

**The modernisation of wind playing in London
orchestras, 1909–1939:
A study of playing style in early orchestral
recordings**

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Abstract

This is a study of performing styles among wind players in London orchestras during the period 1909–1939. Existing scholarship relating to orchestral performance in London in the early twentieth century perpetuates the notion that playing standards were, at best, unreliable until the establishment of contracted orchestras in the 1930s. In addition, existing studies of wind playing in orchestral recordings pre-1930 suggest that a plain style prevailed, with little use of vibrato or tonal flexibility, until the French woodwind schools began to influence British practices in the late 1930s.

Three London orchestras are considered through a combination of archival research and recording analysis. A case study of the New Symphony Orchestra (1905–1930) challenges the notion that pre-1930 London orchestras were ill-disciplined and lacking in corporate identity. The NSO's recordings document a hyper-expressive performance style founded on the use of temporal flexibility, which bears relation to styles observed among pianists, singers and string players of the period. Attention then turns to London's first 'permanent' orchestras, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and London Philharmonic Orchestra. Documentary evidence shows that the two ensembles were established to fulfill two very different ideals of orchestral performance and musical aesthetic. Comparison of the orchestras' recordings is used to establish how this led to the emergence of two contrasting styles of playing in their wind sections, both of which nonetheless represented a move away from the style of the NSO.

These strands are brought together to show how the advent of recording and broadcasting helped to facilitate the expression of changing musical aesthetics in the realm of orchestral wind playing, and how the historiographic prominence of the 'permanent' orchestras of the 1930s and their wind players has in turn distorted present-day views of orchestral and wind performing styles pre-1930.

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- 3_03 Mozart, *The Marriage of Figaro* Overture, complete. NSO, Ronald, 1911.
- 3_04 Grieg, *Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1, 'Morning', bars 1–20. Recorded 1911.
- 3_05 Rossini, *William Tell* Overture, bars 176–95. Recorded 1912.
- 3_06 Bizet, *Carmen*, Entr'act from Act III, bars 1–23. Recorded 1919.
- 3_07 Debussy, *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, bars 1–14 and 21–30. Recorded 1911.
- 3_08 Schumann, Romance Op. 94 No. 1 for Oboe and Piano, complete. Arthur Foreman, oboe, unknown pianist. Recorded 1911.
- 3_09 Tchaikovsky, *1812* Overture, bars 36–42. Recorded 1916.
- 3_10 Debussy, *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, bars 37–40. Recorded 1911.
- 3_11 Bizet, *Carmen*, Entr'act to Act IV, bars 18–50. Recorded 1919.
- 3_12 Schumann, Romance Op. 94 No. 1, bars 67–71. Arthur Foreman, oboe, unknown pianist. Recorded 1911.
- 3_13 Tchaikovsky, *1812* Overture, bars 46–54. Recorded 1916.
- 3_14 Mohr, Air Varié, excerpt. Charles Draper, clarinet, unknown pianist. Recorded 1909.
- 3_15 Liszt, Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 (abridged), excerpt. Recorded 1911.
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- 3_18 Mendelssohn, *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture, bars 100–108. Recorded 1913.
- 3_19 Wagner, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Prelude to Act I, bars 27–41. Recorded 1912.
- 3_20 Dukas, *L'Apprenti Sorcier*, complete. Recorded 1919.
- 3_21 Debussy, *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, bars 1–14 and 21–30. Recorded 1922.
- 3_22 Debussy, *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, bars 1–14 and 21–30. Recorded 1926.
- 3_23 Dvorak, Symphony No. 9, mvt. I, bars 6–9 and 148–156. Recorded 1919–21.
- 3_24 Dvorak, Symphony No. 9, mvt. I, bars 6–9 and 148–156. Recorded 1927.
- 3_25 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6, mvt. I, bars 24–27 and 101–104.
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- 3_27 Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, mvt. I, bars 266–8; mvt. III, bars 60–72; mvt. IV, bars 541–580. Recorded 1922.
- 3_28 Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, mvt. I, bars 266–8; mvt. III, bars 60–72; mvt. IV, bars 541–580. Recorded 1925.
- 3_29 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, mvt. II, bars 1–21. Recorded 1925.

- 3_30 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, mvt. I, bars 132–9 and 252–4. Recorded 1928.
- 3_31 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6, mvt. I, bars 109–12, 153–60 , and 325–335. Recorded 1923.
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- 3_33 Dvorak, Symphony No. 9, mvt. IV, bars 64–92. Recorded 1927.
- 3_34 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6, mvt. I, bars 101–5, 109–13, and 117–21. Recorded 1923.
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- 3_36 Schubert, Symphony No. 8, mvt. II, bars 45–9. Recorded 1922.
- 3_37 Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, mvt. II, bars 205–9. Recorded 1922.
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- 3_39 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, mvt. I, bars 307–12. Recorded 1925.
- 3_40 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6, mvt. II, bars 24–40. Recorded 1923.
- 3_41 Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, mvt. II, bars 126–146. Recorded 1922.
- 3_42 Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, mvt. II, bars 126–146. Recorded 1926.
- 3_43 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, mvt. I, bars 34–45. Recorded 1925.
- 3_44 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, mvt. I, bars 135–46. Recorded 1925.
- 3_45 Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. III, bars 107–14. Recorded 1923–4.
- 3_46 Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. I, bars 102–115. Recorded 1923–4.
- 3_47 Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. IV, bars 78–97. Recorded 1923–4.

Chapter 5 CD A

- 5a_01 Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. I, bars 56–79. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5a_02 Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II, bars 56–60. LSO, Coates, 1923.
- 5a_03 Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II, bars 56–60. LSO, Godfrey, 1927.
- 5a_04 Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II, bars 56–60. LSO, Coates, 1927.
- 5a_05 Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II, bars 56–60. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5a_06 Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81 bars 45–59. BBC SO, Boult, 1932.
- 5a_07 Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81. bars 45–59. LPO, Beecham, 1937.
- 5a_08 Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81, bars 45–59. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1937.
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- 5a_15 Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II, bars 83–4. LPO, Beecham, 1934.
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- 5a_18 Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. I, bars 102–115. NSO, Ronald, 1923.
- 5a_19 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, mvt. II, bars 116–119. NSO, Ronald, 1929.
- 5a_20 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, mvt. II, bars 116–119. LPO, Lambert, 1939.
- 5a_21 Murchie: Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II, bars 39–43. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5a_22 Murchie: Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II, bars 56–60. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5a_23 Murchie: Beethoven, Symphony No. 6, mvt. II, bars 60–67. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1937.
- 5a_24 Murchie: Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvt. I, bars 41–50. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1935.
- 5a_25 Murchie: Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvt. IV, bars 97–105. BBC SO, Walter, 1934.
- 5a_26 Murchie: Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvt. IV, bars 97–105. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1935.
- 5a_27 Murchie: Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, mvt. III, bars 64–80 and 144–147. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1937.
- 5a_28 Murchie: Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II, bars 56–60. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1938.
- 5a_29 Jackson: Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, mvt. II, bars 176–179 and mvt. III bars 317–325. LPO, Weingartner, 1933.
- 5a_30 Jackson: Beethoven, Piano Concerto No. 3, mvt. II, bars 42–51. LPO, Sargent, 1933.
- 5a_31 Jackson: Rossini, *La Scala di Seta*, Overture. bars 9–13, 18–21, 84–98 and 201–217. LPO, Beecham, 1933.
- 5a_32 Jackson: Beethoven, Symphony No. 4, mvt. I, bars 107–117; mvt. II, bars 65–72; and mvt. IV, bars 37–44. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1939.
- 5a_33 Hopkinson: Rossini, *William Tell* Overture, bars 163–226. LPO, Beecham, 1834.
- 5a_34 Hopkinson: Bizet, *La Jolie Fille de Perth* Suite, Prelude, bars 27–40 and 55–61; and ‘Danse Bohemienne’, bars 1–18. LPO, Beecham, 1934.
- 5a_35 Gilbert: Haydn, Symphony No. 99, mvt. II, bars 16–26. LPO, Beecham, 1935.
- 5a_36 Gilbert: Delius, *Summer Night on the River*, LPO, Beecham, 1935, bars 17–32.
- 5a_37 Gilbert: Walton, *Façade* Suite No. 1, Yodelling Song, excerpt. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5a_38 Gilbert: Mozart, Symphony No. 39, mvt. II, bars 63–68. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5a_39 Gilbert: Mozart, Symphony No. 39, mvt. II, bars 63–68. LPO, Weingartner, 1939.
- 5a_40 Gilbert: Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, bars 213–228. LPO, Beecham, 1937.
- 5a_41 Gilbert: Debussy, *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*, 1939, bars 1–14. LPO, Beecham.

- 5a_42** Goossens: Bizet, *La Jolie Fille de Perth* Suite, Sérénade, bars 5–34. LPO, Beecham, 1934.
- 5a_43** Goossens: Beethoven, Symphony No. 2, mvt. I, bars 2–4; and mvt. II, bars 128–35, 199–202. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5a_44** Goossens: Rossini, *La Gazza Ladra*, Overture, bars 171–83, and 195–207. LPO, Beecham, 1933.
- 5a_45** Whittaker: Mozart, Symphony No. 36, ‘Linz’, mvt. I, bars 9–16, 64–71 and 79–83. BBC SO, Busch, 1934.
- 5a_46** Goossens: Mozart, Symphony No. 36, ‘Linz’, mvt. I, bars 9–16, 64–71 and 79–83. LPO, Beecham, 1938.
- 5a_47** Goossens: Haydn, Symphony No. 99, mvt. II, bars 89–95. LPO, Beecham, 1935.
- 5a_48** Goossens: Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, mvt. I, bars 254–8; and mvt. IV, bars 526–79. LPO, Weingartner, 1933.
- 5a_49** Goossens: Beethoven, Symphony No. 4, mvt. IV, 36–40, first and second time. LPO, Weingartner, 1933.
- 5a_50** Goossens: Bizet, Symphony in C, mvt. II, bars 8–19. LPO, Goehr, 1937.
- 5a_51** Goossens: Rossini, *La Scala di Seta*, Overture, bars 5–21. LPO, Beecham, 1933.
- 5a_52** Goossens: Beethoven, Symphony No. 2, mvt. I, bars 40–7. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5a_53** Goossens: arr. Beecham, Suite de Ballet *The Origin of Design*, mvt. II Rondeau, bars 24–32. LPO, Beecham, 1932.
- 5a_54** Goossens: Mozart, Quintet for Piano and Winds K. 452, mvt. I, bars 85–89; mvt. II, bars 113–115; and mvt. IV, bars 87–95. Goossens, Thurston, Alexandra, Brain and Long, 1928.
- 5a_55** Goossens: Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II, bars 56–60. LSO, Godfrey, 1927.
- 5a_56** Goossens: Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II, bars 56–60. LPO, Beecham, 1934.
- 5a_57** Whittaker: Brahms, Violin Concerto, mvt. II, bars 1–32. Hallé, Harty, Szigeti, 1928.
- 5a_58** Whittaker: Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvt. I, bars 1–10. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1935.
- 5a_59** Whittaker: Beethoven, *Egmont* Overture, bars 5–7 and 20–22. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5a_60** Whittaker: Beethoven, *Egmont* Overture, bars 145–156. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5a_61** Whittaker: *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* Overture, bars 29–36. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5a_62** Whittaker: Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvt. I, bars 98–107 and 192–204. BBC SO, Walter, 1934.
- 5a_63** Whittaker: Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvt. I, bars 98–107 and 192–204. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1935.

- 5a_64** Whittaker: Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvt. I, bars 339-351 and mvt. II, bars 108-110. BBC SO, Walter, 1934.
- 5a_65** Whittaker: Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, 1932, bars 208-211. BBC SO, Boult.
- 5a_66** Whittaker: *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* Overture, bars 102-109. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5a_67** MacDonagh: Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, bars 70-82 and 355-360. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1937.
- 5a_68** MacDonagh: Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. III, bars 1-32. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1938.
- 5a_69** Morel: Haydn, Sinfonia Concertante in Bb, mvt. II, bars 4-8. Orchestra, Munch, 1938.
- 5a_70** Whittaker: Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. I, bars 129-133. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5a_71** Goossens: Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. I, bars 129-133. LPO, Beecham, 1934.
- 5a_72** MacDonagh: Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. I, bars 129-133. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1938.
- 5a_73** MacDonagh: Beethoven, Symphony No. 6, mvt. III, bars 107-122. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1937.
- 5a_74** MacDonagh: Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. I, bars 254-257. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1938.
- 5a_75** MacDonagh: Rossini, *La Scala di Seta*, Overture, bars 37-53. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1938.

Chapter 5 CD B

- 5b_01** Thurston: Rossini, *The Barber of Seville* Overture bars 178-189. BBC WO, Pitt, 1926.
- 5b_02** Thurston: Rossini, *Semiramide* Overture, bars 178-187. BBC WO, Pitt, 1927.
- 5b_03** Thurston: Mozart, Quintet in Eb K. 452, mvt. I, bars 113-121; and mvt. III, bars 16-31 and 99-103. Goossens, Thurston, Brain, Alexandra, Long, 1928.
- 5b_04** Thurston: Mozart, Symphony No. 39, mvt. III: bars 45-52.. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5b_05** Thurston: Beethoven, Symphony No. 8 mvt. III, trio. BBC SO, Boult, 1932.
- 5b_06** Thurston: Weber, *Der Freischutz* Overture, bars 96-145. BBC SO, Boult 1932.
- 5b_07** Thurston: Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, bars 409-423. BBC SO, Boult, 1932.
- 5b_08** Thurston: Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, bars 409-423. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1937.
- 5b_09** Thurston: Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, bars 409-423. BBC SO, Walter, 1939.
- 5b_10** Kell: Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, mvt. I: bars 67-70; mvt. II: 22-27. LPO, Weingartner, 1933.
- 5b_11** Kell: Beethoven, Piano Concerto No. 3, mvt. III, bars 181-229. LPO, Sargent, Schnabel, 1933.

- 5b_12** Kell: Beethoven, Symphony No. 4, mvt. I, bars 141-148 and mvt. II, bars 26-34. LPO, Weingartner, 1933.
- 5b_13** Kell: Mozart, Symphony No. 39, mvt. III, bars 45-52. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5b_14** Kell: Beethoven, Symphony No. 2, mvt. II, bars 8-16 and 24-40. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5b_15** Kell: Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. I, bars 34-36. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5b_16** Kell: Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. IV, bars 60-65. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5b_17** Kell: Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, bars 409-423. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5b_18** Kell: Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. IV, bars 270-274. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5b_19** Kell: Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvt. II, bars 4-13. LSO, Weingartner, 1938.
- 5b_20** Walton: Mozart, Symphony No. 39, mvt. III, Trio. LPO, Weingartner, 1940.
- 5b_21** Walton: Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, mvt. II, 68-70 and mvt. III, 28-36. LPO, Lambert, 1939.
- 5b_22** Newton: Juon, Chamber Symphony Op. 27, mvt. I, 6-8, 41-43, 75-83; and mvt. IV, 26-36 and 184-192. New Chamber Orchestra, Kreshover, 1929.
- 5b_23** Newton: Beethoven, Symphony No. 8, mvt. I, bars 36-56 and 108-134; and mvt. III, bars 24-31. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5b_24** Newton: Mozart, Symphony No. 41, mvt. II: 87-91. BBC SO, Boult, 1933.
- 5b_25** Camden: Mozart, Bassoon Concerto, mvt. II: 7-20. Camden, Hallé, Harty, 1926.
- 5b_26** Camden: Mozart, Bassoon Concerto, mvt. II: Cadenza Camden, Hallé, Harty, 1926.
- 5b_27** Camden: Sibelius, Symphony No. 2, mvt. I: 35-40; and mvt. II, 40-55. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1938.
- 5b_28** Camden: Beethoven, Symphony No. 6, mvt. II, bars 32-35; and mvt.V, bars 177-182. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1937.
- 5b_29** Camden: Beethoven, Septet Op. 20, mvt. II, bars 21-25 and mvt. IV, Variation III. Catterall, Shore, Gauntlett, Cruft, Thurston, Camden, Thonger.
- 5b_30** Camden: Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, bars 286-290. BBC SO, Toscanini, 1937.
- 5b_31** Newton: Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, bars 286-290. BBC SO, Boult, 1932.
- 5b_32** Anon bassoonist: Mozart, Quintet in Eb K. 452, mvt. II, bars 95-97. Société (Taffanel) des Instruments à Vents, 1929.
- 5b_33** Alexandra: Mozart, Quintet in Eb K. 452, mvt. II, bars 95-97. Goossens, Thurston, Alexandra, Brain, Long, 1928.
- 5b_34** Alexandra: Mozart, Quintet in Eb K. 452, mvt. II, 35-40; 57-66; and mvt. III, bars 9-13. Goossens, Thurston, Alexandra, Brain, Long, 1928.
- 5b_35** Alexandra: Mozart, Quintet in Eb K. 452, mvt. II, bars 1-5. Goossens, Thurston, Alexandra, Brain, Long, 1928.
- 5b_36** Alexandra: Mozart, Quintet in Eb K. 452, mvt. II, bars 24-26. Goossens, Thurston, Alexandra, Brain, Long, 1928.

- 5b_37** Alexandra: Prokofiev, *Le Pas d'Acier*, mvt. I and III, excerpts. LSO, Coates, 1932.
- 5b_38** Alexandra: Elgar, *Falstaff*, mvt. II, figures 62-63 and 71-73. LSO, Elgar, 1931.
- 5b_39** Alexandra: Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, mvt. II, bars 29-31; 166-76; 205-209; and mvt. III, bars 241-324. LPO, Weingartner, 1933.
- 5b_40** Alexandra: Beethoven, Symphony No. 4, mvt. I, bars 7-8 and 19-20; and mvt. IV, bars 184-188. LPO, Weingartner, 1933.
- 5b_41** Alexandra: Bizet, *La Jolie Fille de Perth* Suite, mvt. III: Marche, bars 1-18. LPO, Beecham, 1934.
- 5b_42** Alexandra: Haydn, Symphony No. 99, mvt. I, bars 76-80 and 120-127; mvt. II, bars 20-26; and mvt. III, bars 88-100. LPO, Beecham, 1935.
- 5b_43** Alexandra: Walton, *Façade*, Suites I and 2, Extracts from 'Polka' and 'Popular Song'. LPO, Beecham, 1936.
- 5b_44** Alexandra: Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, mvt. III, 19-27. LPO, Lambert, 1939.
- 5b_45** Alexandra: Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, mvt. III, 56-72. LPO, Lambert, 1939.
- 5b_46** Hinchcliff: Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, mvt. III, 56-72. LPO, Lambert, 1939.

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Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and that no portion of it has been submitted for examination for another award at this or any other institution.

The following conference and seminar presentations have arisen from this study:

'In Search of an Ephemeral Orchestra: the New Symphony Orchestra, 1905-38'. Paper presented at the IMR conference *The Symphony Orchestra as Cultural Phenomenon*, London, July 2010.

'The New Symphony Orchestra, 1905-1938: A Very RCM Affair'. Paper presented as part of the Grove Forum series, Royal College of Music, London, 14 October 2010.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Alan Hacker (1938–2012)

Introduction

Origin and Aims

This thesis has its roots in my training and work as a performer on historical clarinets of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. It therefore seems appropriate to begin with a description of the personal journey that brought me to this research topic, before embarking on a more objective consideration of the subject area.

My first exploration of performing styles in early recordings took place while a student at the Royal College of Music, where my master's dissertation focussed on wind playing styles in four European orchestras' recordings of Brahms's Third Symphony. As a student of Historically-Informed Performance (HIP), I was interested in the recordings as evidence of nineteenth-century performance practice. This interest grew as I subsequently undertook further training in the performance of Romantic orchestral repertoire on period instruments and began working professionally.

I quickly became frustrated with the lack of available information about wind playing styles from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. Unlike the discursive and detailed string treatises of the nineteenth century, woodwind methods from this period were generally limited to the development of technique, and made little comment on matters of style. This reinforces the old idea that wind players may be artisans or even virtuosi, but rarely are they considered artists.¹ However, comparative studies of string treatises with early recordings have shown that written sources rarely gave a complete picture and often failed to document essential expressive techniques such as portamento and tempo rubato, which dominated the playing style of performers on record.² This suggested to me that the sparse written evidence of wind-playing style may contain similar misleading omissions, and raised the possibility that recordings could be used to construct a fuller account.

When I began my research in 2008, the time was certainly right for a study of wind playing through early recordings. The five-year AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM) was just winding up, leaving a wealth of

¹ See David Whitwell, *The history and literature of the wind band and wind ensemble*, 12: 218.

² See for instance Neal Peres da Costa, 'Performing practices in late-nineteenth-century piano playing', 429–31; and Robert Philip, *Early recordings and performing style*, 235–40.

fresh scholarship as well as new discographical and audio resources.³ Abigail Dolan's thesis 'Landmarks in flute performance style on record, 1900–1950', completed in 2010, demonstrated the wealth of evidence that could be extracted from even the earliest acoustic recordings. And yet, there was much more work to be done. Dolan's thesis was the only one to have considered early wind recordings in depth, and it raised many questions about our perception of the performance styles of the early twentieth century. Furthermore, though various scholars had documented the stylistic attributes of early recorded performances, attempts to ascertain the reasons that performing style changed so radically during the first half of the twentieth century were still in their infancy.⁴

This last point is particularly relevant to performers, for whom audio evidence can be problematic. Even when faced with recordings of performers trained during the nineteenth century, including those directly associated with major composers, HIP musicians have been shy about adopting modes of expression that seem to be overly 'romantic', and even in poor taste. That is not to say that in the two decades since Richard Taruskin wrote that early recordings 'to our modern taste ... sound like caricatures'⁵ there have not been moves towards embracing recorded evidence, and it is certainly beginning to influence practice. But still, as Matthias Arter has observed, HIP ensembles have yet to approach either the letter or the spirit of the recordings, particularly as relates to string portamento.⁶ This is not just a problem of recorded evidence: at a recent conference on the subject of nineteenth-century editions of string music, where the subject of portamento loomed large, many of the performers and academics present were very open about the fact that though they accepted the large amount of evidence about portamento use in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they still felt very uncomfortable about putting it into practice.⁷ No attempt is being made here to assert that historical evidence, however strong, constitutes a stylistic imperative. However, the strength of the reaction that early recordings provoke among musicians is fascinating and begs the question, 'why have tastes changed so dramatically

³ Including work by Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, Nicholas Cook and David Patmore, discussed extensively below and in chapter one.

⁴ See Patmore, 'The Influence of Recording', 299–300. Recent attempts to explain changes in performance style are discussed in chapter one.

⁵ Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 168–9.

⁶ Arter, 'Beethoven's Fifth: A passage to the nineteenth century?'

⁷ 'Authorship and "Authenticity" in Composition, Editing and Performance' conference, part of the *Collection of Annotated String Editions* project, Leeds, April 2012.

since the dawn of recording?'. I have come to believe that if we, as performers, could better understand the origins of our own modern performance paradigm, we would be less inhibited in our approach to earlier styles.

The challenge I set myself, therefore, was to investigate both how and why wind-playing styles had changed in the first half of the twentieth century. I decided to concentrate on orchestral rather than solo recordings, as they offered a wider range of players and repertoire than the solo recordings of the period. In order to do this, I had to contend with the idea that orchestral recordings from before the mid-1920s were clownish affairs, abridged, re-orchestrated, and a poor representation of 'real' playing.⁸ Moreover, many of the available recordings were by London orchestras, which sources suggested were generally formed from a pool of freelance musicians whose main accomplishment was their sight-reading ability, and who brought little collective style or indeed discipline to the music.⁹ Most striking was the assertion, made by Robert Philip in his pioneering work *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, that wind players from before the 1930s, particularly in Britain, often played in a plain and inexpressive manner, communicating little beyond the basic notes and rhythms. If true, this would suggest that the lack of stylistic discussion in wind method books was not an omission, but an accurate reflection of an inartistic, unexpressive, military-band-style wind-playing tradition.

As a musician, I found the idea that wind players only discovered musical expression in the 1930s hard to believe. It seemed incredible, and moreover disrespectful, to suggest that professional wind players went through their careers making no effort to interpret, shape or communicate the expressive content of the music they played. I could accept the notion of rising standards in the sense of improved intonation, more fluent finger technique, fewer mistakes, and increased competition at the top level; but the idea of a generation of wind players defined by a collective absence of musicality seemed highly unlikely.

It was around this time that I happened on a recording of *L'Apprenti Sorcier* by Dukas, recorded in 1917–19 by the 'Royal Albert Hall Orchestra'. It was a name that,

⁸ See for instance Timothy Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, 10–12.

⁹ See Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*, 63–5. This depiction of London orchestral activity goes back at least as far as Thomas Russell's 1945 account in *Philharmonic Decade*, 13–17.

more than any other, surely belonged to a scratch assembly of freelance musicians. And yet what I heard in no way conformed with what I had been reading. The playing was characterful and exceptionally virtuosic. The players seemed comfortable and familiar with their parts, their colleagues, and the many idiosyncrasies of the conductor's interpretation. This recording set me off on a research journey into the discography of the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, more often known as the New Symphony Orchestra (NSO), which became my route into the sound-world of orchestral playing pre-1930.

This did not solve the problem of expressivity, however. The NSO's players certainly did not shape the music in a way that would now be considered expressive or, at times, even refined. Yet not only did I find their playing musically satisfying, but there was strong evidence that contemporary audiences did, too. This led me to consider whether assessments of wind playing style on early recordings were too grounded in the expressive expectations of our own time. It seemed that something might be gained from working on the assumption that the players *were* engaged in expressive communication, albeit using a now-unfamiliar language. In other words, if there was no tonal flexibility or vibrato, but there was a great deal of rhythmic licence, was it not possible that tonal flexibility and vibrato were considered a less important means of expression than the manipulation of rhythm? This challenges accepted notions of what constitutes 'good' or 'tasteful' music-making; but then, that was exactly what happened in the Early Music movement. If HIP musicians could posit entirely different stylistic paradigms for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, why not do the same for the early twentieth century?

This once again brought me back to the question of where modern style had emerged from, and how such a rapid paradigm shift had taken place. My 'discovery' of the NSO had focussed my study on developments in London, and so the natural progression was to consider the enormous upheavals in London orchestral life that took place during the inter-war years. Not only did technology, in the form of recording and broadcasting, change both the nature of musical performance and the working and artistic lives of musicians, but the financial resources that amassed in the hands of the recording companies and the BBC allowed them to establish in the early 1930s the 'permanent' orchestras that London had previously lacked, profoundly changing orchestral activity in the capital. By studying the playing of these permanent orchestras,

namely the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, it might therefore be possible to discern the role that recording and broadcasting played in shaping the playing style of London orchestral wind players during the 1930s.

Scope

The focus of this thesis is wind playing in London orchestras on record prior to the Second World War. The aim of the research is to contribute to the understanding of early twentieth-century wind playing styles as represented by orchestral recordings. The instruments included are the standard members of the orchestral woodwind section, that is, the flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon. In accordance with common orchestral usage, 'wind' is treated here as synonymous with 'woodwind'; any reference to the combined woodwind and brass sections of the orchestra is made as 'wind and brass'. Though the study is based on orchestral recordings, the subject of orchestral performance practice is not the principal concern; rather, the focus is on the playing style of a selection of principal players as documented by their orchestral recordings, and on how they contributed to the collective musical identity of their orchestras.

The hypothesis put forward is that the rise of recording and broadcasting played a major role in the stylistic changes that began during the inter-war years, not only as a result of the influence of recording itself and the objective light it cast on musical performance but also, more directly, through the involvement of recording and broadcasting organisations in the establishment of the first 'permanent' orchestras. Three specific orchestras have been chosen as case studies: the New Symphony Orchestra (NSO), which was the 'house orchestra' for the HMV recording label between 1909 and 1930; the BBC Symphony Orchestra (BBC SO), established by the BBC in 1930; and the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO), formed by Thomas Beecham in 1932 with the assistance of the EMI recording company. The time-period covered by the thesis is defined at one end by the beginning of the NSO's orchestral recording activity, in 1909, and at the other by the outbreak of World War Two, which coincided with the dissolution of Thomas Beecham's LPO. This also has the effect of restricting the study to the technological era of the 78rpm disc, before the editing of recordings became possible.

The NSO acts as a representative of the 'old order' of London orchestras that operated before the BBC created what was effectively the first publicly subsidised

orchestra. It has been chosen in preference to its better-known contemporaries – the Queen’s Hall Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, and the Beecham Orchestra, – for several reasons. As a specialist recording orchestra, it fits better into the theme of orchestras with an intimate link to the recording industry. It began recording earlier than the other candidates and recorded more regularly during the acoustic era, providing a larger body of material to work with.¹⁰ The standard of playing on its recordings challenges the received opinion of London orchestral playing pre-1930, making it an interesting case study for historiographic reasons. Finally, its wind section, who are prominent on many of the recordings, shared a common educational background at the Royal College of Music in the 1890s and 1900s, making the recordings particularly pertinent to the study of early-twentieth-century performance practice.

The playing of the NSO is compared with that of the BBC SO and LPO, two orchestras that loom large in the established history of London orchestras. Unanimously credited with revolutionising playing standards through the introduction of contracts and salaries for players and adequate rehearsal time for programmes, as well as eradicating the practice of players sending deputies, the BBC SO and LPO are considered here in terms of the changes they effected in wind playing style. Study of the two orchestras reveals two very different approaches to orchestral music-making, resulting in two different schools of wind playing.

This thesis is confined to one side of the performer-audience discourse, that is, musical performance and how it was approached by musicians. Though reviews and comment pieces dealing with the orchestras in question are occasionally cited, the study does not attempt to give full consideration to the reception of changing performance style by music critics or the general public. However, the findings presented here suggest that this would be a fruitful area for further study.

¹⁰ Claude Gravely Arnold’s discography *The Orchestra on Record* makes reference to at least 63 recording dates for the NSO prior to 1923. Philip Stuart’s discography of the LSO, *The World’s Most Recorded Orchestra*, lists 18 separate recording dates for the orchestra between their first session in 1913, and the end of 1922.

Structure, sources and methodology

The study is structured around five central chapters. Chapter one explores previous studies of performing styles on record and the early history of recording and broadcasting. Chapter two evaluates the existing literature on performing style as it relates to wind playing, the established narrative of wind playing traditions in England. Chapter three investigates the performing and recording activity of the NSO, and presents an analysis of the wind playing style in its recordings. Chapters four and five concern both the BBC SO and the LPO. Chapter four considers published and archival evidence about the formation, organisation and training of the two orchestras, focussing on how the wind players were recruited, their relationships with their orchestras, and how both players and conductors contributed to shaping the orchestras' playing styles. Chapter five then looks in detail at wind playing styles in the two orchestras in a wide range of recordings. Chapter six summarises the findings of the thesis and brings them together to suggest an account of the changes in wind playing in London orchestras during the period in question and to consider the wider implications for the history of both performing style and London orchestral activity, before finally suggesting areas for further research.

The thesis uses a dual methodology to approach this complex subject and to bridge gaps in the available sources. Each orchestra is approached by a study of both written evidence – archival, published and ephemeral – and audio evidence, in order to achieve a broader and deeper understanding of the playing styles of the three ensembles. In the case of the NSO, due to the unavailability of significant archival material,¹¹ ephemeral sources are used, primarily to put a case for the significance of the group, as well as to explain the unexpectedly high quality of the playing on its recordings. By contrast, extensive material relating to the BBC SO was made available by the BBC Written Archives Centre (BBC WAC), allowing a more detailed analysis of how the orchestra's style was created through the selection and training of its players and how the style which can be heard in the recordings reflected the BBC's wider ethos, as well as the orchestra's exposure to specific conductors. Archival resources relating to the foundation of the LPO are more limited, as the orchestra's own archive only begins in 1939: here, discussion focuses on the figure of Thomas Beecham. First-hand accounts of his method

¹¹ See section 3.1.1, New Symphony Orchestra Sources.

of building and training an orchestra are drawn on, as is evidence from his personal orchestral parts and scores, now held at the University of Sheffield. In addition to these sources specific to the orchestras in question, consideration is given to a wide range of published writings by orchestral wind players active during the period.

The audio resources relating to each orchestra also differ. In the case of the NSO, I was fortunate to have access to the private collection of Damian Rogan, who supplied me with his own excellent transfers of a large selection of the NSO's recordings. Many of the recordings of the BBC SO and LPO are available as commercial transfers, though due to the level of processing commonly applied to such transfers these have been treated with caution and in most cases only used when no other source was available. Rare off-air recordings of live broadcasts by the BBC SO have been contributed by the Music Preserved collection (MP): the small number of live recordings considered in chapter five afford the opportunity to compare studio 'performance' with live performance, offering a further insight into the effect of the recording situation on performing style. Extensive use has also been made of the fruits of two recent large-scale digitisation projects, by the British Library Sound Archive (BLSA) and by CHARM. It is due to these projects, as well as the ever-increasing range of transfers by private collectors made available online, that I have been able to make a very wide survey of the output of each orchestra.

The sonic limitations of early recordings are well known, and are discussed at greater length in chapter one; however, it should also be acknowledged here that in using third-party transfers I have necessarily ceded a degree of control over the processing and therefore sonic characteristics of my recorded evidence. I believe, however, that this is more than balanced by the increase in the number of recordings that, as a result of this decision, I have able to include in my study. In addition, I would suggest that by working with recordings transferred by a range of individuals and methods, there can at least be no suggestion of subjective bias in the processing of the transfers towards my own tastes or opinions. To put it simply, it can only strengthen the case for the presence of certain stylistic characteristics if they are audible across a range of recordings, regardless of the transfer method and level of processing.

The complexity of the sound signal on an ensemble recording far exceeds that of a solo recording, and for this reason there has been no attempt to utilise computer analysis tools on the orchestral recordings considered here. Instead, the gathering of audio evidence for this thesis was based on an established close-listening approach. This began with a broad listening survey of the available output of each orchestra to identify recordings that contained clearly audible wind-playing. These recordings were then subject to systematic exploration, including tables to compare the various aspects of playing style across multiple recordings and detailed comparative annotations of printed scores. Large numbers of short passages were excerpted and compiled as sound files, to facilitate direct comparison and assist in the formation of a general impression of the styles of individual players. In the text below, general and specific findings are illustrated using the clearest examples from the most typical recordings. A list of the recordings cited is given at the head of each section, and more extensive list those surveyed is included in the resources list. Here and throughout the thesis, the titles of musical works are given in the language used on the original 78rpm release.

A second reason for the choice of close listening over computer analysis was the desire to keep to a methodology and descriptive language rooted in my background as a performer. It has recently been suggested that in order to have a valid, objective, musicological discussion about music in performance, it is necessary to reject the traditional metaphors of shape, texture, light, movement, and other non-aural comparisons, and turn instead to computer analysis and scientific descriptions of sound.¹² However, this stance ignores the fact that to invoke scientific representations of sound is merely to replace linguistic metaphors with graphic and numerical ones,¹³ Moreover, it harks back to the divide between musicologists and performers described by John Rink over twenty years ago:

Embarrassment at the subjective, unsystematic vocabulary used by many performers to describe music (not to mention the ‘arcane sign-gesture-and-grunt’ system by which professionals communicate about interpretation in rehearsals) has provoked a reaction against the seemingly naive interpreter in this age of ‘rational reflection’: as a result we tend – unjustly – not to consider performers as

¹² See for instance, Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music*, and Cook, ‘Methods for Analysing Recordings’.

¹³ See Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors we live by*.

serious thinkers about music. ... The vast terminological gulf between analysts and performers blinds us to the fact that good performers are continually engaged in a process of 'analysis' ... [which] forms an integral part of the performing process'.¹⁴

The fact that scholars who advocate the scientific approach, such as Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and Nicholas Cook, do so in appreciation of the value of analysing performance suggests that they do not consider interpretation to be a 'naive' practice. Yet their insistence on a quasi-scientific terminology ignores the possibility that performers, through their own process of analysis, also develop the linguistic skills to describe performing styles in a precise and meaningful way.

Most of the vocabulary used to describe performing style in this thesis will be familiar from other studies of historical performing style on record, and indeed writings on performance practice. I also draw on some terms and concepts which are familiar among musicians working within the realm of HIP, particularly in reference to the subject of phrasing. These terms are outlined in chapter one. In addition, my observations are illustrated by a large number of audio extracts and annotated musical examples, in order to reinforce the meaning of the vocabulary used. The key for the abbreviations used in the musical examples is given with the list of abbreviations.

No attempt is made to sidestep the fact that this approach and therefore the findings of this thesis are inevitably subjective. The recorded evidence has been played to and discussed with numerous other musicians and academics in the course of preparing the final thesis, in particular to confirm the audibility of the more subtle observations; nonetheless, no claims can be made to true objectivity. Similarly, it is impossible to know the practical circumstances or the artistic intentions that lay behind each specific recording considered here; each one is a snapshot of a moment now lost, and it is likely that in some cases, the results of exigency or accident have been mistaken for interpretative decisions or stylistic normalcy. In order to combat these problems, a broad consensus of evidence has been sought as a basis for the central assertions made here, in order to make as strong a case as possible for the presence of certain stylistic attributes in

¹⁴ Rink, 'Review of *Musical Structure and Performance* by Walter Berry', 323.

the recordings considered. Beyond that, the problems are the same as those facing any historical investigation. Richard Evans has written:

Through the sources we use, and the methods with which we handle them, we can, if we are very careful and thorough, approach a reconstruction of past reality that may be partial and provisional, and certainly will not be objective, but is nevertheless true. We know, of course, that we will be guided in selecting materials for the stories we tell, and in the way we put these materials together and interpret them ... even by our own unconscious assumptions and desires. But the stories we tell will be true stories, even if the truth is our own, and even if other people can and will tell them differently.¹⁵

This research project was undertaken with the primary aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the stylistic vocabulary of early-twentieth century London wind players and the forces that brought about the rapid abandonment of that vocabulary. However, from a personal point of view, I do not wish the value of the research to rest solely on whether I have empirically proved the existence of a certain performing style. Just as a reading of a poem does not stand or fall on empirical proof of the author's intentions and their concrete representation on the page but on whether it reveals new layers of potential meaning, so perhaps by writing about recorded performance one can suggest a reading of that performance, encouraging the listener to hear it in a different way. From this perspective, the ultimately unknowable 'truth' of my observations is less important than whether they are able to inspire a creative response among musicians by presenting the possibility of an alternative means of communicating musical expression and, furthermore, to encourage listeners to approach these recordings not as curious artefacts of a more primitive musical age but with respect for the musicians who, once upon a time, stood in a recording studio and put all of their effort into expressing their personal musical vision using the language of their own time.

¹⁵ Evans, *In Defence of History*, 249–50.

Chapter One

Performance Style and Technology

1.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis is concerned with the existing literature on two subjects: the study of performing styles on record and the early history of recording and broadcasting. The challenge, as noted in the introduction, is to bring together these topics to explain the changes that took place in the specific area of orchestral woodwind playing during the first half of the twentieth century. In this chapter, each subject area is dealt with in turn, with the aim of drawing out the implications for orchestral wind playing from the existing literature which surrounds, but rarely penetrates, the core subject area of the thesis.

1.2 Changing performing styles

Sources

Since Robert Philip published his comparative survey *Early Recordings and Musical Style* in 1992, there have been numerous studies of instrumental performing styles in historical recordings. Prominent among these are works by Timothy Day,¹ Mart Katz,² Daniel Leech-Wilkinson,³ David Milsom,⁴ Neal Peres da Costa,⁵ and Abigail Dolan,⁶ as well as multi-authored volumes including Michael Musgrave and Bernard Sherman's *Performing Brahms: Early evidence of performing style*. Between 2004 and 2009, CHARM conducted large-scale research projects into performance style in Schubert song and Chopin mazurkas. Oboist and researcher Matthias Arter has contributed a professional performer's approach to the study of both orchestral and oboe performance styles in

¹ Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*.

² Katz, *Capturing Sound* and 'Portamento and the phonograph effect'.

³ Leech-Wilkinson, 'Portamento and musical meaning', 'Recordings and histories of performing style', and *The Changing Sound of Music*, among others.

⁴ Milsom, *Theory and practice in late nineteenth-century violin performance*, and 'Conditional gifts: the acoustic orchestral recordings of Edouard Colonne and Karl Muck and their testament to late nineteenth-century performing practices'.

⁵ Costa, 'Performing practices in late-nineteenth-century piano playing', and *Off the Record: Performing practices in Romantic piano playing*.

⁶ Dolan, 'Landmarks in flute performance style on record, 1900-1950'.

early recordings.⁷ Also important is the collaborative work of pianist Sigurd Slåttebrekk and recording producer Tony Harrison, who have developed a technique for analysing recordings in great depth by recreating them precisely in the recording studio. Indeed, this performance-based approach has arguably been more successful than other analytical approaches in dealing with the most subtle aspects of performing style.⁸

Some of these studies address the subject of orchestral performance, but Philip remains the only source dealing with stylistic changes across the whole woodwind family, and Dolan's thesis is the only study centred on an orchestral woodwind instrument, the flute. PhD theses by Jessica Ann Raposo⁹ and Spencer Pitfield¹⁰ have also considered the evidence of historical recordings in the context of a broader methodology, in reference to the flute and clarinet respectively. The work of Dolan, Raposo and Pitfield will be considered at greater length in the discussion of individual woodwind traditions, in chapter two.

Several writers have sought to confront the ways in which recording has acted as a catalyst for change in musical performance.¹¹ Michael Chanan, and more recently Day and Philip have taken a broad view of the way that recordings have driven up technical standards but also contributed to a homogenisation of performance styles.¹² Mark Katz's work discusses what he terms 'phonograph effects', ways in which the act of playing for recording apparatus may have prompted specific technical or artistic responses from musicians.¹³ David Patmore has studied how the repeatability of the recording medium and the financial resources of record companies combined to enable Thomas Beecham to set new standards of orchestral playing in London.¹⁴ Finally, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson

⁷ Arter, 'Beethoven's Fifth: A passage to the nineteenth century', and 'Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958): Oboe Concerto (1942): A critical evaluation of the three first recordings', online (accessed 20 December 2012).

⁸ Harrison and Slåttebrekk, 'Being the go-between: recreating Grieg's 1903 Paris recordings', and *Chasing the Butterfly*, online (accessed 30 January 2013).

⁹ Raposo, 'Defining the British Flute School'.

¹⁰ Pitfield, 'British Music for Clarinet and Piano 1880–1945: Repertory and Performance Practice'.

¹¹ Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*; Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*; Chanan, *Repeated Takes*.

¹² Chanan, *Repeated Takes*; Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*; and Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording*.

¹³ Katz, *Capturing Sound*, 3–7.

¹⁴ Patmore, 'The Influence of recording', 118–9 and 285–6.

has contributed a significant new theory on the way in which musicians' performing styles evolve over time.¹⁵

1.2.1 General trends in orchestral performance

There is a broad consensus among the secondary sources concerning general trends in performance style change during the first half of the twentieth century. In the realm of orchestral performance, recorded evidence points to a shift from variety in performing style and tonal palette, characterised by strongly defined national schools of playing, towards the 'homogenised and globalised sound of the modern orchestra ... a synthesis of what used to be different styles'.¹⁶ Part of this was due to the worldwide adoption of a standard set of wind instrument designs, a factor which is discussed further in chapter two. There is also a general consensus about improvements in the standard of orchestral playing, particularly in London, during this period. This can be seen in the increasing tightness of ensemble and rhythmic discipline of the orchestras of the 1920s, along with an improvement in the intonation and blending of woodwind sections.¹⁷ Philip credits the BBC Symphony Orchestra and London Philharmonic Orchestra with achieving a 'quality of ensemble, and refinement of sonority and phrasing, that were unknown in Britain in the 1920s'.¹⁸ However, he also cautions that 'what sounds like messy or undisciplined playing to us did not necessarily sound like that to musicians and audiences of the past ... there is no clear distinction to be made between what we think of as rising standards, and what we have come to acknowledge as changing style'.¹⁹

The early twentieth century saw the emergence of the first generation of iconic conductor-interpreters, men such as Arthur Nickisch, Wilhelm Fürtwangler, Willem Mengelberg, Serge Koussevitzky and Arturo Toscanini. The orchestras of which they claimed artistic ownership became tools for the realisation of a musical vision, a fact that itself drove up playing standards and had an appreciable effect on playing style. These conductors arguably represented a peak of individuality in orchestral interpretation that has never since been matched. In particular, recordings of later generations of

¹⁵ Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and histories of performing style'.

¹⁶ Philip, *Performing Music*, 23.

¹⁷ See Philip, 'Historical recordings of orchestras', 206–11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 200–1.

conductors show a significant reduction in the use of tempo modification, and a retreat into a more limited range of tempos, with instances of extreme basic tempos, particularly at the fast end of the spectrum, becoming rarer as the twentieth century progressed.²⁰ Conductors' interpretations are not the principal focus of this thesis, and discussions of tempo will be set to one side except where they have a direct bearing on the examples of wind playing discussed; however, it is important to acknowledge that this was a period when orchestral players required great adaptability to satisfy the demands of a very broad range of interpretative styles.

1.2.2 Expressive devices

In an era when the conductor was demanding ever-greater control over all aspects of interpretation, the individual style of a wind player can best be heard in the details of their playing: the use of vibrato, tonal and dynamic nuances, rubato and rhythmic flexibility. For the purposes of discussion and for reasons that will become apparent below, these expressive devices will be divided into two groups: 'sonic' devices, being the manipulation of tone and dynamics and the use of vibrato; and 'temporal' devices, being the manipulation of timing, in the form of rhythmic alteration, agogic accents and rubato. While temporal expressivity is dealt with at some length in the following section, sonic expressivity, being more connected with the nature of individual instruments, will be discussed in chapter two. It is sufficient here to note that the general consensus in the existing scholarship is that during the twentieth century, there was a rise in the use of vibrato by both string and wind players as it ceased to be viewed as a decorative technique and became a fundamental part of tone production.²¹ This went hand in hand with an increase in dynamic and tonal shaping, particularly by wind players, beginning in the 1930s.²² Together, these changes are evidence of the increasing expressive importance given to sound itself as a carrier of musical meaning.

Two aspects of playing technique fall outside of the bipartite distinction between temporal and sonic expressive devices: portamento and articulation. Portamento is

²⁰ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 35–6; and Day, *A century of recorded music*, 150.

²¹ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 109–139; Dolan, 127–35; and Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and histories of performing style', 252–3.

²² Philip, *Early Recordings*, 138–9; and Philip, *Performing Music*, 93–5.

usually thought of as a string-specific technique, and has never been studied in relation to wind playing. Portamento and portamento-like effects are however possible on wind instruments. A limited number of instances have been observed in the recordings considered in chapters three and five, and though the technique does not seem to have been a primary expressive device, its significance will be discussed later in the thesis.

Articulation is an expressive resource which is of vital importance to wind players. The word 'articulation' can be used to refer both to the character given to a note or phrase onset using the tongue and breath, and to the way in which notes or phrases are joined or separated. Wind articulation in early recordings has not yet been subject to systematic study, and though a comprehensive investigation of this single issue is beyond the scope of this thesis, an attempt will be made to consider the use of articulation in the recordings surveyed. In order to avoid problems of terminology, the noun 'articulation' will here be used only to refer to the character given to the start, and occasionally the end, of a note or phrase, by the use (or not) of the tongue. However, the adjective 'articulated' will necessarily also be employed when referring to aspects of phrasing, a subject which is discussed at length below.

1.2.3 Temporal expressivity

Many studies have been made of expressive timing in early recordings, mostly in relation to piano playing. The overall trajectory that has been identified is a move away from the very free approach to timing and notated rhythms that formed the basis of a complex early-twentieth century rubato style. This was replaced by the mid-twentieth century by a restrained performing style marked by the literal interpretation of notated rhythms and a limited use of small-scale tempo rubato to shape structurally important moments in the music.²³ Robert Philip identifies three forms of temporal freedom in the early twentieth century: *accelerando* and *rallentando*; the use of *tenuto* and agogic accent; and what he calls 'melodic' rubato, which consists of the 'rhythmical independence of a melody from its accompaniment'.²⁴ He observes a general tendency to lengthen long notes and hurry short notes, and to over-dot dotted rhythms, in orchestral

²³ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 37–93; Costa, *Off the Record*, 189–250; and Harrison and Slåttembrekk, *Chasing the Butterfly*, online (accessed 30 January 2013).

²⁴ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 38.

as well as solo and chamber recordings. In his study of piano recordings, Neal Peres da Costa makes similar observations, noting the practice of localised melodic dislocation, where individual melody notes are placed after, or more rarely before, the corresponding accompaniment note; this is distinguished from 'metrical rubato', which consists of 'rhythmically altering melody notes while essentially preserving the metrical regularity of the accompaniment'.²⁵ Costa also notes the frequent use of rhythmic unevenness in a manner similar to the Baroque technique of *inégaie*.²⁶

Another detailed study of expressive timing in early-twentieth century style comes from the work of Tony Harrison and Sigurd Slåttembrekk.²⁷ By attempting to recreate Grieg's 1903 solo piano recordings in the recording studio, Harrison and Slåttembrekk developed a theory about the key attributes of his playing style, which they suggest is representative of late-Romantic performance practice. They discuss Grieg's style in terms of 'inverse characteristics', that is those which are absent from his style. Among these is the now fundamental practice of emphasising a note or chord by adding time immediately before it, thus accentuating it by delay. Harrison and Slåttembrekk observe that, conversely, 'Grieg's impulse to a new phrase or the placing of the climax of a phrase, is almost inevitably slightly before the projected beat'. This technique of anticipation, as it will be referred to in this thesis, is a crucial stylistic attribute that has not been explicitly discussed in relation to orchestral playing, but is present throughout the pre-1930 recordings considered in later chapters. Harrison and Slåttembrekk also address the important subject of 'swing', which they define as 'the melodic centering on a recurring, regular, and often strong beat'.²⁸ This, too, often involves accentuation by anticipation rather than delay, such as in the 'apparently unprepared and early placement of accents' which they find to be characteristic of Grieg's performance of dance-based pieces.²⁹ The anticipation of particular beats of the bar can also create a feeling of 'swing', which Harrison and Slåttembrekk explain using the concept of 'musical gravity': 'an interaction between the expected and the performed beat'.³⁰

²⁵ Costa, 'Performing practices', 216.

²⁶ *Loc. cit.*

²⁷ Harrison and Slåttembrekk, *Chasing the Butterfly* website (accessed 30 January 2013).

²⁸ Harrison and Slåttembrekk, 'Tempo modulation, swing and structure', *Chasing the Butterfly* website (accessed 30 January 2013).

²⁹ *Loc. Cit.*

³⁰ *Loc. Cit.*

Harrison and Slåttembrekk's observations about the use of anticipation to accentuate notes and create rhythmic swing suggest an important contrast between early-twentieth century performing styles and modern practice, which relies on the weight and control imparted by poise and delay. This highlights the 'otherness' of the aesthetic climate of the period, a climate in which order, precision, control, and the literal realisation of the printed score were not of primary importance. The expressive use of anticipation went hand in hand with the hurrying of short notes observed in orchestral recordings by Philip³¹ and a general tendency to play ahead of the beat which is observed in some orchestral recordings in this thesis. Taken together, these observations point to the widespread use of what may be termed 'fast' expressive timing, as well as – or even in preference to – the 'slow' rubato, delay, and shaping by *ritenuto* that is more common in modern practice. As will be seen, this vocabulary of 'fast' temporal nuances was as widespread among early-twentieth century orchestral wind players as among solo pianists, and its use in an orchestral context puts an interesting perspective on attitudes to ensemble playing during the period in question.

1.2.4 Phrasing

As David Milsom suggests, expressive devices are not a musical end in themselves but are used to communicate underlying ideas about the shape and form of the music as well as its perceived character, narrative, or emotional content.³² However, few studies of performance style have focussed explicitly on phrasing, and there has been little attempt to define specific approaches or traditions. The terms used to describe phrasing are usually relatively loose, such as Philip's references to 'broad', 'plain' and 'nuanced' phrasing.³³ While these terms give an idea of general character, it is useful to have a more specific vocabulary with which to describe phrasing. Borrowing from Milsom, Antony Pay,³⁴ and Bruce Haynes,³⁵ phrasing is described here in terms of *length* and *orientation*. Phrasing can be *articulated*, that is, clearly divided into multiple small parts; or it can be *long-line* or *seamless*, with little sense of the partitioning of the music. In terms

³¹ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 78–80.

³² Milsom, *Theory and Practice*, 29.

³³ Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, 137.

³⁴ Pay, 'Phrasing in Contention'.

³⁵ Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, especially 48–59.

of shape and accentuation, it may be *goal-* or *climax-oriented*, *end-oriented*, or *beginning-oriented*. Phrasing can also be governed by different musical elements and stylistic principles; for instance, the desire to create melodic continuity, or the belief in emphasising structural or harmonic relationships.

In his study of solo violinists, Milsom finds that while players from the early twentieth century made similar decisions to modern players about which musical events to emphasise within a given passage, successive generations of players have tended towards longer phrases.³⁶ Haynes and Pay echo this observation in their assessment of modern performance style.³⁷ Another modern stylistic trend is towards goal-oriented phrasing: while treatises throughout the nineteenth century constantly reiterate the importance of accentuating the beginning of a phrase, slur, or metric unit,³⁸ Pay describes the modern concept of phrasing as ‘based fundamentally on crescendo’,³⁹ and preoccupied by the question ‘where does this phrase go?’. This raises the possibility that recordings from the early twentieth century might document the abandonment of articulated, beginning-oriented phrasing in favour of long-line, goal-oriented phrasing.

Harrison and Slåttebrekk put forward strong evidence for another phrasing practice in the early twentieth-century: the deliberate creation of asymmetry and ambiguity by layering different phrasing structures. They observe in early recordings of many pianists the tendency to refrain from emphasising obvious structural points in the score, and particularly the avoidance of ‘the obvious accumulation of like-minded elements’.⁴⁰ Thus, where a modern performer might use a relaxation of momentum, a reduction in dynamic and a *rallentando* all together to show the conclusion of a structural section, Grieg and some of his contemporaries actively avoided creating ‘closed endings’, instead creating an ambiguous elision of phrases or sections, where the general tension may be relaxed and the dynamic reduced towards a structural point, but an overlap is created by an increase in tempo or the anticipation of the new phrase. This is not the same as the goal-oriented and seamless phrasing identified above as attributes of the incoming, modern performance style, as the structural ambiguity and elision of phrases posited by

³⁶ Milsom, *Theory and Practice*, 55.

³⁷ Pay, ‘Phrasing in Contention’, 293–4; and Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, 48–51.

³⁸ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice*, 29–50.

³⁹ Pay, 294.

⁴⁰ Harrison and Slåttebrekk, ‘Grieg performs Grieg’, *Chasing the Butterfly* website, online (accessed 30 January 2013).

Harrison and Slåttebrekk does not involve a long-term sense of 'direction'. Rather the 'multi-layered' approach, also put forward independently by Pay,⁴¹ facilitates the realisation of multiple and conflicting phrase structures. Pay uses the analogy of waves and sea to describe how groupings or phrases may be perceived on different levels:

On a calmish sea far from shore, for example, non-breaking waves are perceived as entities in their own right even though the change of water level over a whole group of waves is continuous. Perceptual groupings may arise without there necessarily being a physical discontinuity involved.⁴²

Thus is possible to create articulated, beginning-oriented small-scale phrasing within a larger structure: the small-scale phrasing might be shown by dynamic accentuation and a relaxation of the momentum or tone at the end of each group, while still eliding individual phrases using temporal anticipation or a continuity of sound between them, as in the 'seamless legato' and 'lyrical continuity' ascribed by Daniel Leech-Wilkinson to late-nineteenth century style. This differs from the modern, goal-oriented style, where a single, unified, large-scale phrase shape – in Pay's terminology, a 'meta-phrase' – is described simultaneously by multiple elements of the performance, obliterating any sense of smaller or contradicting structures.

1.2.5 Ensemble

As well as having direct relevance to the phrasing styles heard in the orchestral recordings discussed in this thesis, these observations have implications for the concept of ensemble in orchestral playing. The improvement of ensemble playing is usually cited alongside increases in rhythmic 'accuracy', tonal flexibility, and the move towards the faithful and literal interpretation of the score as evidence of a rise in performing standard during the recorded era, particularly in the realm of orchestral playing. However, as Philip points out, 'ensemble playing and the freedoms and disciplines that it involves ... are partly to do with rehearsal, and changing levels of competence. But the way people play together is also a matter of style. Even straightforward issues of competence and accuracy are partly stylistic'.⁴³ Despite chronicling examples of lax

⁴¹ Pay, 353–4.

⁴² Pay, 293

⁴³ Philip, *Performing Music*, 63.

rhythm and ensemble and lack of attention to detail in recordings of British orchestras of the 1920s and the 'considerable change in precision, clarity of detail ... control and tuning' brought by the BBC SO and LPO in the 1930s, Philip also concedes that features such as the 'hurrying and lightness of detail' found in early orchestral recordings were 'matters of more than competence'.⁴⁴ This conclusion is supported by the satisfaction expressed by composers such as Elgar and Stravinsky with recordings which document apparently loose standards of playing, suggesting that an element of 'dash' was characteristic of the style of the time.⁴⁵

The issue of style change versus stylistic improvement is particularly relevant to orchestral wind playing, where spontaneity and soloistic flexibility must constantly be balanced against the needs of ensemble co-ordination. The three wind sections considered in this thesis display very different ensemble playing styles, and one of the questions that will be considered is how each group represents a different attitude to the relative importance of expressive flexibility versus ensemble accuracy. The observations regarding multi-layered phrasing also shed an interesting light on the emerging preoccupation with technical accuracy in orchestral playing during the period in question. If one accepts that the musical aesthetic of the early twentieth century was not based around the clarification of the musical score by the careful coordination of expressive devices, but rather thrived on the tension and ambiguity created by asymmetrical accentuation, conflicting phrasings and the opposition of different stylistic devices to one other and to the structures written into the music, it also becomes conceivable that ambiguity and non-coordination of lines were acceptable to some extent in an orchestral context. To put it another way, it can be posited that unity and clarity were not the overriding aims of orchestral performance in the early part of the period considered, any more than they were for solo pianists. This created a situation where unilateral interpretative decisions and a soloistic attitude to the shaping of orchestral parts were more acceptable than they have subsequently become. Seen in this light, the emergent prioritisation of precise ensemble that can be heard in later recordings seems as much as an ideological shift as a triumph of professionalism over the anarchic orchestral practices that went before.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 68-9.

⁴⁵ Philip, *Performing Music* 90-1.

1.2.6 Hyper-Expressivity and 'Plain' Style

The discussion here has so far focussed on individual elements of playing style, and the move from a highly expressive style of temporal flexibility towards a greater level of restraint and accuracy. This raises the question of what constitutes 'expressivity' in wind playing. Two writers have contributed broader views of playing style changes during the period in question that are pertinent to this issue. One comes from Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, based on recordings of solo singers, string players and pianists. For Leech-Wilkinson, there is a clear difference between the playing and singing of musicians born in the first half of the nineteenth century, such as Joseph Joachim (b. 1831) and Adelina Patti (b. 1843), and those of the following generation. Joachim and Patti are distinguished by their relatively restrained delivery:

a much plainer and smaller sound than we might expect, extremely flexible within the metre, with shallow vibrato but a lot of portamento, yet far from the sentimentality that portamento came to signal much later (in the 1920s). Their attention is focused on lyrical continuity uninterrupted by sudden change in any dimension of the sound; their expression is heartfelt but without histrionics.⁴⁶

By contrast, singers and players born in the second half of the nineteenth century display an increasingly hyper-expressive approach, inhabiting a 'stylistic world in which moments in scores with expressive potential are felt to need the listener's attention drawn to them'.⁴⁷ Leech-Wilkinson describes a tendency towards 'expressive inflation', manifested in 'a gradual shift away from shaping the phrase through broad changes in tempo towards a smaller-scale rubato responsive to melodic and harmonic twists ... an emotional-pictorial approach to understanding and communicating musical meaning'.⁴⁸

In light of this model of stylistic development, it is interesting to note Robert Philip's assertion that the dominant pre-modern style among British wind players was 'plain' and 'un-nuanced'.⁴⁹ He points to a lack of vibrato, dynamic shaping and tonal flexibility among British players of the 1920s which was in direct contrast to the prevailing French woodwind style, the influence of which he suggests became apparent from the 1930s

⁴⁶ Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and histories of performance style', 251.

⁴⁷ *Loc. Cit.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁴⁹ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 114–6, 123–5 and 135–7.

onwards.⁵⁰ Philip's implied definition of expressivity as being communicated through sonic expressive devices is in contrast to Leech-Wilkinson's, which places great importance on the use of temporal flexibility in the form of small-scale rubato. To Philip, it is the absence of sonic flexibility, in the form of vibrato and dynamic shaping, that is the hallmark of 'plain' style in wind players. This is symptomatic of the fact that in the present day, expressivity in wind playing is primarily associated with manipulation of the sound itself. Throughout this thesis it will be argued not only that British players made more widespread use of sonic expressive devices than Philip suggests, but also that there were wind players who, through their use of temporal flexibility, participated in the hyper-expressive style observed by Leech-Wilkinson in other areas of musical performance.

1.2.7 Modern style

The privileging of sonic expressive devices by writers on performance style has its roots in the modern performance paradigm. Leech-Wilkinson has written eloquently about the 'comfortable stylistic consensus' of the mid- to late-twentieth century, characterised by expressive restraint, the decline in rubato and portamento, and a growing belief that a performer's interpretation should be bounded by faithfulness to the musical score, 'which is to say, less sensitive to potential meanings beyond the structural relationships between the notes'. He suggests that the rise of 'a permanent wider and slower vibrato' was also an attempt to negate the subjectivity of personal expressivity, 'as if its width and speed could signal feeling in the abstract while its regularity could guard against feeling in the moment'. This resulted in a 'stylistic world in which vibrato and dynamics bear most of the expressive load, with rubato constrained by a steady beat, the tone rich and relatively unvaried'. Put another way, Leech-Wilkinson is contending that, in the modern performance paradigm, musical expressivity is primarily communicated in the abstract through sonic temporal devices, specifically vibrato and dynamics. Thus, when faced with early recordings of wind players where these devices seem to be largely absent, the reaction of the modern listener is to call them inexpressive.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 137-9.

The turn towards abstract sonic expressivity was the counterbalance to the decline and rejection of earlier modes of temporal expressive shaping. This coincided with a move against interpretation, of which Stravinsky is the most famous advocate.⁵¹ Peter Hill's suggestion that to modern performers 'the score is the music ... absolute precedence is given to getting the facts of the score right, while what the score might *mean* goes by default',⁵² is strongly reminiscent of Leech-Wilkinson's description of guarding against 'potential meanings beyond the structural relationships between the notes'. In this context, the levels of rhythmic freedom that can be heard in early recordings have been viewed as, variously, lack of control, inaccuracy, wanton disrespect for the notated rhythms, and vulgar showmanship. Flautist Richard Adeney (1920–2010) noted his own changing attitude to the 'tricksy rubato' of Léon Goossens, which had influenced him as a young man, but which by the dawn of the twenty-first century sounded 'archaic, even comical'. By contrast, players who Adeney found 'stiff and wooden at the time, now sound ... beautifully stylish and twenty-first century'.⁵³

Though scholars of piano performance on disc have embraced the notion of extreme temporal flexibility as a fascinating lost expressive world, writers on wind performance have yet to give temporal expressivity parity with sonic flexibility in their assessments of pre-modern players. This is particularly important when considering assessments of acoustic recordings, where as will be discussed below, technical limitations mean that sonic nuances were not well captured by the recording apparatus, and performers may have been actively discouraged from using them. This thesis will contend that the equation of expressivity with sonic flexibility has led scholars to falsely categorise some early recordings of wind players as 'inexpressive'; and that it was in fact temporal flexibility, not sonic flexibility, that constituted the primary means of expressive communication among the earliest generation of players considered here.

1.2.8 Modernism and Modernity

One of the stated aims of this thesis is to tackle the underlying causes of performance style change during the period in question. As discussed above, the move from overt

⁵¹ Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*, 75; Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 46–7 and 129–30.

⁵² Hill, 'From score to sound', 132.

⁵³ Adeney, *Flute*, 68.

expressivity to restraint, and from interpretative autonomy to textual fidelity are key features of the paradigm shift being described. These trends can partly be explained by the rise of modernism during the early twentieth century.

The words 'modern', 'modernism' and 'modernity' form somewhat of a terminological quagmire.⁵⁴ In this thesis, 'modern' is used in the context of 'modern style' to refer to the playing style of the mid- to late- twentieth century. However, the socio-historic Modern period is defined as beginning c. 1800, and describes the period of post-enlightenment industrialisation and modernisation that coincided with the rise of what has been termed 'aesthetic modernity': 'the establishment of a degree of autonomy for art', with artists becoming emancipated from old systems of patronage.⁵⁵ Also significant at this time was the emergence of the 'work-concept' (*werktreue*) as a dominant and regulative force across all aspects of western classical music activity.⁵⁶ This had a direct impact as the twentieth century unfolded and the work-concept found its most dominant and vehement expression in positivist and historically-conscious modernist thinking. The result was a subjugation of the creative autonomy of the performer, as performances began increasingly to be judged on their fidelity to the musical work as embodied in the score. This can clearly be seen in the descriptions above of modern performers' attitudes to the musical score.

As well as reflecting attitudes to the musical work, the turn against overt expressivity in musical performance reflected Modernist attitudes to the past and present. Traditional accounts of Modernism describe it as a 'self-conscious search' for a means of expressing the radical nature of the modern age, revealing 'a conception of modernity dominated by the progress of science, technology and industry, and by positivism, mechanisation, urbanisation, mass culture and nationalism ... sensitivity to the isolation and alienation of the individual ... [and] a sense of newness and discontinuity'.⁵⁷ The aesthetic reaction to this is usually characterised by its extremes, such as the overt rejection of immediate historical precedents in a desire to 'make it new'. The 'boldly personal and expressive' approach of the nineteenth century was rejected in favour of 'an austere, explicitly anti-sentimental Modernist approach' to

⁵⁴ See Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Definitional excursions', 499.

⁵⁵ Matthew Riley, 'Introduction', 5.

⁵⁶ See Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Instruments*, 206.

⁵⁷ See Botstein, 'Modernism: 2. Musical Characteristics', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 4 July 2012).

performance,⁵⁸ in keeping with Stravinsky's demand that the performer's task was to 'transmit' rather than to interpret the musical score.⁵⁹ Many of these standard characteristics of modernism can be perceived in the development of orchestral playing styles traced here, including an increased sense of historical responsibility articulated through greater faithfulness to the score and the elimination of overtly expressive techniques such as rubato and portamento. The desire for rupture and renewal was also articulated in the build-up to the founding of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, discussed in chapter four, which was designed to eradicate old-fashioned performing conventions associated with the 'immoral' system of orchestral deputising.

Gareth Thomas's study of the Ballet Russes in London shows how attitudes to theatricality and affectation in performance changed during the period under review.⁶⁰ Before the First World War, initial praise for the rich sensuality and expressivity of Diaghilev's productions was overtaken by 'the growing suspicion ... that flaws in Diaghilev's ballets were being masked by the great talents of his performers, and that the new Parisian modern art was shallow'.⁶¹ On the Ballet's post-war return in 1919, Edward Dent praised Massine's futurist-inspired choreography for *La Boutique Fantasque* as 'a violent reaction against the sentimentalism of the pre-war era',⁶² though Ernest Newman found it 'trite' and deplored the 'frivolous' influence of Jean Cocteau and Les Six.⁶³ As the 1920s went on, many critics turned against Diaghilev, criticising his productions as insubstantial, arch, lacking seriousness and humanity, 'art thinned by virtuosity'.⁶⁴ Thomas suggests that this was typical of a polarisation in 'attitudes to tradition and the past ... since the war had drawn acute attention to the transience of life: in view of the inherent instability and anxiety of the present one either looked to the past to help renew and restore equilibrium or one ignored it in preference for a hedonistic, eternal present'. In Thomas's view, critics such as Newman felt obliged to point out the error in taste of the 'smart set' who opted for the latter.⁶⁵ Considering the implications for British

⁵⁸ Botstein, 'Modernism: 4. Performance Practice', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 4 July 2012).

⁵⁹ Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*, 75.

⁶⁰ Thomas, 'Modernism, Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes in London, 1911-1929'.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 68 and 74.

⁶² Dent, in *The Athenaeum* (1 August 1919), 691-92.

⁶³ Thomas, 78.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

modernism, Thomas invokes architect Reginald Blomfeld's suggestion that the cosmopolitan and continental modernism presented by the Ballet Russes was 'incompatible with Englishness', and that the 'flight from reality' that Diaghilev's productions represented caused unease among those 'who believed that art, especially music, should be ethically responsible'.⁶⁶ The turn against virtuosity and frivolous theatricality in favour of a morally serious approach to art was played out in the realm of musical performance, particularly under the auspices of the BBC, as will be seen below.

Modernity and technological modernisation also had profound impacts on music-making and performance style during the period in question. The most prominent examples of this are the rise of recording and broadcasting, with their implications for the commodification and dissemination of music. Many explanations of style change point to the direct influence of recording technology on performing styles. Philip suggests that the exacting demands of recording were responsible for rising standards of accuracy in orchestral playing.⁶⁷ More specifically, Mark Katz posits the concept of a 'phonograph effect', citing for example evidence that violinists increased their use of vibrato when recording acoustically, to aid projection, cover imperfections and compensate for the loss of the visual element of performance.⁶⁸ Aspects of this argument may partly explain the rise in flute and oboe vibrato during the period in question. Perhaps most importantly, David Patmore's detailed study of the influence of recording on the career of Thomas Beecham points to two separate attributes of recording that combined to revolutionise orchestral performance: the repeatability of the recorded medium, which encouraged reflection and adjustment, and the financial resources accumulated by recording companies, which made it possible to maintain a stable orchestra of high-quality musicians. Rather than discuss these suggestions here, the following section will take a broader look at the history of recording and broadcasting, in order to give fuller consideration to the link between technology and performing style.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 88–89 and 91.

⁶⁷ Philip, *Performing Music*, 70.

⁶⁸ Katz, 'Aesthetics out of Exigency: Violin vibrato and the phonograph', in *Capturing Sound*, 85–98.

1.3 Recording and Broadcasting

1.3.1 Overview and Sources

During the period covered by this thesis, professional music-making in Britain went through a transition from an 'Edwardian infrastructure of music consist[ing] of buildings, institutions and processes',⁶⁹ to 'the dissemination of music by mechanical means'.⁷⁰ As the spending power of the gramophone companies and the BBC grew, so did their influence over musical performance, giving them the ability to shape performing styles and standards and make individual careers and reputations. The following account is an overview of the development of recording and broadcasting in London between 1898 and 1939, focussing on how and why each sector became involved in the production and dissemination of classical orchestral music. The work of social historians and historians of the recordings and broadcasting industries is considered,⁷¹ and first-hand accounts of recording by musicians give an insight into how the recording process affected musical performance.⁷² Before that, however, it is appropriate to consider how the nature of musical performance was changed by the advent of mechanical transmission and reproduction.

Arild Bergh and Tia Denora describe the act of listening to music in western cultures during the nineteenth century in terms of public ritual. The consumption of orchestral music was linked more closely than that of any other repertoire with 'the development of purpose-built concert halls and paraphernalia such as programme notes ...[and] the history of cultural entrepreneurship and social difference ... [it was] a public activity and a signal of status'.⁷³ In London, this ritualisation, centred around Ehrlich's 'Edwardian

⁶⁹ Ehrlich, 'The Marketplace', 40.

⁷⁰ Doctor, *The BBC and ultra-modern music*, 15.

⁷¹ Ehrlich, *The music profession since the eighteenth century*, and 'The Marketplace'; Jones, 'The Gramophone Company: an Anglo-American Multinational'; Martland, 'Since Records Began: EMI, the first 100 years'; Patmore, various works including 'EMI, Sir Thomas Beecham, and the formation of the London Philharmonic Orchestra', 'The Columbia Gramophone Company, 1932-1931: Commercial Competition, Cultural Plurality and Beyond', and 'The influence of recording and the record industry upon musical activity, as illustrated by the careers of Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Georg Solti and Sir Simon Rattle'; Maisonneuve, 'Between history and commodity: the production of a musical patrimony through the record in the 1920-1930s'; Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*; and Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music*, and 'A new dimension: The BBC takes the Proms, 1920-1944'.

⁷² Including Camden, *Blow by Blow*; Temple-Savage, *A Voice from the Pit*; Moore, *Am I Too Loud?*; and Dawson, *Fifty Years of Song*.

⁷³ Bergh and Denora, 'From wind-up to iPod', 102-3.

infrastructure', reached its peak around the turn of the century with the establishment of the Queen's Hall and its summer Proms season, while the wave of highly-trained musicians emerging from London's new and revitalised conservatoires fuelled a boom in orchestral activity. It was just at this time, when orchestral concerts seemed both metaphorically and geographically to have arrived at the heart of metropolitan life, that technology exploded the notion of what musical performance was. The arrival of the phonograph and gramophone made not just music, but individual musical 'performances' into commodities that could be bought and sold. It also made them into concrete objects: a performance was no longer a transient experience, where the musical work existed only in the moment of realisation and thereafter in the memories of the performer and audience. Musical performances could be collected, repeated, compared and analysed, a reality that altered the ontology of music-making and had profound implications for the musician and the listener.⁷⁴

The mechanical reproduction and transmission of music also broke the link between performer and audience. One aspect of this was temporal: it no longer followed that an audience would experience the music concurrently with the performer's production of it. The sense of a shared experience and the performer's ability to shape and respond to the audience's response in real time were both ruptured. The repeatability of recordings also meant that on subsequent playings, listeners were no longer led into the unknown but were listening with a sense of expectation and anticipation of what they knew was coming. In radio, where during the period under consideration performances were mostly live and unrepeated, there was still a breaking of the physical and geographical link between performer and listener. The two no longer shared the same physical space, but were isolated from one another, removing the visual element of performance. The experience of performing to an absent audience is more frequently commented on in reference to broadcasting than recording, with members of the BBC Symphony Orchestra noting the unrewarding nature of work in a closed studio⁷⁵ and articles on the skill of broadcast microphone work focussing on the need to form an intimate

⁷⁴ See Chanan, *Repeated Takes*, 7–9. The effect of recording and broadcasting on the ontology of musical performance and the performer–audience relationship has been considered at length in, among others, Bergh and DeNora: 'From wind-up to iPod: Techno Cultures of Listening', *passim*; and Katz, 'Causes', in *Capturing Sound*, 8–47.

⁷⁵ See Camden, *Blow by Blow*, 127–8; and Jackson, *First Flute*, 69–70.

connection with the unseen listener.⁷⁶ By contrast, as will be shortly be discussed, musicians' descriptions of the recording process are usually focussed more on the creation of a musical testament than the experience of performing to an unknown audience, though David Patmore has noted the use of playbacks by conductors to assess their work from the perspective of the listener.⁷⁷

Both recording and broadcasting also changed the availability of orchestral music.⁷⁸ Orchestral concerts had always been the most uneconomical branch of the music industry; the labour costs were high and the ticket revenue was limited by the capacity of the hall. From a public point of view, even when low-price tickets were offered, access to orchestral music still depended on proximity to a major town or city. But with the arrival of the gramophone, and even more so of free-at-the-point-of-use public broadcasting, orchestral music became available to all, regardless of means or geographical location. When BBC Music Critic Percy Scholes forecast in 1923 that classical music broadcasting would cause 'the general musical public of these islands [to] treble or quadruple its present size' within five years,⁷⁹ he was reflecting a vision of cultural expansion through broadcasting that defined the early BBC. This will be the focus of section 1.3.3.

Technology also had a profound and mostly positive effect on the employment of musicians during the period in question, with the significant exception of the mass unemployment caused by the introduction of talking pictures. The possibility for the nationwide dissemination of orchestral music finally precipitated the creation of a publicly-subsidised orchestra, with the BBC taking the role that decades earlier had been assumed elsewhere in Europe by the state. While the lucky few who joined the BBC SO enjoyed unprecedented security of employment, at least for the duration of their fixed-term contracts, those musicians who found work in the recording studios were also 'singularly favoured ... because their productivity was enormously increased, belatedly enabling them to bid for remuneration comparable to workers elsewhere', via strenuous efforts on the part of the Musicians Union and Performing Rights Society.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ See section 4.3.3.

⁷⁷ Patmore, 'The influence of recordings', 278 and 281.

⁷⁸ See Philip, *Performing Music*, 8-9; Katz, 18-24;

⁷⁹ Scholes, cited in Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music*, 22.

⁸⁰ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 211.

Technological limitations meant that recordings could not yet challenge the employment of live musicians, while the threat to already beleaguered concert halls from broadcast music that was forecast by the likes of William Boosey in the 1920s was headed off, not least by the BBC's increasing involvement in promoting concerts.⁸¹ In the realm of orchestral music, Thomas Beecham was able to harness the financial resources of the record industry to establish the London Philharmonic Orchestra, demonstrating that a private-sector funding model could equally pose a solution to the problem of maintaining a permanent orchestra.⁸² These factors meant that, during this period, technology did more to facilitate professional music-making than to diminish it.

To summarise, it is an incontrovertible fact that the arrival of recording and broadcasting did more to change the artistic and economic lives of musicians than any development before or since. Nowhere was this truer than in London's orchestras, where artistry and economics had always been co-dependent. Along with this came more specific effects on orchestral wind players working in recording and broadcasting ensembles. The rest of this section will consider these in more detail, alongside an overview of the development of the main organisations involved.

1.3.2 Recording

The history of commercial recording in Britain began in 1897 when William Barry Owen, a former employee of the National Gramophone Company in America, arrived in London to seek out investors and to establish a British market for the gramophone. Owen began by selling machines and discs imported from the USA, and in 1898 persuaded a small group of investors headed by lawyer Trevor Williams to form The Gramophone Company (TGC), with sole rights to the British and European patents for Emil Berliner's gramophone machine. Recording engineer Fred Gaisberg was brought over from America as 'chief recorder and artist scout' and took the lead in making recordings for the Company's catalogues by establishing its first permanent recording studio in London and undertaking extensive recording tours abroad.⁸³

⁸¹ See Doctor, 'A New Dimension', 81–4.

⁸² Patmore, 'The influence of recordings', 290.

⁸³ See Chanan, *Repeated Takes*, 29; Jones, 'The Gramophone Company: An Anglo-American Multinational', 82; and Martland, 'Roamin' in the Gloamin', in *Since Records Began*, 36–89.

The decision to deal primarily in locally-produced records was an important one, both for TGC and for London's musicians. The policy of making and pressing recordings locally reflected both economic considerations and TGC's understanding of local markets and was key to its success in the vast range of international territories it entered prior to the First World War.⁸⁴ Britain was TGC's largest market, and the rapid growth in its recording activities provided a new source of employment for London's musicians. Initially, instrumental music was primarily represented in the catalogues by bravura solos and selections of music played by the Hotel Cecil and Trocadero 'orchestras'. The introduction of the Celebrity Red Label Records, featuring leading opera singers, was a milestone in the journey towards the provision of more serious, high-class records. The recruitment of the young conductor and pianist Landon Ronald to help persuade these opera stars into the recording studio was another significant event. Ronald became TGC's 'house conductor' in London and along with his orchestra, the New Symphony Orchestra, made an important contribution to the development of orchestral recording that will be the focus of chapter three. The takeover of the British branch of Columbia (USA) by Louis Sterling in 1907 presented TGC with a serious competitor, and rivalry between the two companies drove developments in classical music recording throughout the period under review.

Acoustic Orchestral Recording

Up to 1925, recordings were made using the acoustic recording process. Put simply, the sounds produced by the musicians were collected by one or more metal recording horns, which were connected directly to a cutting apparatus which recorded the sound onto a wax disc. This was then used to make a metal master disc which in turn was used to stamp out shellac discs for sale.⁸⁵ This process had various limitations, which have been discussed at length elsewhere and will only be summarised here.⁸⁶ Firstly, the frequency range captured by the horn was limited to a range of approximately 100–4000 hz,

⁸⁴ Jones, 'The Gramophone Company', 86.

⁸⁵ For more detailed explanations of the recording process, see Beardsley and Leech-Wilkinson, 'A Brief History of Recording', online (accessed 4 February 2013).

⁸⁶ For a fuller discussion, see Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music*, chapter 3, paragraphs 1–28, online (accessed 3 February 2013).

compared with the human ear which can detect a frequency range of 20–20,000hz.⁸⁷ This has a significant effect on the perceived timbre of the captured sound, and though singers and wind instruments recorded far better than strings or pianists, in no case was the result a true reproduction of the live sound. Due to the sensitivity of the equipment, performers were discouraged from making sudden changes in dynamic, lest they cause the cutting apparatus to jump and chip the wax, ruining the take.⁸⁸ This, combined with the inability of the horn to capture quiet sounds and the requirement that the performers be in very close proximity to it, created a highly unnatural performing situation. The difficulty of assembling a large group of musicians close to the horn and the necessity of keeping the studio very warm to soften the wax made recording even a small ‘orchestra’ difficult and uncomfortable.

For all of these reasons, it has often been suggested that orchestral recordings pre-1925 are largely insignificant, both in terms of their contemporary impact and to the present-day study of performing styles.⁸⁹ Yet the sheer volume of recordings listed in Claude Gravelly Arnold’s 1997 discography *The Orchestra on Record: 1896–1926*, which runs to some 623 pages of entries, is strong evidence against the first point. As will be shown through the recordings of the NSO in chapter three, orchestral recording made rapid and significant improvements during the acoustic recording period, and it may be that orchestral sessions were not always the crowded affairs that has been suggested.⁹⁰ A sketch by Fred Gaisberg, made during a 1907 tour of the Victor company in New Jersey, shows the distribution of a group of string and wind players around a cluster of acoustic horns for the recording of ‘orchestra solos’: Gaisberg’s annotation underneath reads ‘men are not crowded to-gether on the horns but loosely placed’, indicating that even at this very early date, gramophone companies were devising ways to create a sensible performance situation in the studio.⁹¹ By the early 1920s, the fact that ambitious

⁸⁷ See Costa, *Off the Record*, 19. Exact figures for the range of acoustic recording differ, and furthermore there is a discrepancy between the frequency range captured by the equipment and that that could be reproduced by the playback mechanism of the time, such that modern transfers can extract a far wider range from extant discs than contemporary playback equipment.

⁸⁸ Costa, 14.

⁸⁹ See Philip, *Performing Music*, 21; and Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, 11.

⁹⁰ *Loc. Cit.* Day gives Debussy’s *Prelude à l’après-midi d’un faune* among several examples of works that ‘would never have been attempted with the acoustic process’, because of the recording conditions and the lack of a sufficient audience to justify recording; yet chapter three considers not one but two successful acoustic recordings of the work made by a single orchestra during the acoustic period.

⁹¹ See Brock-Nannestad, ‘The development of Recording Technologies’, 158.

recordings of large-scale works by Brahms, Dvorak and Stravinsky were being attempted indicates that the record companies were confident in their ability to capture a worthwhile representation of a symphony orchestra. The recordings of the NSO, discussed in chapter three, show that this confidence was not at all misplaced.

The Recording industry in the 1920s

The First World War had a significant effect on the gramophone business, bringing a slump in sales, the sequestering of factories for armament production, and the loss of TGC's significant holdings in Germany. However, as will be seen in chapter three, recordings continued to be produced throughout the war, and technological improvements continued which allowed ever-more ambitious recording projects to be undertaken in the late 1910s and early 1920s. As the industry re-established itself in the aftermath of war, competition grew between TGC and Columbia, which became independent from its American parent company in 1923. A key battleground was the field of orchestral recording, where Columbia in particular began to embrace the possibilities of marketing 'interpretation', thus contributing directly to the emergent phenomenon of the 'superstar' conductor.⁹² Economic recovery and an increase in disposable income fuelled the growth of the gramophone industry during the 1920s, though TGC itself struggled to retain its dominant position in the face of increased competition and problems with its foreign subsidiaries.⁹³ The Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the ensuing depression hit the industry hard, providing the impetus for a merger between TGC and Columbia (UK) in 1931.⁹⁴ The resulting company, Electric and Music Industries (EMI), had an effective monopoly in the UK and almost all the other territories in which it operated, though the component companies continued to trade as independent record labels, allowing EMI to reap the continued benefits of perceived competition between artists and labels whilst consolidating manufacturing into a single operation.⁹⁵

⁹² See Philip, *Performing Music*, 20-1; and Patmore, 'The Columbia Gramophone Company', 121-2.

⁹³ See Jones, 92-7.

⁹⁴ See Patmore, 126-7; and Martland, *EMI: The First 100 Years*, 130-1.

⁹⁵ See Patmore, 'Selling Sounds', 126-7.

Electric Recording

The developments in microphone and amplifier technology achieved by the telephone and broadcasting industries were first incorporated into recording in 1925. The replacement of the acoustic horn by microphones in order to achieve 'electric recording' revolutionised many aspects of the recording process. Microphones raised the upper frequency range of recordings initially to 5,000 hz and then 8,000 hz by 1934.⁹⁶ The result was an increase in fidelity, the ability to capture sound over a wide area – such as a full orchestra setup – and a sense of the ambient acoustic, creating an impression of realism that was lacking from acoustic recordings. The microphone was also far more sensitive than the horn, allowing recording artists to use quiet dynamics and subtle expressive effects for the first time; and though they had still to be careful of 'blasting' the microphone with sudden loud dynamics, it was possible to control the recording levels and balance. However, some problems remained and new ones were created. The medium of capture and distribution was still the 78rpm disc, which limited the duration of a recorded take to around four minutes. Longer works had either to be abridged or split over multiple discs, neither of which were musically desirable options. Fresh takes could not be played back in the studio without ruining the wax, so it was not possible to assess them until test pressings had been made, a process that could take days or weeks. Most significantly, despite the improvement in the sensitivity of the apparatus, editing of takes was still far in the future, arriving only with the advent of magnetic tape recording in the 1950s. As a result, recordings of the pre-war period present a warts-and-all picture of what happened during the four minutes of needle time; this is in some ways a blessing for the musicologist, though not for the performers, who had to strive for perfection throughout every long take.

Musicians' experiences of recording

Musicians' reflections on the experience of recording during the period under review are mainly found in the memoirs of singers and pianists rather than orchestral players, as well as being reported in the reminiscences of recording company figures such as Fred Gaisberg and Landon Ronald. However, in contrast to the thoughtful opinions on the artistic demands and effects of recording given by the likes of piano accompanist Gerald

⁹⁶ Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, 16.

Moore and singer Peter Dawson, orchestral wind players' reminiscences tend to be of a more practical nature. However, it is possible to extrapolate useful evidence from the extant sources to shed light on the effect that the recording situation had on orchestral players.

Various themes emerge from the anecdotes and descriptions given. Leading artists who made their first recording late in their career often reacted strongly to hearing themselves for the first time: Hans von Bülow reportedly 'almost fainted' when presented with a recording of his own piano playing,⁹⁷ while Adelina Patti famously 'went into ecstasies ... threw kisses into the trumpet and kept on saying: "Ah! Mon dieu! Maintenant je comprends pourquoi je suis Patti!"'.⁹⁸ Today, in an age when cheap and accessible recording equipment makes self-reflection through recording a part of every young musician's training, it is difficult to imagine how it must have felt for a performer already at the top of their profession in the early twentieth century to be confronted with their own music-making for the first time. For some, like Patti, it was apparently a delightful reassurance, but many others must have found the experience brought a new self-consciousness to their playing, as well as heightened self-criticism. Pianist Mark Hambourg wrote in 1923:

This exactitude of reproduction turns playing for recording purposes into a nerve-racking occupation. For the feeling of the invisible detective watching, and shadowing as it were, every note played, simply brings the wretched performer up to desperation ... when the false note emerges, glaring baldly and shamelessly out in all its nakedness, undimmed by the shadow of the kindly pedal, "Da capo" commences.⁹⁹

For Gerald Moore, one did not truly hear one's own playing for the first time until the advent of electric recording:

It is still beyond our capacity to see ourselves as others see us – perhaps this is just as well for our peace of mind – but now it was possible to hear ourselves in very truth ... "Is this what I really sound like"? ... To think in terms of accuracy and vigour which had sufficed in the past was not enough. We now had to sing

⁹⁷ Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, 1.

⁹⁸ Ronald, cited in Moore, *A Voice in Time*, 99.

⁹⁹ Hambourg, 'Piano Recording', 4-5.

and play as musicians, with refinement, with light and shade, with delicacy of nuance.¹⁰⁰

The visitation of self-awareness and an apparently 'objective' account of their playing upon performers was such a profound development that it cannot but have affected all musicians, from leading soloists down to lowly orchestral players. Moreover, the availability of recordings of other musicians for comparison and study is an important factor. Flautist Gerald Jackson recalled purchasing a 'special stopping mechanism' for his gramophone to aid his study of recordings, which he used as a tool to improve his own playing.¹⁰¹ The question is therefore, not *if* recording technology changed the way music was played, but *how*.

On a purely practical level, the specific characteristics of the two recording processes each required the players to modify their delivery in different ways. During the acoustic era, this included crude solutions: while wind players were not subject to the indignities of modified instruments in the way that string players and pianists were, it does seem that they were familiar with the technique of using physical placement to create dynamic effects. Bassoonist Archie Camden recalled that the necessity to approach the horn silently in order to deliver a solo passage was a source of great tension in orchestral sessions.¹⁰² In light of this, there is no doubt that wind players experienced in recording would have understood the futility of using subtle dynamic or timbral nuances when playing for the acoustic horn, and would have modified their playing accordingly. There are no references, among the limited number of accounts of acoustic recording written by orchestral wind players, to the necessity to play louder than normal; but this may have been the case in some orchestral sessions, where not all instruments could be sufficiently close to the horn. This is an important factor to bear in mind when interpreting the evidence of acoustic recordings, and it casts a different light on Robert Philip's observations that players of the 1920s did not use dynamic or timbral shaping.

Some solo singers and pianists describe the advent of electric recording as bringing a new tension into the recording studio, an end to the age of 'convivial jollity' when 'you

¹⁰⁰ Moore, *Am I too loud?*, 56.

¹⁰¹ Jackson, *First Flute*, 42.

¹⁰² Camden, *Blow by Blow*, 109.

could get away with anything'.¹⁰³ Singer Peter Dawson remembered, 'The old recording apparatus covered a multitude of sins. Not so the "mike". It picks out all the flaws – and somehow seems to amplify them. Singing into it necessitates great care'.¹⁰⁴ However, Camden, whose recording of the Mozart Bassoon Concerto was one of Columbia's earliest electric recordings and possibly its first of a bassoon solo, does not mention any significant difference from his previous acoustic experiences, indicating perhaps that artists were not initially instructed to play any differently than before.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, Moore's realisation, cited above, that electric recording demanded 'refinement', 'light and shade', and 'delicacy of nuance'¹⁰⁶ must surely have been shared by wind-players. It is probably not a coincidence that the change from the insensitive acoustic horn to the sensitive microphone immediately preceded the beginning of an increase in the use of tonal and dynamic nuances by wind players in recordings of the electric period.

The available accounts from solo performers suggest that, just like today, musicians developed their interpretation during the course of a recording session. Though it was not possible to listen back to takes that were being considered for the final release, it was usual to make test takes which offered the opportunity for performers to hear their performance. According to Moore, this process would sometimes take two hours of a three-hour recording session.¹⁰⁷ Dawson would explicitly use these test takes to 'make improvements in my rendering of various phrases'.¹⁰⁸ In the case of orchestral musicians, however, the situation was different. Though it is known that Thomas Beecham made extensive use of test pressings to reflect on and improve his work,¹⁰⁹ his some-time principal flautist Gerald Jackson confirmed that 'playbacks were usually private matters for the gramophone officials, the conductors and soloists if any. If the orchestra were allowed to hear any of their recent work, it could only be for some either very compelling artistic or sarcastic reasons'.¹¹⁰ Any re-shaping of orchestral wind solos would therefore have mostly been mediated by the conductor, with little opportunity for the players to react directly to the recording. Moreover, where test pressings were used,

¹⁰³ Moore, *Am I too loud?*, 56.

¹⁰⁴ Dawson, *Fifty Years of Song*, 144.

¹⁰⁵ Camden, *Blow by Blow*, 111.

¹⁰⁶ Moore, 56.

¹⁰⁷ Moore, 54.

¹⁰⁸ Dawson, 143.

¹⁰⁹ See Patmore, 'The influence of recordings', 281.

¹¹⁰ Jackson, *First Flute*, 43.

it might be days or weeks before the orchestra was re-convened to make further takes of a work, with no guarantee of the same personnel.¹¹¹

However, over time, exposure to finished orchestral recordings must have had some impact on the players concerned. Furthermore, most of the leading players considered in this thesis were also solo recording artists who would have had the opportunity to reflect on their own playing in the contexts of solo sessions. On a practical level, orchestras did receive harsh and immediate feedback in the form of the necessity to repeat whole four-minute sides as a result of errors. Both Camden and clarinettist Richard Temple-Savage recalled their constant anxiety about spoiling a take by creating extraneous noises or making a mistake,¹¹² while Gerald Jackson commented on the great reduction in stress brought about by the advent of tape editing. By the time that magnetic tape replaced the wax disc after the Second World War, recording had no doubt had a very direct impact on levels of accuracy and created a more risk-averse performing environment.

1.3.3 Broadcasting

The effect on musical performance of the financial, artistic and cultural impact of recording has been discussed at length by scholars over the last 20 years. However, the same cannot be said of broadcasting. Though Jennifer Doctor and Nicholas Kenyon have considered the role played by broadcasting in shaping the dissemination of classical music and instigating orchestral reform, little attention has been paid to the BBC as an arbiter of taste in performance style. Yet all of the factors that gave recording such an impact on performing activity – financial clout, the power over which artists to promote, the objective and reflective viewpoint brought by recorded sound, the separation of performer and listener, and the ability to reach large audiences – were also present in broadcasting. The BBC, as a non-commercial organisation, also brought to the table public accountability and a level of cultural aspiration that far exceeded the ambitions of the record companies. After establishing the basic history of the BBC, this section will

¹¹¹ This was primarily an issue in non-permanent orchestras, where deputising was common, but it also happened in non-deputising orchestras: for example, the LPO's 1936 recording of Brahms's Second Symphony features principal oboe Léon Goossens on only two of the ten sides, which were later re-takes.

¹¹² See Temple-Savage, *A Voice from the Pit*, 37 and Camden, 109.

consider those aspirations and how they were articulated in relation to classical music performance.

The BBC

This thesis is concerned with the BBC as the creator of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, which was founded in 1930. The build-up to the establishment of the orchestra and its activity between 1930 and 1939 are considered at length in chapter four, where archival documents are used to expand on Nicholas Kenyon's comprehensive account of the BBC SO's history. This section serves to give an overview of the background of the BBC during the period in question.

The British Broadcasting Company was formed in October 1922 out of a desire to control the growth of commercial broadcasting and prevent overcrowding of the airwaves. The Company, which had sole rights to broadcast in the UK, was controlled by a board made up of directors representing the six main radio manufacturers. The original broadcasting station, 2LO, which had been established by the Marconi company in 1920, was taken over in 1922 by a BBC staff of four headed by General Manager John Reith. By the end of that year, it was broadcasting to nearly 36,000 licence-holders.¹¹³ Further regional stations were added, and by the time the long-wave 5XX station was launched in July 1925, the BBC was able to reach around 85% of the population. In 1927, following an official review, the Company became an independent public body with a ten-year Royal Charter and was renamed the British Broadcasting Corporation. By this time the staff of four had become a workforce of 773, serving over two million licence-holders. The Corporation continued to expand in size and influence as the uptake of licences grew, so that by the outbreak of the Second World War it was employing nearly 5,000 staff and reaching an audience of nine million licence-holders.¹¹⁴ In the words of Asa Briggs, 'in 1927 the BBC was still a small organisation, catering for a minority, if a large and growing minority, of the British public. In 1939 the BBC was a large organisation, and it was catering for a majority of the British public'.¹¹⁵ The most significant symbol of this transition was the opening in May 1932 of Broadcasting House, an imposing, purpose-built headquarters across the road from the Queen's Hall; but the

¹¹³ Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting*, I:17.

¹¹⁴ See Briggs, I:17 and II:6.

¹¹⁵ Briggs, II: 6.

foundation of the BBC SO in 1930 was also an external sign of the Corporation's emergence as a national institution.

Despite the changes that rapid expansion brought to the BBC, it remained true to the vision famously expressed by Reith in his 1924 book *Broadcast over Britain* 'to carry into the greatest possible number of homes everything that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement'.¹¹⁶ Reith saw in broadcasting the opportunity and, moreover, the moral imperative to bring culture to the masses, to elevate the tastes and stimulate the critical faculties of the population at large. The provision of art music was a significant part of this vision. By the 1930s this policy of cultural expansion was well established in the corporation: in 1930, live classical music accounted for 14.69% of the total programme time on the national wavelength, and by 1936 this had risen to 19.96%.¹¹⁷ Programming ranged from canonic and popular classical music to the new and avant-garde, and it included educational presentations as well as performances.

The desire to transmit 'everything that is best' meant that the BBC had to be an arbiter of taste and standards, deciding who were the best artists and what music was worthy of broadcast. During the 1920s the Corporation had quickly branched out into concert promotion, and in 1927 it took over the Queen's Hall Proms. It was at this point that the BBC, finding that the existing system of orchestral provision did not meet its standards, took the first steps towards creating a permanent orchestra of its own. The establishment of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, London's first permanent, contracted orchestra, in 1930 was a significant example of the degree to which the Corporation became involved in shaping British musical culture, becoming 'not only ... the most significant music disseminator in Britain, [but also] the foremost employer of British musicians'.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, this thesis will argue, it had a significant and lasting influence over both the sound of British orchestral playing and the historiography of British orchestral activity in the twentieth century.

¹¹⁶ Reith, *Broadcast over Britain*, 34.

¹¹⁷ Briggs, II: 35 and II:54. Based on a single week's programming in October of each year. Classical music is differentiated from 'Light Music', 'Dance Music' and 'Gramophone Records'. The combination of these four categories indicates that music accounted for nearly 50% of total programming time in 1930, and over 60% in 1936.

¹¹⁸ Doctor, 16.

Raising Standards

The establishment of the BBC SO was one manifestation of the BBC's wider commitment to driving up the standard of its music broadcasts and of music performance in general. The Corporation's cultural influence was extended both through the radio and through its publications. In particular, the early editions of its annual handbooks contained articles informing the listener about all aspects of broadcasting, from the technical process involved to what attributes made a successful broadcast artist. These articles summarised lessons learned by BBC staff and the artists they employed about the particular demands of performing through a sensitive microphone into the intimate setting of the listener's home, and they give a clear impression of the performance style deemed most successful.¹¹⁹

The authors, sometimes anonymous, were forthright in their insistence that the wireless demanded a higher standard of execution than the concert platform: 'to some extent a new technique is needed for successful microphone work. Nevertheless, its chief demand is for *better* performance than the majority of artists have ... been prepared to give'.¹²⁰ This was a matter of both technical accuracy and the tempering of excess emotion. Pianists were advised that,

The paramount importance of accuracy and intelligence and the secondary [importance] ... of sensuous beauty ... are simply due to the fact that the audience cannot see the pianist ... If he distracts his audience's attention by inaccuracy ... he obviously does not stand a chance of becoming *en rapport*.¹²¹

Elsewhere, the necessity for a clear delivery and strict sense of rhythm was emphasised, along with the advisability of moderating extremes of tempo.¹²² The articles contain repeated statements of the necessity for 'unaffected' performance, which frequently invoke moralistic language, such as Walford Davies's suggestion that the

¹¹⁹ Including, from *The BBC Handbook 1928*: [n.a.], 'Broadcasting and the Artist', 91–92 and 'Chamber Music in Broadcasting', 97–99; from *The BBC Handbook 1929*: Walford Davies, 'Both Sides of the Microphone', 129–31; Vivienne Chatterton, 'Soprano Singing for the Wireless', 165–66; and [n.a.], 'Piano Technique of the Wireless', 169–70.

¹²⁰ 'Broadcasting and the Artist', 91.

¹²¹ 'Piano technique for the Wireless', 169.

¹²² 'Soprano Singing for the Wireless', 165; 'Piano Technique for the Wireless', 170.

expression of 'simple beauty in music' equated to the 'high exercise of the heavenly faculty of imagination':¹²³

The singers and players must unaffectedly think what they sing or play into the purest and most conversational terms ... They fault if they sing or play as from a concert platform. In like manner, the actor lamentably annoys the listener ... if he ... paints his voice and puts on footlight sobs and other ejaculatory trimmings. Unaffected simplicity of utterance alone gets over.¹²⁴

Another, anonymous, writer described how the microphone could expose the tricks of stagecraft that many performers relied on:

There are many 'stars' whose act does not lend itself to the microphone. Of those, there are some whose work may pass muster in public place where the evidence of the ear is outweighed by the seduction of the eye ... but the sensitive electrical instrument's photographic reproduction of the performance shows lamentably how much is lacking in finesse, in delicacy.¹²⁵

The advice contained within these articles clearly aligns the BBC with the move against frivolity and artifice in performance, described in section 1.2.7 above, and seems to imply a moral responsibility on the part of the performer. Moreover, the invocation of the 'sensitive electrical instrument' as an empirical tool that gave a more faithful and analytical impression of a performance than the unmediated ear clearly indicates that the BBC saw technology as a means of raising performing standards. The message behind these articles was that this technology allowed the BBC to select and disseminate the work of performers who were judged exemplary both in terms of the accuracy of their execution and the honesty of their musical expression, and it was explicitly stated that where broadcasting led, concert performance should follow. The statement in the 1929 handbook that 'though concert pianists cannot necessarily broadcast successfully, good broadcast playing embodies the essentials of good concert performance'¹²⁶ foreshadows the orchestral reform that the BBC was about to instigate by establishing an orchestra that was not only selected and trained to satisfy the demands of broadcast work but also positioned to lead the way in national concert life.

¹²³ Walford Davies, 'Both Sides of the Microphone', 132.

¹²⁴ Walford Davies, 'Both Sides of the Microphone', 131.

¹²⁵ 'Broadcasting and the Artist', 92.

¹²⁶ 'Piano technique for the wireless', 170.

Raising Expectations

In parallel with the campaign for a higher standard of performance went a programme of listener development, which instructed radio audiences on how to listen to broadcast performances – selectively, and with close attention – and encouraged them to develop taste and discernment in their choices of repertoire and performers. Instruction was given both through published articles, such as those in the *BBC Handbook*, and on the air, through music appreciation programmes and broadcast music criticism.¹²⁷ Percy Scholes's weekly music criticism programme, which ran from 1923 to 1928, included reviews of both musical works and performances given in concerts in London, the provinces, and abroad, as well as responding to listener correspondence. The surviving transcripts of these talks give further insights to the performance aesthetic promoted by the BBC.

Scholes encouraged his audience to listen with critical impartiality and disregard the reputation of noted performers, for they 'will often be astonished to find ... passages of bad playing or singing here and there in the performance of artists of enormous fame'.¹²⁸ He derided concert-goers who seemed more concerned with the spectacle of the performance than the aural content¹²⁹ and professed himself 'strongly in agreement with the idea that the noises of the concert room should not interrupt its music'.¹³⁰ Scholes instructed his listeners in the qualities to prize in a performance, primary among which was 'good tone' as well as clear rhythm and 'a feeling of progression, "right-throughness" ... a going on and on from beginning to end, so that every phrase leads on to the next phrase, instead of being performed as a separate thing in itself',¹³¹ an apparent advocacy of long-line phrasing. Performers who constantly interrupted the flow, rhythm or forward motion of the music for the purposes of 'expression', rubato or emphasis of details were condemned,¹³² suggesting that Scholes did not approve of the hyper-expressive style that was common at the time. Scholes's responses to listener

¹²⁷ See Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music*, 36–7.

¹²⁸ Percy Scholes, 'Weekly Musical Criticism' No. 7, 26 July 1923. BBC WAC, Talk Transcripts, Reel 458.

¹²⁹ Scholes, 'Weekly Musical Criticism' No. 25, 20 November 1923. BBC WAC, Talk Transcripts, Reel 458.

¹³⁰ Scholes, 'Weekly Musical Criticism', 17 April 1924. BBC WAC, Talk Transcripts, Reel 458.

¹³¹ Scholes, 'Weekly Musical Criticism' No. 25, 20 November 1923. BBC WAC, Talk Transcripts, Reel 458.

¹³² See for example Scholes, 'Weekly Musical Criticism', 7 February 1924. BBC WAC, Talk Transcripts, Reel 458.

correspondence provides glimpses into the issues that concerned audiences in the early 1920s. By far the most popular subject was the increasing use of vibrato by singers, which prompted so many letters of complaint that Scholes repeatedly had to declare the subject closed.¹³³ The overwhelming condemnation of the practice by both Scholes and his correspondents is a rare example of open resistance to this incoming trend.

Scholes's tenure as BBC Music Critic lasted until 1928, when he was replaced by Ernest Newman, in part as a result of a desire to move from educating a beginner audience towards a more sophisticated and intellectual level of criticism.¹³⁴ However, Scholes's five years as the Music Critic established the Corporation's stance on performing style and contributed to moulding its new listeners' expectations of classical music performance. Moreover, though listener correspondence almost certainly represented a self-selecting group, it appears that the BBC's campaign for clean, unaffected performance, the rejection of extreme rubato and marked expressive nuances struck a chord with its audience.

1.4 Conclusion

The accounts of performance style considered in section 1.2 describe an early-twentieth century approach that made extensive use of temporal flexibility and placed less emphasis on control and accuracy than on overt and sometimes ambiguous expressive shaping on a moment-to-moment basis. This was replaced by an emerging aesthetic that prized clarity, textual fidelity and restrained use of temporal flexibility, and put greater emphasis on the communication of expression through sonic devices, particularly vibrato and tonal and dynamic shaping, and on the construction of long phrases and the clear rendition of musical structure. These characteristics were linked to the emergence of a modernist aesthetic, and the question was posed of what role recording and broadcasting played in bringing about this change.

David Patmore has defined two attributes of recording that brought about change in musical activity: the repeatability of recording itself, and the financial resources amassed

¹³³ See for example Scholes, 'Weekly Musical Criticism', 10 and 17 January 1924. BBC WAC, Talk Transcripts, Reel 458.

¹³⁴ Doctor, 130.

by the recording industry.¹³⁵ The impact of repeatability can be seen in the accounts of musicians' experiences of recording considered in section 1.3.2, which emphasise the self-consciousness, fear of mistakes, and perceived need for delicacy of nuance and expression brought by the advent of electric recording. While broadcast performances were generally not repeatable, the BBC's claims that its microphones exposed exaggeration, affectation and the use of showmanship to cover technical deficiency are testament to the pedagogic value of playing for the microphone, even when feedback was given not directly through playbacks, but mediated via an engineer or producer. In this sense, recording and broadcasting for orchestral musicians were more similar experiences than for soloists, as feedback to the orchestra in the recording studio was also generally mediated.

While recording companies undoubtedly influenced performance style change through the promotion of certain artists, there is no evidence that they actively set out to change listeners' tastes in the manner that the BBC did. The documents considered here show that the Corporation actively advocated a performance aesthetic that was strikingly similar to the approach identified in section 1.2 as the emerging 'modern' style. According to Scholes and the authors of the articles in the BBC Handbooks, a 'good' broadcast performer was clear, accurate, faithful to the score, and not prone to affectation or overtly expressive delivery. Scholes in particular appears to be speaking in favour of rhythmic clarity, long-line phrasing and a restrained approach to rubato. In effect, the BBC was rejecting the hyper-expressive style that Leech-Wilkinson suggests was prevalent during the early-twentieth century.

The BBC's attitude to sonic expressive devices is less clear. The raft of complaints received by Scholes on the subject of vocal vibrato suggests that BBC listeners were against this incoming trend in performance. There is no mention of whether tonal flexibility was considered a desirable feature in a broadcast performer. However, Scholes's insistence on 'good tone' as a hallmark of a worthy performer and the invocation of the 'intimacy' of the broadcast medium suggest that tone colour was an important consideration.

In terms of the impact of the financial resources that both recording and broadcasting brought to orchestral performance, existing scholarship has detailed how the BBC and

¹³⁵ Patmore, 'The influence of recording', 285.

the record industry (specifically EMI) provided the financial underpinning for the establishment of Britain's first permanent, non-deputising orchestras, the BBC SO and the LPO. The resultant effect on performing standards is usually framed in terms of the provision of adequate rehearsal time and a stable body of first-class musicians, resulting in an improvement in rhythmic clarity, ensemble and intonation. However, as has been discussed, two of these attributes are also hallmarks of a changing attitude to performance style, an attitude that was publicly articulated by the BBC.

Following the discussion of wind-instrument specific performance issues in chapter two, the case studies of the three chosen orchestras – the NSO, BBC SO and LPO – will be used to shed light on the issues raised in this chapter. An investigation of the relationship between hyper-expressive performance style and the use of temporal flexibility in solo artists to the wind playing styles of the NSO will facilitate a discussion of the relationship between style and standard in 1920s orchestral playing. An analysis of the BBC SO's recordings will reveal to what extent the establishment of this orchestra brought about not just an improvement in orchestral conditions, but a realisation of the BBC's aesthetic agenda for music performance. Meanwhile, consideration of the LPO's recordings of the same period will address the question of whether the BBC SO's rival orchestra, which was sustained in a large part by its recording contract, exhibited the same or different stylistic traits to the BBC SO.

Chapter Two

Woodwind Instruments, Players and Playing Styles

2.1 Introduction

The first twenty-five years of the twentieth century was for London and most English woodwind playing a period of golden maturity. Boehm flute, French oboe and bassoon, and the Franco-Belgian clarinets had been in regular use for upwards of fifty years and becoming thoroughly assimilated into the country's own feeling of woodwind-playing – 'the fine tone and dignified continence of the English fashion', as Shaw put it so well. But late in the 1920s, fresh movements were brewing.¹

So wrote Anthony Baines in 1957. Accounts of the development of wind playing in Britain and elsewhere during the first half of the twentieth century are dominated by references to national schools of playing, teacher-pupil lineages and iconic instrument designs. The idea that a revolution in playing style and standard occurred during the inter-war years, ushering in a modern era of unrivalled virtuosity and fidelity to composers' intentions, is common currency among writers of the 1950s onwards.² Even scholarly studies such as Robert Philip's *Early Recordings and Musical Style*,³ while presenting a more nuanced view of events, have tended to structure themselves around this established narrative. However, recent scholarship has sought to engage more deeply with both written and recorded sources and points to a revisionist approach to the subject.⁴ This chapter will evaluate the received history of British wind playing in light of recent scholarship and fresh research, in preparation for the more in-depth investigations carried out in chapters three to five.

¹ Anthony Baines, *Woodwind Instruments and their History*, 338.

² Though writers such as Baines, Philip Bate and Lyndsey G. Langwill do not preach the uniform superiority of the new style – and indeed occasionally lament the loss of certain characteristics and variations – they do establish a mythology surrounding a certain cast of players, laying the foundation for an evolutionary view of the subject, with an emphasis on the superiority of the generation of players studied here. This narrative is perpetuated to some degree in most later written accounts as well as in oral history among both players and the consumers of live and recorded music.

³ Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, 1992.

⁴ Such as Jessica Ann Raposo, 'Defining the British Flute School: A study of British flute performance practice, 1890-1940', 2007, and Abigail Dolan, 'Landmarks in Flute Performance Style on Record 1900-1950', 2010.

Sources

Many of the standard source texts on wind instrument organology and playing traditions were written by the group of professional musicians, instrument collectors and enthusiasts involved in the formation and early activities of the Galpin Society (founded 1946).⁵ Though not always scholarly in the modern sense, many draw on first-hand experience as well as extensive primary source research. Prominent among these is *Woodwind Instruments and their History* by Anthony Baines, a performer-turned-organologist who played in the bassoon section of the LPO during the 1930s. The observations and opinions of Baines and others are given consideration, not as definitive fact, but as primary sources, evidence of practices during the period in question and of how the history of the period was shaped during the post-war years. More recent publications of the history of woodwind instruments, such as Yale University Press's series of books by leading player-academics, though bringing a modern scholarly approach to the subject, tend to perpetuate the national-school model of earlier writers.⁶ The most illuminating reconsideration of the topic comes from two recent doctoral theses, both on the subject of the flute, by Abigail Dolan and Jessica Ann Raposo, who bring the fruits of, respectively, the empirical study of sound recordings and a revisionist approach to the historiography of the subject.⁷

A range of primary sources give further insight into the subject at hand. There are a number of memoirs and articles by players active during the period concerned, though it is pertinent to note that the vast majority of these are by musicians who became active in the 1920s and 1930s and may not reflect the views of earlier generations. Moreover, they are to some extent a self-selecting group, as, having had careers that spanned the inter- and post-war years they, must necessarily have adopted a progressive approach to matters of performing style.

The subject of woodwind treatises and method books must also be addressed. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the woodwind method books that were in use in

⁵ Including Anthony Baines, Philip Bate, Lyndsey G. Langwill, Eric Halfpenny and James MacGillivray.

⁶ Powell, *The Flute*; Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*; Hoepfich, *The Clarinet*; and Kopp, *The Bassoon*.

⁷ Dolan, 'Landmarks in flute performance style'; and Raposo, 'The British Flute School'.

Britain dated from the mid-nineteenth century.⁸ Continental works of the 1830s and 1840s were also available in modernised editions.⁹ Otto Langey's series of tutors, published in a uniform format for all wind and string instruments during the late nineteenth century, were revised and republished frequently during the early twentieth century.¹⁰ The great majority of these tutors, however, contain little or no discussion of musical style or even, in many cases, the finer points of tone or articulation. They overwhelmingly concentrate on the development of a fluent technique in all keys, as well as imparting the rudiments of musical notation. Thus, though some information regarding playing style can be extrapolated from the expressive markings provided in studies designed to address issues such as phrasing and expression, these treatises are largely uninformative on the finer points of playing style.

It is a reflection of the growing professionalisation of musical training that a fresh wave of publications appeared in the mid-twentieth century. Two founding members of the BBC Symphony Orchestra – the clarinettist Frederick Thurston and flautist Charles Stainer – published methods during the 1930s.¹¹ Oxford University Press began a series of woodwind technique books in 1936 with F. B. Chapman's *Flute Technique*, which was continued in the 1950s and 1960s with volumes by leading players of the pre-war era, including Thurston, the bassoonist Archie Camden and the emerging oboist Evelyn Rothwell. It is surprising to note that, for all their systematic lists of repertoire and essays on the acquisition of basic technique, none of these volumes go into significantly more detail on the subject of performing style than the tutors of the nineteenth century. This suggests that wind players were still unwilling to theorise about style, and indeed many

⁸ The *School for the Flute* by Charles Nicholson, first published in 1836, was issued in a new edition in 1873, and was probably used in the early years of the Royal College of Music. R. S. Rockstro's lengthy and detailed treatise, *The Flute*, first published in 1890, was issued in a revised edition in 1928. The oboe method of French-born Appollon Marie-Rose Barret, who spent his career playing and teaching in England, was first published in 1850 and revised by the author in 1862, and has remained available in that form to the present day.

⁹ The clarinet methods of Frédéric Berr and Hyacinthe Klosé, originally published in France in 1836 and 1843 respectively, were issued in new 'modernised' editions in 1906 by Hawkes & Sons, edited by the prominent British player Charles Draper. Eugène Jancourt's *Grande méthode théorique et pratique* for the bassoon, first published in France in 1847, was issued as *Bassoon School* by Hawkes in 1911, edited by E. F. James, the leading bassoonist of the time. Henry Lazarus's *New and Modern Method for the Albert and Boehm System Clarinet* of 1881 was in fact a compendium of exercises from the methods of Berr, Ivan Müller (1820) and the unknown F. Neerman.

¹⁰ Langey, *Tutor for the Flute*, 1885, rev. eds. 1909, 1934 and 1965; *Tutor for the Oboe*, 1885, rev. eds. 1911 and 1965; *Tutor for the Clarinette*, rev. ed. 1908; *Tutor for the Bassoon*, 1885, rev. eds. c. 1900, c. 1935, and 1969.

¹¹ Stainer, *A Short Treatise on the Study of the Flute*; and Thurston and Frank, *The Clarinet*.

volumes emphasise the necessity of taking lessons and studying the playing of others to acquire musical understanding. The limitations of these publications probably also reflects the desires of the publishers to sell to a wide consumer base. The only notable difference between the nineteenth and mid-twentieth-century books and methods is the inclusion of orchestral excerpts in several of the volumes, indicating that wind pedagogy was beginning to embrace the orchestral repertoire at an early stage, for the study of style and as preparation for orchestral auditions and employment.

2.2 The Flute

Instruments

By the early twentieth century, most British flute players had adopted flutes of the same cylindrical-bore Boehm-system design that was popular throughout Europe and America and is still in use today,¹² though some design variations remained in use, such as the Rudall-Carte 1867 system, Radcliffe model and Rockstro model.¹³ There was a strong native flute-making industry, centred around the Rudall-Carte firm, whose flutes were used by almost all of the leading players during the period in question. Though there is evidence that some players adopted metal flutes, the emblem of the French school of playing, most British players used wooden instruments, which became a symbol of the British flute 'tradition' in the twentieth century.¹⁴ The playing characteristics differed greatly between the two materials, the wooden flute having more power and a denser tone, while the metal flute offered a lighter sound and greater tonal flexibility.¹⁵ However, by the 1930s, compromise models such as thin-walled or metal-

¹² Though it falls outside the timescale of this study, it is worth noting that the invention and take-up of the cylindrical Boehm flute was hugely significant to the development of the instrument, in terms both of playing style and its treatment by composers. There is much truth in Dolan's suggestion that 'The new tone colour, the improved intonation, the enlarged dynamic range, and the new technical potential opened up new expressive and technical possibilities, causing many musicians to view the Boehm flute as a new instrument bearing the same name' (Dolan, 26), though as a modern flautist she under-emphasises the range of expressive possibilities that were lost in the adoption of the Boehm principle. Comments by George Bernard Shaw in 1894 reflect the fact that the drastic changes to the nature of the instrument caused by this design did not go unnoticed. See Shaw, 'Wanted: A flute that is a flute', in *Shaw's Music*, III/152-3.

¹³ See Powell, *The Flute*, 205-6.

¹⁴ Raposo, 14-16.

¹⁵ See Anthony Baines, *Woodwind instruments and their history*, 53-6.

headed wooden flutes became available, offering a flexibility that approached that of the metal flute.¹⁶

Playing Styles

Most accounts of British flute-playing style tell of a 'wooden flute tradition' which is invariably traced back to Charles Nicholson (1795–1837).¹⁷ Nicholson's playing was described variously as reedy, rich, mellow and powerful, and was distinguished by his ability to produce great volume, especially in the low register.¹⁸ The Nicholson 'tradition' persisted throughout the nineteenth century and was associated with the use of the wooden flute, as well as a forceful sound production involving a 'muscular tight embouchure' and an absence of vibrato.¹⁹ Baines suggested that this style was represented well into the twentieth century, its last representatives being the Scottish flautist Robert Murchie (1884–1949) and his pupil Gareth Morris (1920–2007). However, Baines also noted that at the time of writing in 1957, the French-school approach to the flute, which used a 'relaxed embouchure' and 'lavish vibrato', had gained 'many devotees' in England.²⁰

Philip identifies the tail end of the British tradition in recordings from the 1920s, where he perceives a style which features 'little or no vibrato' and lacks the brilliant tone and flexible phrasing of the French school.²¹ His model of style change thereafter is a fairly simple one of the spread of French influences throughout the 1930 and 1940s culminating in the emergence of a new British style that combined elements of the French flexibility with a 'slower and more subtle' vibrato than was used in France. Central to this process was the flautist Geoffrey Gilbert (1914–1989), who after becoming principal flute of the LPO in 1935 decided to study the French style of playing with René LeRoy. Philip describes Gilbert's tone as 'bright and rich, in the French style, and his phrasing is very flexible. But his vibrato is much slower than Le Roy's suggesting the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁷ See for instance James MacGillivray, 'The Woodwind', 270–71; Baines, 317–20; See also Dolan, 'Landmarks in Flute Performance Style', 37.

¹⁸ For a summary of descriptions of Nicholson's playing, see Dolan, 30–32.

¹⁹ Baines, 55.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

²¹ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 114–6.

influence of ... [Léon] Goossens'.²² Gilbert was relatively isolated in his French-influenced playing in the 1930s, with older players such as Robert Murchie and Gordon Walker maintaining the 'traditional English style on the wooden flute ... though in prominent solos their use of the tremor [i.e. vibrato] is more noticeable than in recordings of the 1920s, and Murchie's phrasing is quite flexible'.²³ Philip's observations are interesting in light of the fact that Murchie was considered by earlier writers to be a leading proponent of the British 'tradition'.

Flute-playing styles have been the subject of more recent scholarly attention than those of other wind instruments. Abigail Dolan's work centres on the French school of playing, and uses the consultation of written sources as a prelude to an empirical analysis of selected recorded evidence. Examples of flute playing in Britain are touched on, though it is not the central focus and thus the analyses are not exhaustive. Nonetheless, Dolan's thesis does shed further light on some aspects of flute-playing style that are relevant to developments in Britain. In particular, she delineates a number of distinct types of vibrato used by flute players in this period, outlined in table 2.1.²⁴

Table. 2.1: Dolan's categorisation of vibrato types

Type	Parameter in which oscillation occurs	Speed (cycles per second)	Usage
Quiver	intensity only	uniform, 9-11 c/s	selective, middle and upper register
Tremor	correlated pitch and intensity	uniform, 9-12 c/s	near constant throughout all registers
Intensified quiver	intensity only	uniform, 8-10 c/s	constant throughout all registers, integral to tone production
French school	correlated pitch and intensity	variable, 6-9 c/s	constant throughout all registers, integral to tone production

Interestingly, Dolan's findings suggest that the use of vibrato was more widespread among British flautists of the inter-war period than the stereotype of the non-vibrato wooden-flute tradition suggests. They also confirm Philip's observation that vibrato was

²² *Ibid.*, 116. The idea that the LPO's woodwind section, which included Gilbert, Goossens and the clarinettist Reginald Kell, pioneered wind vibrato and tonal flexibility in the 1930s is widespread, and will be investigated in depth in chapter five.

²³ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 116.

²⁴ Dolan, 'Landmarks in flute performance style', 127-39.

commonly fast and shallow, though unlike Philip, Dolan asserts that it was used constantly rather than selectively. Dolan's observation of an emerging 'intensified quiver' vibrato in recordings from the 1920s and 1930s correlates with Philip's account of the increased use of vibrato by players in the 1930s.²⁵ Crucially, however, Dolan's observations point to variety rather than consistency in British players' use of vibrato, forming a contrast to the uniformity of the French school and contradicting the notion of a strong native 'tradition'. Dolan's spectral analyses of flute tone do however suggest that there is a basis for claims of a traditional British 'reedy' tone quality, which appears to have been achieved by emphasising the second and third harmonics in the sound, to the extent that they became stronger than the fundamental tone.²⁶ This is contrasted with the French-school approach, which acquired its tonal characteristics from the activation of a wide range of harmonics in the sound.²⁷ Based on both written and audio evidence, she also points to the existence of an alternative, 'soft' tonal concept among some players.²⁸

Dolan's conclusions about British flute players' use of expressive devices are less convincing. Like Philip, she asserts that non-French-school flautists showed little or no recourse to dynamic shaping, tonal inflections or flexible vibrato in the recordings sampled,²⁹ leading her to the conclusion that the later assimilation of French-school influences marked the transition from 'a relatively limited expressive palette towards a diversity of approaches used to generate expressivity'.³⁰ Significantly, Dolan discounts non-French-school players' use of temporal flexibility, despite the fact that it is frequently a primary feature of the recordings she discusses. In this respect, Dolan appears to share Philip's premise that expressivity in wind playing is communicated primarily through sonic expressive devices.

Raposo's study is a re-evaluation of written and audio sources relating to the British and French schools of flute playing and the role of Geoffrey Gilbert, which leads her to challenge the traditional view put forward by Philip and others. Her focus is on

²⁵ Philip, 114-5.

²⁶ Dolan, 94-5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 35 and 96.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 222-36.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 251.

historiography rather than in-depth analysis of recordings, but she does use audio evidence to support her assertion that there was no one clearly defined British school or tradition of flute playing. For Raposo, stylistic differences were ‘individually drawn and not separated by nation’.³¹ In particular, she finds that a selection of British and British-based players active during the inter-war years exhibited ‘mixed and often varying levels of vibrato’, as well as diverse tonal characteristics.³²

Raposo’s work is important for its challenge to the traditional view of two distinct and contrasting ‘schools’ of playing in Britain and France. First, she questions the idea of a ‘wooden flute tradition’, pointing out that metal flutes were not only known and professionally used in England before and after 1900, but were probably more common among amateur players than wooden instruments. This leads her to assert that the use of the wooden flute, though probably the dominant instrument among professionals, was not necessarily a defining feature of British flute playing in the late nineteenth century.³³ Second, Raposo points to a constant stream of continental influences on British flute playing throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with many of the leading players in Britain at the turn of the century either born or trained abroad.³⁴ Prominent among these was the Swiss flautist Jean Firmin Brossa (1839-1914), who studied in Paris with the same teacher as French school founder Paul Taffanel. Brossa was principal in the Hallé Orchestra and taught at the Royal Manchester College of Music from its foundation in 1894. The first French-trained player to make an impact in London was the Welsh flautist Frederick Griffiths, who was active in the 1890s.³⁵ Griffiths was the first of a small but significant stream of French-trained players working in England from the late nineteenth century onwards. Leading French players also made regular visits to England throughout the early twentieth century, suggesting that the French style was familiar in Britain throughout the period.

These facts led Raposo to re-evaluate the legend of Geoffrey Gilbert, who she suggests has been mythologised as ‘a singular hero who, in the face of those who would reject him, rescued British flute-playing from the inferior traditions of the past’, bringing

³¹ Raposo, ‘Defining the British Flute School’, 94.

³² Raposo, ‘Defining the British flute school’, 92.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14–16.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 28–34.

British flute performance 'to a level that would pave the way for him and others to gain recognition and respect on an international level, and not simply within the boundaries of their home country'.³⁶ Raposo's description of Gilbert's place in the narrative of British flute playing is an example of a trope that is also seen in the received histories of other wind instruments, though based on her evidence, it would seem that his role as a catalyst for the adoption of French style has been somewhat overstated.

Players

As with all the woodwind instruments, the lack of a clearly defined native 'school' of playing reflects a lack of strong pedagogical guidance from any of the national conservatoires. A case in point is the founding flute professor at the RCM, William Lewis Barrett (1847–1927), whose students included Daniel S. Wood (1872–1927), who became principal of the Queen's Hall Orchestra and LSO, and professor at the RCM and RAM; Eli Hudson (1877–1919) and Gilbert Barton (b. 1876), both future principals of the New Symphony Orchestra; and Robert Murchie, founding principal of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Around the time Murchie left the RCM in 1910, doubts were cast about Barrett's teaching abilities by a South African student, Percival Kirby, who later recalled his teacher was 'not only very deaf, but that his sight was failing ... he seemed to be quite unfamiliar with current flute literature'.³⁷ Though Barrett left no recordings, Kirby recalls him using 'an instrument with a totally different system of fingering from the regular "Boehm" models', suggesting that Barrett's approach was probably conservative.

Based on this evidence, it is unsurprising that there was no 'school of Barrett' carried forward into the twentieth century, and it seems that the playing style of Barrett's pupils was governed mainly by their generation. Nonetheless, Wood and Hudson are both identified by Dolan as proponents of the low-register 'reedy' tone. James MacGillivray compared Hudson and Murchie's playing, describing Murchie as 'belong[ing] technically rather to the new school, despite his almost violent power, clarity and brilliance'. He continued,

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

³⁷ Mescht, 'Annotating Percival Kirby's Autobiography concerning his studies at the Royal College of Music in London, 1910–1913', 165.

The only surviving recording of Hudson (though it can give little idea of his power) shows his phrasing to be easy, fluent, and even soothing, where Murchie was thrilling, dramatic, and declamatory. There can be little doubt that the former was the native tradition.³⁸

MacGillivray's assessment of Hudson and Murchie bears a striking resemblance to Leech-Wilkinson's description of the change from the 'lyrical continuity' of the nineteenth century to a hyper-expressive early-twentieth-century style.³⁹ Murchie is known to have adopted a wooden flute with a thinned headjoint, a compromise designed to give greater flexibility⁴⁰ and probably an indicator of a progressive attitude. Arguably the foremost orchestral flautist in London during the period under review, Murchie's career culminated in his appointment as principal flute of the BBC Symphony Orchestra from 1930–1938, and his orchestral recordings from this period will be considered at length in chapter five.

In the orchestral sphere, the most significant foreign flautist during this period was Albert Fransella (1865–1935), an Amsterdam-born player who made his career in London from 1882 onwards. As principal of the Crystal Palace and then Queen's Hall Orchestras, he established himself as the preeminent orchestral flautist in the 1890s and remained active until the late 1920s. He was retrospectively credited with introducing the 'relaxed and smaller-toned style of Belgium and Holland' to London in the late nineteenth century,⁴¹ and he was praised by George Bernard Shaw for 'sacrific[ing] boldness of style to delicacy of tone and perfection of execution'.⁴² However, Abigail Dolan identifies in Fransella's playing the same low-register tonal characteristics that she associates with the British 'reedy' school of playing,⁴³ alongside occasional 'quiver' vibrato,⁴⁴ suggesting that distinctions between native and foreign styles in the nineteenth century are not as simple as some accounts suggest. Fransella's lack of a teaching

³⁸ James MacGillivray, 'The Woodwind', 270–71.

³⁹ Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and histories of performance style', 251–2.

⁴⁰ Stuart Scott, 'The Rudall Carte Flautists: Robert Murchie', online (accessed 6 June 2012); and Robert Bigio, 'Christopher Steward's Early Flute Recordings: Robert Murchie', on *Robert Bigio Flute Pages*, online (accessed 13 September 2012). Murchie's Rudall Carte flute was bequeathed to his pupil Gareth Morris, who used it in his career as principal of the Philharmonia Orchestra.

⁴¹ MacGillivray, 270.

⁴² Shaw, cited Raposo, 38.

⁴³ Dolan, 95.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

position at the London conservatoires probably reflects a bias against foreigners, but he is known to have taught private students, including Gerald Jackson.

Gerald Jackson (b. 1900) was one of a trio of Yorkshire-born players who came to hold high positions in the profession despite bypassing the conservatoire system, the other two being George Ackroyd (b. 1879), principal in the Beecham Orchestra from 1909, and Gordon Walker (1885–1965), principal in the LSO from 1927–1939. Jackson was taught in Yorkshire by a local player and began playing professionally at a very early age in theatres and cinemas.⁴⁵ His family would not permit him to move to London to study with Murchie at the RCM, but he did take private lessons with Fransella before moving to the capital in 1926.⁴⁶ Jackson also makes reference to having used gramophone records to study the playing of violinists such as Heifetz, Ysaÿe and Kreisler, whose playing style he tried to imitate on his flute.⁴⁷ Perhaps because of this, as will be discussed in chapter five, Jackson's playing style has a noticeably modern feel to it. Jackson went on to dominate the orchestras of the 1930s and 40s, as founding principal in the LPO (1932–3), principal in the BBC SO (1938–46) and founding principal in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (1946–57). Jackson's memoirs details the alterations he made to his playing over the course of his career, including cultivating a larger sound when he joined the BBC SO,⁴⁸ and it is unfortunate that, perhaps on account of a dearth of solo recordings, he is not included in Dolan's analyses: his playing will be considered in the context of his orchestral recordings, in chapter five.

The significance of Geoffrey Gilbert (1914–1989) has already been discussed. Gilbert was born in Liverpool, the son of a professional oboist, and received his early tuition from Vincent Needham Jnr. and Albert Cunningham. It was Cunningham who first exposed Gilbert to the French style of playing, though at the time he neither recognised it as such nor sought to emulate his teacher, and he was unimpressed by Cunningham's attempts to make him develop his tone through slow practise and melodic studies,

⁴⁵ Jackson, *First Flute*, 8–9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 25–6, 29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

staple elements of the French pedagogical approach.⁴⁹ It wasn't until Gilbert arrived in London in 1935 to take up the post of principal flute of the LPO that he became aware of what he perceived as a growing prejudice against British flute players, symptomised by the gramophone companies' preference for recording French flautists such as Marcel Moyse and René LeRoy.⁵⁰ After experiencing the French style of playing first-hand in concerts and recording sessions, Gilbert became unhappy with his own playing and, on the advice of conductor Eugene Goossens and with the support of Beecham, he changed to a silver flute and took lessons with LeRoy. Dolan's analyses show a clear change in Gilbert's vibrato and tone production between 1936-9, as he developed the range of harmonics in his tone and adopted the slow, flexible vibrato that was the hallmark of the French style.⁵¹ However, it was not until the outbreak of war, when freedom from professional engagements allowed him a period of uninterrupted practise, that he was able to fully assimilate the change in style.⁵²

The rich and diverse primary and secondary sources relating to flute-playing in Britain during the period in question give an impression of the wide variety of styles and influences represented. The number of self-taught or non-conservatoire players who rose to prominent positions during the inter-war years combined with the range of foreign styles that were assimilated before 1900 may go some way to explaining the complexity of the stylistic picture. The appointment of the conservative figure of Lewis Barrett to teach at the RCM also contributed to the lack of development of a clear national school of playing, despite the nominal existence of a centre of training that had the potential to emulate the Paris Conservatoire. Chapters three and five will attempt to address the questions of how these varied approaches to the instrument were represented in three leading orchestras. From a historiographic perspective, Raposo's observations about the

⁴⁹ Little is known about Cunningham, who Gilbert described as playing 'exactly like a French flute player in a wooden flute - vibrato and everything' (Blakeman, 'Geoffrey Gilbert in Conversation', 9-10). However, it would not be a leap of imagination to suggest that Cunningham acquired his approach to the instrument through contact with Jean Firmin Brossa, discussed above, who was active in the north-west from 1870 until c. 1906.

⁵⁰ This claim is born out by discographical evidence, with the majority of releases of major flute works in the 1930s (such as the Mozart and Ibert concertos, Debussy Trio and works by Bach) featuring French players. See 'Discography', *CHARM* website, online (accessed 21/05/12). This probably reflects the fact that, following the merger of HMV and Columbia to form EMI in 1931, the number of local artists being recorded greatly reduced, in favour of recording a limited number of international stars. See Patmore, 'The Columbia Gramophone Company', 128-30.

⁵¹ Dolan, 100 and 137.

⁵² Monya Winzer Gilbert, 'Impact of the French Method', in *Geoffrey Gilbert - A personal look*, online (accessed 12 May 2012).

myths that surround the notion of a 'British School' of flute playing, and the role of Geoffrey Gilbert, have clear resonances for other instruments and for orchestral history that will be discussed below.

2.3 The Oboe

Instruments and Reeds

At the turn of the twentieth century, two types of oboe were in use in Europe: the German instrument, with a sword-profile bore and played with a wide-tipped reed, the direct descendent of the oboes of the early nineteenth century and a relation of the modern Viennese oboe; and the French oboe, with a straight conical bore, played with a narrower reed, developed by the Paris maker Triébert in the mid-nineteenth century and which evolved into the modern oboe used everywhere outside of Vienna today.⁵³ Due to the influence of French-born players, Britain was one of the first countries to adopt the French oboe in the nineteenth century, and while a range of models continued to be available into the twentieth century, they were all variants on Triébert's progression of designs, known as *Systèmes* 1–6.⁵⁴ By the early twentieth century, however, there was a distinct divide in the design variants used in France and England. Triébert's *Système* 6, the 'Conservatoire' system, became dominant in France, especially in a version further refined by the oboist Georges Gillet (1854–1920). By contrast, the keywork system developed by French oboist Apollon Barret (1804–1879), a variation on Triébert's *Système* 5, developed a particularly strong following in England from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, aided by Barret's widely circulated *Method for the Oboe* and his teaching position at the RAM. The continued popularity into the twentieth century of oboes after the Barret design is testament to the personal advocacy of Barret himself and of later players including Léon Goossens, though by the 1930s, there is evidence that the Conservatoire system was also in use in London orchestras.⁵⁵

The differences between the Conservatoire and Barret systems are subtle and difficult to describe, but they relate to the mechanism for playing specific notes. While

⁵³ See Baines, *Woodwind Instruments*, 92–6.

⁵⁴ See Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 149, 181–82.

⁵⁵ In 1940, L. P. Quilter identified Léon Goossens, Horace Halstead, John Field and Alec Whittaker as thumb-place system players, and Terence MacDonagh, Jesse Pantling, David Griffiths and Helen Gaskell as Conservatoire-system players. Quilter, 'Oboe Systems', 25–7.

the Conservatoire system retains some forked fingerings in the second octave, Barret's design eradicated them entirely, as well as adding the 'thumb-plate' mechanism, the use of which still differentiates British oboe playing today.⁵⁶ Geoffrey Burgess suggests that this mechanism affects the tone of the instrument by allowing the use of straight rather than forked fingerings on certain notes but does not describe this change in tone.⁵⁷ L. P. Quilter, the manager of the woodwind department at the instrument makers Boosey and Hawkes, wrote in an 1940 article that Conservatoire-system players tended to find the second-register Bb and C on the thumb-plate system "'wild" and definitely sharp', whereas players accustomed to the thumb-plate system would claim that it improved the tone of these notes by using a greater number of open holes.⁵⁸ Burgess, however, writing from a modern perspective, suggested that the sound of these notes is impoverished by this same factor. A more neutral description of the difference would be that the thumb-plate system lent itself to the more 'open' sound which has been associated with British oboe-playing throughout the twentieth century, whereas the larger number of covered holes in the Conservatoire system produces a rounder sound, richer in overtones. The conflicting opinions as to which of these tonal characteristics constitutes a 'good' sound is evidence of the strongly differing sound-concepts held by different players in different countries and of different generations.

Until the First World War the majority of oboes in use by leading players in London were French-made instruments, the most popular being by the firm of Lorée. Lorée's order-books from the early twentieth-century show not only repeated orders by prominent players, presumably on behalf of their students, but also that certain players had particular models named after them.⁵⁹ After the First World War, the London firm Louis & Co, founded in 1923, emerged as a supplier to the top players. Leon Goossens is known to have admired the Louis instruments and recommended them to his students,⁶⁰ though he himself played on a relatively simple 1907 thumb-plate model by Lorée for most of his career. Goossens also advised his students to avoid instruments with large

⁵⁶ Burgess and Haynes, 149–50.

⁵⁷ Burgess and Haynes, 203.

⁵⁸ Quilter, 'Oboe Systems: Conservatoire or Thumb-plate?', 25.

⁵⁹ In particular, the page for 1912 shows repeated orders for 'Foreman' and 'Reynolds' models, being sold primarily to players of that name, as well as a 'Cor Anglais Reynolds' delivered to Léon Goossens. See [n.a.], 'F. Lorée: A brief history', 24.

⁶⁰ Burgess and Haynes, 182.

amounts of additional keywork,⁶¹ though as will be discussed below, they did not necessarily adhere to this.

In the early twentieth century, as today, reed styles appear to have been equally, if not more important to the sound and style of the various players than any differences in the precise keywork configuration or instrument model used. Most oboists used professionally made reeds, the preeminent maker of the period being Thomas Breatly of Liverpool, who supplied Goossens. Anthony Baines identified Breatly's reeds as light and responsive, in comparison to the 'thick-gouged, far scraped-back' type used by Goossens' contemporary Alec Whittaker, which Baines suggested gave 'a more flexible tone, capable of greater variation in dynamics and colour'.⁶² This description is corroborated by a comprehensive technical study of reed-making styles by David A. Ledet, who delineates two main styles. Reeds by Breatly and the considerable number of reed-makers and players he influenced used cane gouged to between 0.2 and 0.3mm and a short scrape, the bark of the cane being removed up to around 9mm from the tip of the reed. The other common style, seen in reeds used by Whittaker's student Sydney Sutcliffe but also several students of Goossens, was a 'long-scrape' design, where the reed is scraped for almost its entire length, but with a much thicker gouge, of around 0.5 to 0.6mm.⁶³

Playing Styles

Oboe playing is perhaps the most contentious area considered by this thesis, because of the existence of an entrenched narrative revolving around the 'rescue' of British oboe-playing from disagreeable vibrato-free sourness, a story that will be considered in depth below. In Philip's opinion, most oboists of the 1920s played 'with no vibrato at all, and with virtually no shaping of phrases', giving the impression of 'inflexibility of tone'. However, the influence of Léon Goossens's pioneering 'flexible vibrato, rhythmic freedom and wide dynamic range' meant that non-vibrato playing became 'increasingly unusual' by the 1930s, and flexible phrasing more common.⁶⁴ Matthias Arter's comparison of recordings of the Vaughan Williams oboe concerto provides an

⁶¹ Geoffrey Bridge, correspondence on *Allexperts.com*, online (accessed 19 May 2012).

⁶² Baines, 93.

⁶³ Ledet, *Oboe Reed Styles: Theory and Practice*, 71–90 and 171.

⁶⁴ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 123–5.

interesting insight into Goossens's influence, showing that though his vibrato and flexibility were taken forward by the next generation, some aspects of his style that reflected the outgoing musical aesthetic were not. Arter points to his 'amazing agogic freedom' and 'singing and declamatory style', which contrasts with the more modern approach of his student Evelyn Rothwell, whose playing, though 'vibrato-saturated', is also more 'vertically organized', with 'rigid control of the agogic nuances and tempo rubato' as well as 'greater concern for precise ensemble'.⁶⁵

There is no wide-ranging study of oboists of the period 1900–1930 equivalent to Dolan's on which to base a more detailed picture of British oboe playing pre-Goossens, although as with the flute, and indeed the violin and voice, the rise of vibrato and tonal flexibility and decline of temporal flexibility are the main features of changing oboe playing style. However, there is evidence to suggest that the story of oboe-playing was certainly not one of transformation 'from a necessary, but often unpleasant, bleating noise into an instrument capable of producing unimagined refinement and beauty of tone'.⁶⁶ In particular, Geoffrey Burgess perceives 'elegance and flexibility' in the 1911 recording of Schumann's Romances for oboe and piano by Arthur Foreman,⁶⁷ and questions how much the received history of oboe playing in Britain was shaped by 'apocryphal' stories, 'exaggerated to enhance Goossens' reputation', as well as the same nationalist desires that Raposo credits with shaping the story of British flute-playing.⁶⁸ The historiographic aspect of this will be discussed further below.

Players

More than any other woodwind instrument, oboe playing in London was dominated by foreigners throughout the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ From the 1830s onwards, the majority of these were French or Belgian born and trained, including Appollon Barret, discussed above; Belgian Antoine Jean-Baptiste Dubrucq (d. 1893), father of the oboist Eugène Charles Dubrucq (1864–1928) and bassoonist Edward Dubrucq; Desiré Lalande (1866–1904), principal in the Queen's Hall Orchestra (QHO) 1897–1904, who was regarded by

⁶⁵ Arter, 'Ralph Vaughan Williams Oboe Concerto: A Critical Evaluation', online (accessed 20 December 2012).

⁶⁶ Rosen, *The Goossens*, 125.

⁶⁷ Burgess, liner notes to *The Oboe, 1903–1953*, n.p.

⁶⁸ Burgess and Haynes, 198; Raposo, 94–95.

⁶⁹ Burgess and Haynes, 145ff.

Henry Wood as ‘one of the finest oboists London ever had’;⁷⁰ and the Belgian Henri De Busscher (1880-1975), who replaced Lelande in the QHO in 1904 before joining the New York Symphony Orchestra in 1915.⁷¹ These immigrant players introduced successive generations of Franco-Belgian influence to London, which were absorbed into local practice resulting in an often confused picture of what, if anything, was the ‘native’ tradition. The impact of Barret and A.J.B. Dubrucq during the second half of the nineteenth century would have resulted in the delayed assimilation of aspects of earlier French and Belgian trends, while Lalande and De Busscher represented a new wave of continental influences. Meanwhile, what Burgess and Robert Philip identify as the ‘modern French school’ was emerging in Paris, based on the playing and teaching of Georges Gillet.⁷² The German approach to the instrument was also represented in London by the main oboe teacher at the RCM, William Malsch, a British-born player of German descent, who until 1897 played on a German oboe. In the light of all this, it is little wonder that allusions to French or Belgian schools of playing in the writings of Baines, Bate and others are of little help in differentiating between incoming and established styles. Attributions of the lineage of Léon Goossens’s approach are typical of this confusion: while Baines drew a link between the sound of Goossens and Lalande,⁷³ Goossens himself, who was taught by Malsch and the Liverpool-based Charles Reynolds, identified De Busscher as his favourite player.⁷⁴ Burgess notes this Belgian influence as interesting in view of Goossens’s own Belgian heritage, but MacGillivray describes Goossens’s playing as ‘in diametrical opposition to the hitherto admired Belgian style’.⁷⁵

Writers have been keen to understand Goossens’s inspiration because in the same way that Geoffrey Gilbert has come to dominate the historiography of British flute-playing, Léon Goossens (1897–1988) is the central figure in relation to whom the story of the oboe is defined. Several factors lend the Goossens legend even more potency than that of Gilbert. Like Gilbert, Goossens had a very long career as a player (c. 1910–1975) and teacher (1924 onwards) which allowed him to influence directly multiple

⁷⁰ Henry Wood, *My Life in Music*, 113.

⁷¹ Bate and Burgess, ‘De Busscher, Henri’, in *New Grove Online* (accessed 8 June 2012)

⁷² Philip, *Early Recordings*, 122; Burgess and Haynes, 202–3.

⁷³ Baines, *Woodwind Instruments*, 329.

⁷⁴ Post, ‘Interview with Léon Goossens’, online (accessed 29 November 2012).

⁷⁵ MacGillivray, ‘The Woodwind’, 273.

generations of oboists. His solo career, during which he recorded and broadcast prolifically, gave him the kind of international reputation usually only achieved by solo violinists and pianists; Burgess goes as far as to suggest that until the mid-twentieth century, 'the only recordings featuring oboe available in most parts of the world were by Goossens'.⁷⁶ His comeback from a serious car accident that could have ended his career at the age of 65 added the romance of triumph over adversity to his story, and his charisma in radio and television interviews helped him become a well-known personality, while in musicological circles, his association with leading British composers including Vaughan Williams and Britten raised him above the status of a mere wind-player.

This is not to suggest that Goossens's reputation, as an exceptional musician who revived interest in the oboe as a solo instrument, is undeserved. But, as Burgess has suggested, it is very likely to have distorted the historiography of oboe playing in Britain.⁷⁷ For instance, the characterisation of Goossens as the first native player of note and the saviour of British oboe playing has led to the widespread belief that oboe playing in England before Goossens was predominantly of a poor standard, with the exception of a few visiting foreigners. In fact, despite the dominance of French and Belgian oboists throughout the nineteenth century, there were many native oboists active in London by the turn of the century, including two significant families of players, the Hortons and the Foremans. George Horton (1825–1907) was the first professor of oboe at the Royal College of Music.⁷⁸ Philip Bate reports that Horton was described as having a 'very reedy tone' and being a player of 'no great refinement', but Horton had two sons, Edgar Charles and Lewis George, who followed him into the profession, the former becoming a founding member of the LSO.⁷⁹ George S. A. Foreman, who taught at the Guildhall from 1889 to c.1910,⁸⁰ also had two sons who followed in his footsteps: (Gordon) Arthur (1883–1963), the founding principal of New Symphony Orchestra, and his brother Harold George (1892–1962), who often played beside him. Unfortunately, no accounts of George Foreman's playing have been traced, meaning that his playing style

⁷⁶ Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 198.

⁷⁷ Burgess and Haynes, 198.

⁷⁸ According to the RCM CPH's index of past professors, Horton taught at the RCM from 1884 to 1892.

⁷⁹ Barlow and Herbert, 'Brass and woodwind players' routes into the music profession' (accessed 8 January 2010).

⁸⁰ Bate, *The Oboe*, 206.

is unknown. However, Arthur Foreman left many recordings as principal oboe of the NSO, as well as the solo recording mentioned above. His playing will be considered at length in chapter three; for the purposes of this discussion, it suffices to say that he was a stylish and flexible player. This contradicts later accounts of pre-Goossens players, and it is notable that the most waspish anecdotes originate from Goossens and his pupils. Goossens described his former teacher Malsch as sounding like a 'comb and tissue paper'.⁸¹ Elsewhere, Goossens's students Evelyn Rothwell and Natalie Caine recount the story of Fritz Busch's arrival to conduct the LSO for the 1934 Glyndebourne Opera season, where he insisted on engaging Rothwell and Caine in place of the orchestra's regular players, Rothwell's explanation being that the LSO players had 'an old-fashioned sound ... very efficient, very steely, edgy, hard and unsweet. A sound that cut through everything'.⁸² Natalie Caine's husband, the bassoonist Cecil James, suggested that by the late 1940s, Goossens's pupils were preferred by orchestras in comparison to their colleagues, 'who made a noise like treading on an egg'.⁸³

Though there may be some truth in these stories, they probably say as much about the fast-changing tastes of the early twentieth century as about individual players' abilities. Goossens's teacher Malsch was certainly a musician who provoked strong reactions: Henry Wood delivered the cutting verdict that 'his tone and general phrasing got on my nerves',⁸⁴ and Eugene Goossens, brother of Léon, accused him of 'ruin[ing] the tone quality of the London Symphony Orchestra for years'.⁸⁵ Yet his playing must have been admired at some point, as he was principal oboe of the LSO from its foundation until the outbreak of war in 1914 and held positions at most of the London conservatoires. Contradictory accounts exist of the playing of Charles Reynolds (1843–1916), principal oboe of the Hallé orchestra and teacher at the Royal Manchester College of Music. Reynolds was Goossens's first teacher, and was remembered by Eugene Goossens as 'the only great English oboe player of his generation' and a player of 'beautiful sensitivity'.⁸⁶ This directly contradicts Léon Goossens's claim that Reynolds's

⁸¹ Nora Post, 'Interview with Léon Goossens and Edwin Roxborough', online (Accessed 29 November 2012).

⁸² Rothwell, cited Rosen, *The Goossens*, 139–40.

⁸³ James, cited Rosen, 140.

⁸⁴ Wood, *My Life in Music*, 113.

⁸⁵ Eugene Goossens, *Overture and Beginners*, 56.

⁸⁶ Goossens, 55–6.

hard reeds necessitated the use of a mute for long pianissimo sections, a suggestion which also make no sense in light of Goossens's recollection elsewhere in the same book that Reynolds could circular-breathe, a skill that Goossens admitted was only possible with a soft and responsive reed.⁸⁷ Though there are no extant recordings of Malsch or Reynolds to shed light on these inconsistencies, studies in chapters three and five of recordings made by the following generation of oboists give a more nuanced view of the range of styles and standard of playing during the period under review, suggesting that there were other proponents of refined and expressive oboe-playing besides Goossens. The power of the Goossens legend must therefore be born in mind when surveying written assessments of the playing of Goossens' own generation.

Though a different style of playing certainly existed pre-Goossens, therefore, it was by no means universally reviled, nor did it vanish overnight. Henry Wood, who had objected so greatly to the playing of Malsch, nonetheless lamented in a 1924 article on orchestration that 'Our woodwind players have refined their tone-quality to such an extent ... that it has become difficult to make woodwind solos tell ... when we go to Germany, the first thing which strikes us is the 'bite' of the oboes and bassoons, even while we dislike their 'throaty' quality.'⁸⁸ James MacGillivray, an oboist of the post-war generation, identified Alec Whittaker (1901–1970) as having kept alive 'more traditional and international ideas of the instrument', invoking a contrast with Goossens's 'English' style.⁸⁹ Whittaker, who like Goossens came from the North-West of England, was chosen in preference to Goossens to be the founding principal oboe of the BBC Symphony Orchestra.⁹⁰ MacGillivray cites him as having a unexpectedly long-lasting influence on younger players,⁹¹ identifying his stylistic successor as Sydney Sutcliffe, MacGillivray's own contemporary.

Whittaker's successor in the BBC SO, Terence MacDonagh, was in Burgess' view 'responsible for another stream in British oboe playing with a more direct French influence'.⁹² The son of the admired cor anglais player John MacDonagh, Terence

⁸⁷ Goossens and Roxburgh, *Oboe*, 52 and 169.

⁸⁸ Wood, cited Hull, *A modern dictionary of music and musicians*, 364.

⁸⁹ MacGillivray, 'The woodwind', 273–4.

⁹⁰ See chapter four.

⁹¹ MacGillivray, 'The Woodwind', 274.

⁹² Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 204.

studied both with Goossens and in France with Myrtille Morel. His playing, and in particular his fast, shallow vibrato, shows the influence of the modern French school, as Philip's research suggests that a more prominent medium-to-fast vibrato similar to MacDonagh's was common among oboists in Paris by the 1930s.⁹³

The analyses of orchestral recordings in the following chapters feature many players: some known, including Goossens, Whittaker, MacDonagh, and Arthur Foreman; some about whom little or nothing is known, such as David Griffiths, Horace Halstead and John Black. These recordings do nothing to cast doubt on Goossens's reputation as an exceptional artist. But they bring to light elements of the story of British oboe playing that have been obscured or obliterated by the Goossens legend, not least changes in his own playing style during those formative decades. The result is a more nuanced picture of the development of oboe playing in London during the first half of the twentieth century, an effort to re-position Goossens not as a sole genius who saved oboe playing from generations of mediocrity but as a distinctive voice who emerged from a cast of accomplished contemporaries.

2.4 The Clarinet

Instruments

In England at the turn of the century there were two types of clarinet in use: the simple system, also known as the 'Albert', 13-key or 'ordinary' system, and the Boehm-system clarinet.⁹⁴ The principal difference between the two was one of fingering: despite the fact that the basic 13-key design could be supplemented by a wide range of keywork additions, and the instruments of leading professionals were rarely as 'simple' as their name suggested,⁹⁵ the Boehm system allowed greater technical facility across the full range of keys. There was also a sonic difference, the relatively un-covered bore of the simple system giving greater resonance.⁹⁶ It was suggested by at least one contemporary

⁹³ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 121.

⁹⁴ The Boehm clarinet was named after the flute maker Theobald Boehm, whose design innovations made the clarinet system possible, though in reality it was developed by the clarinetist Hyacinthe Klosé in collaboration with French instrument maker Auguste Buffet jeune.

⁹⁵ See Eric Hoeprich, *The Clarinet*, 183 and 185–6.

⁹⁶ See Spencer Pitfield, 'British Music for Clarinet and Piano', 50. The observations about the tone-quality of various instruments in this paragraph reflect both the oral history perpetuated by clarinetists and the author's own experience.

player that the Boehm clarinets of the late nineteenth century had inferior intonation to the simple system instruments,⁹⁷ and extant examples of instruments from the inter-war years frequently have a less-than-equal scale, suggesting that they required sensitive and flexible playing. Despite this, it seems that the advantages of the Boehm fingering system outweighed its limitations.

This theory is supported by the testimony of Charles Draper (1869–1952), one of the first British players to adopt the Boehm system in the 1890s. Draper claimed to have been motivated by hearing a pair of Italian clarinetists who ‘played everything so much more smoothly than I could and I was conceited enough to believe (I’m not really a humble man) that it wasn’t my fault. So I got a pair of Boehm system clarinets next week, took them to Brighton on holiday, and in a couple of weeks I could do them all in the eye!’.⁹⁸ It is likely that the ‘Italians’ were in fact the Spanish brothers Manuel and Francesco Gomez, who played in the Queen’s Hall Orchestra, and indeed Francesco claimed that it was he who not only persuaded Draper and his fellow student George Anderson to change, but procured their instruments and assisted them with the fingerings.⁹⁹

The influence of the Gomez brothers, Draper, and Anderson led to the widespread adoption of the Boehm clarinet in the early twentieth century. In 1906, Draper wrote in his edition of the Klosé Clarinet School: ‘There is no doubt it [the Boehm system] possesses many advantages over all other systems, and a small proportion of British players have recognised this ... All students, but particularly those who desire to enter the professional ranks of Clarinet players, are seriously advised to study very closely the ‘Boehm-system’ ... before making their final decision.’.¹⁰⁰ By the 1930s the Boehm

⁹⁷ Francisco Gomez, Letter to Robin Chatwin, 30 November 1934, cited in E. Halfpenny, ‘The Boehm Clarinet in England’, 3.

⁹⁸ Jack Brymer, *From Where I Sit*, 37–8.

⁹⁹ F. Gomez, cited in Halfpenny, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Draper and John Fitz-Gerald, eds., *Clarinet School*, 4.

system was used by all of the top professional orchestral clarinetists,¹⁰¹ though the simple system continued to be used in military bands until the Second World War.

Boehm clarinets were initially imported from French and Belgian makers such as Martel Freres, whose instruments were re-badged as Hawkes & Sons 'Excelsior Class'. These clarinets, with their sweet and direct sound,¹⁰² were the model of choice for top players before the First World War. The Belgian firm E. J. Albert, who had been the foremost suppliers of simple-system instruments, also sold Boehm system instruments in the UK. After the war, however, a British school of Boehm clarinet-making emerged. Hawkes & Sons began in-house manufacture; and in 1923, Draper, who had previously been employed by Hawkes to test and approve its instruments, set up the firm Louis & Co, which manufactured clarinets after the Martel design as well as Lorée-type oboes. During the 1930s, taste began to turn towards wider-bore instruments, such as the iconic Boosey & Hawkes model 10-10, with its broad and flexible tone, which became associated with the British clarinet school throughout the mid-twentieth century.

Players and Playing Styles

The standard history of clarinet playing in Britain is founded on the idea of a strong tradition that ran throughout the nineteenth century, beginning with Thomas Lindsay Willman (c.1783–1840). Willman was the principal clarinet in the Philharmonic Society from 1817–38 and occupies the same position in the history of British clarinet playing that his colleague and brother-in-law Nicholson does in flute history.¹⁰³ Referred to as the 'founding father' of British clarinet playing, Willman's tone was described as 'fine, clear, sweet'¹⁰⁴ and was likened to the glass armonica.¹⁰⁵ His stylistic legacy was associated with the simple-system clarinet tradition, carried forward by Henry Lazarus

¹⁰¹ F. G. Rendall wrote in 1942: 'Today it is used by the majority of players, and its use is all but obligatory in colleges of music'. Rendall, 'The clarinet in England', 63. Nonetheless, the author's own pair of E. J. Albert simple-system instruments were made as a graduation gift for a female student at the Guildhall School of Music in the mid-1920s, who rejected the option of a Boehm-system pair, and went on to use her instruments professionally, mostly in dance and jazz bands. The instruments, which are in pristine condition, conform to the legend of exceptional tonal resonance, as well as possessing excellent intonation.

¹⁰² See Keith Puddy and Nicholas Shackleton, 'Charles Draper and English Clarinets', *passim*.

¹⁰³ The generation of Philharmonic Society players to which Nicholson and Willman belonged, which also included the trumpet player Thomas Harper and the double bassist Dragonetti, attained a degree of celebrity during their lifetimes that ensured their place in British instrumental history. Their enduring historiographic significance would be a fruitful topic for another study.

¹⁰⁴ *The Musical World* 14 (9 January 1840), 28.

¹⁰⁵ Pamela Weston, *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*, 101.

(1815–1895), Julian Egerton (1848–1945), and George Clinton (1850–1913). George Bernard Shaw spoke of their ‘fine tone and dignified continence’, which he contrasted with the ‘passion and urgency’ heard from German clarinetists.¹⁰⁶ To MacGillivray, the ‘traditional London tone ... lacked the “epic” quality’, instead ‘combin[ing] a crystalline texture with a strong colour, markedly contrasting with the other woodwind’. Lazarus’s students included George Anderson (1867–1951), who, though he changed to Boehm clarinet early in his career, has been described as one of the last purveyors of the traditional simple-system ‘London tone’,¹⁰⁷ a style continued by his student Bernard Walton (1917–1972).

A student of both Lazarus and Egerton, Charles Draper is frequently singled out as causing a revolution in clarinet tone and playing style in the early twentieth century. MacGillivray’s assessment of his impact is worth reproducing in full:

With Draper, and his less picturesque but immensely telling tone, the dramatic or epic was raised to the highest degree possible on any reed instrument: the very spirit of nineteenth-century romantic playing, and the diametric opposite of the feminine-nostalgic quality now everywhere labelled ‘romantic’.

This description, which corresponds with the playing heard in Draper’s chamber music recordings, suggests that Draper’s style was a break from the ‘dignified continence’ that Shaw ascribed to Draper’s teachers, in favour of the more dramatic expressive palette that Shaw associated with the German style. It is possible that he was influenced in this by the preeminent German clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, who made regular solo and chamber appearances in Britain during the 1890s and 1900s.¹⁰⁸ Spencer Pitfield has also noted the extreme rhythmic flexibility found in chamber music recordings made by Charles Draper and his nephew and student Haydn Draper (1889–1934), though he finds that their rubato lacks ‘proportion’.¹⁰⁹ As will be seen when Draper’s orchestral recordings are discussed in chapter three, there is a strong argument that Draper’s playing is representative of the hyper-expressive style that Leech-Wilkinson observes among musicians born in the second half of the nineteenth century.

¹⁰⁶ Bernard Shaw, cited in Baines, 332–3.

¹⁰⁷ See MacGillivray, ‘The Woodwind’, 272; and F. G. Rendall, *The Clarinet*, 123.

¹⁰⁸ Sources indicate that Mühlfeld made at least 36 concert appearances in London between 1892 and 1907. See Maren Goltz and Herta Muller, *Richard Mühlfeld: Brahms’s Clarinetist*, 159–62.

¹⁰⁹ Pitfield, ‘British Music for Clarinet and Piano’, 156.

Philip paints a fairly simple picture of the development of clarinet playing during the first half of the twentieth century, with the playing of Charles Draper and his pupil Frederick Thurston (1901–1953) remaining ‘the model for most British clarinetists from the 1920s to the 1940s’.¹¹⁰ For MacGillivray, on the other hand, ‘the only feature of [Draper’s] tone that has seemed to influence later clarinetists was its sheer breadth, and subsequent efforts to broaden the traditional tone quality already mentioned above have often resulted in a rather hooting sound, too thick and heavy to allow clear articulation’.¹¹¹ MacGillivray’s identification of Draper’s sound as starting the trend towards the broader tone associated with the use of the wide-bore 10-10 clarinet is an interesting one, though it may say more about the author’s perception of clarinet sound-production in the late 1950s when the article was written than about pre-war playing. Draper’s most important students certainly did not have a ‘hooting’ or heavy tone: Thurston, the founding principal clarinet of the BBC SO, and Haydn Draper, principal in the QHO during the 1920s, both had relatively focussed sounds compared to both Charles Draper and the post-war generation of players. Moreover, as will be seen below, Thurston did not continue Draper’s hyper-expressive playing style, with various sources testifying to his subtle use of rubato¹¹² and long-line phrasing.¹¹³

It was Haydn Draper who taught taught Reginald Kell (1906–1981), the first principal clarinet in the LPO. Together, Thurston and Kell were the most important players of the 1930s; the dramatic contrast between their playing styles will be considered in chapter five in specific relation to their orchestral activity in the 1930s. Kell could be considered the successor to the Drapers’ flexible, hyper-expressive approach, though his own testimony cites his colleague in the LPO, Léon Goossens, as his prime influence;¹¹⁴ and, as will be discussed in chapter five, his playing also reflected elements of a more modern aesthetic.

Kell developed a marked vibrato, a highly unusual and even controversial step for a clarinetist. Day suggests that the rejection of vibrato by most orchestral clarinetists may have been a reaction against ‘the reedy, edgy tone and the leering, physical jaw-vibrato

¹¹⁰ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 129–30.

¹¹¹ MacGillivray, ‘The Woodwind’, 272.

¹¹² Pitfield, 156.

¹¹³ Sydney Fell, ‘Chiefly for the Rising Generation’, 39.

¹¹⁴ Reginald Kell, ‘Britannia Rules the Winds’, 58–9.

cultivated by jazz-players',¹¹⁵ though vibrato was used by classical players in France.¹¹⁶ Kell himself did not associate his playing with either of these traditions, instead citing the singer Kirsten Flagstad, cellist Pablo Casals, and Léon Goossens as his inspirations to radically change his playing style whilst principal in the LPO.¹¹⁷ Kell's writings provide a rare personal testimony of stylistic change, providing evidence both of the importance of peer-influence and of the motivations that prompted orchestral wind players to change their playing once established in their careers.¹¹⁸

The received story of British clarinet-playing places less importance on foreign influences than that of oboe or flute playing. Written sources seem to point to two active streams in the early twentieth century: the refined, 'traditional' style of George Anderson and Bernard Walton, and the broad and 'epic' playing of Charles Draper. However, there is no hint of the strong narrative of divided stylistic schools or ultimate transformation by a single iconic player that defines the flute and oboe histories already discussed. The reason for this is not that clarinet-playing history lacks elements of transformation or stylistic diversity, nor that it wants for iconic and influential individuals. Indeed, there were three figures who might have been seized on as the embodiment of a new British style: Charles Draper, Frederick Thurston, and Reginald Kell.

Draper is unanimously accorded great significance in the writings considered, but the hyper-expressive style which he represented went out of fashion after the Second World War. He was also a little too old to fully participate in the blossoming of the recording and broadcasting age, which undoubtedly lent both glamour and wider influence to younger players such as Thurston and Kell. Kell, who had an international performing, recording and broadcasting career similar to Geoffrey Gilbert's, and who assimilated Goossens's radical and highly expressive approach into his clarinet playing, remains an iconic figure to many clarinetists but has not achieved the same pivotal position as his colleagues in the LPO. Kell's approach to the clarinet, though it influenced many of the mid-twentieth-century players, failed to achieve lasting mainstream dominance. It is in fact Thurston who is most often thought of by players

¹¹⁵ Timothy Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, 167.

¹¹⁶ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 128-9.

¹¹⁷ Kell, 58-9.

¹¹⁸ See below, chapter five.

today as the founder of the British school of clarinet playing, perhaps because his restrained style of playing conforms best to modern expectations.

The canon of British clarinet players was not forged in the same nationalist rhetoric as the flute and oboe narratives, and the unbroken succession of highly-regarded virtuosi, from Willman through Lazarus to Gomez and Draper, also precludes Thurston or Kell from being cast as saving the instrument from mediocrity. Yet there was a significant evolution in clarinet playing during the period in question, and consideration of orchestral clarinet playing in chapters 3 and 5 will seek to shed light on how it related to the more strongly-drawn developments in flute and oboe playing.

2.5 The Bassoon

Instruments

British bassoon-playing was the site of the most abrupt change of equipment during the period in question. By the turn of the century there were two distinct types of bassoon in professional use in Europe: the French bassoon, a direct descendant of the instruments of the early nineteenth century, but with a more sophisticated system of keywork; and the German 'Heckel' system bassoon, the result of radical changes in bore design and fingering by leading makers Heckel of Biebrich during the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The two instruments had completely different key systems and used very different styles of reed. Apart from an enclave of German-bassoon playing in Manchester, British players maintained a tradition of using the French system, and as late as 1920, leading bassoonist Edwin F. James was able to state that there were only three professional players in London using the German instrument. However, during the period covered by this thesis, bassoonists abandoned the French system *en masse* in favour of instruments by Heckel or its rival firm Adler. So rapid was the take-up of the German bassoon that by the 1960s organologist Eric Halfpenny believed there were only three remaining professional players of the French instrument.¹¹⁹ The reasons for this dramatic change and its effect on orchestral bassoonists are among the most important issues addressed by this thesis.

¹¹⁹ Halfpenny, 'French and German bassoons in London', 188.

In musical terms, the major difference between the French and German instruments was one of tone. The German bassoon had a far more even tone than the French, with no ‘bad’ notes; but its detractors claimed that it lacked character, was ‘wooden and monotonous’ in the middle and lower ranges,¹²⁰ and had a tendency to sound ‘quite fixed in dynamic level’ from an audience perspective.¹²¹ In comparison, the French bassoon was considered more vocal and flexible in tone with an easier high register, and one source suggested that it could blend better and give more support as a bass.¹²² When played in France it often had a ‘reedy’ or ‘buzzing’ tone,¹²³ though British bassoonists are reported to have modified their reeds to avoid this and to have eschewed vibrato, which was commonly used by French bassoonists.¹²⁴

Just how different French and German bassoons really sounded when played by British players of this period has been widely debated. Halfpenny suggested that ‘a good deal of the supposed tonal discrepancy between the two instruments is in the mind of the player or between him and his instrument. In other words, in the long run they both sound exactly like bassoons and it is the “man behind the gun” who counts more than anything else’.¹²⁵ Cecil James asserted that, when played side-by-side in an orchestral section, the two instruments could be made to blend seamlessly: James, a French-system player, cited his years spent playing in the LSO and Philharmonia with Paul Draper, who used a German instrument, as evidence of this.¹²⁶ Part of the reason for this ease in blending may have been down to the British players’ preference for a smooth sound on the French instrument, which made it more closely resemble the German. However, it is important to note that most of these accounts refer to playing in the inter-war period and after, and there is some reason to believe that older generations of British players made a more distinctive sound on the French instrument. Nonetheless, it is possible for an expert listener to hear the difference between the French and German instruments on recordings of the 1930s, as will be demonstrated in chapter five.

¹²⁰ Baines, *Woodwind Instruments and their History*, 155.

¹²¹ MacGillivray, ‘The Woodwind’, 269.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 269.

¹²³ Baines, 155; and Cecil James, ‘Life as a “Buffet” Player’, 4.

¹²⁴ See Langwill, *The Bassoon and Contrabassoon*, 69; MacGillivray, 269; and Baines, 155.

¹²⁵ Halfpenny, 188–89.

¹²⁶ James, 4.

Players and Playing styles

As with the clarinet, bassoon playing in London developed relatively free from the influence of foreign players from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Like oboe-playing, it was frequently a family affair, with several significant families of bassoon players active in the early twentieth century. The first bassoon professor at the RCM was William B. Wotton (1832–1912), who served as principal bassoon of the Crystal Palace Orchestra from 1866–97, and who was succeeded in both posts by his brother, Thomas E. Wotton (1852–c.1918).¹²⁷ Among William Wotton’s earliest students at the RCM was Wilfred James (1872–1941), younger brother of the largely self-taught Edwin F. James (1860–1920).¹²⁸ The James brothers were both prominent players and teachers, holding principal positions in the Queen’s Hall Orchestra, LSO, and Beecham Orchestra, and teaching posts at the RAM, RCM, Trinity College, and Kneller Hall.¹²⁹ After the death of Edwin, Wilfred shared teaching duties at the RCM with Ernest Hinchcliff (1879–1963), who played with the Beecham and New Symphony Orchestras, the BBC Wireless Orchestra and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.¹³⁰ Between them, the Wottons, the Jameses and Hinchcliff taught most of the following generation of bassoonists, including Edward Dubrucq (1873–1940), son of oboist A. J. B. Dubrucq and LSO principal throughout the 1920s; Richard Newton (1895–1977), principal of the QHO and BBC SO; and Paul Draper (1898–1971), son of Charles Draper and LSO principal in the 1930s. Richard Newton in turn taught Gwydion Brooke (1912–2005), son of the composer Joseph Holbrooke, who joined the London Philharmonic Orchestra as second bassoon in 1932 and went on to be the leading bassoonist of the post-war years. Also of the younger generation was Cecil James (1913–1999), son of Wilfred James, second bassoonist of the LSO 1934–39 and, in the post-war period, the last London orchestral principal to play on a French instrument. Less is known about John (Jack) Alexandra (1891–1957), the nephew of a prominent contrabassoon player, Albert Alexandra (b. 1872). John studied at the Royal Academy and played in the Scottish National Orchestra and LSO (as principal) before controversially defecting to joining the new LPO in 1932. Alexandra’s younger brother George (1906–1973) was also a bassoonist and joined him in the LPO in 1935.

¹²⁷ Langwill, 182.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 174–75.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

All of these London-trained players initially used the French bassoon. The German bassoon was first introduced to England when Hans Richter brought Viennese players into the wind section of the Hallé Orchestra in the early 1900s, shortly before establishing two scholarships at the Royal Manchester College of Music to train local players on the German system. The first scholarship was taken up in 1904 by Archie Camden (1888–1979), who became principal bassoon in the Hallé in 1914 and was the foremost proponent of the German instrument in England in the inter-war years.¹³¹ Camden's 1926 recording of the Mozart Bassoon Concerto, alongside recordings of German and American orchestras, was responsible for provoking interest in the German bassoon among London players. This was compounded by the visit of Toscanini's New York Philharmonic Orchestra in 1930,¹³² whose German-system bassoon section displayed a 'clear and effortless delivery' that caused London players to change over 'in dozens'.¹³³ By the mid-1930s, the principals of the BBC SO, LSO and LPO had all changed from French to German system; indeed, Langwill states that the BBC actively encouraged Newton, their section leader, to change, a suggestion that will be discussed further in chapter four.¹³⁴ However, a number of bassoonists retained their French instruments throughout their careers, most notably Cecil James and Albert E. Wilson, second in the BBC SO from 1930–46.

The reasons for London players abandoning the French bassoon so quickly and with such unanimity appear to be mostly practical. Accounts by bassoonists of the period suggest that the German bassoon offered the orchestral player various advantages. Anthony Baines, himself a bassoonist 'intimately acquainted' with both systems,¹³⁵ concluded that neither instrument had a clear advantage in terms of ease of fingering, but the French bassoon was more reliant on the quality of the reed to overcome certain weak notes. This description corresponds with that of Cecil James, who also suggested that the German instrument was more 'precise'. He likened playing the French bassoon to riding a thoroughbred horse: 'on a good day with a good reed one can sing like a bird

¹³¹ Langwill, 69.

¹³² Langwill, 70.

¹³³ Baines, *Woodwind Instruments*, 153.

¹³⁴ Langwill, 71 and 176.

¹³⁵ Langwill, *The Bassoon and Contrabassoon*, 69. Baines used E. F. James's own instrument, a French bassoon by the London maker Morton, as a student, but later switched to the German system. See also Halfpenny, 189.

... but with a moment's inattention, disaster can strike!'.¹³⁶ Archie Camden wrote that he knew 'many first-class players of the French system – men whose work is unrivalled in any sphere. But ... their outstanding ability is a triumph over inherent difficulties rather than the utilisation of inherent advantages'.¹³⁷ Post-war oboist James MacGillivray believed that the Heckel was 'immensely easier to blow, and it solves most of the problems of intonation, rapid *legato*, and response to an average reed, which traditionally worried all but the most expert players [of the French bassoon]',¹³⁸ while Baines wrote simply, 'it makes life easier for the orchestral player'.¹³⁹ Gwydion Brooke pointed to the competitive factor, claiming that 'very many players use the Heckel because they know they are giving themselves as good a chance as the next bloke ... get on or get out'.¹⁴⁰ He also emphasised British players' preferences for the sound of the German bassoon, asserting that 'with all deference to the wonderful artists using French instruments in this country, these gentry all get as far away from the true *French* sound as they can, and for all the world sound like German bassoons'.¹⁴¹ Sol Schoenbach, one of the first bassoonists to study the German system in New York, is alone in making the interesting assertion that the German bassoon was also preferred by sound engineers in recording sessions, who complained that they had difficulty picking up the sound of the French instrument.¹⁴² This opens the possibility that unflattering recordings of the French bassoon contributed to players moving away from it.

As with Charles Draper's account of his rapid adjustment to the Boehm clarinet, anecdotes relating to the process of changing bassoons tend to make it sound very easy. LPO principal Alexandra is reputed to have changed from French to German bassoon 'in the space of ten days before recording Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with Koussevitzky'.¹⁴³ If true, this would be remarkable; but Brooke, who was Alexandra's second bassoon from 1932 to 1936, the period during which he made the switch, tells quite a different story. Brooke remembers that for years Alexandra used both bassoons

¹³⁶ James, 'Life as a "Buffet" player', 4–5.

¹³⁷ Camden, 'The Bassoon: German or French System?', 37.

¹³⁸ MacGillivray, 'The Woodwind', 269.

¹³⁹ Baines, 155.

¹⁴⁰ Brooke, 'From Messerschmitts to Bassoons', 10.

¹⁴¹ Brooke, 10. Brooke's comments were made in 1957, and so may not reflect the situation during the inter-war years, though they do indicate the coming trend in bassoon tone.

¹⁴² William Dietz, 'A conversation with Sol Schoenbach', 49.

¹⁴³ Baines, 340.

side by side, keeping both out on stage or in the pit, so that when he got into difficulties he could switch back to his familiar French instrument.¹⁴⁴ Brooke is one of the few sources who emphasised the difficulty of changing systems, stating that both Newton and Alexandra found it far from straightforward. This conclusion is supported by a letter from Richard Newton to the BBC regarding the programming for a broadcast recital in 1932. Newton requested that 'I should like to have the details of my evening [recital] settled in good time, if it is possible, as on account of my change over last summer to the German bassoon, with its different fingering, I need more time for preparation than I did formerly'.¹⁴⁵

The important question of the effect the radical change in equipment had on bassoon playing style is very rarely addressed in any depth in existing primary or secondary sources. Philip describes the playing of British French-system bassoonists in 1920s recordings as mostly 'very plain and unshaped', but suggests that this was a generational characteristic, on the basis that Camden's playing on the German instrument was in the same style.¹⁴⁶ Pointing to Camden's lack of dynamic shaping in recordings from the 1920s and 1930s, Philip hears a 'continuity with earlier British players which is more striking than any differences in tone quality'. In Philip's opinion, the stylistic impact on players who switched from French to German system in the 1930s 'was at first undramatic because they ... continued to playing much the same style'. Philip notes only a slight improvement in tuning, with flexible phrasing and vibrato beginning to appear in the 1940s.¹⁴⁷

This stylistic continuity is reflected in the established narrative, which contains no suggestion of a moment of artistic epiphany on the part of a single bassoonist. Despite the adoption of the German bassoon being associated with rising playing standards, no one player has been identified as rescuing the native tradition from mediocrity. Rather, the emphasis is on the desire to raise orchestral standards in both Manchester and London, and accounts of the efforts by Richter and the BBC to introduce the German bassoon into their orchestras cast the bassoonists themselves in a role of passive

¹⁴⁴ Gwydion Brooke, recorded interview, 31 January 1994.

¹⁴⁵ Richard Newton, Letter to Victor Hely-Hutchinson, 17 January 1932. BBC WAC: RContl Artists Personal File, Richard Newton, 1928-62.

¹⁴⁶ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 135-6.

¹⁴⁷ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 136-7.

compliance. This may relate to the bassoon's enduringly low profile as a solo instrument, which leads to bassoonists being seen less as independent artists and more as orchestral artisans. More recent accounts, notably that of James Kopp, tie the rise of the German bassoon to the accepted notion of stylistic homogenisation arising from the growth of recording and broadcasting and international travel.¹⁴⁸ Kopp also points to the increasing internationalism of conductors' careers as creating a drive towards uniformity, and indeed Richter's introduction of the German bassoon to England may be seen as an early example of this. Even first-hand accounts by bassoonists, though placing greater emphasis on personal choice and on the influence of Archie Camden, maintain this practical viewpoint and rarely address the subject of musical expressivity. In an interview in 1994, Gwydion Brooke reported being specifically influenced by Camden's recording of the Mozart Bassoon Concerto, but its influence on him was primarily to do with Camden's tone, which Brooke recognised as the sound that he himself had been struggling to achieve on his French instrument.¹⁴⁹ Cecil James also points to Camden's influence, citing his appointment as principal bassoon in the BBC SO in 1933 as 'the "death knell" for the French bassoon' because he 'made it all sound so easy';¹⁵⁰ but the emphasis is on technique rather than musicality.

It may be that the demands of adapting to a new and unfamiliar instrument, which Brooke suggests were considerable, actually prevented bassoonists from reacting immediately to the stylistic changes that were going on around them in the 1930s. Yet, as with the oboe, it is unlikely that the stylistic picture was so simple, not least in view of the suggestion that the French bassoon may have suffered disproportionately at the hands of the recording technology. The preference for a smooth, Germanic bassoon tone among younger generations of French-system players points to a change in taste that may have been influenced by hearing the bassoon on record. Moreover, even if the initial decision to change was a practical one on the part of most players, the distinctive playing characteristics of the German bassoon, such as the increase in clarity, stability, and homogeneity of tone, cannot have failed to have some impact on their expressivity. Finally, the move away from the flexible but treacherous French bassoon in favour of the more reliable German instrument is symptomatic of the change in the orchestral playing

¹⁴⁸ Kopp, *The Bassoon*, 154–66.

¹⁴⁹ Gwydion Brooke, recorded interview, 31 January 1994.

¹⁵⁰ James, 'Life as a "Buffet" player', 5.

environment during the inter-war period. These issues will be addressed further through the medium of archival evidence in chapter four and recorded evidence in chapters three and five, where extant recordings of leading bassoonists playing on both French and German instruments provide comparative evidence of both the change in expressivity and the effect of changing instruments.

2.6 Conclusion

Several themes emerge through the consideration of the received accounts of woodwind playing in England. From an organological perspective, there is little doubt that there was a general homogenisation of the types of instrument used during the period in question, resulting in a recognisably modern instrumentarium by the late 1930s. The speed at which this happened varied from instrument to instrument, with the bassoon making the latest and most rapid change. Bassoonists were the only players to adopt a German instrument; and while all of the upper winds moved to French-type designs, it is notable that by the 1930s, British-manufacturers had developed professional models that were distinct from those used in France.

General observations can also be made about the background of the players discussed. Flautists are the only group of instrumentalists which does not contain strong familial connections linking prominent players, a situation which is particularly common among oboists and bassoonists. This impression is supported by consideration of orchestra lists for the period, which frequently featured family members performing side by side. It appears that, despite increased access to conservatoire training in the late nineteenth century, which will be discussed in chapter three, the older model of apprenticeship or the passing down of an instrumental 'trade' within a family continued to thrive. However, most of the individuals considered did attend a conservatoire, most commonly the RCM, even if it was to study with a member of their own family, as in the case of Cecil James. This attests to the prominence of the conservatories as sites of both training and professional networking. The rich orchestral life of the north-west of England was also an important training ground for four of the most prominent musicians considered – Geoffrey Gilbert, Léon Goossens, Alec Whittaker and Archie Camden – and though this thesis is focussed on orchestral wind-playing in London, it is

important to acknowledge that the relative stability provided by the Hallé and Liverpool Philharmonic orchestras created a centre of excellence in orchestral wind playing long before the establishment of contracted orchestras in London.¹⁵¹ As will be discussed in chapter four, the BBC SO's policy of 'cherry-picking' the best players from around the country was to some degree responsible for bringing such players to London, at the cost of some resentment in the regions.¹⁵²

Despite these centres of training, consideration of native and foreign styles of playing each woodwind instrument does not present a simple model of existing playing traditions being influenced or taken over by foreign styles. Though written sources present a strong case for a well-established tradition of clarinet playing through the nineteenth century, there seems to be a degree of stylistic fragmentation after the introduction of the Boehm clarinet in the 1890s, with no strong narrative emerging before the Second World War, despite the presence of three iconic players in Draper, Kell and Thurston. By contrast, flute and oboe playing, both of which were subject to complex stylistic development in the nineteenth century due to the influence of foreign players, both feature in stories of stylistic transformation – if not transfiguration – centring on the pivotal figures of Léon Goossens and Geoffrey Gilbert. The legends of these two men, which are closely linked, both tell of a single visionary figure who rescued the mediocre native tradition associated with their instrument by introducing a new, French-inspired, highly flexible and expressive style of playing with vibrato as its main feature. Their stories mirror the simultaneous revolution in orchestral playing, in which they participated as members of Beecham's LPO. However, Raposo and Dolan show that, in the case of the flute, neither written nor recorded sources fully support this simplistic historiographic model. The consideration of written sources in relation to oboe playing suggest that the same preliminary conclusion can be drawn. The discussions of recordings in chapters three and five will seek to shed further light on the intertwined issues of changing style and standard during the inter-war years.

In light of this, it is appropriate to consider what is meant of a 'school' or 'tradition' of playing. In the source texts discussed above, the words are frequently used interchangeably. However, to do so is to ignore the different ways in which playing

¹⁵¹ Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 9.

¹⁵² Kenyon, 47.

styles are perpetuated. A school of playing can be defined as a 'group of players who have had the same musical education, whose technique and instrumental equipment are more or less standardised, who share similar ideals of tone production and musicality, and apply these principles to a circumscribed repertoire'.¹⁵³ The notion of a shared education, focussed around a specific teacher or conservatoire, is the defining characteristic of a school of playing. The classic example of this is the French flute school, centred on the students of Paul Taffanel and Philippe Gaubert at the Paris Conservatoire;¹⁵⁴ thus the students of Léon Goossens could also be said to represent a school of oboe playing. However, this is a rare British example; as seen above, even the Royal College of Music, whose modernisation of the training of orchestral wind players will be discussed in chapter three, failed to establish the level of pedagogical control in instrumental teaching found in Paris, largely through the choice of conservative teachers. True schools of playing are uncommon among British wind-players during the first half of the twentieth century.

The notion of a 'tradition' is more complex. Eric Hobsbawm defined tradition as an essentially ritualistic or symbolic practice which is unvarying and seeks to establish a continuity with the past.¹⁵⁵ It differs from mere convention or routine because its motivation is primarily ideological rather than practical. For example, tuning the orchestra to a concert 'A' is a convention, based on the fact that it is the only open string common to all of the string instruments; dressing the orchestra in tails, however, is a tradition, with a wealth of historical and cultural significance. Some attributes of playing style could no doubt be characterised as conventions, though this definition is difficult to maintain: that which is one musician's convention, adhered to through expediency and the need to conform, may be another musician's artistic choice. Indeed, this highlights the grey area between practical and artistic motivations that is so much more present when discussing orchestral musicians than soloists. One could characterise the use of the French bassoon by British players as a convention rather than a tradition, on the grounds that it was quickly abandoned when a more reliable alternative presented itself. However, to some players, particularly those who retained the French instrument, it was clearly more than that. It is notable, however, that there are no instances of British

¹⁵³ Burgess and Haynes, *The Oboe*, 201–2.

¹⁵⁴ See Dolan, 'Landmarks in Flute Performance Style', 46ff.

¹⁵⁵ Hobsbawm: 'Introduction: Inventing traditions', 1–2.

bassoonists defending the French instrument on the grounds of tradition; rather, most refer to its artistic and communicative qualities as outweighing any practical disadvantages.

Hobsbawm also differentiates traditions from customs, on the grounds that customs can incorporate change, as long as changes ‘appear compatible ... with precedent’. Custom gives change ‘the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history’;¹⁵⁶ it is ‘what judges do [by establishing legal precedent]; “tradition” ... is the wig, robe and other formal paraphernalia and ritualised practices surrounding their substantial action’.¹⁵⁷ It could be argued, according to Hobsbawm’s definition, that a playing ‘tradition’ is a logical impossibility because playing style is necessarily subject to change, and that the national ‘traditions’ discussed above are better described as ‘customs’, where the appeal to historical continuity is used to legitimise new developments. The insistence on a continuity of tradition in clarinet playing is a prime example: though there were undoubtedly significant differences between the playing styles of Thomas Lindsay Willman, Henry Lazarus, Charles Draper, and Frederick Thurston, their inclusion in a lineage that constitutes the British clarinet ‘tradition’ links each of them to a rich history which legitimises the innovations they introduced by appealing to an underlying historical continuity.

Finally, Hobsbawm invokes the notion, important to this subject, of ‘invented tradition’, which differs from tradition in that its continuity with the historic past is ‘largely factitious’.¹⁵⁸ If Raposo’s arguments are accepted, the use of the wooden flute by British players is a clear case of invented tradition, as though wooden flutes had been the instrument of choice for players going far back into the nineteenth century, their use was initially a combination of convention and expediency. The wooden flute was not a true ‘tradition’, not only because there were players who chose metal instruments but because the design of wooden instruments in professional use was modified from generation to generation. Arguably, the invented tradition of the British ‘wooden flute’ school emerged as part of the drive to define a distinctive British woodwind tradition and became increasingly important in the face of homogenisation and the perceived

¹⁵⁶ Hobsbawm, 2.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Hobsbawm, 2.

threat of continental influences during the 1930s. As a result, as Raposo has argued, the notion of this 'tradition' has obscured differentiation of playing styles during the first half of the twentieth century.

Alongside the desire for historical continuity and 'tradition' seen in writings on woodwind performance comes an emphasis on transformation and the redemption of mediocre playing 'traditions' by heroic individual performers. This emphasis on rupture with the immediate past and renewal has clear resonances with modernism. The role of iconic individual performers in the narrative of changing wind-playing styles is also significant from a historiographic point of view. Bennett Zon has suggested that the writing of British music history throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was defined by the notion of the 'land without music' and pervaded by the trope of the heroic individual.¹⁵⁹ His interpretation is that, in the face of a growing desire to construct a national identity, the heroic individual became an analogy for national history and the characterisation of national genius, with the individuals concerned defined in turn by their historiographic role. Though Zon's essay is concerned with the historiography of British compositional history, his observations are pertinent to the study of British performers. In particular, the common traits he identifies in heroic individuals are also ascribed to some of the players under consideration here. In the context of a background of under-achievement, genius is conferred on a very few individuals, but without qualification; hero-figures commonly play a 'dramatically transformative' role in the narrative; the overcoming of adversity is a common theme, as is the ability to adapt in order to survive; and the hero is often imbued with a recapitulatory significance, embodying all that has gone before: tradition and custom once more.¹⁶⁰ These qualities, in particular those of transformation, can be seen in individuals such as Léon Goossens and institutions such as the BBC Symphony Orchestra; their absence can also help to explain the historical neglect of other agents whose ephemeral evidence suggests had great synchronic significance, such as the New Symphony Orchestra.

Taking a broader look at the players considered here, the role of orchestras themselves in shaping the historical narrative must be considered. It is no coincidence

¹⁵⁹ Zon, 'Histories of British Music and the Land Without Music: National Identity and the Idea of the Hero', *passim*.

¹⁶⁰ Zon, 316-19.

that almost all of the players credited above with most importance in accounts of woodwind playing in the 1930s were also the principal players of the LPO and BBC SO. These players achieved status, recognition and even glamour through their connections with their orchestras, with Beecham and with the BBC respectively. As such, they are the first generation of orchestral musicians to have left numerous published memoirs as well as instrumental tutors and other writings. Many of them also left significant recorded legacies as solo and chamber musicians, another crucial factor in assuring both contemporary and posthumous recognition. Thus it seems as well as changing musicians' working lives and playing styles, recording and broadcasting impacted on the formation of reputations to an extent that has not previously been acknowledged.

Chapter 3

A Forgotten Orchestra: The New Symphony Orchestra, 1909–1930

3.1 Introduction

It is good to think that in one branch of music we can not only hold our own, but easily beat all other European countries – and that is the orchestra. Here undoubtedly we reign supreme, a fact fully acknowledged by every foreign conductor who visits these shores. We have three great orchestras in London which are not to be matched this side of the Atlantic: the Queen’s Hall Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra.¹

The New Symphony Orchestra (NSO), also known as the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra from 1915–28, was a player-run ensemble founded in 1905, the year after the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO). Contemporary praise for the quality of its performances is supported by its vast legacy of recordings, some pioneering in their subject and many of a remarkable standard. In scholarship, the NSO is a group occasionally referred to but little investigated outside of accounts of the early career of Thomas Beecham. It is often assumed to be one of many names under which freelance musicians were gathered for London concerts, yet this assumption is in direct contradiction to the above quote from the 1922 memoirs of the orchestra’s conductor, Landon Ronald. The truth probably lies somewhere between the two. This chapter will contend that the NSO had a stable and distinct membership of first-class players and that its extant recordings, which document the development of orchestral recording from before the First World War through to the establishment of EMI in 1930, are consistently among the most successful recorded accounts of orchestral repertoire from the period.

As outlined in the introduction, the NSO has been chosen as a case study for three reasons. First, as an autonomous orchestra formed primarily of Royal College of Music (RCM) graduates from the 1890s, it was the first London orchestra consisting almost exclusively of native musicians who shared a common educational background. The playing of the NSO can therefore be expected to reflect the impact of the institutionalisation of orchestral training on the playing style of the turn-of-the-century

¹ Landon Ronald, *Variations on a Personal Theme*, 173.

generation. Second, the NSO contained a group of exceptional wind players, whose playing to a great extent defined the sound of the orchestra. As a result, it represents the peak of orchestral wind-playing in the early twentieth century. Finally, the NSO was a specialist recording orchestra, being the 'house orchestra' for The Gramophone Company (TGC) from 1909 to 1930, on whose His Master's Voice (HMV) label it released a large number of recordings. The NSO's musicians were therefore experienced recording artists, and its recordings give a special insight into the way that musicians played for the gramophone.

The NSO's story has been broken down into three periods. Section 3.2 covers the period 1905–9, including a consideration of the significance of the RCM's training of orchestral wind players during the late nineteenth century and the possible motivations for the formation of the NSO, as well as its association with Thomas Beecham. Section 3.3 explores the orchestra's heyday between 1909 and 1919, and details its concert activity and public profile, in order to establish its place in the history of orchestral music-making in London. The orchestra's recording activity and its contribution to the development of orchestral recording are also surveyed, as a prelude to the analysis of the wind playing style on the NSO's recordings from this early period. Section 3.4 deals with the orchestra's concert activity after World War One and looks at the playing style in its late acoustic and early electric recordings. The chapter concludes with a consideration of why the NSO vanished from history and a preliminary evaluation of the historiography of orchestral activity in London.

3.1.1 Sources

There is no surviving archive for the NSO, and only scant records of it have been found in the archives of the Royal Albert Hall, where the orchestra was resident for ten years. Papers relating to the NSO do exist in the EMI Archives, but access to them is currently

prohibited.² Information has been taken from musicians' memoirs and other published first-hand contemporary accounts, as well as biographical writings on some of the key individuals involved, including Thomas Beecham and Landon Ronald. Work by Cyril Ehrlich, Simon McVeigh and David Wright on music education and the music profession in the early twentieth century has contributed to the understanding of the context from which the orchestra emerged.³ Genealogical sources such as census returns have been used to verify the identity and background of the individual players, the RCM's student registers have been consulted to glean more information about their training. However, it is ephemeral sources, such as concert programmes, newspaper listings, reviews and features in the press, which have yielded the richest rewards, revealing a story that could never have been guessed from the standard texts on orchestral activity during this period.

3.2 Background, Origins, and Concert Activity 1905–1909

3.2.1 Orchestral training and the music profession

When the Royal College of Music was established in 1883, founding director George Grove intended that it should address the shortage of highly-skilled native orchestral musicians capable of meeting the increasing demands of modern orchestral scores by composers such as Liszt, Verdi and Berlioz.⁴ To this end, an orchestral class was developed under the direction of Charles Villiers Stanford, in which students prepared works for performance both in private College concerts and public performances in outside venues. Stanford's class, which received generous financial support during Grove's tenure as director, fulfilled three aims: to provide a specific training in orchestral

² In recent years, EMI Archives's previous policy of open access to its documentary archive has been replaced by a blanket ban on the viewing of any documents, or files containing documents, which include details of a financial or contractual nature. No exceptions are made on the grounds of the age of the documents or the passage of time since the death of the individuals concerned. This effectively prohibits access to any files relating to the NSO, to its individual musicians, to its conductor, Landon Ronald, and to any internal correspondence. Neither have the various committee minutes been made available. In most cases, it has become difficult even to acquire specific information about the archives' holdings. It is hoped that this situation will be rectified in the future, and a reinstatement of access to these documents will allow the full story of the NSO's recording activities to be told.

³ Ehrlich, 'The Marketplace' and *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century*; and McVeigh, 'An Audience for High-Class Music' and 'The Modernisation of London's Concert Life around 1900'; Wright, 'The South Kensington Music Schools'.

⁴ Wright, *The South Kensington Music Schools*, 256.

playing; to expose students to a broad range of modern, mostly continental, composition; and to provide Stanford with an ensemble that could be utilised in the training of his composition students.⁵ In addition, through the practice of inviting college professors and alumni to play alongside the students, the orchestra supported the development of professional networks which would benefit the students in their future careers.⁶

The orchestra gave up to seven concerts each academic year as well as playing for opera performances, presenting a range of music that prepared the students well for professional life. Between 1890 and 1898, the orchestra's repertoire was dominated by symphonies and overtures by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Schumann and Wagner, reflecting Stanford's preference for Germanic music. However, new works were also given, such as Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony in 1894, Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 'From the New World' in 1896, and works by native composers including Frederick Cowen and Hamish McCunn. After 1895, budget constraints resulted in a shift towards smaller-scale works.⁷ Standards were frequently high: George Bernard Shaw remarked in 1889 that the students' efforts were 'much better than an average performance of Don Giovanni at Covent Garden',⁸ and when the RCM gave the UK premiere of Schumann's *Genova* at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Shaw observed that the students' eagerness resulted in 'a degree of illusion which is the rarest thing in the world at regular professional performances'.⁹ By 1891, Shaw had begun to observe the impact of these young players on the profession, pointing to 'the marked effects of the reinforcement of our orchestras with young men whose offhandedness over Wagnerian scores takes away the breath of their elders'.¹⁰ By displaying the College's work in public venues with performances that approached a professional level of skill, attracted the notice of the mainstream press, and showed up the jadedness of many professional performances, the RCM orchestra surely contributed to the rise in audience expectations and in playing standards from the 1890s onwards.

⁵ See Leslie Heward in Heward et al, 'Charles Villiers Stanford, by Some of his Pupils', 202.

⁶ Wright, 274.

⁷ *Ibid*, 273.

⁸ Shaw, in Laurence ed., *Shaw's Music*, II:297-8.

⁹ Shaw, 'Genova', in Laurence ed., *Shaw's Music*, II:64.

¹⁰ Shaw, in Laurence ed., *Shaw's Music*, II:297-8.

The College was particularly proud of its record in training wind players. In 1885, a drive began to recruit players of flute, clarinet, horn and bassoon through the provision of specific scholarships. This meant that, unlike at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM), the wind section of the RCM orchestra consisted overwhelmingly of current students, creating a strong peer-group learning environment.¹¹ Students received a weekly two-hour woodwind class with Stanford, in addition to four hours of orchestral rehearsals,¹² and there was an annual prize awarded to an outstanding wind student.¹³ The presence of leading orchestral players on the teaching staff, as well as in the college orchestra itself, gave students a strong example to follow, and facilitated their progression into the profession, though as noted in chapter two, some of the teachers were stylistically conservative musicians. Nonetheless, by the time that Hubert Parry took over from Grove as director in 1895, he was able to boast that RCM-trained wind players could be found in most of the leading ensembles of the day and were among ‘the best and most trustworthy performers’.¹⁴

The RCM was the first institution in Britain to provide a focussed, professionally relevant orchestral training to young wind players, who had previously been trained by apprenticeship, by family members, or at the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall. There is no evidence of the specific principles that were taught by Stanford, and the absence of orchestral passages from the published tutors available during the period 1890–1914 suggest that the study of a canon of excerpts was not yet a part of the curriculum.¹⁵ However, the opportunity to play regularly alongside their peers in an orchestra that tackled the most challenging of modern scores alongside the works of the emerging orchestral canon undoubtedly prepared students far better for professional life than previous generations of young musicians.

Another effect of the institutionalisation of orchestral training was the formation of relationships and networks between musicians, contributing to ‘the shift away from the

¹¹ See Wright, 270.

¹² *Ibid*, 272.

¹³ The student records for Charles Draper and Eli Hudson list them both as winners of the ‘Silvain and Smith prize for wind instrument player’. RCM, Student Ledgers, Scholars, II: 116 and 27.

¹⁴ Parry, *Report of the Council to the Twelfth Annual General Meeting of the Corporation* (8 July 1895), 2, quoted in Wright, 272 n.110.

¹⁵ See section 2.4.1 for a list of tutors.

old professional networks to the emerging conservatoire-based ones'.¹⁶ The RCM made regular excursions to give concerts outside of London, which played a crucial role in peer bonding between students. Musicologist Marion M. Scott's reminiscence of the concerts in which she participated between 1896 and 1902 described the orchestra as having 'an *esprit de corps* which is quite extraordinary', and it is notable that the musicians Scott counted among her colleagues included some of the founding members of the NSO.¹⁷ There were also opportunities for networking between different generations of students: extant concert programmes show at least one occasion where current and former students were brought together in an augmented RCM Orchestra,¹⁸ and in the early decades of the twentieth century, former students began to appear on the list of professors.¹⁹ Finally, there is at least one suggestion that the College took an active role in placing graduates in the profession: Parry is reported to have used his own influence to help Charles Draper gain the principal clarinet position in the Crystal Palace Orchestra in 1895.²⁰

One outcome of the success of the RCM's orchestral training programme was that wind players entering the profession during the 1890s and 1900s faced increasing competition for work. Table 3.1 shows the huge increase in the numbers of wind players working in London around the turn of the century, according to statistics compiled from trade directories by Cyril Ehrlich. In 1896 it was claimed that 'an advertisement inserted in the papers at the present day for a first violin or a bassoon player would elicit at least fifty answers'.²¹ Perhaps more realistically, the Dutch flautist Albert Fransella was reported to have been selected from a field of twenty-four candidates for the position of principal flute in August Manns's orchestra at the Crystal Palace when the job became vacant in 1892,²² evidence that the surge of players affected even the highest level of the profession.

¹⁶ Wright, 'The South Kensington Music Schools', 267.

¹⁷ Scott, 'The Royal College of Music from Within', 43.

¹⁸ Orchestra list for *Naval Architects' Festival Concert*, Queen's Hall, 8 July 1897. RCM Library, *Royal College Music Orchestra Concerts*.

¹⁹ Charles Draper and Daniel Wood both replaced their own teachers as professors of clarinet and flute in 1911, and Léon Goossens replaced his teacher Malsch as oboe professor in 1924. Information from the card index of past professors, RCM Centre for Performance History.

²⁰ Weston, *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*, 268.

²¹ Kuhe, *My Musical Recollections*, 309–10.

²² 'Who's Who?', *Musical Standard* (9 April 1898), 233.

Table 3.1: Numbers of flautists and clarinettists advertising in London trade directories, 1890–1931.²³

	1890	1900	1910	1920	1931
Flute	31	146	153	140	72
Clarinet	18	171	179	153	46

The generation of wind players who left the RCM in the 1890s may have been better trained than many in the profession they were entering, but, as table 3.1 shows, they were entering a saturated market, and even the most talented players did not find an orchestral post immediately. Henry Wood's Queen's Hall Orchestra (QHO), founded in 1895, set new standards for orchestral playing in the capital but it relied primarily on foreign-trained wind principals, including Fransella and the Spanish clarinettist Manuel Gomez. Some RCM graduates began to creep into the ranks of the wind section by the 1900s, but there were few opportunities for them to progress. Meanwhile, the Crystal Palace Orchestra, which before the establishment of the QHO had been London's leading ensemble, was losing its audiences to its more centrally located rival. Charles Draper had been joined in the wind section in 1899 by a fellow RCM alumnus, the flautist Eli Hudson, but their tenure was short-lived, as the orchestra was disbanded in 1900.

Chamber concerts were also an outlet for the new generation of players. Both Draper and Hudson were recruited by oboist C. W. Nightingale and RCM composer alumnus William Yates Hurlstone into an ensemble that gave several series of chamber concerts, entitled Century Concerts, in south London between 1899 and 1904. The Century Concerts were 'established for the Performance of High-Class Vocal and Instrumental Music, and especially Wind Chamber Works'.²⁴ Christopher Redwood suggests that the concerts may have been conceived as a replacement for the recently dissolved British Chamber Music Concerts series run by pianist Ernest Fowles between 1894 and 1899, in

²³ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain*, 237.

²⁴ Redwood, 'The Century Concerts', 74.

which Charles Draper had regularly participated.²⁵ Both Draper and Hudson would have been acquainted with Hurlstone from the RCM, Hudson having given the premiere of his Quintet for wind and piano there in 1897. Nightingale was a self-taught oboist, but all the other wind players he and Hurlstone invited to play were RCM trained, including horn player Bertie Muskett and bassoonists Ernest Hinchcliff and Edward Dubrucq.²⁶

The disbanding of the Century Concerts in 1904 has been linked to the founding of the NSO.²⁷ However, of the wind players involved in the Century Concerts, only Hudson and Draper were closely involved with the initiation of the new orchestra. Muskett did play with the group in the early seasons, but he left to join the Beecham Orchestra in 1909 and did not rejoin the orchestra until the 1920s. Dubrucq does not appear on any extant NSO orchestra list, but he was recruited by Beecham in 1909 and later became principal bassoon in the LSO. Nightingale, credited with being the organising force behind the Century Concerts, does not appear on any extant orchestra lists for the NSO or any other orchestra of the period. Thus, though the Century Concerts may have been a key fermentation ground for the NSO initiative, it is unlikely that the founding of the orchestra was directly linked to the discontinuation of Hurlstone's concerts.

With no extant writings by Hudson or Draper, one can only speculate on their motivation for starting the NSO. However, the immediate inspiration was undoubtedly the formation of the London Symphony Orchestra in 1904, by members of the Queen's Hall Orchestra who disputed Henry Wood's removal of their right to deputise engagements.²⁸ The formation of the LSO by a group of players that included some of Draper and Hudson's contemporaries from the RCM was a pioneering demonstration that musicians could successfully take control of their own orchestra, against a background of increasing unionisation in the performing arts.²⁹

²⁵ Reviews evince Draper's connection with the concerts, including Baughan, 'Comment on Events', *Musical News* (2 November 1895), 258; and 'British Chamber Concerts', *Musical Times* (January 1898), 27.

²⁶ See Redwood, 'The Century Concerts', 73-79.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁸ See Morrison, *Orchestra: LSO*, 13-15.

²⁹ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain*, 164ff.

From an artistic point of view, visits to London by foreign groups showed British performers and the public alike that orchestral performance could be a high art form in which the individual players, in particular wind players, took the lead in defining the sound of the ensemble. One of the most notable examples was the Meiningen Orchestra, a virtuoso chamber orchestra whose reputation had been established by its work under Hans von Bülow and its association with Brahms in the late nineteenth century. After the orchestra's first performance in London on 17 November 1902, *The Times* critic wrote, 'The third *Leonora* overture of Beethoven began the concert, and in the phrasing of the clarinet passage ... the style of Herr Mühlfeld was unmistakably felt ... there is a good deal of truth in the criticism that points to him as a leading influence in the whole'. Here and in the review of the orchestra's last concert, on 23 November 1902, the reviewer commented that the balance of the orchestra favoured the wind section.³⁰ Though it has been suggested that Mühlfeld and Charles Draper were mutually admiring of one another's playing,³¹ there is no suggestion that the Meiningen Orchestra in any way directly inspired the creation of the NSO. However, it is an example of the way in which visits by foreign orchestras raised awareness, not only of orchestral playing standards abroad, but of the artistic contribution that individual wind players could make within an orchestra, given the opportunity.

Hudson and Draper, both powerful and distinctive musical personalities who in earlier times would have held unassailable positions among their peers, were equally equipped to take such a leading role. Yet, in an era when new standards were being set for orchestral performance by Wood at the Queen's Hall and by the LSO under Hans Richter and Arthur Nickisch, Hudson and Draper were effectively being left behind, not being permanent members of either ensemble.³² On a practical level, Wood's attempt at instigating a no-deputies arrangement at the Queen's Hall may also have directly affected musicians such as Draper and Hudson, as it presumably curtailed most casual

³⁰ 'Concerts', *The Times* (18 November 1902), 5; and 24 November 1902, 4.

³¹ Weston, 'Clarinets in the Edinburgh University Collection of Historical Musical Instruments', *EUCHMI* website (accessed 15 February 2011); and Hoeprich, *The Clarinet*, 235. Though this information is widely repeated, no references to its origins have been found.

³² Eli Hudson is regularly referred to as having been principal flute of the LSO. In fact, though he may have deputised in that position, his name does not appear on the LSO orchestra list for any season between its creation in 1904 and Hudson's death in 1919. The error may have arisen from confusion between the LSO and NSO.

work from that source.³³ It was under these circumstances that Hudson and Draper perhaps looked at the initiatives being made by their peers and decided to form an orchestra of their own.

3.2.2 The NSO and Beecham 1905–1909

The earliest appearances of the New Symphony Orchestra were in two aborted series of Sunday concerts at the Coronet Theatre in Notting Hill in 1905 and 1906. Though contemporary press reports noted the quality of the players, pointing out the presence of Hudson and Draper as well as the well-known orchestral leader John Saunders,³⁴ poor attendance caused the cancellation of each series after two concerts. Undeterred, Hudson, Draper and Saunders mounted a concert at the Queen's Hall in 1906, featuring the rising violinist Jessie Grimson and conducted by her husband Edward Mason, both fellow RCM graduates. The orchestra was once again well received,³⁵ but more important was the fact that, during the rehearsal period, Draper made contact with the young Thomas Beecham and offered him the NSO for hire. According to Beecham's memoir, *A Mingled Chime*, he had already planned a series of concerts consisting solely of eighteenth-century repertoire, but was uneasy with the prospect of employing either the LSO or QHO because of reservations about their playing and because the principal players treated his proposal with 'scepticism and condescension'.³⁶ In contrast, when he attended an NSO rehearsal, he heard a 'superior refinement of tone which I had not found elsewhere ... here might be an instrument capable of meeting the demands I should make of it'.³⁷ Beecham booked a reduced set of the players for a series of four programmes in November 1906 at Bechstein Hall (now the Wigmore Hall). He described his satisfaction with the resulting concerts: 'The orchestra played excellently throughout, and I had the satisfaction of sensing that, through its ability to grasp my intentions, it was well within my power to realise in the concert hall that which I had conceived in the

³³ The absence of orchestra lists for the QHO between the 1904 rebellion and 1911 makes it impossible to identify which players were recruited to rebuild that band; Hudson and Draper are unlikely to have been involved, as their later dispute with Beecham shows them to have been protective of their right to deputise.

³⁴ [n.a.], 'Concerts', *The Times* (30th October 1905), 7.

³⁵ *Musical Times* (July 1906) 47/761, 490; and *The Times* (19 June 1906), 11; 'Echoes of the Month', *Musical Herald* 700 (July 1906), 210.

³⁶ Beecham, *A Mingled Chime*, 94.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

study'.³⁸ *The Times* reported 'quite a large audience' for the first concert, supporting Beecham's assertion that the series was a success.³⁹

The NSO and Beecham continued their association in 1907 with a succession of celebrity concerts featuring young soloists such as Joseph Szigeti and Myra Hess. The latter event elicited a review from the string-players' magazine *Cremona* that praised the orchestra for a 'sensitivity and finish that mark them out' and called it a 'welcome addition to our relatively small number of permanent orchestras'.⁴⁰ Though fast becoming associated with Beecham, the NSO also remained for hire independently, and on the merits of its performance with Szigeti it was engaged by the German conductor Fritz Cassirer for a programme which included the British premieres of Delius's *Appalachia* and the 'Dance of the Seven Veils' from Strauss's *Salome*.⁴¹

Beecham claimed the credit for convincing the NSO's committee to enlarge the group to full symphony orchestra size to give concerts of larger-scale repertoire.⁴² However, it is more likely that this was an organic process that took place over the course of their engagements during 1907, dictated by the demands of the artists and agents who engaged the orchestra. According to his biographers, Beecham and the section leaders were responsible for hand-picking players and then rehearsing them 'in order to gain an approach to ensemble'.⁴³ Certainly by the time Beecham conducted the NSO in their first self-proclaimed series of five Symphony Concerts at the Queen's Hall in spring 1908, a high standard had been attained. Eugene Goossens recalled the orchestra's performance as being 'superlative', writing in his memoirs: 'to say that [Beecham] and his orchestra - a collection of the finest players in London - created a profound impression on the public is to put it mildly'.⁴⁴

Beecham's programming in the 1908 series emphasised modern music, combining British and foreign composers in a manner that successfully attracted the attention of the press. Beecham's biographers emphasise the young conductor's skill as an orchestral

³⁸ *Loc. cit.*

³⁹ 'Concerts', *The Times* (3 November 1906), 8.

⁴⁰ 'The Art of the Month', *Cremona* (November 1907), 135.

⁴¹ See Lucas, *Thomas Beecham*, 35-6; and Beecham, *A Mingled Chime*, 89-90.

⁴² Beecham, *A mingled chime*, 100.

⁴³ Jefferson, *Sir Thomas Beecham*, 64.

⁴⁴ Goossens, *Overture and Beginners*, 70.

trainer and his meticulous preparation of the many new works he championed.⁴⁵ However, constant tensions between economics and artistic aspirations defined British orchestral activity in the decades before the prior to 1930, and it is impossible to know how much time was at Beecham's disposal for rehearsal. It is likely that the player-run NSO recognised the value of allowing Beecham to train it, even if rehearsals were not paid, as was probably the case for the Symphony Concerts series. Beecham and the orchestra maximised their gain from rehearsals by re-programming the new works prepared for the 1908 series in celebrity concerts and provincial engagements, though individual players, many of whom were established as soloists, reserved their right to deputise where necessary. Over the course of 1908, tensions built between Beecham and the NSO, Beecham's biographers naming the sending of deputies to out-of-town concerts as a particular flash point.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the orchestra was establishing its reputation independently of Beecham, and notably replaced the QHO for a week at the 1908 Proms under the baton of Eduard Colonne. In December 1908, a tour with celebrity violinist Jan Kubelik gave the orchestra its first taste of working with Landon Ronald, a conductor who was soon to become its most important collaborator.

In early 1909, despite having announced an imminent second series of Queen's Hall concerts, Beecham and the NSO parted ways. Both sides issued public statements, claiming to have initiated the split.⁴⁷ The *Musical Standard* quoted an unnamed source, who reported that Beecham had decided to found a new orchestra, 'over which he will be able to exercise exclusive control'.⁴⁸ Beecham's biographers claim that Beecham had issued a Henry Wood-style ultimatum in December 1908, outlawing the use of deputies.⁴⁹ Beecham's subsequent success and iconic status in the history of British music-making have obscured the fact that the orchestra would have been foolish to accept such an ultimatum, which demanded a potentially crippling level of loyalty to a young conductor who did not offer any guarantee of future financial security. It is at least equally likely that the musicians of the NSO, with growing confidence in their orchestra, sought to free themselves from Beecham.

⁴⁵ See Beecham, *A Mingled Chime*, 89; and Lucas, *Thomas Beecham*, 36.

⁴⁶ Lucas, *Thomas Beecham*, 40.

⁴⁷ Beecham's statement appeared in the *Musical News* on 27 February 1909. The NSO's statement has not been traced.

⁴⁸ *Musical Standard* (16 January 1909), 46.

⁴⁹ See Lucas, *Thomas Beecham*, 40.

3.2.3 A Co-operative Orchestra

At this point, it is appropriate to consider the organisation of the NSO and the inferences that can be drawn about its working practices. The NSO was a player-run orchestra and, along with the LSO, was credited with bringing ‘modern methods of finance into orchestral organisation’.⁵⁰ The co-operative basis of the LSO’s self-proclaimed ‘musical republic’ is well known:⁵¹ all the players shared the orchestra’s risks and its profits, elected the board, and chose the conductors and soloists they worked with.⁵² It seems that the NSO operated along the same lines, as several sources refer to the orchestral members being reliant on dividends.⁵³ This gave the players a vested interest in the long-term success of the enterprise, as it was to their advantage to build the orchestra’s reputation and make it a financially viable concern.

Table 3.2: NSO Board of Directors, 1909, instruments and training

Name	Orchestral Position	Training
Eli Hudson	1st Flute	RCM 1895-1899
Walter Henry Cordwell	1st Bassoon	RCM 1889-1892
Charles Draper	1st Clarinet	RCM 1889-1894
J. H. Geary	1st Trombone	Unknown
Thomas F. Morris	Principal 2nd Violin	RCM 1896-1902
John Saunders	Leader	GDSM
H. Stanislaus	Cello	RCM 1899-1902
H. Waldo Warner	Principal Viola	Unknown

Table 3.2, which is based on the earliest extant list of the board of directors, shows the degree of influence that the wind players had over the orchestra.⁵⁴ The training background of the board members reflects the fact that Draper and Hudson gathered around them a group of players from their network of fellow RCM alumni. The

⁵⁰ Nettel, *The Orchestra in England*, 253.

⁵¹ ‘The London Symphony Orchestra’, in *Inaugural concert of the London Symphony Orchestra* [concert programme], Queen’s Hall, 9 September 1904.

⁵² See Morrison, *Orchestra: The LSO*, 22.

⁵³ Strutt, *Reminiscences of a Musical Amateur*, 144; and Jackson, *First Flute*, 38.

⁵⁴ From *New Symphony Orchestra Symphony Concert*, Queen’s Hall, 2 December 1909. Royal College of Music Centre for Performance History, collection ‘London: Halls - Queen’s Hall’

woodwind and horn sections consisted almost entirely of RCM graduates of the 1890s and early 1900s. Extant orchestra lists, reproduced in Appendix A, suggest that throughout the period to 1914 the woodwind section had a relatively stable personnel dominated by RCM graduates. The strings contained few RCM musicians.⁵⁵ Leader John Saunders, who had trained at the Guildhall School with John Carrodus, was presumably in charge of building the NSO's string section; and, as a well-respected and established chamber musician and orchestral leader, he was in a position to recruit good string players of all backgrounds from throughout the profession.

There are of course serious questions over the reliability of printed orchestra lists, due to the issue of orchestral deputising. Much has been written about the 'deputy system', prevalent before the establishment of contracted orchestras in the 1930s; under this system, a player reserved the right to send someone in his place if a more lucrative or important engagement was offered. This has led to the idea that, prior to 1930, London orchestras maintained little distinction between their memberships; in the oft-quoted words of Francis Toye, there was merely 'a pool of freelance players from which ... some three orchestras can be formed, at a pinch'.⁵⁶ This in turn has cast doubt over the accuracy of orchestra lists printed in concert programmes.⁵⁷

First, it is important to recognise that Toye's comment was made in the late 1920s during the build-up to the foundation of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, when various parties including Thomas Beecham were seeking support for a permanent orchestra. Even if orchestral standards were as low and deputising as rife as has been suggested during the 1920s – a fact which will be discussed later – the same assumptions cannot be automatically extended to before the First World War, when orchestral activity was booming, young players were abundant and competition between orchestras was driving up standards. Deputising undoubtedly took place; but one might ask why, if it was as widespread as was later suggested, orchestra lists were included in concert programmes. Not only would such lists be meaningless, but they would serve to highlight the problem.

⁵⁵ Aside from the principal second violin, Thomas F. Morris, there are two first violins, one violist and four cello-players on the orchestra list for the concert on 2 December 1909 who trained at the RCM.

⁵⁶ Toye, cited in Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain*, 207.

⁵⁷ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain*, 207-8; Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 8-9; Morrison, *Orchestra: LSO*, 12-14; and Nettel, *The Orchestra in England*, 248-9.

Comparison of the NSO orchestra lists with those of the LSO, QHO and Beecham Orchestras shows that, at least in principle, each group strove to maintain a distinct cast of players, suggesting that the identity of an orchestra – its ‘brand’ – was related to the idea of a unique personnel, which was expressed through the list of players in each programme.⁵⁸ Principal players almost never featured on the lists of more than one group during the same season, and most remained connected to the same orchestra for many years at a time, which surely would not be the case if orchestra membership was as fluid as has been suggested. Tellingly, there were no orchestra lists in the programmes of the QHO for almost ten years following the mass resignation of players in 1904. This may indicate that Wood was not able to stabilise the orchestra’s membership for some years and did not want to advertise the fact; however, it may equally have been a power-play, keeping the players anonymous and therefore dispensable, rather than allowing them to gain the recognition and ultimately celebrity that had allowed the 1904 musicians to mutiny and set up on their own.⁵⁹ The fact that the QHO began publishing lists again in the early 1910s therefore says much about the value of the orchestral list as a brand statement, a value that relied on the list giving a fair representation of the players on stage.

The nature of a self-governed orchestra also has implications for the practice of deputising. In such an organisation, players’ responsibility was to their colleagues; and the core players, as shareholders, had a vested interest in maintaining the orchestra’s reputation. Fuller-Maitland’s review of the LSO’s first concert in *The Times* observed that ‘as none of the prominent players availed themselves of the privilege of sending deputies as substitutes – the privilege for which they had seceded from the other organisation – the volume of tone was magnificent, and the effect of the performance

⁵⁸ A sample of the vast quantity of programmes surveyed is: for the Beecham Orchestra: *Thomas Beecham Orchestral Concerts, Second Series: First Concert*, Queen’s Hall, 2 February 1909; *Saint-Saëns Jubilee Festival*, Queen’s Hall, 2 June 1913. For the New Symphony Orchestra: *New Symphony Orchestra Symphony Concert*, Queen’s Hall, 2 December 1909; *New Symphony Orchestra Symphony Concert*, Queen’s Hall, 31 October 1912. For the LSO: *London Symphony Orchestra Concerts 1909-1910* [series prospectus], Queen’s Hall; *London Symphony Orchestra Concert*, Queen’s Hall, 16 June 1913. For the Queen’s Hall Orchestra: *London Music Festival 1911*, Queen’s Hall, 22-27 May 1911; *Queen’s Hall Symphony Concert*, Queen’s Hall, 1 February 1913.

⁵⁹ Prior to 1904, in programmes for the Proms, players’ names were given both in the form of an orchestra list and in the main programme to identify the soloists in the medleys and fantasias that always appeared in the second half of each concert. Leanne Langley has suggested that this was a deliberate move to create rapport between the audience and the familiar faces in the orchestra. See Langley, ‘Building an Orchestra’, 47-8.

under Dr. Richter was truly memorable'.⁶⁰ To say that the players of the LSO recognised the importance of turning out to play for their own debut concert merely states the obvious, but one can speculate that this would be true of other concerts key to establishing and maintaining the orchestra's reputation, such as its flagship Symphony Concerts series. The same model can be extended to the NSO.

Ultimately, it will never be known to what extent the NSO's players sent deputies to concerts and rehearsals, and indeed the question is less relevant than that of attendance at recording sessions, which will be discussed below. However, it is assumed here that the printed personnel lists do give a useful indication of the orchestra's membership and that the players rehearsed together frequently enough to be considered a regular orchestra rather than simply a scratch ensemble, a hypothesis that is more than supported by the evidence of the recordings considered later in this chapter.

3.3 Heyday, 1909–1919

3.3.1 Concert Activity 1909–1919

Following the split from Beecham, the NSO's players wasted no time in holding rehearsals and inviting prospective new conductors to attend.⁶¹ They found their ideal match in Landon Ronald (1873–1938). Unusually for a conductor, Ronald was not born into the upper classes but was the illegitimate son of the Jewish popular songwriter Henry Russell. Moreover, he had the same educational background as his players, having studied at the RCM. Perhaps a result, it seems he shared Hudson's and Draper's ambitious and entrepreneurial attitude, as well as their practical approach to building an orchestra, traits that some found unseemly.⁶² Despite this, Ronald had, on his rapid rise through the ranks as accompanist, repetiteur and finally conductor, built a wide network of contacts and cultivated close relationships with the likes of Nellie Melba and Edward

⁶⁰ Fuller Maitland, cited in Morrison, *Orchestra*, 26.

⁶¹ Ronald, *Myself and Others*, 26.

⁶² 'He has made plenty of mistakes in his career, and if he finds that for a little while people are inclined to associate him with the music heard in the drawing-rooms of rich Orientals, with the vain and inartistic doings that surround the personalities of operatic stars, with a success which is not free from the suspicion of being due to the influence of great people, he only has himself to blame'. Filson Young, 'New Symphony Orchestra', 331.

Elgar, which would be of great benefit to the NSO over the coming years. To the musical public, he was well known as a song composer and was regarded as one of the most exciting conducting talents of the day, able to boast of regular appearances with the London Symphony Orchestra. Ronald's reputation was further enhanced by a successful trip to Germany in late 1907, during which he had become the first Englishman to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic, the local press comparing his performances favourably to Weingartner, Mahler and Nikisch.⁶³ Perhaps most importantly, his connections within the music world had led directly to his recruitment by The Gramophone Company as their 'Musical Advisor', responsible for convincing celebrity performers to sign recording contracts, a fact which enabled Ronald to bring the NSO into the recording studio almost immediately. In Ronald, the NSO had found a conductor who could bring musical prestige while helping the orchestra build the portfolio of engagements essential for any degree of financial stability.

The relationship between Ronald and the NSO was cemented by a series of six concerts at the Queen's Hall from March to June 1909, 'the orchestra to play for nothing (as the LSO was doing), the losses to be born by Ronald'.⁶⁴ Reviews of the early concerts were mixed, most identifying weaknesses in the group that needed to be overcome for the orchestra to fulfil its potential. Filson Young praised the players' 'youth and seriousness' and their 'spirit of artistic earnestness', but found that the orchestra

lacks the machine-like finish with which Mr Wood's band performs music of every kind, and therefore in kinds of music that require such precision and polish it is inferior to the Queen's Hall Band; and for the present at any rate it does not boast a collection of incomparable artists such as are the glory of the London Symphony Orchestra.⁶⁵

Young's recommendation that the brass and woodwind needed to improve their balance and blend, both within sections and with the rest of the orchestra, was echoed by other writers. J. H. G. Baughan of the *Musical Standard* was most direct, remarking, 'Mr. Ronald will do well to keep his "brass" more subdued (insisting, too, upon the best quality of tone), remembering that his strings are not, at present, remarkably powerful in

⁶³ See Druckenfield, *O Lovely Knight*, 57.

⁶⁴ Ronald, *Myself and Others*, 28.

⁶⁵ *Loc. cit.*

tone'.⁶⁶ However, the overall critical consensus was that the young group would be a force to be reckoned with, given a little more experience playing together.

The NSO immediately mounted a second series of Symphony Concerts for the 1909–10 season, this time without needing Ronald to underwrite the losses. An impressive list of backers was secured, many of whom were close associates of the conductor, including Nellie Melba and Ronald's publishers, Enoch & Sons. Elgar and Stanford appeared on the list of patrons printed in the first programme, which announced the founding of a library of music for the orchestra, based on donations from Ronald and some of the players. All this testified to a commitment on the part of Ronald to build up 'his' orchestra. The orchestra, in return, welcomed his leadership, eventually inviting him to join of the board of directors, an offer that had not been extended to Beecham.⁶⁷

The 1909–10 Symphony Concerts season was also well received. Richard Capell of the *Musical Standard* noted, 'It would be unjust to leave unpraised the playing of the Orchestra. They did better than last year and will probably go on improving. The names of all the musicians were, very properly, printed in the programme; it was interesting to note that English names predominated overwhelmingly'.⁶⁸ Capell's typically Edwardian pride in the prevalence of native musicians in the orchestra highlights that, as a young, home-grown orchestra, the NSO were noticeably a breed apart from their rivals.

Ronald and the NSO continued to give a series of Symphony Concerts at the Queen's Hall every season until the First World War. The programmes typically combined standard repertoire, including symphonies and overtures by Beethoven, Brahms and Wagner, with a generous selection of 'novelties' – new works and other pieces which were unfamiliar to the public. Ronald's core repertoire was Tchaikovsky and Elgar, both of which were strongly represented, particularly in the seasons immediately preceding the First World War. The orchestra's performances of these works were initially met with great acclaim, but as the 1910s went on, both composers suffered a collapse of favour. Two all-Elgar concerts in the NSO's 1913–14 season, which included the premiere of *Falstaff*, were poorly attended, and Ronald's Tchaikovsky nights, though

⁶⁶ J. H. G. Baughan, 'Comment and Opinions', *The Musical Standard* (27 March 1909), 195.

⁶⁷ Ronald is named as the Chairman of the Board of Directors in a concert programme from the Queen's Hall, 31 October 1912; however, few programmes from this period survive and he is likely to have joined the board somewhat earlier than this.

⁶⁸ Capell, *Musical Standard* (16 October 1909), 244.

wildly popular with the public, caused *The Times* to sneer both at the programming and the interpretation:

The Tchaikovsky lemon is evidently not yet squeezed dry. At any rate Mr. Landon Ronald and the New Symphony Orchestra showed on Saturday afternoon that it is possible to squeeze enough juice from it to keep a large audience at Queens Hall happily engaged in the process of lapping it up.

Mr Ronald's method is extraordinarily skillful. He knows so well where to give the squeeze. ... The second subject of the [Fifth] Symphony's first movement had a languishing, you-made-me-love-you kind of sentiment dependent upon a hastening and dragging of the time, nicely calculated to give a fresh fillip to a jaded palate.⁶⁹

These comments, made at a time when Tchaikovsky's music was associated by musicologists with 'hysteria',⁷⁰ reflect a turn against the extravagant and over-expressive in performance which is also evident in press reactions to performances by the Ballet Russes during this exact period, considered in chapter one above.⁷¹ Ronald and the NSO's association with this repertoire undoubtedly damaged its reputation in the long term, contributing to the retrospective assessment that it was a populist orchestra. In reality, a study of the orchestra's advertised programmes shows that this was not the case, for as well as their mastery of familiar repertoire, the NSO contributed much to the promotion of new music, an attribute that would normally justify historical recognition. Alongside the first performance of *Falstaff*, the NSO gave premieres of works by a host of young British composers, including Hamilton Harty's Violin Concerto, and whole evenings dedicated to modern British and continental composers. The NSO was also used by Henry Balfour Gardiner in his new music series of 1911 and 1912, concerts which have received attention from scholars of British music for their part in Gardiner's campaign to raise the profile of the 'Frankfurt Group' of composers, including Bax, Delius, Holst and Vaughan Williams.⁷²

Ronald's influence and connections in the musical world were not simply confined to finding backers for the NSO's concerts. His good relationships with soloists and agents,

⁶⁹ 'A Tchaikovsky Concert', *The Times* (20 April 1914), 12.

⁷⁰ See Thomas, 'The Impact of Russian Music', 22–38.

⁷¹ Thomas, 'Modernism, Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes', 67–74.

⁷² Lloyd, 'Gardiner, Henry Balfour', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 05 January 2011).

notably Ibbs and Tillett, bought a steady flow of soloists' concerts the orchestra's way.⁷³ Ronald had also become increasingly involved in conducting the weekly Royal Albert Hall Sunday Afternoon Concerts since they began in 1905–6, and it was presumably through his influence that the the NSO became the resident orchestra for the concerts from 1909.⁷⁴ The programmes had previously been constructed along the principle of miscellany, with a high proportion of instrumental and vocal solos, but Ronald's biographer suggests that Ronald made efforts to increase the orchestral content of the concerts and 'make the programmes of artistic and musical worth'.⁷⁵ The published programmes for the concerts in 1909–10 show that the format remained reliant on familiar works, though Ronald succeeded in introducing new music to the concerts, with William Wallace, Norman O'Neill and Granville Bantock all featuring in the NSO's first season, as well as a complete performance of Elgar's First Symphony. The residency continued for a decade, the concerts becoming the orchestra's staple engagement, and proved a beneficial training ground for the ensemble. This, combined with provincial engagements promoted by the impresario Percy Harrison and celebrity tours with the likes of Nellie Melba, provided the NSO with a stable portfolio of work during the years 1910–1914.

At this point in the story, world events intervened: the declaration of war in 1914 put a stop to much London concert life, including the NSO's Queen's Hall seasons. The Royal Albert Hall concerts continued throughout the war, but most other work ceased. The NSO's only significant new venture before 1919 was a series of Saturday night promenade concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in June 1915, conducted jointly by Ronald and Thomas Beecham. The programmes, which excluded German music, were generously praised in the *Musical Times*, which stated that, despite the lack of first performances, it was 'one of the most admirable series of concerts ever given in London'.⁷⁶ However, audiences for the four-week endeavour were not large, and the concerts were not repeated in following years.

⁷³ Ronald was frequently in correspondence with Ibbs and Tillett suggesting promising new performers, and was even involved with designing the book they used to record notes of auditionees, though whether he participated in the audition panel is unknown. See Fifield, *Ibbs and Tillett*, 61 and 157.

⁷⁴ See Druckenfield, 61.

⁷⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁶ 'London Concerts: Royal Albert Hall Promenade Concerts', *Musical Times* (July 1915), 429.

3.3.2 Recording Activity 1909–1919

The NSO's association with Landon Ronald from 1909 led it immediately into the recording studio and marked the beginning of a 20-year-long association with The Gramophone Company (TGC). As TGC's 'house orchestra', it was London's first specialist recording orchestra. A consideration of the NSO's early recording career and its relationship with TGC provides the background for the analysis of recordings that follows.

Towards orchestral recording

By the late 1900s, improvements in recording technology made orchestral recording increasingly viable. In late April 1909, Fred Gaisberg wrote to his brother Will from Milan, 'I am going right ahead merrily making records ... I made orchestral solos this morning - 35 players.'⁷⁷ Gaisberg was probably referring to the orchestra of La Scala, also known as the Scala Symphony Orchestra, which discographer Claude Gravelly Arnold cites as making the 'first musically significant series of orchestral recordings'⁷⁸, demonstrating that the gramophone could achieve 'a passable echo of what was to be heard in the theatre and the concert hall', as well as being the first orchestral records to achieve international distribution.⁷⁹

At the same time that Gaisberg was writing excitedly about recording an orchestra of 35 in Milan, the London Palace Theatre Orchestra released a recording of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* under their musical director Hermann Finck, for the Odeon label.⁸⁰ Like Ronald at TGC, Finck held the position of Musical Director at the International Talking Machine Company, which owned the Odeon label.⁸¹ His orchestra at the Palace was one of the best-trained and best-paid theatre orchestras in London,⁸² and the recording is notable for being the first extended orchestral recording issued in an album, rather than as separate discs.⁸³

⁷⁷ Gaisberg, cited in Moore, *A Voice in Time*, 116.

⁷⁸ Arnold, *The Orchestra on Record*, xvi.

⁷⁹ Arnold, xvi.

⁸⁰ Tchaikovsky, *Nutcracker Suite*, Finck, London Palace Orchestra. 78rpm. Odeon 0745/78, released April 1909.

⁸¹ Arnold, 650.

⁸² Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain*, 175; Finck, *My Melodious Memories*, 62.

⁸³ Arnold, 'Orchestral recordings', in Hoffman, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Recorded Sound*, I: 781.

Together, the recordings by the Palace Theatre Orchestra and the Scala Symphony Orchestra showed that the time was right for gramophone companies to move into orchestral recordings, a development of which Ronald, as TGC's Musical Advisor, would surely have been aware. Without access to correspondence, it is impossible to know what negotiations went on between Ronald, TGC and the NSO, but the fact that the orchestra began recording within six months of Ronald becoming principal conductor does suggest that studio work featured in the Ronald's plans for the ensemble from the start.

Unfortunately, no papers relating to the contractual relationship between the NSO and TGC have been made available, though an unattributed discography in Ronald's Artist File at the EMI archives makes reference to a 'contract 1909 between The Gramophone Company and Landon Ronald to conduct the New Symphony Orchestra'.⁸⁴ The subject index to the EMI Board minutes records that, later in 1916, 'Landon Ronald and Orchestra' were contracted for six sessions per annum.⁸⁵ This hints that the NSO was bound up in Ronald's contractual relationship with TGC, though instances in 1910 and after 1923 of the orchestra recording with other conductors show that it also worked for the Company independently. Beyond that, all that can be surmised is that the orchestra had an exclusive relationship with TGC and that it had a succession of annual and multi-year contracts for a minimum number of sessions per year.⁸⁶

Repertoire

The NSO's first recording session took place on 15 July 1909, only six months after the orchestra had announced its split from Beecham. Under Ronald's direction four discs of music were made, including the first and third movements of Grieg's Piano Concerto in A minor with Wilhelm Backhaus, abridged so that each movement fitted onto one

⁸⁴ *Sir Landon Ronald: Discography*. Landon Ronald Artist File, EMI Archives, Hayes.

⁸⁵ Access to minutes held in the EMI Archives is currently denied, but a subject index to the minutes of various committees exists, compiled by former EMI archivist Ruth Edge, is available to view. This contains multiple references to Ronald and the NSO, which will be drawn on in the following section. *Subject Index: EMI Board*, Subject: Ronald, Landon, Entry: 4 June 1916

⁸⁶ Further references to Ronald and the NSO in the card indexes to the minutes of the Executive Committee and EMI Board indicate that the orchestra's contract was renewed in 1918, for two years; in 1920, with Ronald; in 1922, for three years at six sessions per annum; and in 1925 and 1928, each for three years.

single-sided 12" record. Gaisberg later recalled that the records provoked a significant reaction:

I remember the sensation created when Backhaus played an excerpt from the Grieg Piano Concerto with Sir Landon Ronald. The brilliance of the piano cadenzas and the "catchy" themes of the Concerto roused general enthusiasm and hastened on the development and improvement of gramophone recording technique.⁸⁷

The NSO went on recording prolifically throughout the early 1910s, its output far exceeding that of any rivals. The repertoire was dominated by popular classical works, some of which would have been familiar not only to concert goers but also to frequenters of music-halls.⁸⁸ Arguably, the NSO's recordings were designed to appeal to a broad audience, while TGC's high-culture aspirations were carried by Arthur Nikisch, who was wooed by the Company to make recordings with the London Symphony and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestras in 1913.⁸⁹ Martland refers to Nikisch's recordings as the most important orchestral discs of the pre-First World War era, bringing new prestige to the Company.⁹⁰ Yet it was Ronald and the NSO who recorded the bulk of the HMV orchestral catalogue, achieving a standard of playing and quality of recording that rivalled Nikisch's discs in every way.

The music recorded by the NSO was extremely challenging for the players. The NSO's 1911 sessions included repertoire as diverse and demanding as the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* incidental music, Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* Overture, Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, overtures by Beethoven and Weber, the third movement from Tchaikovsky's 6th Symphony, Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* Overture, and Debussy's *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, all in abridged arrangements.⁹¹ The first batch of releases were accompanied by a three-page spread describing them as 'the most perfect examples of Orchestral Recording yet made'. Of the Scherzo, it was boasted 'such lightness of the flute passages has never been attained on a record before', and that 'to get the true effect of the "Figaro" Overture by means of a record is an

⁸⁷ Gaisberg, 'Sir Landon Ronald', 147.

⁸⁸ Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste*, 239.

⁸⁹ Nikisch's 1913 recordings will be discussed further in the next section.

⁹⁰ Martland, *EMI*, 62.

⁹¹ Discographical database, *CHARM* website, online (accessed 7 January 2011); and Arnold, *The Orchestra on Record*, *passim*.

achievement to be proud of'.⁹² The response must have been favourable, as Ronald and the NSO returned to the studio between January and March 1912 for a total of 12 days, during which they recorded 34 sides, comprising nearly two dozen works. These were released at a rate of two or three discs per month from January to June and September to December 1912, always accompanied by a two or three-page feature, including photographs, at the front of the Company's monthly supplement. The repertoire was varied, including overtures, opera interludes, symphonic poems, and movements from larger works, most of which were familiar from the orchestra's Sunday Orchestral Concerts.

The orchestra continued recording regularly before and during the war, and the emphasis on short, popular orchestral works continued until 1916, from which point there was a move toward recording longer works as well as making new versions of music already released. This was in part due to advances in recording techniques, but HMV may also have been responding to a recent series of orchestral releases by Thomas Beecham and the Beecham Orchestra on the Columbia label. The most significant projects undertaken by Ronald and the NSO during this period were an abridged recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherezade*, recorded and released in instalments between 1916 and 1919, and an extraordinary recording of Dukas's *l'Apprenti Sorcier*, reported to be the recording of which Ronald was most proud, which was completed in a single day in November 1919.⁹³ These discs formed a logical progression toward the NSO's first recording of a full symphony, Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 'From the New World', begun in late 1919 and completed in a series of sessions in October and November 1921.⁹⁴

Marketing the NSO

As there was no pre-existing market for orchestral recording in 1909, the NSO was responsible for building a consumer base for orchestral repertoire as well as being a pathfinder for orchestral recording techniques, facts that shaped the orchestra's output

⁹² *His Master's Voice New Records* (December 1911), 2–4.

⁹³ *The Voice* (August 1920), 13.

⁹⁴ Recording sheets, 'Royal Albert Hall Orchestra', 1–6. An extra session was taken in December 1922 to re-make the Largo, which had been criticised on its release for blemishes in the cor anglais solo. Scholes notes the release of the second, improved version of the Largo in Scholes, *Second Book of the Gramophone*, 42–58.

throughout the 1910s. The orchestra's records were released on TGC's His Master's Voice (HMV) label, and HMV's marketing of the early NSO recordings suggests that there were three possible target groups for the NSO's records: existing consumers of popular or celebrity red label records, who may not have had a prior knowledge of orchestral music; gramophone enthusiasts, whose interest was in the technology itself as much as the content of the discs they bought; and orchestral concert-goers, including the NSO's own regular audience, who might be enticed to purchase records in order to recreate the concert experience in their own homes. To the first group, HMV directed extended write-ups of the NSO's new records in its catalogue supplements, providing descriptions of the music complete with printed musical examples in the manner of analytical programme notes.⁹⁵ For the second group, the write-ups included descriptions of particular technical triumphs and sonic effects that had been achieved, such as the realistic capture of a french horn or timpani, which tempted the 'gramophile' to buy the record on the basis of its ground-breaking fidelity. The final group, the concert-goers, were targeted by adverts in the NSO's own concert programmes, which emphasised the 'beauty of tone and accuracy'⁹⁶ and promised 'records of this orchestra are universally recognised as the finest examples of recording extant'.⁹⁷ The monthly catalogue supplements also sought to allay fears about the standard of reproduction, with an emphasis on the sound of the NSO's wind section:

These special records ... inaugurate a new era in orchestral recording. For tone quality, balance and executive excellence, they are far ahead of anything of the kind ever done before. The effect of a big orchestra is, indeed, fully realised ... the wind instruments are heard with beautiful clearness and individuality of tone.⁹⁸

In order to appeal to these potential customers and build a market for orchestral recording, therefore, the NSO's releases had to satisfy on artistic and technical grounds as well as being accessible to listeners who were unfamiliar with orchestral music.

TGC's own motivation for making orchestral recordings is also a relevant consideration. Such recordings were never going to make a significant impact on the

⁹⁵ See for instance [Gramophone Co. Ltd], *New Gramophone Records* (November 1909), 1-2.

⁹⁶ *Royal Albert Hall Sunday Afternoon Concerts*. Royal Albert Hall, 18 February 1912.

⁹⁷ *Queen's Hall Symphony Concert*, Queen's Hall, 31 October 1912.

⁹⁸ [Gramophone Co. Ltd], *New Gramophone Records* (November 1909), 1-2.

Company's balance sheet. Celebrity operatic records, already an important and established part of the Company's marketing strategy, accounted for only 1% of unit sales in 1913.⁹⁹ 'Always and ever it was the popular music, the topical song, the review hit, the newest musical comedy waltz, and the comic song that carried the business on its back and made the classical adventure possible', wrote Herbert Ridout, Publicity Manager for Columbia in the 1920s.¹⁰⁰ The value of classical recordings to the gramophone companies was not in revenue but prestige, part of the on-going campaign to establish the gramophone as a respectable form of entertainment. The vigour with which TGC pursued its orchestral recording programme with the NSO indicates that it felt the orchestra was making a meaningful contribution to its profile as a purveyor of high-class music, as well as a showcase for the advances being made in recording quality.

As TGC's house artists, Ronald and the NSO had a broad and challenging remit: to make discs of music that was accessible to new listeners but also appealing to the NSO's own concert audience; to convince the record-buying public that orchestral recording was viable from a technical point of view; and to contribute to the establishment of the HMV 'brand' as a provider of high-quality, high-class music. They addressed this challenge by recording works which were firmly within their concert repertoire, particularly that from their Sunday Orchestral Concerts, which delivered exactly the kind of well-loved works that would appeal to a broad range of consumers. Familiarity with the music also ensured a high standard of performance from the orchestra. It is notable that many of the works recorded in the early 1910s were based around virtuosic or soloistic wind writing, which both showed off the orchestra's stellar wind players and was better suited to the limitations of acoustic recording.

It is easy to dismiss the NSO's 1910s discography as mere lollipops for the masses, a succession of popular classics simply designed to sell recordings. But to do so is to ignore the fact that, until the late 1910s, there was no market for recordings of 'serious' orchestral repertoire as it is understood today, even if it had been technically feasible to record such works. It is also wrong to suggest that because the NSO recorded music now considered populist its records are somehow less meaningful as evidence of performing

⁹⁹ Martland, *Since Records Began*, 62-3.

¹⁰⁰ Ridout, 'Behind the Needle' VII, 174.

style. Comparisons with the orchestra's 1920s recordings later in this chapter will show that the wind playing style remained much the same when the orchestra began recording what is now considered 'serious' repertoire. For the purposes of this section, the extant recordings will be taken at face value, as the earliest significant body of evidence of wind playing styles in a London orchestra.

Recording the NSO

The NSO was the vehicle through which the Gramophone Company developed its approach to orchestral recording. Jerrold Northrop Moore has highlighted the importance that TGC placed on using experienced musicians for its orchestral recordings in the 1910s,¹⁰¹ and some members of the NSO brought a wealth of studio experience to the orchestra's early sessions. Charles Draper and Eli Hudson had been recording for TGC since the early 1900s.¹⁰² NSO leader John Saunders's name first appeared in the HMV catalogues as a member of the Renard Trio in 1910, though it is likely that such a prominent London musician would have become familiar with the recording studio long before that. Other members of the orchestra, including principal oboe Arthur Foreman and co-principal flute Gilbert Barton, began making solo recordings for the HMV label in the early 1910s, just as the NSO's own programme of recording began.

Nonetheless, and despite the fact that the NSO appears to have had a relatively stable membership during the pre-First World War period, it is still impossible to be certain of the identity of the players on its recordings. The flute is the most problematic instrument, as Eli Hudson shared the principal flute position with Gilbert Barton from 1910, and Barton may have taken over completely by 1912.¹⁰³ It is therefore unknown which player featured on any given recording. According to the extant orchestra lists,

¹⁰¹ Moore, *Elgar on Record*, 6.

¹⁰² Draper's early recordings are frequently difficult to identify, as he recorded for a number of different companies under different names; however his earliest attributed recordings for The Gramophone Company appear to be three recordings with the catalogue numbers 6018–6020, made in 1902. These were bravura arrangements of traditional themes, *Ye banks and braes o' bonnie doon* and *Auld Robin Gray*, and *Mohr's Air Varié*. (Discographical database, CHARM website (accessed 7 January 2011). Eli Hudson's recording career probably began with the Fransella Flute Quartet in 1898, after which he made a number of solo flute and piccolo records and took part in promotional 'concerts' for the Company, at which live performances were given alongside recorded ones. Hudson was also one of the regular conductors of the Black Diamonds Band, a military band that released hundreds of popular music records on the Company's budget Zonophone label. See Lotz, 'Black Diamonds are Forever', 219.

¹⁰³ The only extant orchestra list from the 1910s is from October 1912, which lists Barton as sole principal. In the absence of more lists from the period before Hudson's death in 1919, it is impossible to know if he had left the orchestra.

the identity of the other wind principals remained unchanged until the 1920s, a fact that appears to be reflected by a continuity of playing style in the recordings, which will be discussed at length below. Unfortunately, presumably due to the limitations of the recording equipment, there is almost no audible bassoon playing on the NSO's recordings from this early period; therefore it is not possible to discuss bassoon-playing style based on these examples.

The consistency of production staffing for the NSO's recording sessions probably reflected the Company's desire to build expertise. According to the information encoded in the matrix numbers of the discs cut,¹⁰⁴ Will Gaisberg oversaw the NSO's sessions in 1909–10. After his withdrawal from recording to concentrate on administrative affairs in 1911, the engineer William Hancox became the NSO's regular expert, overseeing all of its 1911 sessions and the majority from 1912 to 1915. Landon Ronald would also have made an important contribution: as TGC's 'house conductor', a position similar to a record producer in the modern era, Ronald was responsible for overseeing operations in the recording studio as well as arranging the music and so would have been actively involved in the development of protocols for recording his orchestra.¹⁰⁵

This continuity of staffing is reflected by a consistency in the sound of the NSO's early recordings. There was no attempt to reproduce a naturalistic orchestral sound by recording something resembling a normal orchestra: rather, close listening to the NSO's 1911–12 recordings suggests that small forces were used, in order to achieve clarity of the individual parts and presumably minimise problems of ensemble. For instance, in the orchestra's 1912 recording of Schubert's 'Unfinished' Symphony, a small string section is audible, possibly supplemented by Stroh instruments, as well as single woodwind, and brass reinforcement of lower parts (track 3_01).¹⁰⁶ The overall effect is not the grotesque parody of an orchestra one might expect: the group is well balanced and the ensemble remarkably tight, and the result is almost chamber-music like. Furthermore, the re-orchestration contributes to a clearly characterised rendition of the work, with the basic components of the music well defined. One could argue that the

¹⁰⁴ Kelly, *Structure of the Gramophone Company and its output, 1898-1954*, 14.

¹⁰⁵ See Patmore, 'The House Conductors', on the *CHARM* website, online (accessed 19 March 2013).

¹⁰⁶ Stroh string instruments, named after their inventor Augustus Stroh, have a metal resonator and horn in place of the normal wooden sound-box, thus producing a stronger sound that reproduced well on acoustic recordings. They were widely used for recordings before the advent of electric recording.

trademark NSO production values were indicative of a practical, unpretentious approach to orchestral recording that reflected their status as a house orchestra, whose job was to provide a clear rendering of each work, along with the brilliance and virtuosity that the orchestra brought to their studio work. The results can be contrasted with the discs made by Nikisch and the LSO in 1913, where the use of what appears to be a larger orchestra and an orchestration more faithful to the original nonetheless results in far less clarity and precision of ensemble. In Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* overture, the LSO's recording (track 3_02), while beautifully shaped by Nikisch, is nonetheless far less tight and sparkling than the NSO's of two years earlier (track 3_03). Though neither recording has a perfect orchestral balance, and despite Ronald's breakneck tempo, the NSO musicians achieve better ensemble than their counterparts in the LSO, perhaps on account of the smaller forces used.

This is not to say that the NSO's recordings are without fault. There are flaws of intonation, though the general level is good, and the precision of ensemble playing within the string sections varies. However, in light of the known challenges of the acoustic recording situation, the recordings should be listened to from the point of view of how much was achieved in very difficult circumstances.

3.3.5 Playing Style 1909-1920

Table 3.3: Recordings cited in section 3.3.5

Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
Grieg	'Morning' from <i>Peer Gynt</i> Suite No. 1, Op. 46	18/11/1911	D 156
Rossini	<i>William Tell</i> Overture	16/03/1912	753
Bizet	<i>Carmen</i> , Entr'act to Act III and IV	08/03/1919	D 134
Debussy	<i>Prelude à l'après-midi d'un Faune</i>	16/12/1911	D 130
Schumann	Romance Op. 94, No. 1 for Oboe and Piano	23/11/1911	9442
Tchaikovsky	1812 Overture	27/05 and 08/07/1916	D122-3
Tchaikovsky	Suite No. 3 in G, Mvt IV, Variations 8-10	19/10/1912	D 163
Mohr	Air Varié	28/07/1909	Z-046000
Liszt	Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, S. 244/2	21/10/1911	D 144
Beethoven	<i>Leonora</i> Overture No. 3, Op. 72b	21/10/1911	0701-3
Weber	<i>Oberon</i> Overture	16/12/1911	D 154
Mendelssohn	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> Overture, Op. 21b	02/03/1913	853
Wagner	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> Overture	02/03/1912	65365
Dukas	<i>l'Apprenti Sorcier</i>	15/11/1919	D 461

Flute

As discussed in chapter two, vibrato is the most commonly studied aspect of flute playing style. The limitations of sound quality on early acoustic recordings often make it difficult to conclusively state whether vibrato is present by close listening alone. However, there are certainly instances when fast, shallow vibrato is audible in the flute, such as the NSO's 1911 recording of *Morning* from Grieg's *Peer Gynt* Suite, where there are audible tremors on the first notes of some phrases (track 3_04; ex. 3.1). There are also selected notes where vibrato is audible in the flute part from the Andante of Rossini's *William Tell* Overture (track 3_05, ex. 3.2). In the NSO's 1919 recording of the Entr'act from Act Three of Bizet's *Carmen*, a more constant vibrato is audible throughout the flute part (track 3_06).

vibrato on the first note when the phrase is repeated in bars 11–14. When the theme returns in bar 21, however, there is a far stronger vibrato on selected notes, and though this may in part reflect the flute player's attempt to project over the fuller orchestration, it also points to expressive differentiation.

Ex. 3.3 Debussy, *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, bars 1–30, abridged, flute.
Sonic devices and breaths, NSO, Ronald, 1911.

The musical score for flute, Ex. 3.3, Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, bars 1–30, is presented in six staves. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 9/8. The tempo is marked 'Très modéré'. The first staff is marked 'p doux et expressif'. It features a 'vib?' marking above the first note and a 'breath' marking above a later note. The second staff has a '1 vib?' marking above the first note and a 'breath' marking above a later note. The third staff has a '2' marking above the first note and a 'breath' marking above a later note. The fourth staff has a 'breath' marking above the first note and another 'breath' marking above a later note. The fifth staff has a 'breath' marking above the first note and a '1.' marking above a later note. The sixth staff has an 'a 2' marking above the first note and a '1. etc.' marking above a later note. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f'.

Based on close listening alone, it is not possible to ascertain whether the flautist(s) in the recordings considered here are playing largely without vibrato and introducing it on specific notes or using a more constant vibrato that is only audible on the recordings when it reaches a certain level of intensity. What is clear is that there is vibrato present

on some occasions – primarily long notes and at the beginning of phrases – and that its use is differentiated, based not merely on tessitura but also on musical context. The fact that it is more often audible at the start of phrases than the end points to a beginning-oriented approach to phrasing. The increased use of vibrato in the Bizet excerpt may point to a different attitude to that composer or, alternatively, indicate that a different flautist is present.

Vibrato is not the only expressive effect audible on the recordings presented, and in many ways is not the most important. The flautist(s) make extensive use of temporal flexibility throughout all of the recordings, in keeping with the NSO's collective style, which will be discussed further below. Also interesting is the attitude to phrase marks and breathing. In the Bizet (track 3_06), the player chooses several breathing points which might, in a modern stylistic context, be considered to break the line of the phrase (ex. 3.4). In bars 11, 14 and 18 they coincide with breaks in the notated slurs, and in the latter two cases with the phrasing pattern of the clarinet part, whereas in bar 6 the player changes the slurring pattern. Only in bar 21 does the breath seem unplanned. Similarly, the opening solo of *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (track 3_07), which is delivered in a strong and unsentimental manner which challenges modern expectations, features a breath which would be considered heretical by flute players today (ex. 3.3 above). That the player takes the same breathing-place at the return of the theme in bar 11 indicates that it is planned rather than accidental, though in this second instance he succeeds in shaping the phrases either side of the breath more successfully to lessen the abruptness of the breath itself, and to make it sound like a musical break of phrase rather than an unwanted slip of control. In the third statement of the material, the frequent breaths, combined with an increase in rhythmic flexibility, create an expressive effect which is far more volatile and dramatic than the long, tranquil phrases that are the norm today.

Ex. 3.4 Bizet, Entr'acte from Act III of *Carmen*, bars 3–23, flute.
Breaths, NSO, Ronald, 1919.

Andantino,
quasi allegretto

Fl. *pp*

breath

breath

breath

breath

breath

trill

etc.

The breathing patterns observed here may be indicative of a lack of breath control on the part of the flautist, or they may result from the extra projection needed when playing for the acoustic horn; but they are a common feature of the flute playing on many of the NSO's recordings, and possible stylistic explanations must also be considered. As discussed in chapter two, a general tendency towards shorter phrases has been observed in musicians of this period, linked to the principle that slurs implied distinct phrasing groups. Certainly the lack of long-line or goal-oriented phrasing is a striking feature of the recordings considered throughout this section. The flautists' decisions to break slurs and separate slurred groups by marked breaths are made in this stylistic context, indicating that continuity of melodic line was not a primary concern of wind players of this period. Moreover, in a work such as the Debussy, which at the time of the recording had a relatively short performing history, this early recording documents an alternative approach to the work from the time before a single approach became normative.

Oboe

It was suggested at the beginning of this section that the stylistic consistency of the oboe playing on the NSO's early recordings indicates the regular presence of Arthur Foreman. This is based on an observable continuity in the use of vibrato, and rubato and phrasing style throughout the NSO's recordings of this period, which furthermore bears

comparison with Foreman's one extant solo recording, of the Schumann *Romances* for Oboe and Piano, made in 1909 (track 3_08, ex. 3.5).

Ex. 3.5 Schumann, Romance Op. 94, No. 1. Temporal and sonic devices, Arthur Foreman, oboe, unknown pianist, 1911.

The musical score is written for Oboe in 3/4 time, marked "Nicht schnell". It consists of nine staves of music, with various performance annotations and dynamic markings.

- Staff 1 (Measures 1-9):** Starts with "[vib throughout]" and dynamic *p*. Annotations include "breath articulation?", "A", "ag.", "breath", and "A". Dynamic *pp* appears at the end of the staff.
- Staff 2 (Measures 10-21):** Starts with dynamic *p*. Annotations include "A", "2", and "A+ag.". Dynamic *fp* appears at the end.
- Staff 3 (Measures 22-30):** Starts with dynamic *p*. Annotations include "A+ag.", "ag.", "A+ag.", and "breath". Dynamic *p* appears at the end.
- Staff 4 (Measures 31-40):** Starts with dynamic *f*. Annotations include "uneven", "A", "A", "A", "breath", and "ag.". Dynamic *sfp* appears at the end.
- Staff 5 (Measures 41-50):** Starts with dynamic *f*. Annotations include "breath", "A", "A", "breath", and "dynamic emphasis". Dynamic *sfp* and *fp* appear.
- Staff 6 (Measures 51-60):** Starts with dynamic *fp*. Annotations include "articulation" and "scherz.". Dynamic *fp* appears.
- Staff 7 (Measures 61-73):** Starts with dynamic *pp*. Annotations include "breath" and "dynamic emphasis".
- Staff 8 (Measures 74-80):** Starts with dynamic *p*. Annotations include "breath", "ag.", and "ag.". Dynamic *fp* appears.
- Staff 9 (Measures 81-89):** Starts with dynamic *pp*. Annotations include "ag.", "ag.", and "breath".

The most prominent feature of the oboe playing on the NSO's recordings of the 1910s is the use of agogic accents and rubato at points of heightened expressivity, such as the end of *Morning* (track 3_04), and the opening of Tchaikovsky's 1812 overture (track 3_09, ex. 3.7 below). There is also extensive use of rhythmic anticipation. The device can clearly be heard in bars 32–40 of the Debussy *Prelude*, where, as is common elsewhere, the anticipated note is combined with an agogic accent (track 3_10). Ex. 3.6 indicates which beats are anticipated. The widespread use of this device and other forms of rhythmic flexibility in the NSO's orchestral recordings is in keeping with Foreman's performance of the Schumann *Romance*, supporting the suggestion that Foreman was indeed regularly present at the NSO's orchestral sessions.

Ex. 3.6 Debussy, *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, bars 37–40, oboe.
Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1911.

Oboe vibrato is even more difficult to discern than flute vibrato on poor-quality recordings, but Foreman's appears to be fast and shallow, used selectively in the context of a primarily non-vibrato tone. This can be heard on the recording of *Morning*, cited above, as well as the Entr'act from Act Four of *Carmen* (track 3_11). Foreman's approach seems to have been more selective than that of the flautist(s), as in *Carmen*, when the vibrato is reserved for the ends of phrases. Interestingly, far more vibrato is audible in his solo recording, possibly due to increased proximity to the recording apparatus. The solo recording also contains a passage at bars 67–71 in which Foreman appears to be using finger- or key-vibrato, in which a strong vibration is achieved by rapidly opening and closing a key or finger-hole on the instrument (track 3_12, ex. 3.5 above); this form of vibrato is not identifiable on any of the orchestral recordings. As an aside, it is not known whether it was Foreman or another player who played the two major cor anglais solos recorded during this period, from Rossini's *William Tell* overture and the fourth movement of Tchaikovsky's Suite No. 3, but neither of these contain any vibrato.

The other stylistic feature which is consistent across the oboe playing in the NSO's recordings is the use of strong articulation, in the form of heavy tonguing at the starts of phrases and clear separation of written slurs. As with the flautist(s), Foreman separates slurred groups and shapes them in a beginning-oriented fashion, using a combination of articulation, dynamic emphasis and temporal accentuation to stress the beginning of each group. This approach is particularly audible Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, both in Foreman's solo (track 3_09) and the wind section tutti a few bars later (track 3_13; ex. 3.7). The same tendency can be heard in the Debussy, cited above (track 3_10, ex. 3.6 above). Foreman shows a similar approach in his recording of the Schumann *Romance*, phrasing very much by the slur, though it is interesting to note that in this solo context he displays a far wider variety of articulation, from the heavy tonguing heard in the orchestral recordings to a much more cushioned articulation in bars 55-6 (track 3_08, ex. 3.5 above). Thus, while comparison with this recording is useful to support the assertion that Foreman is present on the orchestral recordings in question, it also highlights the fact that orchestral recordings do not necessarily document the full range of techniques and expressive devices employed by players of this period.

Ex. 3.7 Tchaikovsky, *1812 Overture*, Op. 49, bars 36-50 abridged, oboe.
Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1916.

The musical score for oboe, Ex. 3.7, Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, Op. 49, bars 36-50 abridged. The score is in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major, and marked (Largo). It features a solo oboe part with dynamics ranging from *f* to *mf*, and includes markings for "piangendo e molto espr." and "ag." (accelerando). The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts with a "solo" marking and a "f" dynamic, followed by "piangendo e molto espr." and two "ag." markings. The second system starts with a "(48)" marking and a "mf" dynamic, followed by "f" and "etc." markings.

Clarinet

There is little doubt of the identity of the clarinettist on the NSO's recordings. Charles Draper left a great number of solo recordings from both the acoustic and electric periods that give a clear impression of his distinctive playing style.¹⁰⁷ The writers

¹⁰⁷ As well as the short virtuoso pieces recorded in the 1900s, Draper made a significant number of chamber music recordings between 1917 and 1928, including two recordings each of the Mozart and Brahms Clarinet Quintets, and one each of the Beethoven Septet and Schubert Octet for wind and strings.

considered in chapter two characterised his playing as bolder and more dramatic than that of his predecessors, traits that can certainly be heard in his 1909 solo recording of Mohr's *Air Varié*, along with a muscular use of rhythmic flexibility (track 3_14). Unexpectedly, this recording also appears to document the use of selected vibrato, a device not usually associated with clarinet playing during this period. The vibrato, which appears to occur on selected notes in the opening section, is very fast and shallow, bearing some resemblance to the flute and oboe vibrato heard above. However, there are no examples of clarinet vibrato in the NSO's recordings from this period.

Due to the limited selection of clarinet solos on NSO recordings of this period, there is less material to consider than was the case for flute or oboe. Draper's firm and direct delivery and exceptionally fluid technique can be heard on the NSO's 1911 recording of Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2* (track 3_15). Draper makes little use of dynamic or tonal shaping on these early recordings, and his tone could be characterised as sustained, as heard in the opening of Beethoven's *Leonore Overture No. 3* (track 3_16). His primary method of accentuation was certainly temporal, and recordings of Weber's *Oberon Overture* and Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* overture both show him using rubato to accentuate the peak of a dynamic hairpin (track 3_17 and 3_18, ex. 3.8 and 3.9). The latter example also shows his tendency towards a more extreme rubato within a fixed tempo than heard in his colleagues' playing. There are no more solo passages on which to base a fuller assessment of his rubato or other aspects of his playing, which will instead be reserved for the discussion of the NSO's 1920s recordings. However, there are numerous examples of his temporal flexibility within ensemble contexts, which are considered further in the following section.

Ex. 3.8 Weber, *Oberon Overture*, bars 64–72, clarinet.
Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1911.

The musical score for Clarinet (A) shows a melodic line in 3/4 time. It begins with a 'dolce' marking and a 'solo' instruction. The tempo is marked '(Allegro con fuoco)'. The score includes a dynamic hairpin that reaches a peak marked 'A' with a downward arrow. Later, there is an 'ag.' (accelerando) marking with a downward arrow. The score ends with 'etc.' and a fermata over the final notes.

Ex. 3.9 Mendelssohn, *A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*, Op. 21, bars 100–108, clarinet. Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1913.

Cl. (A) (Allegro di molto) *p* ag. ag. etc.

Ensemble: Rubato and Virtuosity

Temporal flexibility was a primary feature of the NSO wind section's playing. A subtle rhythmic accentuation can be heard in the flute and cor anglais solos in the Andante of Rossini's *William Tell Overture* (track 3_05), where the second of each three-quaver group is consistently placed early (ex. 3.10); and in *Morning* (track 3_04), where the rhythm is uneven throughout (ex. 3.11).

Ex. 3.10 Rossini, *William Tell Overture*, bars 176–95, flute and cor anglais. Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1912.

Andante
Fl. *tr*
C. A. *solo* *dolce* A A A + ag. A A + ag. etc.

Ex. 3.11 Grieg, 'Morning' from *Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1, Op. 46, bars 1-20, flute and oboe. Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1911.

The musical score for Ex. 3.11 is presented in three systems. The first system shows the flute (Fl.) and oboe (Ob.) parts. The flute part begins with a *p* dynamic and an accent (*A*) on the first note. The oboe part enters in the third measure with a *p* dynamic. The second system continues the flute part with accents and agogic markings, and the oboe part with a *p* dynamic and an accent. The third system shows the flute part with accents and agogic markings, and the oboe part with accents and agogic markings. The score concludes with the word "etc." in the flute part.

The wind principals were practised in accommodating each other's rubato in ensemble contexts, as can be heard in excerpts from Wagner's *Meistersingers* Overture (track 3_19) and the Entr'act from Act Three of Bizet's *Carmen* (track 3_06, ex. 3.12). As has been noted above, the rhythmic devices used included agogic accents, anticipation, and the hurrying of shorter notes, as well as an uneven division between on-beat and off-beat quavers in apparently straight writing, examples of which have been indicated in ex. 3.12. It is notable in this excerpt that despite the almost constant rhythmic flexibility, the flute and clarinet make a point of coming together for their parallel quavers in bars 14 and 19, showing that the players did not conceive their rubato patterns entirely independently.

Ex. 3.12 Bizet, *Carmen*, Entr'acte to Act III, bars 3–23.
Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1919.

The musical score for Ex. 3.12 consists of three systems of staves. The first system is for the Flute (Fl.) and the second system is for the Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. (Bb)). The tempo is marked 'Andantino, quasi allegretto' and the dynamics are 'pp'. The flute part includes annotations for 'A' (accelerando), 'ag.' (allegretto), and 'uneven' (uneven rhythms). The clarinet part includes annotations for 'A' (accelerando), 'A+ag.' (accelerando plus allegretto), 'ag.' (allegretto), and 'ens.' (ensemble). The score shows complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and uneven rhythms, with various articulations and dynamics.

Perhaps the most impressive feature of the NSO wind playing is their ability to achieve precise ensemble during virtuosic wind-section writing. The orchestra's 1919 recording of Dukas's *L'Apprenti Sorcier* shows the players achieving an extraordinary clarity in the complex, fast figurations (track 3_20). This indicates not only a high level of individual technique but also a collective familiarity with the repertoire, presumably resulting from numerous performances at the popular Royal Albert Hall Sunday Concerts, where such works were staples of the programming. Nonetheless, the fact the players could achieve such tightly-knit pyrotechnics in the challenging context of an acoustic recording session testifies to their skill as ensemble players and recording artists.

Preliminary Conclusions

It was noted in chapter one that writers on performance style have tended to equate expressivity in wind playing with the use of vibrato and dynamic and tonal shaping. When judged solely by these criteria, the recordings of the NSO to some extent conform to the Robert Philip's characterisation of the plain, un-nuanced playing that he finds to

be prevalent in British orchestras before the 1930s. There are some isolated instances of tonal inflections, and it appears that fast, shallow vibrato was selectively employed by the flute, oboe and possibly clarinet; but these are both used sparingly. It is when the players' use of other expressive devices is taken into consideration that the full stylistic picture emerges.

In the early acoustic recordings considered here, the NSO wind principals appear to have relied primarily on temporal shaping to communicate their phrasing and expressive intentions. A range of rhythmic inflections and accentuations have been identified, including agogic accents, rhythmic unevenness, and the use of anticipation, in the context of both fast and slow tempos. These devices are used in passages where the tempo remains regular, as well in as freer sections, and disruption of the basic pulse is relatively rare among the examples considered. Further notable features are the use of strong attacks at the beginning of phrases, the clear articulation of slurred groups, and a general absence of long-ling phrasing. The players combine these means to shape the musical material without recourse to subtle tonal or dynamic effects, thus making their playing, by accident or design, ideal for the acoustic recording medium.

It was also noted above that, because the NSO was not a permanent orchestra in the 1930s sense, there is inevitably some doubt over the identity of the players on the recordings considered.¹⁰⁸ However, there is a degree of stylistic consistency across the majority of the extant recordings that suggests a continuity of personnel between recordings sessions. Comparison with solo recordings provides further evidence for the presence of Foreman and Draper on the recordings. Moreover, the standard achieved by the NSO in the face of the challenges of acoustic recording testifies to the ability of the individual players and provides perhaps the strongest evidence that the recordings do represent the playing of a core of musicians who rehearsed, performed and recorded together regularly, rather than the efforts of a collection of deputies and freelancers. The collective rhythmic inflections, level of ensemble and sheer technical pyrotechnics that can be heard on some of the orchestra's recordings could not have been achieved by a scratch orchestra, thereby allaying the doubts raised by the lack of hard evidence as to the identity of the musicians.

¹⁰⁸ Section 3.3.2 Recording activity, 1909–1919: Recording the NSO.

3.4 A New Era 1919–1930

3.4.1 NSO Concert Activity 1919–1930

1919 was a turning point in the story of the NSO. Comparisons of pre- and post-war orchestra lists show that almost all the players survived the war years. However, the few casualties that the orchestra did suffer were crucial. The first was founding member, occasional conductor and principal 'cellist Edward Mason, who died on active service in 1916. Principal flautist and chairman Eli Hudson also saw the front, having enlisted in an 'Artists Regiment' to entertain the troops. Whilst on tour, he was caught in a gas attack, and he died back in London in early 1919. The same year saw the death of leader John Saunders, at the age of 52. Charles Draper remained involved with the orchestra throughout the 1920s, but the NSO had evolved into a different ensemble. The original core of RCM-trained founding members became increasingly depleted, and orchestra lists indicate that the turnover of players increased during the 1920s. The board of directors contained far fewer section leaders, and a greater number of rank-and-file string players, with Draper one of only two wind players on the board. All of these factors contributed to the demise of the orchestra as a serious concert-giving body. New members would inevitably have had less of a sense of ownership over the orchestra and therefore less incentive to engage in projects for which the payment was in artistic satisfaction and the building of the orchestra's reputation as a serious symphonic ensemble.¹⁰⁹

As a result, having ceased giving series of self-promoted Symphony Concerts at the Queen's Hall with the onset of war in 1914, the NSO never returned to the format. Other circumstances also contributed to a change in the orchestra's concert activities. The economics of concert-giving in the 1920s were highly unfavourable, as inflation caused sharp increases in wage demands, hall hire and other associated costs, a fact that may have discouraged the NSO from giving self-promoted concerts.¹¹⁰ In 1919 the Royal Albert Hall dispensed with Ronald and the NSO's services at the weekly Sunday

¹⁰⁹ Morrison details how the under-representation of section principals in favour of rank-and-file players on the LSO board of the 1950s caused disputes over the direction of the orchestra, culminating in the principals walking out in 1955. Similarly, the shift in the make-up of the NSO board after the First World War may have influenced the change in the orchestra's concert activities. See Morrison, *Orchestra: LSO*, 108-109.

¹¹⁰ See Doctor, 'A new dimension', 78-9.

Afternoon Concerts. The Hall's governing Council decided instead to contract out the running of Sunday concerts to an impresario, Lionel Powell, and thus no longer had any need to employ the NSO directly.¹¹¹ In the event, Powell did engage the NSO without Ronald for his 'Special Sunday Concerts', but they were given under a series of guest conductors. Ronald was wounded, writing later, 'Deep down in my heart I mourned the loss of those wonderful Sunday concerts, and, judging by the hundreds of letters I received at the time, the public bitterly resented the commercialism and utter callousness which influenced the Royal Albert Hall Council of that day and Mr. Hilton Carter to come to such a regrettable decision'.¹¹² Ronald and the NSO did continue to appear regularly at the Royal Albert Hall in monthly concerts accompanying the Royal Choral Society, but the relationship between orchestra and conductor became less exclusive as the 1920s went on. Ronald, by now Principal of the Guildhall School of Music, had many other commitments, as well as increasingly failing health. The change in the NSO's personnel and in particular in the player-directors may have further contributed to the separation.

However, Ronald and the NSO did not sever their on-stage ties completely. In 1926, in an attempt to re-capture the 'glory days' of the Royal Albert Hall concerts, Ronald began a new series of Sunday orchestral concerts at the Palladium, promoted by the National Sunday League. They were well received, though press reports show that the repertoire that was once the staple of the old concerts was now out of fashion.¹¹³ Ronald admitted in his memoirs that 'apparently it was not quite the same thing to the public and the size of the audiences ceased to justify the concerts being given every Sunday'.¹¹⁴

According to the memoirs of flautist Gerald Jackson, by the late twenties, times were lean for the NSO: 'they were not getting much work and their 'houses' were becoming pretty poor. With this orchestra I remember as many dates at ballad concerts as real symphonic work'.¹¹⁵ By this time, the NSO was truly operating as an orchestra for hire. During the 1930s, as newer and more successful orchestras offered a more inviting

¹¹¹ Ronald, *Myself and Others*, 40–41.

¹¹² Ronald, 42.

¹¹³ 'London Concerts', *The Musical Times* (February 1926), 155–156.

¹¹⁴ Ronald, *Myself and Others*, 42.

¹¹⁵ Jackson, *First Flute*, 38.

prospect to players and audiences alike, the NSO seems to gradually disappear from concert listings altogether.

3.4.2 Recording Activity 1919–1930

Despite the decline in the NSO's concert activities, the orchestra continued to undertake a significant amount of recording work throughout the 1920s. As already discussed above, limited available material at the EMI archives indicates that the NSO remained under a sequence of three-year contracts to HMV, evidence of the company's faith in the orchestra's work. As the gramophone companies began to move into the realm of serious orchestral repertoire, the NSO remained HMV's main recording orchestra.

Symphonic Recording

Both contemporary sources and recent writings identify widespread recording of symphonic repertoire as beginning in 1923, a watershed point at which the gramophone won acceptance by the 'serious', musically-educated listener.¹¹⁶ The situation is usually described in terms of a rivalry between HMV and Columbia (UK), newly independent from its US parent after a management buy-out. According to Herbert Ridout, Columbia's former publicity manager:

In 1923, with non-scratch records and improved gramophones, a movement had been started in which everybody else had to join in or be left behind. Side by side, the two companies launched into symphonies. Columbia put out Sir Henry Wood in the "Eroica" on three records, HMV followed with Beethoven's Fifth, Columbia announced Weingartner in the Seventh and put the five records in an album – and the classic race had started.¹¹⁷

However, a study of the NSO's recording sheets shows that it started recording complete symphonies for HMV well before the Columbia buy-out in 1923. Between 1919 and 1921, Ronald and the NSO made a complete recording of Dvorak's 'New World' Symphony,

¹¹⁶ Ridout, 'Behind the Needle'; Morgan, 'A New Pleasure'; and Patmore, 'The Columbia Graphophone Company'.

¹¹⁷ Ridout, cited in Patmore, 'The Columbia Graphophone Company', 122. That Ridout omitted to attribute the recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to Ronald and the NSO is evidence that by 1941 both orchestra and conductor were considered less significant artists than Weingartner or even Wood.

only slightly abridged. The work, which filled eight sides, was released in 1922 and could be considered the first true symphonic release by a British orchestra. The combination also recorded Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 during September and October 1922. It could therefore be argued that, rather than throwing down the gauntlet in 1923 as Ridout implied, Columbia was responding to progress already made by HMV in this field in the years following the First World War.

The two companies pursued different strategies as the 1920s went on. HMV did not compete with Columbia's drive to sign illustrious international conductors such as Felix Weingartner, nor did it challenge Columbia by its volume of symphonic releases during the final years of acoustic orchestral recording. Instead HMV relied on two home-grown conductors, Landon Ronald and Albert Coates, to build up its catalogue. Coates contributed recordings of several large-scale works between 1921 and 1923, including Brahms' First Symphony, Beethoven's Ninth and Tchaikovsky's Fifth, with an unidentified 'Symphony Orchestra' that is reputed to have been made up of members of the LSO, though the orchestra itself was under contract to Columbia and so could not be credited on an HMV release.¹¹⁸ It was Ronald and the NSO, however, that supplied the majority of HMV's major orchestral releases before 1925, a series of ambitious projects including Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, Brahms's second, and the Beethoven Violin Concerto with soloist Isolde Menges. In addition the NSO recorded Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* under the baton of Eugene Goossens, who stepped in when Ronald had a nervous breakdown in 1922.¹¹⁹ The NSO were also entrusted with many of Edward Elgar's recordings sessions during the 1920s, including his first recording of the Second Symphony, in 1924.

The ten-year-long relationship between Ronald, the NSO and HMV gave them an advantage when they began recording full symphonies together. Percy Scholes's guide to Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 in the *Second Book of the Gramophone* found that the NSO's recording showed 'rather better orchestral balance and steadier tone' than the Hallé's rival recording for Columbia.¹²⁰ Scholes also used the NSO's 1922 recording of

¹¹⁸ Coates signed with HMV in 1921 and the LSO, of which he was principal conductor, moved their contract from Columbia to HMV in 1926. See Stuart, *The LSO Discography*, Appendix >AS, [n.p.].

¹¹⁹ The substitution of Goossens for Ronald for these sessions is referenced in the index of the EMI Executive Committee, 30 December 1921. EMI Archives.

¹²⁰ Scholes, *Second book of the gramophone*, 58. The NSO cond. Ronald, recorded 1919–22 for HMV, and the Hallé Orchestra cond. Harty, recorded in 1923 for Columbia.

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as the basis for his introduction to the work. His assessment of the recording is worth reproducing in full, as it indicates the criteria upon which early symphonic recordings were judged:

The H.M.V. Records were alone in their glory when this book first appeared, and are still, perhaps, the best all round. The playing is almost flawless, and the recording very fine and satisfying. Parlophone are superior on the interpretative side all through, but their recording is distinctly inferior, except in some of the Finale. Columbia are well recorded, and are excellent dynamically (H.M.V. underdo their pp, p, and ff) but unfortunately show a great deal of unsteadiness, raggedness and faulty intonation, so that their Records are probably the worst of the three issues.¹²¹

Scholes's assessment implies that, for him, neither artistic individuality nor the cult of the conductor had yet become decisive factors in evaluating the desirability of a record. Rather, companies had to satisfy on the grounds of recording and playing quality. It seems that HMV's experienced team of Ronald and the NSO were better placed to achieve this, with their long experience of obtaining the highest quality results in the acoustic studio environment.

After the advent of electric recording in 1925, Ronald and the NSO re-recorded Schubert's Eighth Symphony, Beethoven's Fifth and Dvorak's Ninth, and added Tchaikovsky's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies to the catalogue, as well as Brahms's Fourth featuring the NSO under the baton of Eugene Goossens. However, much of the orchestra's extensive studio time between 1925 and 1930 was employed re-recording the shorter orchestral works that had made up the bulk of its discography, as well as adding more. Ronald ceased to be the only conductor associated with the NSO, which recorded many discs under Malcolm Sargent and Eugene Goossens, as well as continuing its association with Edward Elgar. The last session listed on the NSO's artist sheet took place on 25 June 1930, recording works by Walford Davies and Sullivan under the

¹²¹ Scholes, *First book of the gramophone*, 144. The Parlophone recording is the Berlin Staatsoper conducted by Weissmann in 1924, and the Columbia is the LSO with Weingartner, recorded the same year.

direction of Sargent.¹²² The orchestra was presumably dropped by the company along with many other artists when EMI was created in 1931. It appears to have contributed at least one recording after this date, however: fittingly, it was an electric re-make of the NSO's very first recording, the Grieg Piano Concerto with Wilhelm Backhaus, made in 1933 under the direction of John Barbirolli.

Over 70 NSO recordings, under the names New Symphony Orchestra and Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, were still available in the HMV catalogue of 1940. This dropped to around 40 in 1946, then to 10 by 1949. A handful endured for a further decade, into the LP era, mostly short orchestral pieces recorded with Sargent in the late 1920s. The NSO's final listing was in the first integrated EMI catalogue, published in 1958.¹²³

3.4.3 Playing Style 1919–1930

Overview

During the 1920s the NSO were at the forefront of the development of symphonic recording. As a result, it is possible to assess their playing in the inter-war period not only in the repertoire of short popular works but also in large-scale symphonic repertoire, giving a glimpse of how the wind players approached what was beginning to be viewed as 'serious' music. In addition, a number of works from the orchestra's pre-war discography were re-recorded, some on two occasions, giving ample scope for comparison.

The arrival of electric recording was a huge development for orchestral recording, and the NSO participated from the very beginning. Their first electric discs were a series of short works by Elgar made in April 1925, followed by a recording of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4 in July of the same year. Comparison of the orchestra's late acoustic and early electric recordings is interesting for several reasons. With the improvement in sound quality, electric recordings sometimes give a far clearer impression of the details

¹²² The Company's 'Artist Sheets' were the records of each performer or group's recording sessions, including the works recorded, the instrumentation, and details of each take. British Library: EMI Microfilm collection, reels 361, 376 and 378.

¹²³ After the merger of the Gramophone Company and Columbia in 1931 to form EMI, separate catalogues were maintained for each label until 1957. In 1958 the first fully integrated catalogue was published, listing all of the available recordings from both labels.

of the wind playing, which supports or contradicts observations made about the earlier recordings. Theoretically, electric recordings should also give a more 'natural' impression of the orchestra's playing, because it was possible to record with the original orchestration, number of players and seating plan. From the point of view of the impact of recording on wind playing, it is also significant to note any apparent changes between the acoustic and electric recordings which might imply that the players changed their style in response to the new technology. However, the NSO's electric recordings are not always more informative than their acoustic counterparts: some early electric recordings were made in very resonant acoustics, or with a balance that greatly disadvantaged the wind section, meaning that the wind playing is less clear than on acoustic recordings, where the players were seated very close to the horn.

Table 3.4 Recordings cited in section 3.4.3

Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
Debussy	<i>Prelude à l'après-midi d'un Faune</i>	08/09/1922	D 130
Debussy	<i>Prelude à l'après-midi d'un Faune</i>	24/09/1926	D 1128
Dvorak	Symphony No. 9, Op. 95	01/11/1919 07/10/1921 29/11/1921 22/11/1922	D 536-7 D 587 D 613
Dvorak	Symphony No. 9, Op. 95	21/01/1927	D 1250-4
Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 6, Op. 74	30/01/1923 01/05/1923 15/05/1923 29/05/1923 23/06/1923	Victor 55240-4
Beethoven	<i>Leonore Overture No. 3, Op. 72b</i>	1925	D 1051-2
Beethoven	Symphony No. 5, Op. 67	10/10/1922 24/10/1922	D 665-8
Beethoven	Symphony No. 5, Op. 67	24/09/1926	D 1150-3
Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 4, Op. 36	20-21 and 27/07/1925	D 1037-41
Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 5, Op. 65	18/04/1928 19/04/1928 02/05/1928	D 1511-6
Schubert	Symphony No. 8, D. 759	07/07/1922	D 165
Brahms	Symphony No. 2, Op. 73	03/12/1923 13/09/1923 05/02/1924	D 871-4

Flute

Gilbert Barton, who moved up from second to co-principal and finally principal flute in the NSO before the First World War, continued to play with the orchestra throughout the 1920s. From 1928 onwards, his name alternates on extant orchestra lists with that of Arthur Gleghorn. There is a certain lack of consistency in the style of flute playing on the NSO's 1920s records which suggests that, as before the war, there may be a number of different flautists represented.

Most revealing from the point of view of flute playing are two further recordings of *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un Faune* made by the NSO in 1922 and 1926 (tracks 3_21 and 3_22, ex. 3.13). When compared with the 1911 recording, the later recording in particular shows an increase in the use of vibrato. On the later recordings, the vibrato is both more intense and used more constantly throughout all three phrases, though it is of the same essential character as in 1911, fast and shallow with little variety of speed, and remains most prominent at the beginnings of phrases. There is no reduction in the number of breaths taken by the flautist compared to the 1911 recording, though some of the breathing locations are different. The recordings also have the same by-the-slur phrasing and energetic character as the early recording.

Ex. 3.13 Debussy, *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, bars 1–23 abridged, flute.
Sonic and temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1911.

The image shows a musical score for flute, divided into two parts: NSO 1922 and NSO 1926. The tempo is marked 'Très modéré'. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 9/8. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'p doux et expressif', 'no vib.', 'breath', 'ag.', 'T.I.', 'p léger et expressif', 'vib?', 'phrasing by the slurs', and 'non vib.'. It also features dynamic markings like 'p' and 'f', and articulation like 'A' and 'etc.'. The score is annotated with wavy lines representing vibrato and arrows indicating breath and acceleration points.

Of the recordings surveyed, the Debussy is the only work to feature significant low-register flute vibrato. The orchestra's two recordings of Dvorak's *Symphony No. 9* show a much more restrained approach to vibrato in the low register solos, though there is vibrato in some passages of higher tessitura, such as bars 6–9 of the first movement (tracks 3_23 and 3_24). There are also many instances throughout the recordings of this period of the flautist(s) using vibrato in an ensemble context, when playing in octaves or block harmony with other winds, a practise that was not observed in the pre-war recordings.

The use of rubato by the NSO wind section will be dealt with at greater length below, but the recordings surveyed suggest that the flautist(s) continued to use rubato in

both solo and ensemble contexts during the inter-war period. The beginning of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6, recorded acoustically by the NSO in 1923, is one of many examples of the use of agogic accents and rhythmic accentuation in a manner that resembles the pre-war recordings discussed above (track 3_25, ex. 3.14). The most common device heard on these recordings is the agogic accent on appoggiaturas and first notes under slurs, which is even employed in the context of fast technical passages such as the solo from Beethoven's *Leonore* Overture No. 3 (track 3_26). This rhythmic device, which is also common in ensemble contexts, is a feature of the habitual rhythmic accentuation that continues to define the NSO's 1920s recordings.

Ex. 3.14 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6, Op. 74, mvt. I, bars 24–7 and 101–4, flute.
Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1923.

Oboe

There is a clear change in the oboe playing on the NSO's recordings during the 1920s. According to the available orchestra lists, Arthur Foreman remained as principal until some point after 1923, when he was replaced by one David Griffiths, a player about which almost nothing is known.¹²⁴ Griffiths is listed as principal oboe until 1930, when he began to alternate with other players. Significantly, the marked change in the style of the oboe playing on the NSO's recordings took place in around 1925, and while it must be acknowledged that this coincides with the change to electric recording, it seems to strongly indicate a change of player. As the playing style is very consistent after this point, one can speculate that the recordings do indeed document the playing of Foreman in the early 1920s and Griffiths for the remainder of the decade.

¹²⁴ Burgess suggests that Foreman emigrated to the United States 'in the early 1920s'. Burgess, liner notes to *The Oboe*, n.p.

Based on the limited biographical information, one might expect Griffiths to be an undistinguished player, perhaps one of the old-fashioned, hard-toned players so often criticised in the writings discussed in chapter two. In fact, the oboe playing on the NSO's electric recordings of the 1920s is a revelation: largely vibrato-free, but delicate, sweet and flexible, with a remarkable amount of tonal shaping. A direct comparison between Foreman and Griffiths can be heard in the NSO's two recordings of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, recorded acoustically in 1922 and electrically in 1926 (tracks 3_27 and 3_28). The earlier recording features the fast, shallow vibrato that was attributed above to Foreman, while in the later disc, Griffiths plays completely without vibrato, but with a swell towards the middle of most notes that is characteristic of his playing on all of the 1920s NSO recordings. Elsewhere, in the long solo that opens the second movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, Griffiths again plays without vibrato, except possibly at the peaks of the dynamic hairpins in bars 14–19 (track 3_29, ex. 3.15). Griffiths's very clear separation of the short slurs in this solo is another characteristic of his playing, further evidence that the NSO's tendency to make short phrases and emphasise small-scale articulation patterns continued throughout the 1920s despite changes in personnel. Griffiths's tendency to swell on individual long notes can be clearly heard in an excerpt from the orchestra's 1928 recording of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5, first movement, (track 3_30), which also includes a short example of Griffiths switching from his trademark swells to a more front-loaded articulation (ex. 3.16).

Ex. 3.15 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, Op. 36, mvt. II, bars 1–21, oboe.

Andante in modo di canzona

solo

p *semplice, ma grazioso*

etc.

Ex. 3.16 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, Op. 64, mvt. I, bars 132–9 and 252–4, oboe.

(Allegro con anima)

mf > *p* *f* *p* *mf* *cresc.* *ff*

(252)

etc.

mf *mf* *cresc.* *f* *ff*

Clarinet

Charles Draper continued as NSO principal clarinet throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s. His playing on the orchestra's post-war recordings is in the same style as the earlier examples considered, dominated by his strong, sustained tone and use of marked rhythmic flexibility. Both of these features can be heard in the orchestra's recording of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 (track 3_31, ex. 3.17). In bars 109–116, agogic accents on the beginning of each rising scale are balanced by acceleration towards the highest note, which is played before the downbeat of the second bar. In the second theme (bars 153–60 and 325–35), the contours of the melody are emphasised by anticipations, and there is also a suggestion of vibrato on several of the longer notes. Draper is less consistent than his colleagues in separating written slurs and sometimes tends towards longer and more sustained phrases, such as in the *animando* in bars 329–31.

Ex. 3.17 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6, Op. 74, mvt. I, bars 109–12, 153–60 and 325–35. Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1923.

The musical score for Clarinet (A) is presented in four systems, illustrating various temporal devices and performance instructions:

- System 1 (Bars 109–12):** Marked *(Moderato mosso)* and *p*. It features triplet rhythms and an *ag.* (agogic) accent on the first note of the second bar.
- System 2 (Bars 153–60):** Marked *Adagio mosso dolce possibile*. It includes dynamics *ppp*, *p*, and *ppp*. Performance instructions include *ag. solo* and *ag.* accents.
- System 3 (Bars 325–35):** Marked *(Andante come prima)* and *ag. solo*. It includes dynamics *pppp* and *ppp*. Performance instructions include *ritard. molto* and *ag.* accents.
- System 4 (Bars 329–31):** Marked *Meno* and *animando*. It includes dynamics *p*, *ppp*, *p*, *ppp*, and *pp*. Performance instructions include *dolcissimo ma espress.*
- System 5 (Bars 329–31):** Marked *quasi adagio* and *etc.*. It includes dynamics *pp*, *pppp*, *pp*, *pppp*, *pp*, *pppp*, and *pppp*.

Comparison of Draper's playing on the NSO's acoustic and electric recordings of Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 shows that, on the whole, acoustic recordings do give a fair representation of Draper's playing (track 3_32 and 3_33, ex. 3.18). When considering bars 64-92 of the fourth movement, the electric version shows the same direct, sustained sound as his acoustic recordings, with a slight increase in the audibility of the tonal flexibility and dynamic shaping. The temporal shaping is also largely the same, consisting primarily of anticipations and acceleration towards accentuated notes. In this case Draper does emphasise the written slurred groups throughout, in particular the difference in grouping between bars 75-7 and 79-81. The overall impression given by the available recordings is that he had a very flexible approach to ensemble and placed little importance on the coordination of melody and accompaniment, or even of parts in semi-unison, as heard in anticipations of the violin downbeats towards the end of the excerpted passage in both versions. To Draper, it seems that soloistic rhythmic flexibility was a primary means of expression to be prioritised as much in orchestral playing as in chamber music.

Ex. 3.18 Dvořák, Symphony No.9, Op. 95, mvt. IV, bars 64-92, clarinet and bassoon. Temporal devices and accents, NSO, Ronald, 1919-22.

(Allegro con fuoco)

Cl. (A) solo *p* *f* *dim.* *p*

Bsn. *staccato* *p* *fz*

A ag. ag.

A accent

A accent

A accent

A

p *dim.* *p* *fz* *f* *f*

etc.

Bassoon

The NSO's recordings of the 1920s provide the first opportunity to hear the principal bassoon. Unfortunately, the orchestra's founding principal, Walter Cordwell, had left the orchestra by 1920; his replacement, Ernest Hinchcliff, was arguably the leading player of the early twentieth century and so the opportunity to analyse his playing is valuable. Like all London players of the time, Hinchcliff played the French bassoon, and its distinctive nasal timbre is clearly audible on many of the NSO's recordings from this period. Hinchcliff's strong articulation and limited use of dynamic or tonal shaping are in keeping with the playing of his colleagues, as is his use of temporal shaping. While excerpts from the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony (track 3_34) show his rhythmic flexibility to be more restrained than that of the upper winds, when given a melodic solo he displays a great flexibility within the beat. In solos from the first and second movements of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony, he can be heard playing very much behind the beat, except on the upbeat to bars 46 and 48, which are anticipated (track 3_35, ex. 3.19). Schubert's Eighth Symphony also provides an example of flexibility in an accompaniment role (track 3_36).

Ex. 3.19 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, Op. 64, bassoon.
Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1928.

mvt. I, bars 320–30

(Allegro con anima)
solo

Bsn. *pp* *p* etc.

mvt. II, bars 83–7

(Moderato con anima)
solo

f *g* *ff* *g* etc.

What is perhaps more unexpected is that Hinchcliff also made regular use of ornamental vibrato, usually on expressive notes of high tessitura, as can be heard in the NSO's two recordings of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (tracks 3_37 and 3_38). It is also notable that, while he also uses anticipation and agogic accents to shape the solo in the earlier recording, the temporal shaping is more restrained in his later, electric recording, though there is not enough evidence to say if this indicative of a wider trend.

General Tendencies: Phrasing

One of the strongest features of the individual and ensemble playing of the NSO wind principals, which has been observed throughout this section, is their marked articulation and separation of small-scale phrasing marks (slurred groups). As has been observed above, the orchestra typifies early twentieth-century playing styles in tending towards short phrases rather than the long-line, climax-oriented phrasing which was to become the norm later in the twentieth century. There is particularly clear in the NSO's recordings of Tchaikovsky's Symphonies, music which today is more associated with long lyrical lines than articulated, 'classical' phrasing. Two particular examples illustrate this. The first is from the first movement of the Fourth Symphony, in bars 307–312 where the oboe and flute play the counter-melody to the second theme (track 3_39, ex. 3.20). Their separation of the written slurs is extremely marked, with no hint of sustaining through the phrase, and the beginning of each individual slur is accentuated either by articulation, dynamic or agogic emphasis. The second example taken is from the second movement of the Sixth Symphony (track 3_40, ex. 3.21). Contrary to the now-familiar practice of sustaining through each two-bar phrase and 'arriving' on the final note, the NSO players separate and lift each individual slurred group, placing the strongest accent on the beginning of each second bar. This is in contrast to the most sustained version given by the strings, heard at the end of the excerpt.

Ex. 3.20 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, Op. 36, mvt. I, bars 307–12, woodwind.

(Moderato assai, quasi Andante)

Fl. *p*

Ob. *p espress.*

Cl. (Bb) *p*

Bsn.

etc.

Ex. 3.21 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6, Op. 74, mvt. II, bars 24–40, flute.

(Allegro con grazia)

Fl. *mf* *piu f* *mf*

f *mf* *f* *ff*

etc.

Another pronounced example of beginning-oriented phrasing is in the 1922 version of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (track 3_41, ex. 3.22). In this wind section solo, the slurred groups are clearly separated and agogic accents are used on the first note under each slur, while the remaining notes are lightened and hurried, creating a strong beginning-oriented phrasing by the slur. A similar phrasing is evident in their 1926 version of the symphony (track 3_42). Here, the agogic accents remain but the following notes are more in time. There is also a clearer dynamic shaping in this version, though the strong separation of slurs remains and the overall phrasing shape is the same.

Ex. 3.22 Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, Op. 67, mvt. II, bars 126–46. Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1922.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system contains the staves for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. (Bb)), and Bassoon (Bsn.). The Flute part begins with a *dolce* marking and features slurred groups of notes, each with an *ag.* (agogic) accent on the first note. The Clarinet part begins with a *p* (piano) marking and also features slurred groups with *ag.* accents. The Bassoon part begins with a *dolce* marking and features slurred groups with *ag.* accents. The second system continues the parts for Flute and Clarinet, with *ag.* accents on the first notes of slurred groups. The third system shows the continuation of the parts, with *cresc.* (crescendo) markings and *etc.* (etcetera) indicating the end of the excerpt.

The prevalence of this approach to small-scale phrasing throughout the NSO's recorded output points to a continuity with earlier practices that was perhaps lost in the search for intensity of sound and long, singing melodic lines that began to emerge in the 1930s, as will be discussed in chapter five. It also sheds some light on the individual players' apparently lax approach to the technical issue of breathing during phrases: if one proceeds on the basis that slurred groups are, to some extent, distinct entities, the idea of breaking the longer line in order to breathe is not the musical aberration it has since become.

Ensemble Rubato

Multiple instances of temporal shaping have already been observed in solo passages featuring the NSO wind principals. As with the recordings of the 1910s, the players also used temporal devices when playing together, both in rhythmic unison and in passages with more than one voice.

The NSO's electric recordings include more instances of poor ensemble than their acoustic recordings. This probably reflects the increased sensitivity of the microphone compared to the acoustic horn, which masked many details, though it is also possible that the reduced forces and close proximity of players in the acoustic studio made ensemble playing easier in some cases. The fact that the NSO's concert activity and general stability as a working ensemble was decreasing in the later 1920s may also be reflected in its recordings, though they remain of a generally high standard. Another problem seems to have been contrasting rubato styles between the players present on some recordings. In the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, the difficult rhythms of the wind passage from bars 35–46 are not quite coordinated, principally because Draper is anticipating the beginning of each phrase much more than the flautist, who seems inclined to detach phrases more (track 3_43, ex. 3.23). However, later in the movement, the section is reconciled in delivering an example of collective rubato (track 3_44, ex. 3.24).

Ex. 3.23 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, Op. 36, mvt. I, bars 34–45, flute and clarinet.

(Moderato con anima)

The musical score consists of two staves: Flute (Fl.) and Clarinet in B-flat (Cl. (Bb)). Both parts are marked 'a 2' and 'f espr.'. The flute part has a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the clarinet part has a more rhythmic accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings like 'cresc.' and 'etc.'.

Ex. 3.24 Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, Op. 36, mvt. I, bars 135–46.

(Ben sostenuto il tempo precedente)

Cl. (B \flat)

pp

poco a poco stringendo...

poco cresc.

etc.

p

The orchestra's 1923 recording of Brahms's Second Symphony yields examples of two further forms of temporal shaping. The sound quality and balance of the recording are poor, making it of little use in assessing the playing of individual instruments, but it is still possible to get a sense of ensemble rhythm. In bars 107–14 of the third movement (track 3_45, ex. 3.25) there is an example of the use of rhythmic flexibility in a multi-voice context, with the oboist, flautist and horn player using expressive agogic accents and uneven quavers throughout the passage. The result is a degree of deliberate non-coordination within a steady pulse that is reminiscent of the 1919 recording of the Entr'act from Act Three of Bizet's *Carmen*, discussed in the previous section (track 3_06, ex. 3.4 above).

Ex. 3.25 Brahms, Symphony No. 2, Op. 73, mvt. III, bars 107–14, flute, oboe and horn. Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1923–4.

Tempo primo (Allegretto grazioso)

Fl.

Ob.

Hn. (G)

dolce

uneven

dolce

ag.

uneven

ag.

ag.

ag.

uneven

etc.

Also notable are the instances of whole-orchestra rhythmic unevenness that occur in the first and fourth movements. The second theme of the first movement, presented in bars 102–15, is marked throughout by an extreme unevenness of the quavers on the third

characteristic, a deeply ingrained feature of the players' individual and collective understanding of the music they were playing, and of their mode of expression.

Ex. 3.27 Brahms, Symphony No. 2, Op. 73, mvmt. IV, bars 78–97, flutes and violin I.
Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1923–4.

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for Violin I (Vln. I), starting with a dynamic marking of *mp*. It includes performance instructions: *ag.*, *ag.*, *rushed + uneven*, *A + ag.*, and *rushed + uneven*. The middle staff is for Flutes 1 and 2 (Fl. 1,2), with *etc.* and *A + ag.* markings. The bottom staff has a dynamic marking of *f* and *etc.* markings. The score includes a *cresc.* marking and a dynamic change to *f*.

3.5 Conclusion

The NSO was introduced as an orchestra unknown except for an association with the young Thomas Beecham, and thereafter assumed to be relatively insignificant to the development of London orchestral life, perhaps one of the many names under which freelance musicians gathered. However, the evidence considered here tells a very different story. Ephemeral items including newspaper reports and concert programmes detail the orchestra's extensive and well-received concert activity before the First World War, which included notable first performances and a series of popular Sunday concerts that lasted for a decade. Discographical records document the NSO's enormous recording activity during its long tenure as house orchestra for HMV, which produced pioneering recordings throughout the acoustic and early electric eras. Perhaps most importantly, the recordings themselves are strong evidence against any remaining suggestion that the orchestra was not the equal of the LSO or Queen's Hall Orchestra.

Analyses of the NSO's recordings reveals evidence of a distinctive playing style and challenges the idea that a low standard and 'plain' style of interpretation dominated orchestral wind playing in early twentieth-century London. The recordings are frequently of a very high standard, especially considering the demands that early

recording processes made of musicians. The recordings also suggest that temporal shaping was a primary expressive device to woodwind players, perhaps more important than tonal and dynamic nuance during this period. Furthermore, multiple individual examples point to beginning-oriented shaping and clear articulation of small-scale phrase marks having been fundamental stylistic characteristics.

The playing of the individual wind principals raises further issues. There is evidence of the selective use of vibrato by the principals of all four instruments; notably, the vibrato is fast and shallow in all cases, in no way resembling the slow and flexible vibrato that began to emerge in the 1930s. The oboe playing on the NSO's records, which has been attributed to Arthur Foreman and the otherwise unknown player David Griffiths, contradicts the entrenched narrative that casts oboe-playing prior to the redemptive influence of Léon Goossens as sour, inflexible and inexpressive. The playing of clarinetist Charles Draper is an extreme example of the privileging of temporal flexibility and individual expression over ensemble concerns. In the playing of Draper, it is possible to see the manifestation of the 'hyper-expressive' style posited by Leech-Wilkinson as a prime feature of the period.

It is also interesting to consider the relationship of the NSO's style to late nineteenth-century wind playing. In the early part of this chapter, the significance of the RCM's introduction of orchestral training was discussed at length, though there is no suggestion that the RCM was the focus of a definable 'school' of playing in the same sense as the Paris Conservatoire. It seems clear that the wind section of the NSO was heavily based upon networks of RCM alumni who studied in the 1890s and early 1900s, and who therefore were subject to similar influences and immersed in the playing styles of the late nineteenth century. The fact that the orchestra displays elements of a coherent and distinct playing style therefore raises the possibility that the NSO's recordings provide a window into the stylistic world of wind playing in late-nineteenth-century London. That the characteristics observed correlate with the findings of studies of pianists, string players and singers trained in the nineteenth century goes further to support this hypothesis.

The playing style observed on the NSO's pre-First World War recordings appears largely to persist throughout the 1920s, though there is some evidence of a reduction in

the extent of the temporal flexibility in the late 1920s. This could be a reaction to the advent of electric recording, which allowed recourse to a greater range of expressive parameters and therefore removed the necessity to communicate the bulk of expressive intent through rubato. Alternatively, it could be that the NSO's recordings reflect the general tendency towards expressive restraint during the late 1920s. The question remaining to be addressed is what happened to this performing style in the 1930s when the money poured into new orchestras by the BBC and EMI changed orchestral working practices forever.

The historiographic questions raised by the evidence presented here are complex, and will be more fully explored in the concluding section of this thesis. However, some preliminary suggestions for the NSO's disappearance from the history of London orchestral activity can be outlined. The NSO's lack of enduring association with any conductor other than Landon Ronald has certainly contributed to it being overlooked by both historians and record collectors alike. Ronald's posthumous reputation is at best as an 'ultra-conservative' musician,¹²⁵ and at worst 'self-serving' and 'amazingly pompous'.¹²⁶ Ronald was certainly adept at managing his affairs: his wealth at death figure, as given in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, was some £30,311 in 1938,¹²⁷ compared to Wood's £6,460 in 1944, and Beecham's £10,801 in 1961.¹²⁸ Gaisberg suggested that 'the genius of Sir Landon Ronald should have made him one of the greatest international conductors of our time, but he knew that this would make too great a demand on his own personal liberty and health. He was unwilling to become a slave to a career'.¹²⁹ These facts together may have contributed to the notion that he was somewhat of a mercenary musician, despite evidence that he was dedicated throughout his life to bringing orchestral music to a wide public.¹³⁰ Nonetheless, a reevaluation of

¹²⁵ Goossens, *Overture and Beginners*, 148

¹²⁶ Morrison, *Orchestra: LSO*, 17 and 115.

¹²⁷ Holden, 'Ronald, Sir Landon (1873–1938)', online (accessed 17 February 2011). The relative worth of this in modern terms is £1.4 million (based on the Retail Price Index) or £5.5 million (based on average earnings). Conversions from the *Measuring Worth* website (accessed 17 February 2011).

¹²⁸ Jacobs, 'Wood, Sir Henry Joseph (1869–1944)', online (accessed 17 February 2011); and Jefferson, 'Beecham, Sir Thomas, second baronet (1879–1961)', online (accessed 17 February 2011).

¹²⁹ Gaisberg, 'Sir Landon Ronald', 6.

¹³⁰ Not only did Ronald use the Royal Albert Hall Sunday Concerts as a vehicle for orchestral music, as discussed on pages 19–20, but he also introduced cheap 1s tickets for the NSO's Queen's Hall concerts from 1911 onwards.

Ronald's contribution to British musical life during the first part of the twentieth century is certainly due.

The reputation of the NSO has also been affected by the relative statuses afforded to the various forms of recording and concert activity in which it engaged. That the orchestra in the 1920s moved away from presenting what were termed 'symphony concerts', which focussed on symphonic repertoire, and became associated with popular and ballad-type concerts was certainly detrimental to its reputation. Furthermore, the NSO's important work in the recording field has not served to redress the balance. The orchestra's early acoustic recordings have been overlooked both because of their repertoire and the primitive nature of the reproduction, while the symphonic recordings of the 1920s have been overshadowed by other recordings of the time by ensembles such as the LSO, under the baton of various foreign conductors. This is compounded by the fact that the NSO's recording format – the 78rpm disc – became obsolete after World War II, and unlike other artists it did not resurrect a post-war profile by making new recordings on LP.

For the origins of narratives that consign the NSO to a minor role, one must also look to the climate surrounding the foundation of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1930, an event which was defined as a historical turning point even as it happened. In 1931, a review decried the NSO's 'abandoned style of playing which may be considered a relic of the old order of London orchestral playing', and went on to single out three brass players seconded from the BBC SO as the only performers worthy of praise.¹³¹ Chapters four and five will explore how the conscious drive to reinvent British orchestral playing for the modern age gave birth to not one but two distinct and competing streams in wind playing, led by the woodwind sections of the BBC SO and LPO. However, the rhetoric of the 'new' can also perhaps be charged with obscuring and misrepresenting the achievements of an orchestra which represents the last gasp of nineteenth-century wind-playing style.

¹³¹ 'Concert Notes', *Musical Mirror and Fanfare* 11/4 (April 1931), 144.

Chapter 4

Individuality and the Institution: The BBC SO and LPO, 1930–1939

4.1 Introduction

The connoisseur of to-day may be able to detect, even behind the dazzling façade of the conductor's personality, something of the corporate life of the orchestras to which he listens either in the hall or on the gramophone record. Actual quality of tone, especially in the wind departments, depends largely on individual instruments, yet when the balance is made up, orchestras offer to the ear of the listener their own peculiar sonority. It has for instance been noticeable during the last years of the decade of the nineteen-thirties that the three London orchestras have each a distinctive quality, as well as a general attitude to music, which affects their style of playing. It may be metaphorically described in terms of drapery; the L.S.O. sells a cotton textile, the L.P.O. a silk, and the B.B.C. a velvet. Their specific virtues are: of the L.S.O. adaptability and resource, of the L.P.O. a lyric, singing style, derived from its conductor's musical mentality, and great finesse; of the B.B.C. massive power and executive brilliance both corporately and individually. Their compensating defects are: of the L.S.O. a certain colourlessness that sometimes degenerates into laxity (of attack, ensemble and phrasing); of the L.P.O. an acuity of tone and attack that sometimes hurts the ear with its assaults – the strings might be whipcord lashes; of the B.B.C. an inflation that sometimes sounds heavy, sometimes bloated.¹

The history of orchestral music-making in London is defined by the successive establishments of new orchestras, each challenging existing practices and standards of performance. In the early 1930s the stakes were raised by the creation of two more orchestras hoping to assume the mantle of Britain's flagship ensemble and, indeed, to show the way forward for the development of orchestral music-making. This decade also saw the coming of age of the broadcasting and recording organisations as orchestral sponsors, and it is a sign of the times that the two ensembles that were created – the BBC Symphony Orchestra (BBC SO) and London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO) – were

¹ Frank Howes, cited in Nettel, *The Orchestra in England*, 284.

wholly or partly sustained by the financial resources of, respectively, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Electric and Musical Industries Ltd (EMI).

This chapter investigates the musical and organisational characters of the BBC SO and LPO during the period 1930–9. The aim is to understand the environment in which the wind-playing styles of the two orchestras developed and how playing standards were 'reformed'. The contemporary quote given above suggests that London's individual orchestral ensembles were perceived to have strongly distinct identities, which are investigated here in depth. The BBC SO and LPO represented different visions of the ideal orchestra, a situation which reflected the contrast between the BBC's corporate identity and the individualism of Thomas Beecham. The formation of each orchestra is discussed, with particular attention to the initial motivations and aims as well as the selection of players. The effect that the orchestras' workloads and work profiles had on their playing is considered. The training of the players is also examined, in particular the roles played by the orchestras' principal conductors, Adrian Boult and Thomas Beecham, and the impact that their musical ideals and approaches had on the orchestras they created.

4.2 The BBC Symphony Orchestra

This account of the history and development of the BBC SO as an artistic entity covers three broad areas: first (4.2.2 to 4.2.3), the environment which gave rise to the orchestra, including an overview of the BBC Music Department and the build-up to the establishment of the BBC SO between 1927 and 1930; second (4.2.4 to 4.2.6), the recruitment and management of the wind players, the orchestra's work profile, relationship with HMV and recording activity; and third (4.2.7 to 4.2.8), the orchestra's training under Boult and the influence of other conductors. The aim is to paint a picture of how the BBC went about fulfilling its ambition to create a new leading orchestra for Britain, which went beyond solving the long-standing problems of orchestral funding and player deputising and extended to the implementation of a modern vision of orchestral playing style that reflected the values of the wider Corporation.

4.2.1 Sources

The following account is based on a range of primary and secondary sources, including detailed research at the BBC Written Archives Centre (BBC WAC). Published primary sources include Adrian Boult's memoirs and the reminiscences of players Gerald Jackson, Archie Camden and Bernard Shore.² Prominent among secondary sources is Nicholas Kenyon's 1981 history of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, which provides extensive background to the establishment of the ensemble as well as its performing activities, reception, and changes in its organisation during the years in question; however, the book does not address the subject of playing style, go into detail on day-to-day orchestral management or discuss in any depth the individual wind players.³ Jenny Doctor's comprehensive study of the BBC Music Department between 1922 and 1936 shows the role that certain key individuals played in shaping both the policy and practicalities of the BBC's musical activity and reveals the extent to which changes in the structure and operational ethos of the Corporation were reflected in musical programme content. It also provides an essential background for interpreting the raw archival materials relating to the orchestra.⁴

Interrogation of resources at the BBC WAC has made it possible to present a more detailed account than has previously been given of the management of playing style and standard in the BBC SO during the 1930s. Documents have been consulted from various file sequences at the BBC WAC. These include: R29, Orchestra General, which contains information about orchestral policy and player contracts; R21, which contains material relating to the orchestra's recording contracts; R46, correspondence with recording companies; and RCONT1, the Radio Contributors' files, which contain papers associated with individual musicians and conductors. In the absence of internal personnel files for any orchestral players, these RCONT1 files – which preserve correspondence about engagements extra to their contracts – give insight into the relationship between individual musicians and the BBC.⁵ These archival materials have been used to

² Boult, *My Own Trumpet*, Jackson, *First Flute*, Camden, *Blow by Blow*, and Shore, *The Orchestra Speaks*.

³ Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*.

⁴ Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music*.

⁵ There are no files relating to members of the BBC SO in the 'Left Staff' files held at the WAC. The orchestra's personnel files may have been handled by the Programme Contracts department, but this file sequence is closed to research, and it has not been possible to ascertain whether such files are present within it. In addition, there are no RCont1 files for Robert Murchie or Frederick Thurston, and Archie Camden's file sequence is missing the first file, which contained material prior to 1946.

understand how the BBC approached its aim of creating a new flagship orchestra, to ascertain the organisation's relationship with key members of the wind section, and to address the question of how the Corporation's attitude towards musical performance and the practical demands faced by a broadcasting orchestra had a combined role in shaping the artistic identity of the BBC SO.

4.2.2 The BBC Music Department

The history and cultural aspirations of the BBC have already been discussed in chapter one. The idea of creating a permanent BBC orchestra was conceived during the latter part of Percy Pitt's tenure as BBC Director of Music, which lasted from 1922 to 1930. However, by the time the orchestra was launched in 1930, Pitt had been forcibly retired and the role assumed by Adrian Boult. Doctor has suggested that the BBC's enforcement of the retirement age of 60 in Pitt's case may have reflected the desire to appoint a Music Director with the conducting ability to match its aspirations for its new orchestra.⁶ Boult's background, as conductor of the City of Birmingham Orchestra and a member of the BBC's Music Advisory Committee, 'fitted him admirably for the post', as he possessed not only the conducting skills and wide-ranging musical interests but also the administrative prowess to lead the expanding music department.⁷

Boult was supported by a team that included an experienced Concerts Manager in the form of W. W. Thompson; an efficient if sometimes unpopular Orchestral Manager, Richard Pratt; and the programme planners, Edward Clark and Julian Herbage. Clark and Herbage had joined the Department in 1927 and were responsible for designing the 'Comprehensive Orchestral Organisation' that became the structure of the BBC SO.⁸ Clark, who had studied in Paris and Vienna, where he had been an active member of Schoenberg's circle, had a wealth of personal contacts on mainland Europe and played a crucial role in keeping the department in touch with the latest developments in modern music.⁹

⁶ Doctor, 'Vaughan Williams, Boult and the BBC', n.p.

⁷ Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 38-9.

⁸ See 4.2.5, Work profile

⁹ Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music*, 394.

Between 1930 and 1936, Clark worked primarily as a programme builder with responsibility for orchestral, chamber and contemporary music concerts. He was instrumental in expanding the BBC's music programming in diverse and challenging directions, as well as arranging visits by notable performers and composers.¹⁰ His work directly contributed to the orchestra's exposure to the most demanding modern music and its contact with a wide range of foreign conductors. His unexpected departure in 1936 – due in part to alterations made to programmes he had built for the BBC SO's continental tour of that year – marked the end of an era in the BBC Music Department.¹¹ Though his remaining colleagues sustained his contacts and programming practices as far as possible for the remainder of the 1930s, the loss of Clark's personal network, combined with increasing pressure on the department to raise the proportion of British musicians that it employed,¹² resulted in a change of approach that can be seen in the decrease in visits by foreign conductors, discussed below.¹³

The 1930s is considered to have been a highly bureaucratic period in the BBC's history. Briggs describes it as an 'era of extreme centralisation' marked by the attempted separation of 'creative' and 'administrative' jobs at all levels.¹⁴ To Maurice Gorham, it was 'the great Stuffed Shirt era, marked internally by paternalism run riot, bureaucracy of the most hierarchi[c]al type, an administration system that made productive work harder instead of easier, and a tendency to promote negative characters to be found amongst the staff'.¹⁵ For Doctor, the move to the new Broadcasting House in 1932 was a physical manifestation of the change in the Corporation; whereas at Savoy Hill, the BBC had 'developed from the inspiration of individuals, deriving its identity from the impetus and spontaneity of employees' specific personalities and talents', Broadcasting House provided an 'atmosphere of efficiency and structure ... procedure, planning and professionalism'.¹⁶

¹⁰ See Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music*, 181–2 and 394–6.

¹¹ Doctor, 332.

¹² See Doctor, 292–4, 300–5.

¹³ 4.2.8, Visiting conductors.

¹⁴ Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, II:11.

¹⁵ Gorham, cited in Doctor, 187.

¹⁶ Doctor, 187.

The departure of Clark, whose shortcomings as an administrator were widely acknowledged,¹⁷ reflected the spreading ethos of professionalism and accountability at every level of the Corporation, including the Music Department. Though the documents considered below show that Boult and his staff strove to act as a buffer between the bureaucracy of the efficiency-obsessed BBC hierarchy and the artists it employed, it was inevitable that the working atmosphere of the BBC SO reflected that of the wider corporation. The act of bringing a group of independently-minded wind players who had only ever known the freedom of a freelance career together in an orchestra that was not only contracted and non-deputising but part of a large corporation caused inevitable tensions, which are explored below in section 4.2.4. However, it must also be acknowledged that the BBC brought a new level of professionalism into orchestral management, defined by impartiality, transparency and the constant drive towards maximum efficiency. This can be most clearly seen in the management of players and playing standards, detailed below.¹⁸ Furthermore, the businesslike efficiency of the Corporation was balanced in the Music Department by an ongoing commitment to providing cultural leadership, evidenced in the privileging of the artistic development of the BBC SO over its pure broadcasting efficiency, a subject that will be discussed further in section 4.2.5 below. This brave stance, maintained throughout the 1930s, helps to explain the BBC SO's consistently high performing standard during the period under review.

4.2.3 Background to formation: BBC Orchestras in the 1920s

The complex series of events that led up to the establishment of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in autumn 1930 have been charted in detail by Nicholas Kenyon,¹⁹ and the brief summary given here is based on his account, as well as the BBC's own history of its orchestral policy, set down in a series of unattributed documents written circa 1939 and now held in the BBC WAC.²⁰

¹⁷ Doctor, 127–30.

¹⁸ 4.2.4, Recruitment and management of players.

¹⁹ Nicholas Kenyon, *BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 5–48.

²⁰ 'BBC Symphony Orchestras' and 'London Orchestras' [both undated, c. 1939]. BBC WAC, R29/193, Orchestral Music, 1939–57.

The BBC established its first 'orchestra', the BBC Wireless Orchestra, in 1923, effectively an enlargement of a small studio ensemble. It was with this orchestra that Percy Pitt conducted experimental symphony concert broadcasts in June and November 1923, though when it came to mounting the BBC's first full series of concerts outside orchestras including the New Symphony Orchestra were engaged. Meanwhile, the BBC's own account describes how staff grasped almost immediately the importance of continuity of orchestral personnel and the problem of the deputy system.²¹ Early ensembles were remembered as 'very unsatisfactory, as [musicians] were liable to send deputies when they had engagements elsewhere, and the personnel was always changing'.²² The first attempt to formalise the ensemble as a contracted nucleus of 22 players was made in 1924 under the leadership of Dan Godfrey, who reportedly stated that he would rather have 'a somewhat inferior type of player constantly working in the orchestra whom he would be able to train, than to have an occasionally superior player, unrehearsed and unused to his method of conducting, who are [sic] constantly changing'.²³ The BBC's account of this period therefore suggests that it was well aware of the necessity of a consistent cast of players to build a good orchestra, but it is also clear that it was powerless to achieve such a thing in the face of the prevailing orchestral marketplace.²⁴

The build-up to the establishment of the BBC SO began in 1927. The BBC's takeover of the Queen's Hall Proms that year brought the Corporation into the centre of London concert life, and made it responsible for playing standards at the iconic festival.²⁵ At the same time, Ernest Newman – who in 1928 became the BBC's resident Music Critic – was spearheading a campaign of press criticism against the poor standard of London orchestras.²⁶ First-hand comparisons with the Hallé, which gave half of the concerts in the BBC's 1928–9 Queen's Hall series, and with the Berlin Philharmonic, which visited in December 1928, further stimulated the desire for orchestral reform.²⁷ Meanwhile, the BBC had been investigating a possible collaboration with the Royal Philharmonic Society

²¹ 'BBC Symphony Orchestras' and 'London Orchestras' [both undated, c. 1939]. BBC WAC, R29/193, Orchestral Music, 1939–57.

²² 'BBC Symphony Orchestras', 1. BBC WAC, R29/193.

²³ 'London Orchestras', 2. BBC WAC, R29/193.

²⁴ See section 1.2.3, *Broadcasting: Raising standards*.

²⁵ See Doctor, 'A New Dimension', 91 and 96–7; and Kenyon, 13.

²⁶ Kenyon, 8–9 and 13–14.

²⁷ Kenyon, 13–15.

and its orchestra, and elsewhere rumours had been circulating that Thomas Beecham, recently returned from an American tour, was planning to establish a permanent opera company with associated orchestra.²⁸

These strands began to come together in March 1928 when Landon Ronald met with Beecham to discuss Beecham's possible collaboration with the BBC. Throughout 1928 a succession of orchestral schemes were discussed, involving Beecham and concert promoter agent Lionel Powell, as well as a recording contract with the Columbia company and a host of concert series in London and the provinces. Press speculation over a new orchestra for London mounted, fuelled by unsanctioned interviews by Beecham and suggestions of conflict between Beecham, the BBC, and Henry Wood. In the face of a deteriorating relationship with Beecham and rumours of a rival scheme involving the LSO, HMV and Lionel Powell, the BBC pinned Beecham down to identifying a group of 27 key players, who were then contracted for a pilot season of concerts in 1929–30.²⁹ Assurances of ongoing employment were also made at this point to some players of the existing Wireless Orchestra. However, by mid-1929 it was becoming clear that a collaboration with Beecham was unsustainable, and the BBC made the decision to take sole charge of the proposed orchestra. The players who had been contracted on Beecham's recommendation were used for the pilot season, and in the meantime the BBC Music Department went ahead with plans for a unilateral scheme, involving 114 players on full and part-time contracts.

During the transition from a collaborative scheme with Beecham to a project in which the BBC was entirely autonomous, the Corporation brought in Henry Wood to review its preliminary orchestral personnel and reassessed its obligations to players who had already been approached. Concerns were expressed on two fronts: first, that some of the players who expected to be included in the new orchestra, particularly those from the Wireless Orchestra, were not of a sufficient standard; and second, that Beecham's preferences of players were not necessarily shared by Wood, the BBC, or Boult, newly installed as Music Director.³⁰ Between April and July 1930, the BBC sought to overcome

²⁸ Kenyon, 16–17.

²⁹ See Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 42. See also Anon., 'Untitled' [list of key players]. BBC WAC, R29/204 and R29/205, 1929.

³⁰ See Kenyon, 43–4; also Report of Orchestral Meeting, 13 March 1930. BBC WAC, R29/192, Orchestral Meetings, 1929–30; and Kenneth Wright, Memo, 19 March 1930. BBC WAC, R29/205.

these problems by moving players into different positions, in some cases revoking offers. The final cast of players did, however, contain most of the musicians who had participated in the pilot season. Surprisingly, considering the concerns expressed both at the time and in the BBC's retrospective account³¹ about the standard of members of the Wireless Orchestra, many of these players also found their way into the new orchestra. The decisions made about individual musicians, discussed in the next section, reveal aspects of the BBC Music Department's attitude to instrumental playing style.

4.2.4 Recruitment and management of players

Kenyon identifies three types of players among the BBC SO's founding principals: established London freelancers; 'talented outsider[s]', brought in from the provinces; and experienced broadcasters.³² All of these groups were represented in the wind section. The principal flute, Robert Murchie, was arguably the leading orchestral flautist in London during the inter-war years, a fact that allowed him to negotiate a salary of £1,000 p.a. in 1930, far higher than the standard principals' salary of £800.³³ Principal clarinet Frederick Thurston was well known to the Corporation, having been a member of the Wireless Orchestra since its inception in 1923. His association with Boult went back even further, the conductor taking credit for 'discovering' the young Thurston in 1911 when Boult himself was a student at Oxford.³⁴ Both Thurston and Murchie were uncontroversial choices, but attempts to appointment 'talented outsiders' to the oboe and bassoon sections caused more problems. The BBC's choice for the crucial position of first oboe was Alec Whittaker, then principal of the Hallé Orchestra. He duly accepted the post, but the BBC was condemned for using its privileged financial position to poach a leading player from the provincial orchestra.³⁵ As a result, attempts to recruit Whittaker's colleague, Hallé principal bassoon Archie Camden, were suspended,³⁶ and

³¹ 'BBC Symphony Orchestras' and 'London Orchestras' [both undated, c. 1939]. BBC WAC, R29/193, Orchestral Music, 1939–57.

³² Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 52–53.

³³ R. G. Pratt, 'BBC Symphony Orchestra. Contracts', 29 September 1930. BBC WAC, R29/205.

³⁴ 'Obituary: My Frederick Thurston', *The Times* (14 December 1953), 10.

³⁵ See Kenyon, 46–7.

³⁶ See Kenyon, 46–47. Kenyon's account of this reflects the BBC's official history of the situation: however, Camden's own version of events claims that Harty put no pressure on Hallé players to decline the offers made by the BBC in 1930, and that it was Camden's own decision to remain loyal to the Hallé as long as Harty was conductor. See Camden, *Blow by Blow*, 125.

instead an established London player, Richard Newton, was appointed to lead the bassoon section.

In contrast to the string sections, where many of the rank-and-file players had been recruited by nationwide auditions,³⁷ the remainder of the wind section consisted primarily of London freelancers who had worked for the Corporation during the 1920s, in the BBC Wireless Orchestra and Wireless Military Band. In some instances, this reflected assurances made in the late 1920s by the BBC to members of the Wireless Orchestra that they would continue to be employed in the new permanent orchestra.³⁸ In the case of the oboist John H. Field, the BBC investigated every avenue to free itself from these obligations, because of concerns over his playing standard. However, Field was ultimately included in the orchestra, and the renewal of his contract without reservations in 1933 and 1935 suggests that the BBC must ultimately have been satisfied with his playing. The fact that Field, like so many of the founding members of the BBC SO wind section, was a long-standing employee of the BBC surely also contributed to the stability of the section, which remained remarkably constant throughout the 1930s.³⁹ Notwithstanding the changes of principals, discussed below, the majority of the founding wind players remained in the orchestra throughout the decade, the only exception being the flute department, where only the second flute, Frank Almgill, was still present in 1939.

Selection criteria

The ages of the musicians selected for the new orchestra in 1930 suggest that the BBC prioritised maturity and experience. Murchie was the oldest principal, at 46, followed by Newton, 35, and Thurston and Whittaker who, both 29, already had many years of professional experience behind them. The oldest members of the section were the bassoonists Ernest Hinchcliff, 51, the former principal of the NSO, and Thomas Dickie, 56. Even the youngest players were by no means green: the 21-year-old flautist Edward Walker had already played in his father's section in the LSO, and the 22-year-old oboist Terence MacDonagh had led the BBC SO oboe section during the pilot season 1929–30. The fact that the next youngest member of the section was 29-year-old bassoonist Albert

³⁷ Kenyon, 55.

³⁸ See for example, [R. H. Eckersley?], 'Permanent Orchestra', 16 April 1930. BBC WAC, R29/205.

³⁹ Kenyon, 129. See also Appendix A, Orchestra Lists.

Edward Wilson gives some indication of the depth of experience throughout each department.

There is a lack of detailed information about the BBC's stylistic priorities in building its wind sections; however, some isolated cases provide insights from which more general principles can be inferred. One relates to the difficult task of fixing the oboe section. As already mentioned, Terence MacDonagh led the oboes during the pilot season, an appointment which was made on the recommendation of Beecham. After Beecham's withdrawal from the BBC Orchestra project, MacDonagh was cited as an example of a player whose inclusion reflected Beecham's tastes rather than those of the BBC, perhaps indicating that it did not share Beecham's belief in putting very young but promising players in important positions. What is even more revealing is the decision that the ideal oboe department would consist instead of Alec Whittaker, with MacDonagh playing second, and Léon Goossens as cor anglais player, as 'the general opinion as to the advisability of offering Goossens first oboe was unfavourable'.⁴⁰ When Goossens was approached with this offer, he was predictably insulted:

I was led to believe that I was going to be First Oboe ... Adrian Boult and the Orchestra Manager took me out to lunch; the Orchestral Manager, who I couldn't stand, started buttering me up. 'Of course we ought to mention at this juncture that it is for the Cor Anglais that we principally want you as we have already appointed our First Oboe'. I got up from my seat and said 'No, thank you. Good afternoon, gentlemen', and walked out. Adrian wrote me a letter to apologise.⁴¹

The decision not to offer Goossens the first oboe position of course appears questionable in light of the iconic status he subsequently achieved. Further evidence from the BBC WAC suggests that it was based on an active dislike within the BBC Music Department for Goossens's overtly expressive, vibrato-laden playing style. In a series of annotations to an internal memo about solo engagements, circulated in January 1935, a note by Kenneth Wright included the mistyped comment 'Whatever one's personal dislike of his tone may be, he has a big gollowing [sic]'.⁴² Wright had clearly meant

⁴⁰ Report of Orchestral Meeting, 14 May 1930. BBC WAC, R29/192, Orchestral Meetings 1929–30.

⁴¹ Rosen, *The Goossens*, 131.

⁴² Julian Herbage, 'Memo: Leon Goossens', 12 January 1935. BBC WAC, RCONT1, Léon Goossens, 1932–42. The original memo suggested that Goossens should be offered a concerto engagement with the BBC SO, partly in the hope that it would stop him from trying to negotiate very high fees for smaller broadcast engagements.

'following', but Edward Clark drily responded 'I presume this should read "wallowing"'. Further comments by Arthur Wynn and Aylmer Buesst continued the word play. Both Wright's initial comment and the responses it prompted, which deviate from the usually businesslike tone of Music Department memos, suggest a widespread disdain among the staff for Goossens's hyper-expressive delivery. This is further evidence of the way that a belief in 'unaffected' performance style pervaded the corporation.

The other case that gives an insight into the BBC's artistic priorities in regard to wind players relates to the bassoon section. As mentioned above, the BBC's plans to bring Archie Camden to London were suspended in 1930 so as not to further aggravate tensions with Hamilton Harty, and the principal bassoon position was given to Richard Newton. However, an internal review of the BBC SO at the end of its first season judged the bassoon section 'the least satisfactory department in the woodwind from the point of view of artistic standard'. Particular doubts were expressed about the playing of Ernest Hinchcliff and Thomas Dickie; based on the age of the two men, it could be inferred that this was because their playing style was old-fashioned.⁴³ The issue of bassoon systems may also be relevant, as it was at this time that Richard Newton changed from French to German bassoon, apparently encouraged by the BBC.⁴⁴ Sources suggest that Dickie was already a German-system player,⁴⁵ but it is unlikely that Hinchcliff changed system at such a late stage in his career. The youngest member of the section, Albert Wilson, is known to have remained loyal to the French system throughout his career,⁴⁶ meaning that the BBC SO bassoon section contained a mix of the two instruments at least until Wilson's departure in 1946. This is more likely a testament to Wilson's ability to blend than evidence of an ambivalence towards the French bassoon on the part of the BBC. Their determination to recruit Camden, the leading German bassoon player in the country, Newton's change to German system, and the sidelining of Dickie and Hinchcliff

⁴³ Edward Clark and Julian Herbage, 'The Orchestral Scheme', 1 May 1931. BBC WAC, R29/205.

⁴⁴ There are no BBC sources to corroborate this claim, which is made in Langwill, *The Bassoon*, 177.

However, a note by Newton requesting extra preparation time for a solo engagement on account of having recently changed instruments confirms that he did switch to the German bassoon in summer 1931, the end of the BBC SO's first season. Richard Newton, Letter to Victor Hely-Hutchinson, 17 January 1932. BBC WAC, RCONT1, Richard Newton, 1928-62.

⁴⁵ Eric Halfpenny, 'French and German Bassoons in London', 188.

⁴⁶ Wilson played alongside Cecil James in the RPO orchestra in the 1960s, the last all-French system bassoon section in London. See Langwill, *The Bassoon*, 175 and 182.

are all indicative of a desire to move away from the old style of playing on French bassoons and embrace the German instrument, which, as has been noted, offered greater stability and clarity and was more microphone-friendly.⁴⁷

Relationship between management and players

The departure of Harty from the Hallé orchestra in 1933 finally allowed the BBC to bring Camden to London, leading Newton to be demoted to sub-principal, Hinchcliff moved to contrabassoon and Dickie retired.⁴⁸ Newton's replacement as principal bassoon by Camden was clearly viewed by the BBC to be a delicate situation and was handled with great care. Newton was regarded as 'an excellent and reliable player', second only to Camden in the country, but lacking in his 'artistic ability', though as will be discussed in chapter five, it is unclear what this actually meant, and the Music Department's opinion may have been based more on Camden's reputation than specific details of his playing style. Newton's 'exemplary conduct' in the orchestra was also noted when the recommendation was made that he keep his principal's salary when demoted to sub-principal, and it was stated that Boult would 'rather lose Camden than agree to a reduction in Newton's salary'.⁴⁹ The BBC also agreed that, in order to save him embarrassment, Newton would not have to play second to Camden in Queen's Hall concerts; it is unclear whether this meant that he would be allowed to play principal, or that he would be excused from the concerts altogether, though the latter seems more likely.⁵⁰ Despite these concessions, however, a later memo alludes to dissatisfaction among the players regarding Newton's demotion, and Camden's own account of the situation records that the assurances he had received from Pratt that Newton had been consulted on the matter of stepping aside proved untrue. Camden also claimed that it was at his insistence that Newton kept his principal's salary.⁵¹

Whatever the truth, correspondence held in the BBC archives shows that Boult went to great effort to maintain a good relationship with Newton after Camden's arrival. In

⁴⁷ See 2.5, Bassoon: instruments.

⁴⁸ R. G. Pratt, 'Memo: BBC Orchestra: Archie Camden - Principal Bassoon', 21 June 1933. BBC WAC, R29/80/1, BBC Symphony Orchestra Contracts 1933-35.

⁴⁹ Cruttwell, 'Memo: BBC Symphony Orchestra: Bassoon Department', 25 May 1933. BBC WAC, R29/80/1, BBC Symphony Orchestra Contracts 1933-35.

⁵⁰ Pratt, 'Memo: Queen's Hall Symphony Concerts: Proposed Bracketing of Archie Camden and Richard Newton', 22 September 1933. BBC WAC, R29/80/1, BBC Symphony Orchestra Contracts 1933-35.

⁵¹ See Camden, *Blow by Blow*, 125.

1935, he wrote to Newton to compliment him on his playing during Toscanini's first concerts with the BBC SO.⁵²

You played very finely, better, I think, than in the days when you were playing First Bassoon for us. It is excellent to know that you should be maturing your form and playing all the time in spite of the disappointment which you had sometime ago.⁵³

Newton's reply, which expressed thanks and appreciation for the personal message, does not give any indication of hard feelings about the situation. The improvement in his playing that Boult alluded to, surely an inevitable result of Newton's growing familiarity with the German bassoon, was eventually rewarded by his return to the principal bassoon position upon Camden's departure in 1946.

The fact that Newton was willing to remain in the orchestra and eventually returned to the principal position owed much to Boult's sensitivity in the handling of orchestral players; however, relations between the management and the orchestra's principals were not always so happy. In May 1931, a group of players including Alec Whittaker, Terence MacDonagh, and the entire clarinet section were 'reprimanded by Mr Boult' for offences which were detailed in a confidential report, no longer extant.⁵⁴ The exact nature of the transgressions is open to conjecture, but it is possible that they related to the players' conduct, or to the acceptance of outside engagements without permission, as a result of the players testing their boundaries during their first season of employment. Similarly, in 1935, a memo stated that Robert Murchie's behaviour 'has not been satisfactory in many respects and a final report will be required ... before the contracts are renewed'.⁵⁵

It is unsurprising that, of the wind section, it is the principal players whose names are most often associated with misconduct. These were artists of high standing, who had never before been shackled by a full-time contract. They were doubtless aware of their value to the orchestra and less afraid of losing the security of a salaried job than were the

⁵² This is a source of confusion: either Newton agreed to play second to Camden in these prestigious Queen's Hall concerts, or he was in fact promoted to principal. The former seems more likely, and would explain Boult taking the trouble to thank him.

⁵³ Boult, 'Draft Letter to Richard Newton', 26 June 1935. BBC WAC, RCONT1, Richard Newton, 1928-62.

⁵⁴ P. E. Cruttwell, 'Orchestral Contracts', 7 May 1931. BBC WAC, R29/205.

⁵⁵ P.E. Cruttwell, 'BBC Symphony Orchestra: Contracts', 16 May 1935. BBC WAC, R29/80/1, BBC Symphony Orchestra Contracts 1933-35.

rank-and-file players, making them more inclined to test the boundaries of their contracts. In the face of this, the BBC had to be pro-active in establishing discipline and enforcing contractual obligations, in particular the bans on deputising and accepting outside engagements, a task which fell to the orchestral manager, Richard Pratt. In view of this, his unpopularity with the players is unsurprising: Basil Tschaikov, son of clarinettist Anassim Tschaikov, who played in Thurston's section, recalled his efficiency, describing him as having 'eyes and ears everywhere',⁵⁶ while Gerald Jackson stated that he was 'one of the most hated men I have ever known'.⁵⁷ It appears that contractual compliance was maintained, and a new environment of orchestral discipline successfully established, but at a possible cost to player morale.

Camden's memoirs, published posthumously in 1982, describe the BBC as an unrewarding employer to work for. Compared with the Hallé Orchestra, where 'everyone was considerate' and the orchestral management was distinguished by 'charm and a ready appreciation of the players' needs', Camden found the BBC administration lacked warmth, and he echoed the accounts of the dislike felt by players towards the orchestra manager.⁵⁸ Camden suggested that many of the wind principals felt a lack of encouragement from the management, who rarely acknowledged good playing, and summarised the situation by quoting an unnamed former Hallé colleague who had joined the BBC SO in 1930: 'you have to remember you're just a number on one page of a ledger. As long as you are where you ought to be at any given time you're alright'.⁵⁹ Pratt's apparent response to complaints about the lack of feedback was "'Rest assured ... that the Corporation is satisfied with your playing by the fact that you remain in the orchestra'".⁶⁰ Camden also recalled that a request by the wind principals to form a wind quintet under the BBC SO name, though supported by Boult, was turned down by the Corporation, not only on the grounds that it might deprive players outside the orchestra of work but also because the BBC had 'no real knowledge of [the players'] chamber music work' and would not permit the use of its name without a formal audition. In his account, Camden was at pains to distance Boult from this decision, further evidence that

⁵⁶ Tschaikov, *The Music Goes Round and Around*, online (accessed 21 July 2012).

⁵⁷ Jackson, *First Flute*, 66.

⁵⁸ See Camden, *Blow by Blow*, 125–26.

⁵⁹ Camden, 126–27.

⁶⁰ Camden, 127.

Boult acted as a buffer between the players and the corporation. Camden's account is alone in recording such strong complaints about the atmosphere within the BBC SO, though his tale of being treated like a complete outsider to the Corporation after he left the orchestra, which testifies to the deeply hierarchical and compartmentalised nature of the organisation, resembles an anecdote included in Gerald Jackson's memoirs.⁶¹

The working atmosphere in the BBC SO may have contributed to the loss of two of its principal players in the late 1930s. The departure of Alec Whittaker in 1937 appears to have resulted from a deterioration in his relationship with the BBC. Camden, who played alongside him in both the Hallé and the BBC, recalled that Whittaker was unhappy with the impersonal, corporate atmosphere of the orchestra, which contrasted with the 'encouragement and appreciation' he had been used to from Hamilton Harty in the Hallé, and his playing suffered as a result.⁶² Whittaker's BBC contributor file records a long series of wrangles over fees for solo and chamber music bookings in the mid-1930s, which also appears to have soured relations somewhat.⁶³ The end of Robert Murchie's tenure in 1938 appears to have taken place in more dramatic circumstances. Because the BBC SO contracts files post-1935 are unavailable, the exact circumstances cannot be confirmed, but Jackson stated that 'a difference of opinion' with visiting conductor Arturo Toscanini was a contributing factor. Richard Adeney, Murchie's former student, elaborates on this, claiming that Murchie hurled drunken abuse at Toscanini during a rehearsal and was sacked on the spot.⁶⁴ However, a 1938 letter from Boult to Bruno Walter hints at other problems:

You will find the personnel of the Orchestra little changed, but there are younger players in the positions of First Flute and First Oboe, Mr. Gerald Jackson and Mr. Terence MacDonagh. This has improved what I felt was our weakest spot, woodwind intonation, as the new players are anxious to cooperate instead of taking the line that they always know best.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Camden, *Blow by Blow*, 146; Jackson, *First Flute*, 67. Jack Brymer's memories of playing in the post-war BBC SO also echo Camden's account of the working atmosphere within the orchestra. See Brymer, *From Where I Sit*, 125.

⁶² Archie Camden, *Blow by Blow*, 126.

⁶³ See BBC WAC, RCONT1, Alec Whittaker, File 1 1932–62.

⁶⁴ Adeney, *Flute*, 21–3.

⁶⁵ Adrian Boult, 'Letter to Bruno Walter', 5 January 1938. BBC WAC, RCONT1, Bruno Walter, 1933–45.

Boult's words show his desire for constant improvement in the BBC SO's playing, though one can imagine that leading players such as Murchie and Whittaker did not take kindly to the expectation, implicit in Boult's remarks, that principal players were expected to 'cooperate' – do what they were told – rather than exercise their own professional and artistic judgement.

Principal clarinet Frederick Thurston had a largely unproblematic relationship with the orchestra and the longest tenure of any of the founding principals, remaining in post until 1946. However, even he was subject to censure on one occasion. Prior to the renewal of Thurston's contract in 1933, the following memo was passed from the orchestra manager to the Programme Finance department, who oversaw the players' contracts:

You will probably wish to place on record the fact that this player was interviewed on 16th June and informed in detail as to the defects in his playing and the reaction this was bound to have on the question of salary. I was present at the interview; Thurston appeared to take the matter fairly well and has definitely promised to do his very best to satisfy the BBC during the coming season.⁶⁶

In the absence of the confidential report detailing the BBC's concerns, the nature of the 'defects' in Thurston's playing are unknown; possibilities include intonation, ensemble playing, technical standard and preparation, as well as his readiness to 'cooperate' and to respond to the demands of conductors. However, the recorded evidence, which dates primarily from after 1933, does not show significant problems in any of these areas, and there is no evidence that Thurston's salary was reduced as a consequence of this issue. Indeed, the satisfactory resolution of the situation, as well as the BBC's commitment to the continued development of its players, is evinced by the fact that following this interview Thurston was given a further contract for three years – a measure reserved for 'those players of outstanding reputation whom otherwise there might be a danger of losing'.⁶⁷ The exchange nonetheless reveals the level of

⁶⁶ R. G. Pratt, 'Memo: BBC Orchestra: Frederick Thurston - principal clarinet', 18 June 1933. BBC WAC, R29/80/1, BBC Symphony Orchestra Contracts 1933-35.

⁶⁷ Cruttwell, 'BBC Symphony Orchestra Contracts', 29 May 1933. BBC WAC, R29/80/1, BBC Symphony Orchestra Contracts 1933-35.

involvement that the BBC had in maintaining the standard of its orchestra by closely monitoring the performance of individual musicians.

As seen in these accounts, the BBC's constant concern with the standard of its orchestra was addressed not only in the rehearsal room but also at a management and policy level. The extant papers made available for external research suggest that the Corporation had a paternalistic attitude towards its players, though it was not entirely ruthless. Non-principal players were kept on short, one-year contracts wherever possible, both to discourage complacency and to facilitate their rapid replacement where necessary,⁶⁸ but the BBC embraced responsibility for player development and appears to have viewed dismissal as a last resort. Confidential reports were written on each musician on an annual basis, containing assessments from the Orchestral Manager and Music Director on 'character, general conduct, zeal, punctuality', as well as playing ability.⁶⁹ Interviews pressing for improvement were held with players whose conduct or playing was deficient, and probationary periods and re-auditioning were used at contract renewal time for borderline cases.⁷⁰ The overall impression given is that the Music Department strove to establish a systematic and consistent system of managing orchestral players that emulated processes elsewhere in the Corporation but also that cases were treated on an individual, and sometimes sympathetic, basis, especially when Boult was involved. This desire for consistency, fairness and professionalism comes across strongly throughout the orchestral papers from the 1930s and was surely a key factor in the BBC's success in establishing a new and modern model of orchestral management, which helped ensure a low turnover of players and thus contributed to the maintenance of a high playing standard. However, as Camden testifies, it also had an impact on the artistic environment of the orchestra, as the paternalistic attitude of the management was at odds with the fostering of an atmosphere of creative autonomy and confidence within the wind section. The sharp contrast between this situation and that of Beecham's LPO will be considered below, and the musical results flowing from it in chapter five.

⁶⁸ R. G. Pratt, 'BBC Orchestra: Three-year contracts', 28 April 1933. BBC WAC, R29/80/1, BBC Symphony Orchestra Contracts 1933-35.

⁶⁹ BBC Symphony Orchestra: Musicians' Confidential Report, 1931 [blank copy]. BBC WAC, R29/205. Unfortunately, the actual reports for members of the orchestra during this period have not been traced.

⁷⁰ For example, see P. E. Cruttwell, 'BBC Symphony Orchestra: Contracts', 16 May 1935. BBC WAC, R29/80/1, BBC Symphony Orchestra Contracts 1933-35.

4.2.5 Work profile

The BBC SO was more than just a symphony orchestra: it was a pool of contracted musicians who were originally intended to cover many of the BBC's instrumental music requirements. The creation and management of such an ensemble involved balancing 'the demands of artistic excellence and the demands of efficient broadcasting, between hours produced to justify money expended, and the importance of a quality of performance which cannot be measured in output'.⁷¹ As early as 1928, when rumours of a BBC permanent orchestra were rife in the press, an article in *The Times* accurately predicted the challenges that were to face the scheme:

Great orchestral playing requires a far more subtle combination of individual faculties than does rowing. Suppose, what is by no means certain, that this country contains orchestral players in each department who man for man are as fine executors as their opposite members in either the Berlin or Philadelphia orchestras ... [The BBC's] servants should be available to supply all sorts of music at all sorts of hours of the day and night. Not for it ... the unified style of playing or even, except on the rarest occasion, the fully rehearsed programme ... the ideal orchestra must of necessity be very expensive to somebody and comparatively infrequent in its benefits to anybody.⁷²

Edward Clark and Julian Herbage tackled this challenge by designing a system whereby the symphony orchestra of 114 players could be partitioned to provide either a smaller symphony orchestra of 78 and a theatre orchestra of 36 (the latter to provide music for dramatic programmes and musical comedy), or a light orchestra of 67 and a popular orchestra of 47 (to cover light music and other miscellaneous requirements).⁷³ The beauty of this 'Comprehensive Orchestral Organisation' was that one group of 114 musicians could cover a broad range of the broadcasting requirements, and that the pairs of smaller ensembles could be used simultaneously. In practice, this would require the players to work in different combinations, turning their hand to a vast range of genres, and it frequently led to an extremely heavy workload.⁷⁴ The system became the backbone of the orchestral scheme, though Eckersley foresaw that it would cause

⁷¹ Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 88–9.

⁷² 'The Ideal Orchestra', *The Times* (13 October 1928), 10.

⁷³ The orchestral scheme is laid out in detail in Kenyon, 35–6.

⁷⁴ For an account of the monotonous side of broadcast work, see Jackson, *First Flute*, 69.

difficulties, 'such as the availability of the men for performance and rehearsal ... [and] the artistic limitations of a scheme which forces players into what might be considered a certain amount of hack work'.⁷⁵ Modifications to the system were made over the course of the early 1930s, including the creation of a separate BBC Theatre Orchestra in 1931 to relieve the main orchestra of some of its extensive light-music commitments. Concerns that the orchestra's standard had slipped during the 1933–4 season resulted in the avoidance of three-session days and the reduction of the orchestra's broadcasting hours to provide more preparation time for the Wednesday Symphony Concerts, which were the orchestra's main artistic focus and essential to maintaining its public reputation. It was also recognised that studio work was detrimental to the morale of the musicians, as it lacked the stimulus of a live audience.⁷⁶ This led to the undertaking of provincial and European concert appearances from 1934–5 onwards, with the intention both to motivate the musicians and to build the orchestra's reputation nationally and abroad. These decisions are evidence of the BBC's choice to prioritise the artistic excellence of its orchestra over productivity in terms of broadcasting hours.

The BBC's Wednesday Symphony Concerts at the Queen's Hall typically numbered between 18 and 20 concerts between October and May. These, along with the weekly Sunday studio concerts, were the orchestra's main point of contact with visiting conductors and attracted the most press scrutiny of the orchestra's playing. In the first season (1930–31), the concerts were grouped into threes under a single conductor, who often also took the Sunday studio concerts during the same period, to ensure continuity of training and direction. This created an effective 'residency' for conductors who visited, an arrangement that was attractive for the visitors and contributed to the training of the orchestra during its first season.

The orchestra was also frequently involved with the Concerts of Contemporary Music, where it was challenged by the latest scores from continental Europe, including works by Stravinsky, Hindemith, and the Second Viennese School. The establishment of the BBC SO was a significant step forward for the BBC's contemporary music ambitions,

⁷⁵ Kenyon, 36. Roger Eckersley (1885–1955), who served as BBC Director of Programmes between 1925 and 1934, was played a key role in the establishment of the BBC SO. Though he had no professional musical background, Eckersley's support for the Music Department and its cultural ambitions was crucial to the achievements of the Department during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

⁷⁶ Kenyon, 88; see also Camden, *Blow by Blow*, 127.

as it provided the BBC with a group of musicians who could be trained by Boult in the performance of new music and allowed extensive preparation time for complex works. The reactions of composers who came to the BBC before and after 1930 are testament to this. When Webern visited to conduct his Five Orchestral Pieces Op. 10 in late 1929, he complained that the music was met 'with little understanding on the part of the orchestra'.⁷⁷ Yet by January 1931, Schoenberg was able to say of his own experience conducting the new BBC SO that 'The orchestra rehearsals brought me great happiness. I can say that I have perhaps never yet rehearsed such a difficult work so effortlessly.'⁷⁸ The creation of the BBC SO also made it viable to hold the annual meeting of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) in the UK for the first time in 1931. Critic Edwin Evans, later president of the ISCM, pronounced it a landmark event: 'At this festival the BBC Orchestra created a new precedent ... Considering the demands modern composers make upon orchestra players the change [in the level of preparation and execution] is as revolutionary as the music with which some of them have confronted our audiences'.⁷⁹ The BBC's support of both British and foreign composers continued throughout the decade, and the BBC SO became somewhat of a specialist ensemble in the field of contemporary music, giving close to 400 first performances by the end of 1939. The exposure to this amount of new music, and the rhythmic and expressive demands made by many of the composers they worked with, is likely to have impacted on the BBC SO's playing style.⁸⁰

The BBC SO's versatility was one of its greatest strengths. Arturo Toscanini is reputed to have said that 'if he were asked to do a series of mixed programmes with restricted rehearsal, he would prefer it to be with ... the BBC Symphony Orchestra - than any that he knew in the world'.⁸¹ However, the necessity of fulfilling so many functions must also have had an effect on the orchestra's playing style. Back in 1922, *The Times* suggested that with orchestral versatility came the danger that 'in being able to tackle all styles of musical expression equally well there may be some lowering of the possible standard for any single one'.⁸² Certainly the orchestra's varied workload

⁷⁷ Webern to Schoenberg, 3 Dec 1929, quoted in Doctor, 173.

⁷⁸ Schoenberg to Clark, 20 Jan 1931, quoted in Doctor, 204.

⁷⁹ Evans, quoted in Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 67.

⁸⁰ See Day, *A Century of Recorded Music*, 162-6.

⁸¹ Jackson, *First Flute*, 76.

⁸² 'Modern Orchestral Music: The Craving for Brilliance', *The Times* (2 September 1922), 10.

required that the players be highly adaptable and somewhat of a 'blank canvas' for visiting conductors, which arguably precluded the development of a strongly drawn playing style.

4.2.6 The BBC SO and HMV

Though various recording companies were named as possible partners during the development of the permanent orchestra scheme in the late 1920s, no recording company was involved in the final formation of the BBC SO. Unfortunately, the BBC WAC files relating to the BBC SO's recording contract do not cover the period prior to 1935; and as the corresponding files in the EMI archives are inaccessible, it is not possible to ascertain the terms or the start date of the BBC SO's contract with HMV. However, HMV Artist Sheets indicate that the BBCSO's first recording session took place on 30 May 1932.⁸³ This dates from a little over a year after the merger of Columbia and HMV to form EMI, in March 1931, and six months after Thomas Beecham negotiated what was to become the LPO's recording contract, in November 1931. It also pre-dates the formation of the LPO itself, and its first recordings, in October 1932.⁸⁴ Assuming that the BBC's negotiations with HMV preceded the first session by weeks or even months, it is possible that the BBC SO's contract was signed very shortly after the Beecham negotiated the LPO contract. It may be that EMI was hedging its bets over whether Beecham's new orchestra would materialise, but the situation is probably more accurately interpreted in terms of the obvious attraction for EMI in holding both of London's new orchestras under contract to its two 'rival' labels.

Recording occurred on at least five dates in both 1932 and 1933 and six in 1934,⁸⁵ indicating that the BBC SO's contractual obligations during this period resembled the agreement signed in 1935, which held the ensemble on an exclusive basis with a guaranteed minimum of five, three-hour sessions per annum.⁸⁶ In fact, correspondence indicates that due to the orchestra's heavy broadcasting schedule, it was difficult for even this small number of sessions to be fulfilled. According to the 1935 contract,

⁸³ See British Library EMI microfilm collection, Reel 364, Artists sheets Bard-Beecham.

⁸⁴ See 4.3.4, The LPO and EMI.

⁸⁵ See British Library EMI microfilm collection, Reel 364, Artists sheets Bard-Beecham.

⁸⁶ See draft contracts, memos and correspondence, January-April 1935. BBC WAC, R21/18/1, Recording Contracts January-June 1935.

recordings of broadcast performances could be counted against the guaranteed minimum number of sessions, if they resulted in a release; however, recording duties were not included in the orchestral musicians' contracts, but were paid separately, meaning they would effectively be paid twice for any concert issued as a commercial recording. Boult was also under a separate exclusive contract to HMV to cover his recordings with the BBC SO.⁸⁷ The BBC received royalties on the orchestra's recordings, as did visiting conductors, but Boult and the players did not.⁸⁸ In light of the relatively modest income promised by the contract, its primary value to the BBC was presumably in terms of the publicity and prestige that recording brought. Indeed, in order to call itself Britain's leading orchestra, the BBC SO had to have a presence in the record catalogues and the review pages, where it could be compared with its rival orchestras.

Relationship between broadcasts and recordings

HMV was responsible for choosing repertoire for recording in consultation with the BBC, but it also responded to suggestions from Boult.⁸⁹ In general, HMV were happy to work within the BBC's own programming, recording works shortly after they had been broadcast, a system that minimised the need for extra rehearsal.⁹⁰ This was also the case when recording visiting conductors. Perhaps as a result of this, most of the BBC SO's recordings were made in a single session or day, with the supporting documentation showing that it was rare for the orchestra to re-record portions of a work on a later date. However in his comments on the 1936 BBC-HMV contract, Orchestral Manager Richard Pratt highlighted some working difficulties with the system, namely that when HMV wished to record a work for which no broadcast performance had been scheduled, they seldom allowed any rehearsal time during the studio session, apparently expecting the BBC SO to prepare the repertoire during the course of their normal rehearsals. Pratt also stated, 'there is not always agreement between HMV and the BBC as to the suitability of items selected for recordings'.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Rex Palmer, Letter to Adrian Boult, 11 April 1935. BBC WAC, R21/18/1.

⁸⁸ Draft Contract between HMV and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, 1935. BBC WAC, R21/18/1.

⁸⁹ For instance, his 1934 request to record Schubert's Symphony No. 9. See Rex Palmer, Letter to Adrian Boult, 6 April 1934. BBC WAC, R46/69/1, Recording General.

⁹⁰ Rex Palmer, Letter to Owen Mase, 2 August 1934. BBC WAC, R46/69/1, Recording General.

⁹¹ Pratt, Memo: BBC Symphony Orchestra: recording for HMV, 30 July 1937. BBC WAC, R46/71/1, BBC Symphony Orchestra Contracts 1937-9.

It was rare for HMV to record a live performance. The recording contract, negotiated with the Musicians' Union, stipulated that a full session fee was payable to every musician involved in a concert that was recorded and subsequently issued by HMV, even if the company only wanted to record a single item in the programme. This made it uneconomic to record live performances unless a significant proportion of the programmed repertoire was suitable for release.⁹² This arrangement also removed any financial incentive for recording broadcasts in favour of studio recordings. However, HMV did make speculative live recordings of some visiting conductors. Relay recordings were made of Koussevitzky's performance of Sibelius Symphony No. 2 in the 1933 London Musical Festival, and following strenuous persuasive efforts on the parts of both the BBC and HMV to gain Toscanini's consent, many of his concerts were also recorded, though in most cases he exercised his right of veto over their release.⁹³ Many of these recordings have latterly become available and are included in the analysis of playing styles in chapter five.

Overall, it is clear that studio recording was not the main focus of the BBC SO's activities, as reflected by the relatively small number of recordings they made during the 1930s in comparison with the LPO. However, as the next section will discuss, as a broadcasting orchestra the BBC SO spent most of its time playing for the microphone, meaning that technology nonetheless had a strong impact on its playing style.

4.2.7 Adrian Boult

Adrian Boult spent more time training the full BBC Symphony Orchestra than any other conductor. He conducted around half of the orchestra's symphony concerts each season throughout the 1930s, as well as many of the studio concerts and contemporary concerts, and all of the orchestra's provincial and international appearances between 1930 and 1939. Boult was noted both for his stylistic awareness – which in 1930 meant finding a different sound-world and phrasing style depending on the nationality, period or composer of the music⁹⁴ – and for his 'feeling for the great architectural span' of

⁹² See R. Jardine-Brown, Record of interview with Rex Palmer, 1 April 1937. BBC WAC, R46/69/2, Recording correspondence 1937–9.

⁹³ See Correspondence for June 1937, in BBC WAC, R46/71, Recording General, BBC SO Contracts 1937–39.

⁹⁴ See Kenyon, 62 and Shore, 52.

symphonic works, which prompted comparisons with Toscanini.⁹⁵ The contemporary press praised him for his training of the orchestra: 'Under his direction a pianissimo is a pianissimo and a triplet has its exact value. Yet there is nothing rigid or lifeless or merely finicking, because the detail is subordinated to the main structural lines'.⁹⁶ Principal violist Bernard Shore categorised him as an 'idealistic' conductor, with a concern for the faithful presentation of the musical work:

What tone quality is to Beecham, architecture is to Boult, though possibly Boult's ideal is held as a more conscious artistic faith than is Beecham's instinctive drive towards the sensuous side of the art ... Boult's preoccupation with the formal aspects of music is linked with his attitude to the composer whose faithful servant he aims at being. His concern is that you in the audience should hear the symphony as Brahms, the composer, conceived it, in so far as he, the conductor, can bring it to life for you without distorting it through the medium of his own personality.⁹⁷

This attitude was also seen in his desire for the accurate realisation of a given score and the removal of spurious editorial additions.⁹⁸ Boult himself recalled an occasion during his visit to conduct the Vienna Philharmonic in 1933 when he made the orchestra change their habitual phrasing to correspond with the autograph manuscript.⁹⁹ He also insisted on the literal realisation of rhythms – which, as seen in chapters one and three, was by no means a universal attitude at the time. It was an approach that no doubt served the orchestra well in the performance of contemporary music. Shore also notes Boult's 'insistence upon rhythmic swing', which appears to have been a way of asking for a lightened pattern of accentuation and avoidance of heavy final beats of bars.¹⁰⁰ If this is correct, Boult's attitude to rhythm is strongly reminiscent of the constant rhythmic propulsion advocated by Percy Scholes.¹⁰¹

Shore's account of Boult in rehearsal emphasises his preoccupation with balance, noting that he often called on the opinion of the BBC's Balance and Control department,

⁹⁵ Alex Nifosi, remarks in conversation with Nicholas Kenyon, quoted in Kenyon 106.

⁹⁶ *The Times*, review of concert 11 February 1931, quoted in Kenyon, 61.

⁹⁷ Howes, *Full Orchestra*, 156–57.

⁹⁸ See Shore, *The Orchestra Speaks*, 49–52.

⁹⁹ Boult, *My Own Trumpet*, 106–7.

¹⁰⁰ Shore, 51.

¹⁰¹ See 1.2.3, Broadcasting: raising expectations.

on the grounds that 'the balance, if right for the microphone, will certainly be right in the hall'.¹⁰² Boult's belief in technology as a tool for raising performance standards through self-reflection is further documented in a 1937 memo:

It has occurred to me that it would be of great interest to me (personally) to have a permanent recording of all Wednesday night's concert (April 7th) ... as I have often said to you, the privilege of hearing my own work from a film or blattnerphone tape a few days after a performance is most valuable, in fact I would ask for it for every performance I do if I did not feel that this was quite an unfair strain on your department.

But I should be most grateful if you think a reasonable case can be made for permanent recording of all three works in this concert. They are all three standard classics, and it would be of the greatest interest to me ten years hence to play them through and hear how I handled them at this time.¹⁰³

Unfortunately, if the concert of 7 April 1937 was recorded, there is no trace of the surviving discs. Nonetheless, Boult's comment about listening back to concerts on blattnerphone¹⁰⁴ and film confirms that he used recording to assess the orchestra's performances. His assertion that a recording of the upcoming performance 'would be of great interest to me ten years hence' indicates that he did not simply view the medium as a means of short-term feedback, but also saw the value of capturing standard works as a way of tracking the development of his own interpretations over a long time-period. Most importantly, the memo establishes that Boult saw recordings as a way of accurately preserving a live performance and that he valued the analytical experience of listening through technology to improve that performance.

Boult had more influence over the playing of the BBC SO in its initial decade than any other individual. It is also clear that his approach to music-making corresponded very closely with the performance values espoused by the BBC throughout the 1920s.¹⁰⁵ The characteristics identified here, including fidelity to the score and rhythmic

¹⁰² Shore, 51.

¹⁰³ Adrian Boult, 'Memo: Symphony Concerts', 5 April 1937. BBC WAC, R46/69/2, Recording Correspondence 1937-1939.

¹⁰⁴ The blattnerphone was an early magnetic recording device that recorded onto 6mm steel tape. The BBC began using it in 1933 to record broadcasts, some of which were transferred onto 78rpm disc for retention.

¹⁰⁵ See 1.2.3, Broadcasting: raising standards.

literalness, will be tracked in the recordings considered in chapter five. Boult's use of technology to improve his orchestra's playing, which also aligned with the BBC's values, suggests that Boult's training of the BBC SO was microphone-oriented, raising the question of how this affected the wind playing.

4.2.8 Visiting Conductors

Though a significant amount of the BBC SO's time was taken up by routine broadcasting work under the BBC's house conductors, its most intense periods of orchestral training were associated with high-profile studio and public concerts under visiting conductors, whose contribution to the orchestra's training was valued by Boult.¹⁰⁶ Both he and Edward Clark maintained a personal relationship with some of the conductors who visited the BBC, though booking decisions were taken in consultation with the Director of Programmes and the Entertainment Executive. In the early 1930s visits were typically planned during the six to eight months preceding the opening of the new season in October, though it was not unusual for plans to remain unfinalised until a few weeks before a given concert. Music Department staff evaluated the desirability of potential guest conductors based on public interest, prestige, scheduling and financial considerations, and the roster of guest conductors included many distinguished foreign musicians, including Oskar Fried, Richard Strauss and Igor Stravinsky. Table 4.1 shows the number of visits made by the orchestra's most frequent guest conductors each season during the 1930s. On the basis of these admittedly crude figures, it can be suggested that the BBC's choice of guest conductors was to some extent biased towards those with an 'objective' musical style that matched the Corporation's own aesthetic.

As this table shows, by far the most regular foreign visitor to appear in the Symphony Concerts series during the 1930s was the Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet. A close associate of Stravinsky, Ansermet made a great contribution to the orchestra's familiarity with modern music, and French repertoire in particular: his three symphony concerts during the BBCSO's 1930-31 season included major works by Debussy and Poulenc and a programme devoted to Stravinsky, featuring the Piano Concerto with the composer as soloist and *The Rite of Spring*. He was noted for his accurate and attentive renderings of complex scores, and his ability to instil rhythmic precision – praised by

¹⁰⁶ Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 75.

Table 4.1 Appearances in Wednesday Symphony Concerts and London Music Festivals (LMF) by selected conductors, 1930-1939

Name	1930-31	1931-2	1932-3	1933-4	1934-5	1935-6	1936-7	1937-8	1938-9	Symphony Concerts	LMF	Total
Boult	9	13	11 3 LMF	6 3 LMF	5	8	7	9	68	6	74	
Toscanini				4 LMF	5 LMF	2 6 LMF	5 LMF	2	22	24		
Wood	5	2	5	1	2	2	1	2	20	20		
Ansermet	3	1	1	1	1	1			8	8		
Koussevitzky			3 LMF	3 LMF					0	6	6	
Beecham			1	1	1	1		1	5	5		
Weingartner		1	1	1 1 LMF	1				4	1	5	
Walter		1		1 2 LMF				2	3	2	5	

Stravinsky¹⁰⁷ – was appreciated by the players of the BBC SO.¹⁰⁸ The orchestra's time with Ansermet must also have done much to reinforce Boult's efforts to train the players in the exact realisation of rhythmic notation. Kenyon's claim that Ansermet's markings remained in the orchestra's parts until after the Second World War suggests that he had an enduring influence over the ensemble,¹⁰⁹ though evidence from the BBC Written Archives indicates that the only conductor whose markings were retained in the BBC's own parts was Boult himself.¹¹⁰

Felix Weingartner was also a regular visitor during the first half of the decade, appearing every season from 1931–5. The archetypal 'classical' conductor, renowned for his elegant and streamlined interpretations, Weingartner's performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in the 1934 London Music Festival was praised as a 'classical and undistorted reading' of 'unswerving directness'.¹¹¹ Weingartner, who had visited London regularly since before the First World War to conduct the LSO and Royal Philharmonic Society, would have been familiar to most of the players. This, combined with the fact that he did not maintain an exclusive relationship with the BBC SO, suggests that his visits were not of special significance to the development of the orchestra, though his input was undoubtedly valued by the BBC and served to reinforce the performance aesthetic established by Boult.

In 1933, the London Musical Festival was inaugurated to accommodate extended visits by eminent conductors, particularly those whose posts with other orchestras rendered them unavailable during the main concert season. A shortlist, compiled in 1931, of individuals whose stature and attractiveness to the Corporation justified special treatment consisted of Arturo Toscanini, Serge Koussevitzky, Willem Mengelberg, and Wilhelm Furtwangler. The first festival provided a three-concert residency for Koussevitzky, the principal conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. A more interventionist conductor than Boult, Ansermet or Weingartner, his performances were received well by the press, though his style provoked John Barbirolli to remark:

¹⁰⁷ Stravinsky, *An Autobiography*, 75–6 and 137.

¹⁰⁸ Nifosi, cited Kenyon, 60.

¹⁰⁹ Kenyon, 60.

¹¹⁰ W. W. Thompson, Letter to Ernest Ansermet, 24 December 1935, BBC WAC, RCont1, Ernest Ansermet.

¹¹¹ *The Times*, quoted in Kenyon 98.

I must confess myself very disturbed by his rather ruthless disregard of all the composer's indications of speeds, and the continual substitution of 'effects' of his own. This is not to deny him the glamour of his personality and perhaps his sincerity, but I do feel that his attitude of not disciplining himself at all in regard to matters of style, and in giving the impression that he must 'interpret' everything before the music can come to life, is not in the highest ideals of our art. Perhaps the simplest way to put it is that his attitude is the direct opposite of Toscanini. The latter radiates something very pure and noble whereas I cannot help sensing some of the showman in Koussevitzky.¹¹²

Though clearly not a musician who conformed to the BBC's performance aesthetic, Koussevitzky's skill as an orchestral trainer was undeniable. Principal violist Bernard Shore described Koussevitzky as a virtuoso conductor who insisted on rhythmic vitality and fullness of tone, and would accept nothing less than technical perfection from players at all times.¹¹³ His account of Koussevitzky's exacting rehearsal technique makes references to his demands for a singing style, and the use of vibrato by the strings even in a *pianissimo* dynamic.¹¹⁴ Koussevitzky undoubtedly brought the BBC SO to new heights of responsiveness and virtuosity during his visits in 1933 and 1935, and the ability of the orchestra publicly to meet his demands was a milestone in the building of its reputation.

Bruno Walter also conducted the orchestra on several occasions, including the 1934 London Music Festival. Walter was characterised by Neville Cardus as a Romantic conductor with a fluent, lyrical style, which tended toward the overly sentimental, as 'subjective' as Toscanini was 'rigidly objective'.¹¹⁵ He was liked and admired by the orchestra,¹¹⁶ and had a close personal relationship with Boult.¹¹⁷ Boult's great respect for Walter as an orchestral trainer is evinced by his request in 1938 for advice on the orchestra's playing, which Walter modestly declined to fulfill.¹¹⁸ It is initially surprising

¹¹² Barbirolli, letter to D. C. Parker, 8 June 1933, quoted in Kennedy, *Barbirolli: Conductor Laureate*, 78-9.

¹¹³ Shore, *The Orchestra Speaks* 103-5; and *Camden Blow by Blow*, 138-9.

¹¹⁴ Shore, 107.

¹¹⁵ Cardus, 'Bruno Walter at the BBC Concert', *The Manchester Guardian* (12 January 1939) 11.

¹¹⁶ Se Jackson, *First Flute*, 76-7.

¹¹⁷ Boult, *My Own Trumpet*, 75-7.

¹¹⁸ Adrian Boult, Letter to Bruno Walter, 5 January 1938. BBC WAC, RCONT1, Bruno Walter, 1933-4. Also Bruno Walter, Letter to Adrian Boult, [n.d.] 1938. BBC WAC, RCONT1, Bruno Walter, 1933-45.

that, despite these facts, Walter made relatively few visits to the BBC SO. This is directly a result of the fact that, from 1935 onwards, all of the BBC's efforts went into accommodating Toscanini in a series of visits throughout the rest of the decade.

Undoubtedly the most famous conductor in the world, in the early 1930s Toscanini's reputation scaled ever-greater heights. He was in his second season as principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic, where he was earning a reported salary of \$100,000 for fifteen weeks' work. In 1930, he had led that orchestra on a European tour which concluded with his first ever concerts in London, where the reception was 'stunned and ecstatic'.¹¹⁹ He had for decades refused invitations to conduct British orchestras, because of reservations about rehearsal time and deputies.¹²⁰ To the BBC, bringing Toscanini to London was the ultimate validation of its achievements in revolutionising British orchestral performance.

Toscanini's first appearance with the BBC SO was at the 1935 London Music Festival where he gave two programmes, each allocated six days' rehearsal. Cellist Alex Nifosi recalled, 'A great factor in Toscanini's decision [to accept the BBC's invitation] was his knowledge of our training under Sir Adrian ... [the orchestra was] well used to an architectural approach to the classics ... [and] meticulous adherence to the score'.¹²¹ The orchestra responded well to Toscanini, Shore describing him as 'the one living conductor whom every single member of the orchestra approves ... He stimulates his men, refreshes their minds; and music that has become stale is revived in all its pristine beauty.'¹²² The public reaction to the 1935 concerts was predictably rapturous, Cardus hailing them as 'the most important events that have occurred for years in the orchestral life of this country'.¹²³

The success of the Toscanini concerts was such that as the 1930s went on, the BBC repeatedly went to every length to ensure his return visits, a decision that effectively prevented it from forming a strong relationship with any other visiting conductor. Koussevitzky's return in 1935 to give three concerts in the London Musical Festival, which had served in part to prepare the orchestra for Toscanini's arrival, was inevitably

¹¹⁹ Sachs, *Toscanini*, 202.

¹²⁰ See Morrison, *LSO*, 28–9.

¹²¹ Nifosi, cited in Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 106.

¹²² Shore, 161.

¹²³ Cardus, *Manchester Guardian* (7 June 1935), cited in Kenyon, 109.

overshadowed by what followed, leading Boult to recollect, 'It was obviously not practical politics to invite them both again, and I wonder whether I was ever forgiven'.¹²⁴ In 1936, Concerts Manager W. W. Thompson warned that "'London's self-appointed musical dictator" will queer the pitch of all first-rate people', causing 'difficulties with our Walter's and our Koussevitzky's'.¹²⁵ However, the success of Toscanini's next visit in 1937 outweighed this concern, and he was given the entire 1938 and 1939 festivals, as well as concerts in the 1938–9 symphony concerts season, making a total of 20 appearances with the BBC SO in a two-year period.

The resources and attention dedicated to Toscanini, combined with the departure of Edward Clark and an increasing focus on employing British musicians, led to a decline in other leading foreign conductors visiting the BBC SO as the decade went on, as seen in Fig. 4.1.¹²⁶ Only the relationship with Ansermet remained unaffected, primarily because, as a specialist in modern French compositions, he was not in direct competition with Toscanini. Toscanini was also perceived by some to have had a negative impact on the sound of the BBC SO. Neville Cardus observed in 1939 that the orchestra had become 'too efficient in a modern streamlined way, a defect which is part of the price paid every year for the superb if rather inhumane performances under Toscanini'.¹²⁷ This observation corresponds with what Toscanini's biographer Joseph Horowitz identified as Toscanini's 'late' style,¹²⁸ invoking Barbirolli's comments in 1937 that his 'almost complete lack of serenity' suggested 'an intense desire to prove to himself, and of course to others, that he is not getting old'.¹²⁹ Chapter five will consider the audio evidence of his influence over the orchestra's stylistic development during the 1930s, through a selection of Toscanini's live and studio recordings with the BBC SO.

The influence of Boult and Toscanini over the BBC SO, combined with the orchestra's exposure to modern music under the guidance of Boult and Ansermet, created an ensemble most accustomed to the demands of an 'objective' and 'architectural' style of conducting that demanded clarity and rhythmic precision, entirely in keeping with the

¹²⁴ Boult, *My Own Trumpet*, 102.

¹²⁵ Thompson, Memo (21 December 1936). BBC WAC, RCONT1, Bruno Walter, 1933–45.

¹²⁶ See Doctor, 332.

¹²⁷ Cardus, 'Bruno Walter at the BBC Concert', *The Manchester Guardian* (12 January 1939), 11.

¹²⁸ Horowitz, *Understanding Toscanini*, 343.

¹²⁹ Barbirolli, cited Kennedy, *Barbirolli*, 125–26.

BBC's stylistic agenda. This is not to say that the BBC deliberately insulated its orchestra from contact with conductors who represented other approaches. The BBC's conductor bookings were defined more by the unrivalled draw of Toscanini than by a deliberate desire to exclude conductors of different styles. Nonetheless, had Walter not been considered at times over-sentimental, or Koussevitzky too much the showman, it is conceivable that the BBC might have been more active in courting their favour. Toscanini embodied both an incoming, highly objective musical aesthetic and the BBC's own scrupulous, quasi-moralistic approach to performance. Moreover, his star quality and rarity value were hugely valuable to the building of the orchestra's image. Had Furtwängler or Mengelberg been available in the early 1930s the situation might have turned out differently; but as it was, by the second half of the decade the public's expectations had been set: Toscanini's visits had become the BBC SO's 'unique selling point', and his influence on their playing style was firmly embedded.

4.3 The London Philharmonic Orchestra

By 1932, the BBC SO was well established and successfully fulfilling the BBC's ambition to create a permanent, full-time orchestra that compared favourably with the great orchestras of Europe and the USA. Its brief dominance of the home orchestral scene was ended in October of that year by the emergence of a new competitor in the form of Thomas Beecham's London Philharmonic Orchestra.

After a brief overview of the formation of the LPO (4.3.2), this section will address the issues of the LPO's concert activity and repertoire, and its relationship with the EMI recording company (4.3.3 and 4.3.4), before focussing on the personnel of the LPO wind section, their relationship with Beecham, and his methods of shaping the orchestra's performing style. The aim is not to construct a full history of the LPO in the 1930s, but to highlight the key areas in which it differed from the BBC SO, in order to understand how this impacted on the wind playing style.

4.3.1 Sources

Though an in-depth archival study has been made here of the establishment and operation of the BBC SO in the 1930s, the same has not been possible for the LPO. This is

primarily due to the absence of material; the orchestra's own archives contain little or no material relating to the day-to-day running of the orchestra before it was taken over by its players in 1939. Fortunately, however, the absence of primary source material equal to that consulted for the BBC SO is made up for by the richness of secondary sources relating to the LPO and Thomas Beecham. Four biographies exist of Beecham, along with Humphrey Proctor-Gregg's compilation of reminiscences, all of which contain extensive information about the orchestra; the most recent by John Lucas deals objectively with many of the Beecham myths as well as presenting a wealth of primary-source research relating to the early years of the LPO.¹³⁰ David Patmore's detailed work on Beecham's recording activities, which draws on much now-unavailable material held in the EMI archives, is combined with Philip Stuart's discography of the LPO to form the main basis for observations about the LPO's recording activities.¹³¹ Patmore's 2001 PhD thesis also contains a large amount of information drawn from interviews with musicians who worked with Beecham,¹³² which informs discussion of his working methods. Finally, Beecham's own library of orchestral scores and parts, in which his detailed performance directions have survived, provides primary source evidence of his musical style.¹³³

In terms of materials relating specifically to the LPO, there are informal memoirs by musicians who played in the orchestra, including wind players Gerald Jackson and Richard Temple-Savage, as well as Jerrold Northrop-Moore's photographic history of the orchestra, which contains various images from the 1930s.¹³⁴ The writings of former LPO chairman and viola player Thomas Russell contain much relevant information, though inconsistencies with other sources indicate that Russell's accounts of the period before 1939 should be treated with care.¹³⁵ The 1998 history of the LPO written by the orchestra's archivist, Edmund Pirouet, is extremely useful, not least because it takes a

¹³⁰ Charles Reid, *Beecham: An Independent Biography*; Alan Jefferson, *Sir Thomas Beecham: a centenary tribute*; Alan Blackwood, *Sir Thomas Beecham: the man and the music*; John Lucas, *Thomas Beecham: an obsession with music*; and Humphrey Proctor-Gregg, *Beecham Remembered*.

¹³¹ Patmore, 'EMI, Sir Thomas Beecham, and the formation of the London Philharmonic Orchestra', and 'The Influence of Recording'; and Philip Stuart, *The London Philharmonic Discography*.

¹³² Patmore, 'The Influence of Recording'.

¹³³ The Thomas Beecham Music Library (TBML), University of Sheffield.

¹³⁴ Jackson, *First Flute*; Temple-Savage, *A Voice from the Pit*; and Moore, *Philharmonic Jubilee*.

¹³⁵ Thomas Russell, *Philharmonic Decade*.

revisionist and often highly critical approach to the activities of Thomas Beecham, a valuable balance to the hagiographical tendencies of some earlier sources.

4.3.2 Background to formation

The foundation of the LPO in 1932 was the eventual conclusion of Thomas Beecham's attempts to form a new permanent orchestra. After the breakdown of negotiations with the BBC in 1928–30, Beecham became involved with the LSO board's attempts to stabilise its orchestra and raise its standard of performance.¹³⁶ However, despite a relatively high level of co-operation from the LSO and a favourable outlook for the partnership, negotiations broke down in July 1932. It has been suggested that only at this point did Beecham take the 'impulsive and essentially short-term decision' to create a new orchestra,¹³⁷ a characterisation that makes the triumphant debut of the LPO a matter of weeks later seem nothing short of miraculous. However, more recent accounts have argued that, though Beecham's initial approach to the LSO may have been in good faith, his negotiations with potential backers, some of which took place without the knowledge of the LSO, make it clear that he kept his options open.¹³⁸ This was primarily a result of Beecham's need for autonomy and his tendency to negotiate on a personal level, though Edmund Pirouet has suggested that Beecham was all along using the LSO as a stepping-stone in his larger plan to found a new orchestra over which he could have full control.¹³⁹ Whatever the truth, the outcome was that Beecham walked away from the LSO negotiations with a significant portfolio of preliminary agreements with the Cortauld-Sargent concerts society, the Royal Philharmonic Society, the Royal Opera House and the newly-formed EMI, owner of both the HMV and Columbia recording labels. It was this patchwork of engagements that Beecham used as the basis of the new LPO.

¹³⁶ See Patmore, 'EMI, Sir Thomas Beecham, and the Formation of the London Philharmonic Orchestra', 16. A detailed account of events can be found in Pirouet, *Heard Melodies are Sweet*, 5–8.

¹³⁷ Patmore, 'EMI', 11.

¹³⁸ Patmore, 12 and Pirouet, 7–8.

¹³⁹ Pirouet, 'EMI', 8.

4.3.3 Work profile

The LPO's concert activity during the 1930s resulted from Beecham's consolidation of a range of existing freelance orchestral engagements. The most prestigious of the orchestra's commitments was the Royal Philharmonic Society series, which was conducted half by Beecham and half by visitors including Willem Mengelberg, Pierre Monteaux, Bruno Walter, and Felix Weingartner. The Cortauld-Sargent concerts also brought the LPO into contact with eminent foreign conductors, including Fritz Busch, Eric Kleiber, and George Szell. These subsidised concerts, designed to make high-level orchestral performance available to working people by distributing tickets through employers and employee associations, were successful in terms of ticket sales, and provided the LPO with the opportunity to tackle challenging repertoire under favourable rehearsal conditions, with repeat performances.¹⁴⁰ By contrast, Beecham's own Sunday concert series, promoted with the agent Harold Holt, was a consistent loss-maker for the LPO. The first two seasons included works by Delius, Poulenc, Eugene Goossens and Mahler, but even a shift to the more conservative programme staples of Beethoven, Brahms, Dvorak and Wagner in subsequent seasons did not improve box office receipts.¹⁴¹

After Beecham, the LPO's most regular conductor was Malcolm Sargent, who directed the the Royal Choral Society series and Robert Mayer Children's Concerts. The International Opera and Russian Ballet Seasons at Covent Garden provided regular work during the summer season. The operas were conducted primarily by Beecham, though Furtwängler took charge of some productions; but the ballet performances were directed by younger men including Antal Dorati. It was perhaps these seasons that provided the greatest challenge to the LPO's playing standard, not because of their difficulty but because the relentless and repetitive work was both tiring and lacking in artistic stimulus. At the end of the 1934 ballet season, Ernest Newman commented that the orchestra was unrecognisable as 'the same LPO that had done such brilliant work during the opera season ... a worse performance of the Tchaikovsky it would be difficult to imagine'.¹⁴² Leader Paul Beard cited the summer seasons as the motivation for his

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁴¹ Pirouet, *Heard Melodies are Sweet*, 14.

¹⁴² Newman, cited Pirouet, 15.

defection to the BBC in 1936, telling Beecham that 'one more day of rehearsing and performing Wagner, starting at ten in the morning and finishing at midnight, would have finished him'.¹⁴³ The fact that the Ballet season was not primarily conducted by Beecham may also have been a factor in the falling off of standards.

The orchestra also performed regularly outside London, making extensive provincial tours under the management of Harold Holt. The LPO's foreign performances included visits to Brussels in 1935 and Paris in 1937 and a well-documented tour of Nazi Germany in 1936. Léon Goossens recalled that this tour represented a peak in the orchestra's playing, and a live recording of one of the performances will be considered in chapter five.

A survey of its concert activities shows that the LPO, like the BBC SO, faced a variety of repertoire and played for high and middle-brow events, under a range of conductors. However, there were various differences. First and foremost, while the BBC SO's workload was centrally planned and managed in reference to a strategy for the development of the orchestra, the LPO was at the mercy of various outside organisations. This meant that LPO's workload was not controlled in the way that the BBC SO's was; Paul Beard's remark, cited above, indicates that three-session days were common, and the LPO did not benefit from a four-week paid holiday before the start of its gruelling summer season, both of which factors must have impacted on the consistency of its performing standard. In terms of repertoire, the LPO's exposure to modern music did not extend to the Second Viennese School repertoire, and clarinettist Richard Temple Savage's recollections of the orchestra's antagonistic encounter with Benjamin Britten in 1936 indicates that it was stylistically uncomfortable with some modern music, a fact that may be related to its playing style, which will be considered below.

4.3.4 The LPO and EMI

As Patmore has discussed, Beecham recognised the importance of recording work in creating a financially and artistically sustainable orchestra. EMI was involved in the creation of the LPO from an early stage, as a result of Beecham's recognition that the

¹⁴³ Pirouet, 15.

newly merged company had the means to assist significantly in the creation of a permanent orchestra.¹⁴⁴ Following the merger of The Gramophone Company and Columbia (UK) to form EMI in June 1931, Beecham began to negotiate with representatives from both of the constituent companies in October 1931. Beecham argued that there was no first-class recording orchestra in England, and that he would refuse to make further recordings except with his own orchestra. In return for EMI's financial support in the form of an 80-session contract, Beecham offered them a hand in the audition process, by recording each player.¹⁴⁵ Beecham also stated his intention to create an ensemble to rival the orchestras of Philadelphia, Vienna and Berlin, which Patmore has suggested shows Beecham to have been strongly influenced by international comparisons, drawn on the basis of his own concert tours.¹⁴⁶ EMI was receptive to Beecham's offer, particularly in view of its soon-to-expire contract with the LSO and the imminent opening of the Abbey Road studios. By the end of November 1931, a deal had been reached with Beecham for an exclusive 56-session contract, primarily with the Columbia label. 50 of the sessions would be with a nucleus orchestra of 30 players, and The Gramophone Company had the option of using up to 25 of the nucleus sessions. Crucially, EMI wrote control over personnel into the contract: not only would it have 'the privilege of making an Audition record of each individual player to judge his intonation and Gramophone recording tone', but the names of the selected musicians would be written into the contract, and no substitutes were allowed.¹⁴⁷ This indicates the belief that recording provided the opportunity for a more probing assessment of players, as well as EMI's commitment to the drive to raise orchestral standards by ensuring a consistent cast of players.

There is no evidence of whether EMI took up its option to record the auditions of the core members of the LPO during its formation in 1932, nor is there evidence that EMI interfered in any way with Beecham's choice of players. Certainly the principal players, such as Goossens, would already have been known to it, and it is unlikely that Beecham would risk offending them by asking them to prove themselves on disc. Neither is there a mention of a recorded audition for the LPO in Gerald Jackson's memoirs. It is however

¹⁴⁴ See Patmore, 'EMI, Sir Thomas Beecham, and the formation of the London Philharmonic Orchestra'; and Patmore, 'The Influence of Recording', 286.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴⁷ Patmore, 'EMI', 23.

possible that the young sub-principal players were tested in this way, and Lucas indicates that Beecham heard players including second bassoonist Gwydion Brooke at EMI's new Abbey Road studios.¹⁴⁸ Certainly EMI were happy with the resulting orchestra, as shown by Fred Gaisberg's letter of congratulation to Beecham after the LPO's debut concert:

I should like to express the congratulations of both myself and my colleagues at the success of your new Orchestra which I might truthfully say was beyond all expectation. They are a magnificent lot of players and after so few rehearsals showed good team work. I would say that after a year they would easily be the finest orchestra in the land.¹⁴⁹

The LPO went on to record prolifically with Beecham throughout the 1930s, mostly for the Columbia label. Patmore's research has indicated that EMI was ultimately in control of the repertoire that was recorded, though 'with a musician of Beecham's eminence [there] was certain to be a matter of "quid pro quo",¹⁵⁰ and Beecham was not averse to springing unexpected repertoire on his players or changing between works in mid-session if he felt he was not getting the results he wanted.¹⁵¹ Patmore also observes that Beecham was rarely persuaded to accompany concertos or solo singers in the studio,¹⁵² though his recorded discography with the LPO between 1932–40 does include recordings of the Mendelssohn and Prokofiev violin concertos with Szigeti and the Sibelius concerto with Heifetz. The latter recording, issued as a 'Sibelius Society' set, is an example of the 'Society' model which played a large part in shaping Beecham's recorded repertoire during the 1930s. Walter Legge's 'Society' concept, which used advanced subscriptions to fund recording,¹⁵³ allowed Beecham to record his preferred repertoire and accounts for the high proportion of works by Delius, Sibelius and Mozart that the LPO recorded with Beecham during this period. The remainder of their joint recording activity was accounted for by short works and suites, operatic overtures and preludes, and incidental music. Rossini is well represented, along with Bizet, Berlioz, Weber and Wagner. There is a notable absence of nineteenth-century symphonic

¹⁴⁸ Lucas, *Thomas Beecham*, 208–9.

¹⁴⁹ Fred Gaisberg, letter to Beecham, 21 October 1932, cited Patmore, 'EMI', 24.

¹⁵⁰ Patmore, 'The Influence of Recording', 106.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 116–120.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 108–9.

repertoire, and apart from works by Mozart and Haydn, the only symphonies Beecham recorded with the LPO during this period were Brahms's Symphony No. 2, Schubert's fifth and 'Unfinished' symphonies, Beethoven's second, Tchaikovsky's fifth and the D minor symphony by Cesar Franck.¹⁵⁴

The LPO was also called upon to play for sessions under other conductors. The majority of these were British, including John Barbirolli, Hamilton Harty, Eugene Goossens, and Constant Lambert. In addition, there were sessions under Edward Elgar and William Walton, and a significant range of concerto recordings under Barbirolli and others, including the Beethoven piano concertos with Schnabel and Moiseiwitsch, the Tchaikovsky, Glazunov and Mozart violin concertos with Heifetz, and the Mendelssohn, Beethoven and Brahms violin concertos with Fritz Kreisler.¹⁵⁵ Numerous light music recordings made under the direction of Eric Coates were issued under the credits 'Light Symphony Orchestra' and 'Symphony Orchestra', presumably because neither EMI nor the LPO wanted to associate the prestigious LPO name with middle-brow repertoire.¹⁵⁶ Sessions with visiting foreign conductors were less frequent, though there were several with the young George Szell, as well as with Walter Goehr. The orchestra's regular conductors for the Russian Ballet season, Antal Dorati and Efrem Kurtz, made recordings of excerpts from the ballet repertoire which were endorsed by the Ballet Russes. The LPO's most prestigious recordings with foreign conductors were made under Felix Weingartner, in early 1933 and 1938-40, and with Serge Koussevitzky, in September 1934. These sessions accounted for most of the LPO's major symphonic recordings of the 1930s, including many works by Beethoven and Brahms.

The large quantity of recording work undertaken by the LPO, both with and without Beecham, contributed significantly to the financial stability of the orchestra throughout the 1930s. Moreover, it also gave the orchestra a sizeable presence in the recording catalogues, with a reputation to match; Ehrlich suggested that its recordings 'became the standard, in a large repertoire, by which others were judged'.¹⁵⁷ Recording equally contributed to the development of the LPO. Patmore has detailed how Beecham made

¹⁵⁴ See Gray, *Beecham: A centenary discography*, 20-53.

¹⁵⁵ See Stuart, *the London Philharmonic Discography*, 19-68 for details of the LPO's recording activity up to and including Beecham's final sessions before his departure from the USA in 1940.

¹⁵⁶ Stuart, 22.

¹⁵⁷ Ehrlich, cited Patmore, 'EMI', 25.

extensive use of test pressings to hone his recorded performances, evidence that he, like Boult, believed in recording as a means of driving up performing standards.¹⁵⁸ In this sense, the LPO was as much of a microphone-oriented orchestra as the BBC SO. However, this similar relationship with technology did not result in a similar playing style; indeed, as alluded to in the introduction to this chapter, the two orchestras were stylistically very different. This was a result of the players recruited and the manner in which they were trained, which will be considered in the following sections.

4.3.5 Recruitment and personnel

It might appear that Beecham's success in quickly building a high-quality orchestra in the space of a few weeks, despite the BBC having many of the most experienced players in London under contract, was a triumph in almost impossible circumstances.¹⁵⁹ In fact, several factors made the task entirely feasible. First, in exchange for the support of the Royal Philharmonic Society, Beecham had agreed to take 20 of its players in his new orchestra, including principal flute Gerald Jackson and young principal clarinet Reginald Kell.¹⁶⁰ Second, the round of auditions Beecham conducted for the Russian Ballet season of 1931 gave him the opportunity to survey the latest talent and led directly to some recruitments to the LPO, including future principal flautist Geoffrey Gilbert.¹⁶¹ Third, he had an insider's knowledge of the LSO's personnel and precarious financial situation, giving him insight into which players might be enticed away to join his new orchestra. Among these was the LSO's principal bassoon and director, John Alexandra.

Beecham also claimed he was in a position to recruit 'many of the best members' of the BBC SO, who, according to Beecham, were dissatisfied with their restrictive full-time contracts.¹⁶² In the event, however, the new LPO contained almost no former BBC SO members. In fact, as has already been established, Beecham's preferences in terms of orchestral musicians often diverged from those of the BBC. One might thus infer that the existence of the BBC SO had a less hampering effect on his choices than it might otherwise have done. One example of a divergence in taste which was highly

¹⁵⁸ Patmore, 'The influence of recording', 281–2.

¹⁵⁹ See Lucas, 207–10.

¹⁶⁰ See Lucas, *Thomas Beecham*, 207, and Jackson, *First Flute*, 54.

¹⁶¹ See Patmore, 'EMI', 12 and 21, and Jefferson, 85.

¹⁶² Patmore, 'EMI', 21.

advantageous to Beecham was the BBC's decision not to employ Léon Goossens, who was one of the stars of the new LPO, remaining with the orchestra until the outbreak of war.

Goossens joined Kell, Jackson, and Alexandra to form the founding quartet of wind principals. Their age range was a little lower than that of the BBC SO principals: Kell was the youngest, at 26, followed by Jackson, 32, Goossens, 35, and Alexandra, 39. Though the rest of the wind section contained some established freelance players, Beecham also recruited many young instrumentalists fresh from the colleges, such as bassoonist Gwydion Brooke, 20, and bass clarinetist Richard Temple-Savage and contrabassoon player Anthony Baines, aged 26 and 23 respectively when they joined in 1935.¹⁶³ As a result, the average age of both the wind section and the orchestra as a whole remained low throughout the 1930s.¹⁶⁴ Players were also brought in from outside London: Percy Whitaker, who played second flute in the orchestra throughout the 1930s, had trained in Manchester, and Horace Green, the cor anglais player in the early 1930s, was discovered by Beecham playing in the Folkestone municipal orchestra.¹⁶⁵ In contrast to the BBC, with its system of impartial auditions, the LPO seems also to have maintained the more traditional practice of recruiting players through their family connections. This can be seen throughout the wind section. The flautists Leonard and James Hopkins, who appeared together in the 1934 season, were certainly father and son. John Alexandra was joined in the bassoon section by his younger brother George as second bassoon in 1935; George took over from John as principal in 1942. Their uncle Albert Alexandra also played contrabassoon in the orchestra's first season.

The recruitment of less experienced instrumentalists was necessary to combat the instability of the personnel that the orchestra suffered, particularly among the sub-principal and auxiliary wind players. This was partly due to the fact that, though described as a 'permanent orchestra', the LPO was not salaried in its early years. The core players, including the wind principals, were guaranteed a certain number of engagements per annum in return for their commitment to put the LPO before all other

¹⁶³ Richard Temple Savage recalled that he was still at college when he began playing for the LPO. See Temple Savage, *A Voice from the Pit*, 24–6.

¹⁶⁴ Lucas, 209.

¹⁶⁵ Lucas, 209.

engagements.¹⁶⁶ Players of auxiliary instruments, such as bass clarinet and cor anglais, were simply paid per engagement, and were entirely dependant for work on the requirements of the programming. This left them susceptible to the temptations of contracts elsewhere; Temple Savage recounts that he gained the bass clarinet position from Edward Augarde during the 1934–5 season because the older player ‘was not very happy with the amount of money he could earn with the LPO’ and left to join the BBC Empire Orchestra.¹⁶⁷ Temple Savage goes on to say that, during the main concert season, the number of engagements he received did not add up to a ‘living wage’ and that he was reliant on a job at the Old Vic to support himself.¹⁶⁸ In view of this, it is not surprising that the LPO wind section had less continuity of membership than the BBC SO’s did during the 1930s, and that it relied on talented young players to fill junior positions. However, life was different for the core members such as Gwydion Brooke, who recalls being kept kept fully employed:

we were doing everything. It was so much work going on, such hard work ... we were doing everything: concerts, Sunday afternoon concerts at the Albert Hall, touring all over the country, up to the far north. Living in trains, going over to Ireland, did all the opera season, and after that the ballet season. And this was really hard work, there was no time for anything, anything else. And on top of that there was recording.¹⁶⁹

This level of employment ensured a degree of stability among the LPO principal players. Goossens and Alexandra remained throughout the 1930s, and Kell until 1937, when he was replaced by Bernard Walton. The turnover of first flautists was quicker. Jackson quit after the first season, on the grounds that he could earn more money outside of the orchestra;¹⁷⁰ he is almost certainly one of the targets of Thomas Russell’s oblique criticism that ‘certain players left, as certain players always will ... Musicians suffer, by the nature of things, from a highly-developed individualism, often accompanied by a lack of social sense’.¹⁷¹ Jackson was replaced by Leonard Hopkinson, an established London freelancer about whom little is known. His departure in 1935 may

¹⁶⁶ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁶⁷ Temple Savage, 24.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 26–7.

¹⁶⁹ Brooke, recorded interview, 31 January 1994.

¹⁷⁰ Jackson, *First Flute*, 58.

¹⁷¹ Russell, *Philharmonic Decade*, 25.

have been the result of the introduction that year of formal contracts and weekly wages for the core players. Brooke, who left at the same time, recalled that 'instead of being paid per hour as it were, you were paid so much, and so of course that meant to say you were going to work quite a bit harder and get less money. And the actual money suggested, was pretty poor'.¹⁷² Hopkinson was replaced by the young Hallé principal flautist Geoffrey Gilbert, who had already appeared in the orchestra as second flute in the 1933–34 season. Beecham's willingness to take the risk of putting promising but inexperienced young players in important orchestral positions, already demonstrated in 1929 by his selection of Terence MacDonagh for the original BBC scheme, was again seen by his appointment of Gilbert, who was just 21 when he became principal flute of the LPO. Meanwhile, however, the introduction of contracts also put a strain on the orchestra's finances; Pirouet states that players' wages and overtime payments were frequently in arrears,¹⁷³ a situation that ultimately contributed to the liquidation of the orchestra's original holding company in 1939.¹⁷⁴

The hierarchy of the LPO wind section was very different to that of the BBC SO. As will be discussed below, section principals held an exalted position in Beecham's orchestra, and there is some evidence that they held themselves aloof from their colleagues. Temple-Savage recalled that the 'Royal Family', as the principals were known, ignored him for some time after he joined the orchestra, a situation that was perhaps unsurprising in a section that combined leading soloists with young players barely out of college. The fact that only the core players were on contracts must have caused a degree of division; certainly it was a very different situation from the BBC, where most of the players were on full-time contracts, auxiliary players were kept busy all year round, and the second and third players in the main orchestra sections played as principals in the divided orchestras. Furthermore, Pirouet suggests that the 1930s LPO had 'little sense of corporate identity. The orchestra remained a collection of individuals, bound together only by their work on the concert platform'. This arrangement suited Beecham's working practices well, as it bound the players to him. The next section will discuss how he moulded his 'collection of individuals', making use of both the hierarchy of the orchestra and the individual talents of his principals.

¹⁷² Brooke, recorded interview, 31 January 1994. MP, MP_TT0762.

¹⁷³ Pirouet, *Heard Melodies*, 19.

¹⁷⁴ *Loc. cit.*

4.3.6 Thomas Beecham

Whereas various conductors contributed to the shaping of the BBC SO's style during the 1930s, the LPO owed its sound and style primarily to its principal conductor, Thomas Beecham. Beecham is often described as a meticulous orchestral trainer,¹⁷⁵ and various sources shed light on exactly how he achieved the improvement in orchestral standards with which he is credited. Of the Beecham Symphony Orchestra, Reginald Nettel wrote, 'among these players Beecham found an absence of strongly-held views on the essentials of orchestral playing, and he was able to train them quickly in a distinctive style that we have since come to know as Beecham's own'.¹⁷⁶ It is less likely that there was an 'absence of strongly held views' among the principal players that Beecham recruited for the LPO, though the many youngsters who filled out the sections would have been ripe for moulding. Nonetheless, he was able to bring them together into a unified whole to articulate his own musical approach.

David Patmore's extensive survey of Beecham's personality and relationship with his musicians as well as his working habits gives many clues to his approach to training an orchestra. Of great importance is a central dichotomy in Beecham's character: he was described as "'very fussy, very particular'", and yet also impulsive and unpredictable. In the recording studio he has similarly been characterised both as a meticulous taskmaster striving for perfection and as casual and spontaneous, prone to arriving late and rarely respecting the advanced planning.¹⁷⁷ Beecham's attention to detail is evinced in his careful preparations for the LPO's debut concert, where he drilled individual sections and key players. However, other accounts point to the freedom that Beecham gave his orchestras, encouraging his section leaders to take charge and play as individuals, particularly in solo passages.¹⁷⁸ Over the following pages, several aspects of Beecham's working method will be surveyed: the changeability of his interpretations; his use of marked-up orchestral parts; his reliance on principal players; and his ability to get what he wanted out of his players without challenging their autonomy.

¹⁷⁵ For instance, Nettel, *The Orchestra in England*, 266.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 266.

¹⁷⁷ Patmore, 'The influence of recording', 101–2, 104 and 119–20.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

Training the LPO

It is said that on the morning of the first rehearsal of the LPO the players eyed each other cautiously like a lot of new boys at school.¹⁷⁹

In 1932, Beecham's young orchestra was a relative stylistic 'clean sheet' for him to work with. His preparations for the orchestra's debut concert in October 1932 are reported to have been meticulous, including extensive sectionals, piano rehearsals with individual section leaders,¹⁸⁰ and several full rehearsals of the orchestra.¹⁸¹ The effort evidently paid off; critical reception of the opening concert was excellent and several of the reviews emphasise the precision and clarity of the performance. Richard Capell remarked on 'the brilliance, the clarity and the ensemble of the performers';¹⁸² Ernest Newman considered the performance 'electrifying', recording that 'the tone was magnificent, the precision perfect, the reading a miracle of fire and beauty'.¹⁸³ For Cardus, the performance was almost too perfect: 'At present the orchestra is like a new machine - a little too crisp and polished. In a few weeks the mellowing will begin'.¹⁸⁴ Though no recording of this concert survives, the reviews suggest that Beecham's rehearsals may have focussed on ensemble and clarity of line, and the references to rehearsals with section leaders point to a careful preparation of phrasing and interpretation in solo sections. This is supported by Bernard Shore's detailed description of Beecham's rehearsal technique, based on his experience with the BBC SO. Taking Delius's *Paris* as an example, Shore gives the impression that most of Beecham's work was done through attention to balance, the shaping of dynamics and rubato, and the characterisation of individual phrases and passages, often drawing on extra-musical references to inspire the players.¹⁸⁵

Beecham was known for the changeability of his interpretations, and used his unpredictability to keep his players alert.¹⁸⁶ In Shore's opinion, 'Beecham sets out on a new journey each time, and is seldom heard to say: "I generally make an allargando

¹⁷⁹ Frank Howes, cited in Pirouet, 10.

¹⁸⁰ Blackwood, *Sir Thomas Beecham*, 123–24.

¹⁸¹ Lucas insists the claim of 12 rehearsals is exaggerated, and that the actual number was three.

¹⁸² Capell, cited in Lucas, *Thomas Beecham*, 210.

¹⁸³ Newman, cited in Blackwood, 124.

¹⁸⁴ Cardus, cited in Pirouet, *Heard Melodies*, 9.

¹⁸⁵ Shore, *The Orchestra Speaks*, 41–6.

¹⁸⁶ Patmore, 'The influence of recording', 102 and 104–5.

here”, or “in this passage I always like the flute to stand out”¹⁸⁷. Shore emphasised that with Beecham, ‘the performance will be alive, extraordinarily vivid. No orchestra has ever found Beecham dull.’¹⁸⁸ Léon Goossens recalled that ‘in performance something always came out that had not shown itself in rehearsal’.¹⁸⁹ The excitement inherent in performing for Beecham was one of the things that bound his players to him. Violinist Frederick Riddle was of the opinion that ‘where most other conductors appeared to have a performance which we all strove to achieve, occasionally successfully, Beecham was always striving to find a better one than the last’.¹⁹⁰ This comment is typical of those made by many of Beecham’s musicians, indicating that the fluidity of Beecham’s approach spoiled his players for anyone else, leaving them dissatisfied when faced with a conductor who sought to set in stone the details of their interpretation.¹⁹¹

Despite his spontaneity, Beecham’s performances were not left to chance. He made extensive markings in orchestral parts, a very direct way of controlling his players.¹⁹² These markings related primarily to phrasing and dynamics. Frank Howes gave an account of how Beecham used written markings to achieve a complex clarity of the canonic lines in the development section of Beethoven’s ‘Eroica’ Symphony.¹⁹³ Proctor-Gregg also indicated that Beecham used markings in parts to indicate the accentuation and articulation of phrases.¹⁹⁴ Riddle recalled: ‘He was always listening for the ‘tune’. The melody has to be heard, and I think that the hairpins (<>) which abound in all Beecham parts are the means of making the players bring out certain notes and phrases and of getting them out of the way when the tune passed to another part’.¹⁹⁵ A partial survey of the scores and parts held in the Thomas Beecham Music Library confirms these accounts, and in particular the frequent use of hairpins, particularly in music by Mozart and Haydn; and indeed recordings considered in chapter five demonstrate that

¹⁸⁷ Shore, 41.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁸⁹ Goossens, cited Proctor-Gregg, *Beecham Remembered*, 65.

¹⁹⁰ Riddle, in Proctor-Gregg, 104.

¹⁹¹ See, for instance, Gerald Jackson, in Proctor-Gregg, 80; and Jack Brymer, in Proctor-Gregg, 48.

¹⁹² Patmore, ‘The influence of recording’, 102.

¹⁹³ Howes, in Proctor-Gregg, 76.

¹⁹⁴ Proctor-Gregg, 136.

¹⁹⁵ Riddle, cited in Proctor-Gregg, 104.

the dynamic swell or *messa-di-voce* was a key part of Beecham's expressive vocabulary.¹⁹⁶ Other annotations include additional and altered dynamics, articulation and bowing in the string parts. It is noteworthy that Romantic repertoire is generally less heavily annotated than that of Mozart and Haydn. Beecham's markings have been included in several of the musical examples that accompany the analyses of recordings in chapter five, in order to show how his players interpreted them. However, even these detailed markings were not used to set the interpretation in stone, and Beecham would often alter them before a concert in order to take into account the acoustics of the venue or simply a change of opinion.¹⁹⁷ The parts in TBML show frequent corrections and often have several layers of markings in different coloured inks, evidence of Beecham's changing interpretations.

Beecham's last-minute alterations would often be passed on to his orchestra via the principal players, who would be called into his dressing-room before a concert.¹⁹⁸ This is an example of Beecham's reliance on his principal players, which led some to characterise his ensembles as 'principals' orchestras'.¹⁹⁹ Many sources stress the importance to Beecham's music-making of having a close relationship with a select group of his own players. According to violinist Frederick Riddle, Beecham assembled a core of principal players 'who he thought played in the right way for him' and relied on them to lead their sections by example.²⁰⁰ To Shore, Beecham's unconventional stick technique meant that he required 'an orchestra that is really his, one that can grow up in his methods, or lack of them'.²⁰¹ For Richard Temple Savage, bass clarinettist and librarian of the LPO during the 1930s, the issue was one of personality:

The combination of Sir Thomas's wealth and title with his brilliance and wicked tongue inclined people to be sycophantic and to yield to his every whim, which was bound to have a detrimental effect on his character. This may well have been why he had difficulty in achieving results with orchestras other than his own

¹⁹⁶ A full list of the items viewed is contained in the resources list. Many of the orchestral parts bear dated signatures of players who played from them during Beecham's foreign tours, making it possible to establish in several cases that the sets were in use during the 1930s, and therefore probably represent a direct link with the LPO.

¹⁹⁷ See Brymer, in Proctor-Gregg, 48; and Patmore, 102.

¹⁹⁸ Brymer, in Proctor-Gregg, 48.

¹⁹⁹ Riddle, in Proctor-Gregg, *Beecham Remembered*, 104.

²⁰⁰ Riddle, in Proctor-Gregg, 104.

²⁰¹ Shore, *The Orchestra Speaks*, 40.

where the players were hand-picked because they understood him and 'did it his way'.²⁰²

Whatever the reasons, Beecham used his financial resources to pay whatever was necessary to get the talent he wanted.²⁰³ The fact that Beecham's most successful relationships were with orchestras that he created – the Beecham Symphony Orchestra, LPO and post-war Royal Philharmonic Orchestra – seems to point to the conclusion that Beecham needed players that understood his approach to music-making.

Beecham's relationship with his principal players was achieved using a fine balance of control and freedom. Felix Aprahamian's claim that Beecham 'employed the best available instrumental talent, and trusted it'²⁰⁴ suggests that he gave his players a large amount of creative scope. Humphrey Proctor-Gregg recalled Beecham saying that he simply selected players "'skilled in every *technical device* of their instruments, but also conversant with every *interpretational resource*. And then you let them play"²⁰⁵ LPO leader Paul Beard recalled having 'absolute freedom ... to use my own judgement in dealing with technical matters – bowing, fingering, phrasing and so on'.²⁰⁶ In his memoirs, principal flute Gerald Jackson recalled that Beecham inspired him and gave him the confidence to play his best, but that the conductor also had strong ideas about what he wanted. To Jackson's mind, the interpretation of solos was never imposed on players, but rather suggested in a way that was difficult to resist:

He made me forget myself and make music – real music. He never attempted, as so many conductors do, to dictate each bar and how it should go. He let me play my way, but sometimes he would make a gentle, charming suggestion. "No, Mr. Jackson, don't you think ... ?" Out would come the blue pencil, and he would phrase the thing for me.²⁰⁷

Though Jackson admitted following Beecham's wishes even when he did not quite agree with his interpretation, he stresses that Beecham 'suggested, but never

²⁰² Richard Temple Savage, *A Voice from the Pit*, 57.

²⁰³ Patmore, 'The influence of recording', 100.

²⁰⁴ Aprahamian, in Proctor-Gregg, 33.

²⁰⁵ Proctor-Gregg, 135.

²⁰⁶ Paul Beard, cited in Proctor-Gregg, *Beecham Remembered*, 39.

²⁰⁷ Jackson, *First Flute*, 52.

demanded'.²⁰⁸ Later, he recalled, 'Only with him was it possible to give an unstrained performance. He never dominated to the extent that the player lost his individuality; always he bolstered one's confidence in one's own individuality'.²⁰⁹ It seems that the key to Beecham's success in this area lay in making players feel that the interpretation he wanted was coming from them, as Léon Goossens identified: 'Once you had gained his confidence (and your own), he made you feel you were doing the whole thing yourself, playing as you had always wanted to play'.²¹⁰ Violinist Charles Taylor confirmed this observation: 'he would shape, say, a woodwind phrase during rehearsal, and then give the oboe or clarinet all the freedom in the world to play as if it were his own interpretation'.²¹¹ These statements by players make it clear that Beecham was highly skilled in shaping the playing of his principals in a way that made them believe in his interpretation, a result of both his grasp of the psychology of orchestral musicians, noted by Patmore,²¹² and his ability to select individuals who were sympathetic to his musical ideas and way of working.

Beecham's route to achieving a high standard of orchestral performance thus combined several factors: the selection and training of players sympathetic to his approach to music-making; his encouragement of player autonomy; extensive preparation in the form of both part-marking and rehearsal time; his own spontaneity in performance; and a constantly developing approach to individual works, honed both in performance and through the recording process, where he made use of reflective listening. The relationship that Beecham fostered with his players allowed him to train them in his specific approach to music and music-making. Accounts from players show the extent to which Beecham shaped the playing of his orchestra, down to the level of phrasing and dynamic shaping. However, the fact that he was working with a group of players selected because they were sympathetic to his musical approach and willing to participate in his musical vision points to the conclusion that the stylistic attributes to be investigated in chapter five reflected, in most cases, the tastes of both Beecham and his players.

²⁰⁸ Jackson, 52.

²⁰⁹ Jackson, cited in Proctor-Gregg, 80.

²¹⁰ Goossens, cited in Proctor-Gregg, 65.

²¹¹ Charles Taylor, cited in Proctor-Gregg, 117.

²¹² Patmore, 'The influence of recording', 103.

4.4 Summary: Differences between the BBC SO and LPO

A 1934 memo by Boult provides a direct insight into the differences between the BBC SO and LPO, as viewed by one of their conductors:

Sir Thomas Beecham has said on separate occasions (a) that not a man of the BBC Orchestra is as good as his opposite number in the London Philharmonic Orchestra, (b) that we have a few better players than he, (c) that our Brass is better and some of our Wood-wind, but his Strings are far better.

I conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra last Thursday, and most decisively say that I would not lose a man of our Orchestra in exchange for his opposite number in the London Philharmonic Orchestra. The two First Oboes are of about equal calibre; our Strings are far better in every way; in every other branch we have the superior player. It is not too much to say that hardly a passage of the Elgar Symphony went by without my having occasion to compare some aspect of it unfavourably with our own recent performance. I spent most of the first rehearsal trying to persuade the players to admit that two and two make four (to be technical. a quaver followed by two semi-quavers was habitually played by them too long, and the semi-quavers too late and too short).

Beecham's enormous success with the London Philharmonic Orchestra has been entirely due to his amazing personality and magnetism. Any conductor who has handled both Orchestras will agree. Sir Henry Wood compared them quite recently in conversation with me.

I have gone to some length to show that though I enjoyed my recent Philharmonic Concert, and found the players delightful to work with, it is not to the BBC's interest, and mine, that I should conduct the London Philharmonic much, unless I can undertake their training, which is out of the question.

To the alternative possibility, Sir Thomas Beecham's frequent conducting of our Orchestra, there are even graver objections. He gets magnificent results with them, but at such a cost that I shall feel called upon to insist on a drastic curtailment of the Orchestra's broadcasting hours in any week in which Sir Thomas Beecham is conducting. He usually arrives late for rehearsal, and keeps the Orchestra overtime (when a player has been in his place at 10 punctually, it is a considerable extra strain to be kept till 1.20 at the whim of a conductor; even the

uncertainty is an annoyance). I recently rehearsed our Orchestra the morning after a Beecham Concert, and was given quite the flattest playing I have heard from them in these 3 years. A few months later the same thing happened after a Bruno Walter Concert, at which the playing had been on at least a Beecham level of brilliance, and I found their playing next morning neat and lively with hardly a trace of fatigue.²¹³

This memo provides an important summary of many of the issues raised in the course of this chapter. First, Boult's observations about Beecham's effect on the BBC SO support the accounts both of Beecham's personal magnetism and of his spoiling orchestras for other conductors. Second, it highlights Beecham's incompatibility with the BBC's working ethos. Third, it confirms the existence of a divergent approach to matters of performing style between the two conductors and orchestras. Boult's complaint about the LPO's rhythmic accuracy shows clearly the contrast between Boult's literal approach to the written score, and to rhythmic notation in particular, and the LPO's freer, more flexible style, which is confirmed by the recordings surveyed in chapter five. Finally, the memo also echoes the suggestion, made elsewhere, that the LPO was reliant on Beecham to perform at its best, in contrast to the BBC SO, who were expected to deliver consistently for any conductor.

This goes some way to explaining the divergence in playing styles between the BBC SO and LPO wind sections that will be presented in chapter five. The BBC SO and LPO and their respective conductors also differed on more fundamental levels. Both ensembles represented new models of orchestral finance, though while the BBC SO's basis of public subsidy was entirely new, the finance package that Beecham built for the LPO can be described as an expansion of the model he developed for previous orchestras, by combining a portfolio of concert engagements with a significant gramophone recording contract. There was a similar contrast on an organisational level: while the management and leadership of the BBC SO was an entirely new concept in the orchestral world, reflecting the bureaucracy and corporate decision-making practices of the BBC, the LPO had more in common with earlier orchestras, with leadership focussed on the orchestra's principal conductor. Both schemes had their advantages and

²¹³ Boult, 'Memo: The Royal Philharmonic Society', 5 March 1934. BBC WAC, R29/194/1, Orchestra Policy 1933-39.

disadvantages: the LPO was free from the BBC SO's heavy public accountability but also lacked its stable financial basis. The two orchestras also had different work profiles: the BBC SO was primarily a radio orchestra, while the LPO's schedule was dominated by public concerts and recording.

On this basis, it can be argued that the two orchestras represented fundamentally different ideas of how a great orchestra should be created: the BBC SO was a clean break with the past in every way, while the LPO constituted a more direct evolution of the orchestras of the early twentieth century, characterisations that in both cases were reflected in their playing styles. However, what is perhaps most important to this thesis is the status that the wind players had within each organisation. It is ironic that, though the BBC SO's body of musicians, and particularly its wind players, were older and more experienced than the brilliant young players recruited into Beecham's LPO, it was the latter ensemble which operated in an atmosphere of creative autonomy and professional respect. Though Beecham's approach to training his musicians and shaping the playing of his principals was undoubtedly more interventionist than simply employing the best musicians and letting them play, it was done in such a way as to increase their self-confidence and sense of autonomy, rather than diminish it. By contrast, internal correspondence relating to the management of the BBC SO players frequently gives the impression that they were viewed as wayward children rather than experienced professional musicians; and Boult, though showing a more respectful attitude towards his players than others in the BBC, nonetheless took full responsibility for 'training' them, never content simply to 'let them play'. In light of this, it is not surprising that the senior members of the BBC SO's wind section – Murchie, Whittaker, and Camden – chafed against authority, though other players, younger or with more stoical personalities, such as MacDonagh, Thurston and Newton, appear to have fitted into the BBC mould more easily. Indeed, it is hard to imagine any of the LPO's wind principals fitting into the BBC SO, either in terms of their personalities, or, as will be seen below, their playing styles.

Chapter Five

The BBC SO and LPO on Record, 1930–1939

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will investigate the playing style of the BBC SO and LPO through the medium of live, broadcast and studio recordings. The aim is to understand the impact that the two different models of orchestral activity had on the playing style of their wind sections. This in turn will address the question of how the advent of non-deputising, contracted orchestras, which were directly supported by the recording and broadcasting industries, contributed to the changing sound of London orchestral wind-playing. In addition, various issues that have been raised by the consideration of published and archival sources will be addressed.

These questions can be summarised here. In chapter one, various playing-style models were discussed, in particular the notions of 'plain' and 'hyper-expressive' style, as well as the use of extensive temporal shaping, which gave way to an emphasis on expression through sound and vibrato from the 1930s onwards. This chapter will explore the way in which these orchestras reflected that development. In chapter two, questions were raised about the notion of a British woodwind 'tradition' and whether the status given to the leading players of the 1930s was justified; the matter of the change from French and German bassoons was also discussed. In chapter three, the New Symphony Orchestra was established as an orchestra that made a significant contribution to the development of orchestral recording and had a defined wind-playing style that contained many stylistic features that have been attributed to solo performers of the same period, including temporal flexibility and an absence of long-line phrasing. At the end of chapter three, questions were raised about how this style was affected by the advent of the contracted orchestras of the 1930s and why the NSO was written out of history. Finally, following on from the discussions of the formation and operation of the BBC SO and LPO in chapter four, specific issues remain to be addressed in relation to certain players. Do

the recordings shed light on the recruitment and personnel changes to the two orchestras' wind sections during the 1930s? Do recordings explain why, for instance, the BBC was so keen for Archie Camden replace Richard Newton as their principal bassoon? Is there any evidence of the playing 'defects' that Frederick Thurston was reprimanded for? What was the effect on the BBC SO of replacing Alec Whittaker with Terence MacDonagh or Robert Murchie with Gerald Jackson?

This chapter is divided into two parts. Section 5.2 is an overview of the general stylistic characteristics of the BBC SO and LPO and sets out broad observations about the use of expressive devices in the recordings surveyed, as well as about any significant differences in their playing under different conductors. For the BBC, this centres around the Boult-Toscanini axis; for the LPO, the main conductors represented in their discography are Beecham and Weingartner. The purpose of this overview, which is illustrated by representative examples, is to establish the 'house style' or aesthetic environment in which the wind players were working, as well as to facilitate an initial comparison of the two orchestras. The second, longer part of the chapter, section 5.3, considers the principal players of each woodwind instrument in turn; it investigates their own personal styles and how these related to the 'house styles' of their orchestras.

It is in the nature of recordings that they provide only a snapshot of the playing of an individual or group of musicians and in the nature of a performing artist that his or her performance will change on every occasion. Moreover, the available evidence is inevitably affected by the bias in the recorded repertoire and limited to works with significant wind writing which have been recorded in such a way that the winds can be heard. Therefore, it is inevitable that the recordings will raise as many questions as they answer and that the answers which arise will never be conclusive. Nonetheless, strong themes do emerge, which combine with the written evidence to tell a tale of two orchestras.

5.2 General observations

5.2.1 BBC SO playing style

Table 5.1: Recordings cited in section 5.2.1¹

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
BBC SO/Boult	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	22/05/1933	DB 1966–69
LSO/Coates	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	27/08/1923 16/10/1923	D 942–45
LSO/Godfrey	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	02/04/1927	L 1938–41
LSO/Coates	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	25/10/1927	D 1359–62
BBC SO/Boult	Brahms	<i>Tragic Overture</i>	30/05/1932	DB 1803–4
BBC SO/Toscanini	Brahms	<i>Tragic Overture</i>	25/10/1937	DB 3349–50
BBC SO/Toscanini	Brahms	Symphony No. 4	3-4/6/1935	[76812]
BBC SO/Toscanini	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	03/06/1938	[MP_TT0161]
LPO/Beecham	Brahms	<i>Tragic Overture</i>	22/03/1937	LX 638–9

A survey of a wide range of recordings by the BBC SO during the period 1930–39 suggests that the orchestra, and its wind section in particular, generally played in a style that conformed with the principals of emotional reserve, unaffected delivery and technical polish which the BBC promoted through its music broadcasts. In terms of the wind playing, this meant a restrained attitude to expressive devices and a literal approach to the printed score.

In the BBC SO, only the flutes and oboes employed vibrato; there are no examples of clarinet or bassoon vibrato on recordings from the 1930s. The conservative attitudes of Thurston and Camden towards the device were clearly stated in their writings.² Camden also referred to the problem of vibrato in the orchestra, warning that ‘Its indiscriminate use in the woodwind department of an orchestra can be very disturbing, for it distorts the harmonic structure’ and citing unnamed ‘famous’ wind players who agreed with his belief that, though vibrato may sometimes be appropriate in ‘more recent work’, it should not be used in ‘the classics’.³ The BBC SO wind section seem to have adhered to

¹ Catalogue numbers refer to the original 78rpm release. For archival recordings and recordings not issued until after the 78rpm era, square brackets are used.

² See below, 5.3.3 Clarinet and 5.3.4 Bassoon.

³ Camden, *Bassoon Technique*, 30–1.

this approach, as there are very few examples of them using vibrato in woodwind tutti of a homophonic nature. The individual players' use of vibrato appears to relate to the character and period of the music they are playing; nonetheless, the principal flautists and oboists did use a significant amount of vibrato, a fact which is surprising in light of the received notion that expressive vibrato in British wind-playing began with Léon Goossens and French-influenced flautists such as Geoffrey Gilbert.⁴

All of the orchestra's flute and oboe principals were selective in their vibrato use, though there were variations between individuals. These will be considered at greater length below; for now, it suffices to say that founding principals Murchie and Whittaker used it sparingly in Mozart but introduced it more into later repertoire. This is particularly true of Whittaker, who can be heard using it in many passages in works by Brahms and Wagner. The character of the music was also an important factor, with vibrato usually confined to lyrical or expressive solos, where it can be heard most often on longer notes. Dynamic or energetic passages and those that consist of short or fast-moving notes are usually vibrato-free. It is also notable that Murchie and Whittaker's use of vibrato appears to have intensified when they were playing for Toscanini.

The BBC SO wind players' use of dynamic and tonal shaping is similarly reflective of the period of the music they were playing. Recordings of Mozart made under Boult and Walter document a very reserved use of dynamic and tonal shaping compared to LPO recordings from the same period, though the string-heavy balance on most of these recordings may be masking some nuances. The issue of balance is interesting in itself; most of the BBC SO's Mozart recordings are balanced in favour of the strings, suggesting a deliberate privileging of string tone by Boult and the recording engineers. In comparison, recordings of other repertoire from the period give the winds far more prominence. This suggests that wind parts in Mozart Symphonies were considered to be to some extent auxiliary.

⁴ See, for example, Jackson, *Performance Practice: A Dictionary Guide for Musicians*, 404; Burgess, *The Oboe*, 263; and Day, 'Elgar and Recording', 192.

Just as the use of vibrato increased in repertoire from Beethoven onwards, so the BBC SO wind section tended to use more dynamic shaping in solo passages in later repertoire. As will be discussed below, the amount of shaping varied by instrument and player, with the flute and oboe generally using more than clarinet or bassoon. The collective tonal approach remained relatively sustained, with scarce use of tonal inflections. On recordings made under Toscanini, including live broadcasts, there is an even greater tendency to intensely sustain the tone, which echoes Shore's recollection that Toscanini insisted on a constant *cantando* or singing approach. Though this approach apparently discouraged small-scale tonal shaping, Toscanini's performances and recordings do show a considerable increase in strongly-drawn dynamic shaping and in the overall dynamic range, as well as a more intense vibrato from Murchie and Whittaker.

The principle of sustain also defines the BBC SO's phrasing style. In Mozart, the players tend towards a long-line approach, with little articulation of small-scale phrasing marks and limited accentuation of appoggiaturas, dissonances and other expressive events. Detached or repeated notes are usually equally-weighted, and articulation soft and unobtrusive, in both legato and staccato passages. Beginning-oriented phrasing is rare, used as a specific effect rather than a default style. These attributes persist in later repertoires, and though phrasing becomes more flexible and nuanced in Romantic repertoire, the emphasis on sustain and large-scale phrasing remains.

Shore's identification of Boult's insistence on 'rhythmic swing', discussed above,⁵ can be interpreted as an aspect of phrasing. This 'swing' was not created so much by rhythmic accentuation or 'the melodic centering on a recurring, regular, and often strong beat', as in Harrison and Slåttembrekk's study of Grieg,⁶ but by avoiding the traditional, beginning-oriented, metrical accentuation of the first beat of the bar. By 'swinging' across the barline, or ensuring the downbeat was light and prompt, Boult was asking his players to create a sense of forward motion by extending the phrase until a point of eventual cadence, climax or resolution, as heard in the second theme from the first

⁵ See 4.2.7, Adrian Boult.

⁶ Harrison and Slåttembrekk, 'Tempo modulation, swing and structure', *Chasing the Butterfly* website (accessed 30 January 2013).

movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (track 5a_01, ex. 5.1). In this sense, Boult is exploiting the notion of 'musical gravity', defined by Harrison and Slåttembrekk as 'an interaction between the expected and the performed beat'.⁷ But rather than moving the expected placement of the downbeat, he is cheating expectation simply by denying the expectation that it will be emphasised.

Ex. 5.1 Mozart, Symphony No. 41, K. 551, mvt. I, bars 56–70, bassoon and violin I.

(Allegro vivace)

Vln. I

+ Bsn. 1

+ Fl.

etc.

The BBC SO's approach to rubato and other forms of temporal accentuation is perhaps the hardest aspect of its playing to quantify, because the orchestra's playing, particularly under Boult, was defined by the absence of the temporal devices identified in the playing of the NSO, i.e. a negative stylistic characteristic. This is particularly the case in Classical-period music and in ensemble passages, where much of the routinely-used rhythmic unevenness which was observed in the NSO's playing is eradicated in favour of a more mathematical subdivision of the bar or beat. This reflects to *The Times's* observation in 1931 that 'under [Boult's] direction ... a triple has its exact value',⁸ and fits in with Boult's complaints about the LPO's flexible approach to rhythm. To ears accustomed to modern performance where strict interpretation of rhythm is the norm, the BBC SO's rhythmic accuracy seems unremarkable, but when put alongside other record-

⁷ Harrison and Slåttembrekk, 'Tempo modulation, swing and structure', *Chasing the Butterfly* website (accessed 30 January 2013).

⁸ *The Times*, review of concert 11 February 1931. Cited in Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, 61.

ings of the period it is possible to see how very modern Boult's approach was and why it prompted remarks from the press.

Temporal devices such as rhythmic unevenness or agogic accents were used very sparingly by the BBC SO, rather than being triggered automatically by small-scale musical events such as appoggiaturas and chromatic figures. The difference can be heard by comparing an excerpt from the second movement of BBC SO's 1933 recording of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (track 5a_05) with three 1920s recordings by the LSO (tracks 5a_02 to 5a_04, ex. 5.2). This conforms with Harrison and Slåttebrekk's observation that a characteristic of the modernisation of performing style was a move away from the presence of rhythmic flexibility as an 'unmarked' characteristic of style, as seen in these three LSO recordings, and towards a situation where literal rhythms were the norm and temporal shaping became a 'marked' characteristic, as in the BBC SO recording where rhythmic shaping is confined to the top line and reserved for the end of the phrase.

Ex. 5.2 Mozart, Symphony No. 41, K. 551, mvt. II, bars 56–60, woodwind and violins.

(Andante cantabile)

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Violin I (Vln. I), and Violin II (Vln. II). The second system includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), and Bassoon (Bsn.). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked '(Andante cantabile)'. The score features several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over the notes) and slurs. The Flute part in the second system includes a 'etc.' marking at the end of the phrase.

Boult appears to have permitted more temporal shaping in Romantic repertoire, such as the subtle lengthening of on-beat quavers that can be heard in his 1932 recording of Brahms's *Tragic Overture* (track 5a_06, ex. 5.3). However, it is still far more restrained than in the LPO's recording of the same work (track 5a_07).

Ex. 5.3 Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81, bars 43–59, oboe and clarinet.
Temporal devices, BBC SO, Boult, 1932.

(Allegro ma non troppo)
slight rubato

Ob. (a 2) *poco f* *f* *più f* *f* straight

Cl. (B♭) (a 2) *poco f* *f* *più f* *f* straight

straight *cresc.* *f* *f* uneven *f* uneven

straight *cresc.* *f* *f* uneven

uneven *f* *cresc.* *ff* etc.

uneven *f* *cresc.* *ff* etc.

These emphases, which also appear in Bruno Walter's 1939 live performance of the work with the BBC SO, appear to have reflected the players' natural instinct, as an unmarked feature of style. However, when playing the same work under Toscanini in 1937, though the swung quavers at the beginning of the passage are more pronounced, from bar 51 onwards the rhythm is played evenly, possible evidence of Toscanini's famed rhythmic intensity and strictness (track 5a_08).

Driving rhythm and tempo and intense, hyper-sustained tone were fundamental to Toscanini's performances with the BBC SO; but this rigidity is starkly contrasted by the use of significant rubato as a marked stylistic feature at points of heightened expressivity. There is little doubt that Toscanini was in control of where and how rubato was used, and indeed he is sometimes captured audibly vocalising wind solos as the player delivers them, such as on the BBC SO's 1935 recording of Brahms's 4th Symphony (track 5a_09). One example of his tendency to extreme rubato is in a live recording of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (track 5a_10). In the same passage from the slow movement that was heard above (ex. 5.2), Toscanini appears to have encouraged the flute and oboe to use a very broad rubato, which comes in strong contrast both to their own playing under Boult (track 5a_05, above) and to the straight delivery of the bassoon and strings at the beginning of the passage in Toscanini's version.

The characteristics described above go some way to defining a BBC SO 'house style', established under Boult, that was modified and extended by Toscanini. The extent to which individual players conformed to this house style will be explored below. Certainly it is clear that both Boult and Toscanini had a profound effect on the way the orchestra played; what is more surprising is that there are such differences in the sound of the orchestra under the two conductors, despite the fact that Boult's conducting style was commonly considered to resemble Toscanini's objective and architectural approach. An overview of the BBC SO's recordings under the two conductors shows that, though they shared the desire for rhythmic accuracy, there was a significant difference between the wind players' understated, restrained playing under Boult and their intense, exaggerated expressive gestures under Toscanini.

5.2.2 LPO playing style

Table 5.2: Recordings cited in section 5.2.2

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
LPO/Beecham	Mozart	Symphony No. 39	19/11/1936	[LPO-0040]
LPO/Beecham	Mozart	Symphony No. 39	13/03/1940	LX 927-9
LPO/Beecham	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	19/01/1934	LX 282-5
LPO/Beecham	Beethoven	Symphony No. 2	03/10/1936	LX 586-9
LPO/Beecham	Brahms	Symphony No. 2	14/03/1936	LX 515-9
NSO/Ronald	Brahms	Symphony No. 2	03/12/1923 13/09/1923 05/02/1924	D 871-4
LPO/Lambert	Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 5	1-2/03/1939	C 3088-92
NSO/Ronald	Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 5	18/04/1928 19/04/1928 02/05/1928	D 1511-6

Just as the BBC SO's players represented the Corporation's belief in artistic restraint, the wind section of the 1930s LPO reflected Beecham's flamboyant musical style and preference for characterful and soloistic wind principals. Between 1935 and 1937, the section contained Geoffrey Gilbert, Léon Goossens and Reginald Kell, three players who became famous for their use of vibrato and tonal flexibility. As will be explored below, what differentiated them from the players of the 1920s and their counterparts in the BBC SO was not the presence of these devices in their playing but that their use of the devices was so prominent and finely graded. The LPO wind section's approach to different styles of music also contrasted with that of their rival orchestra, principally in that they did not eschew vibrato and expressive flexibility in music of the Classical period.

The individual vibrato characteristics that were so important to the playing styles of the LPO wind principals will be investigated at length below. None of them used what might be termed a constant vibrato, but they did use it selectively across all styles and periods of music. In the LPO's recordings of works by Mozart and Haydn, of which there are many, the players can be heard using vibrato in a wide variety of contexts. The amount of vibrato varies, but like the BBC SO players, long notes in lyrical or expressive

passages are the most typical location for it. Non-vibrato tone was usually maintained in ensemble passages, but there are frequent exceptions to this, and the bassoon section was the only part of the woodwind to avoid vibrato completely.

The LPO players consistently made more use of dynamic and tonal shaping than the BBC SO. This ranged from the detailed, quasi-vocal nuances of Goossens and Kell to the characteristic dynamic shaping that appears to have been part of a Beecham-led LPO house style. This most often took the form of dynamic swells or *messi di voce*, which were frequently applied to long notes and small-scale legato phrases. These can be heard at their most extreme on a rare live recording made of Mozart's Symphony No. 39 in Ludwigshafen, during the LPO's 1936 German tour (track 5a_11). As discussed above, these swells were often notated in the orchestral parts.⁹ The absence of the swells on Beecham's 1940 studio recording of the work is testament to his tendency to change his interpretation, though it may also reflect the fact that by that time, the LPO's personnel had changed significantly from those originally trained by Beecham.

The players also tended to put greater emphasis on appoggiaturas, dissonances and chromatic lines in comparison to their counterparts in the BBC SO, as in this example from the first movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (track 5a_12). Another signature characteristic that pervades almost all of the LPO's recordings is the use of a very clipped articulation in response to notated staccato marks, even in the context of an otherwise legato phrase. This can be heard in the oboe part of the previous example and also the Trio of Beethoven's Second Symphony (track 5a_13).

Eighteenth-century music was Beecham's speciality, and with the LPO he developed a very particular approach, already heard in the examples above. This included the use of articulated and beginning-oriented small-scale phrasing, particularly in the music of Mozart. The composer's slurs were meticulously defined by the clear articulation and detachment of slurred groups, as well as beginning-oriented shaping or phrasing-off, though in a manner that is more marked than the NSO's small-scale phrasing style. On occasion, the effect is strikingly similar to the style developed in the late twentieth cen-

⁹ See above, 4.3.6 Thomas Beecham.

tury by the modern historically-informed performance movement, as can be heard in the oboe line in this excerpt from the second movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (track 5a_14, ex. 5.4).

Ex. 5.4 Mozart, Symphony No. 41, K. 551, mvt. II, bars 27–31, oboe, with Beecham's markings from TBML ORCH 178. Phrasing, LPO, Beecham, 1924.

Ob. (Andante cantabile) detached detached etc.

Dynamic and tonal nuances and detailed articulated phrasings can also be heard in the LPO's recordings of later repertoire, from Beethoven to Brahms, though the wind players sometimes adopted a more long-line approach in lyrical passages. The expressive use of dynamic and tonal shaping continues throughout the LPO's recorded repertoire, the players' flexible approach to tone contrasting with the hyper-sustained style heard in the BBC SO under Toscanini.

As already heard above, the LPO principals made frequent use of temporal shaping. In solo passages, the full range of devices from gentle rhythmic accentuation to strong agogic accents were used to reinforce accentuations made by vibrato, tonal and dynamic nuances. As with other devices, the music of Mozart and Haydn is treated as expressively as that of later composers, such as here in the slow movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (track 5a_15). The LPO wind section also made use of collective ensemble rubato, for example in the slow movement of Tchaikovsky's 5th Symphony (track 5a_16). However, the LPO's use of rubato and rhythmic shaping is not a direct continuation of the practice of the 1920s, as it is generally speaking a marked stylistic characteristic, reserved for the emphasis of expressive passages and solos. Brahms's Second Symphony provides an example of the difference between the LPO and NSO: the LPO play the second theme of the first movement with straight rhythm (track 5a_17), using little of the routine lengthening of on-beat quavers that can be heard in the NSO's 1923 recording (track 5a_18, ex. 5.5). Elsewhere, it can be observed that though the LPO players

made use of ‘fast’ rhythmic flexibility, it is certainly less pronounced than in the playing of the earlier ensemble, whose temporal shaping tends to be more volatile, as can be heard by comparing this clarinet counter-melody from the second movement of Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony, played by the Charles Draper of the NSO, and in a similar but more measured way, by Bernard Walton of the LPO (tracks 5a_19 and 5a_20).

Ex. 5.5 Brahms, Symphony No. 2, Op. 73, mvt. I, bars 102–15, flute and violin I.
Temporal devices, NSO, Ronald, 1923–4.

The musical score for Ex. 5.5 consists of two staves: Flute (Fl.) and Violin I (Vln. I). The tempo is marked '(Allegro non troppo)'. The flute part begins with a rest, followed by a series of chords marked 'uneven' and 'p'. The violin I part plays a melodic line with slurs and accents, also marked 'uneven' and 'p'. The score includes dynamic markings like 'p' and 'p sempre', and performance instructions like 'cresc.' and 'etc.'.

Most of the characteristics of the LPO’s style are heard regardless of who was conducting them. The playing styles of the wind principals in particular were so strong that they shine forth under every director, a fact that can be linked back to the observations made about the LPO’s working ethos as a ‘principal’s orchestra’. In this respect, the presence of certain players was key to the sound of the whole wind section: on the recording of Brahms’s Second Symphony discussed above, the absence of Goossens during the original recording sessions seems to correspond with an uncharacteristic expressive restraint from the rest of the section, despite the presence of Gilbert and Kell. Similarly, the recordings made by the LPO under Weingartner and Beecham just after the outbreak of the Second World War, by which point the LPO had lost most of its key players, also show a more restrained playing aesthetic. The interaction between the highly soloistic

and individual styles of the LPO's wind principals in the 1930s and Beecham's fluid but nonetheless highly considered approach is perhaps the key to understanding the LPO's model of orchestral playing.

5.3 Principal players

Section 5.2 established the contrasting house styles of the two orchestras under consideration: the BBC SO restrained, objective, and with an almost modern sensitivity to style and period, and the LPO soloistic, flexible, with much shaping and nuance. Section 5.3 will consider the principal players of each woodwind instrument in turn, showing how their playing related to these general styles, and dealing with those issues specific to each instrument or musician already outlined in the introduction to this chapter.

5.3.1 Flute

Four flautists held principal positions in the BBC SO and LPO during the 1930s: Robert Murchie (b. 1884), Gerald Jackson (b. 1900), Leonard Hopkinson (b. 1892) and Geoffrey Gilbert (b. 1914). Their recordings will be used to consider issues raised in chapter two relating to the existence of the British flute-playing tradition, and the impact of stylistic traits which have thus far been considered to originate with the French flute school, i.e. vibrato and tonal flexibility.

Robert Murchie

Table 5.3: Recordings cited featuring Robert Murchie

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
BBC SO/Boult	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	22/05/1933	DB 1966–69
BBC SO/Toscanini	Beethoven	Symphony No. 6	21–22/10/37	DB 3333–7
BBC SO/Toscanini	Beethoven	Symphony No. 7	12/06/1935	[EMI 23334]
BBC SO/Walter	Brahms	Symphony No. 4	21–22/ 051934	DB 7718–22
BBC SO/Toscanini	Brahms	Symphony No. 4	3–4/6/1935	[76812]

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
BBC SO/Toscanini	Beethoven	Symphony No. 9	03/11/1937	MP_TT0126
BBC SO/Toscanini	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	03/06/1938	MP_TT0161
BBC SO/Toscanini	Mendelssohn	Midsummer Night's Dream: Scherzo	14/03/1935	[Testament SBT 1015]
BBC SO/Toscanini	Brahms	Symphony No. 2	10/06/1938	[SBT 1015]
BBC SO/Toscanini	Brahms	<i>Tragic Overture</i>	25/10/1937	DB 3349-50

In chapter two questions were raised about Robert Murchie and his place in the development of British flute playing. Baines gave him as an example of 'the traditional English school' of playing,¹⁰ yet to other writers he was a progressive player: Robert Philip comments on his flexibility of phrasing in the BBC SO's 1934 recording of Brahms's 4th Symphony;¹¹ and James MacGillivray described his style as being of 'violent power, clarity and brilliance ... thrilling, dramatic and declamatory', which marked a departure from the 'native tradition'.¹² This section will address these contradictory descriptions as well as shedding further light on his relationship with the BBC.

During his time as principal flute of the BBC SO between 1930 and 1937, Murchie featured on many recordings, playing under a range of conductors. These show him to have been be a player of great finesse and stylistic flexibility, able to fit into the BBC SO house style and yet emerge as an individual and soloistic voice in exposed passages by employing a wide range of expressive devices. Murchie's approach to rhythm was particularly interesting. As a player trained in the 1900s and active before the First World War, one would expect him to exhibit rhythmic traits similar to those observed in recordings of the New Symphony Orchestra, in which he played very early in his career.¹³ And indeed, in solo passages, he does frequently employ agogic accents, rhythmic anticipation and other temporal emphases. Yet, as a member of the BBC SO, he also had to adopt literal rhythm as his default approach. Examples from the second movement of Boult's 1934 recording of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 show his adaptability in this re-

¹⁰ Baines, *Woodwind Instruments*, 55.

¹¹ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 116.

¹² MacGillivray, 'The Woodwind', 270-1.

¹³ Orchestra lists from 1909 give Murchie as the NSO's piccolo player.

gard. In bars 39-43 (track 5a_21), Murchie conforms to the orchestra's house style by playing his sextuplet semiquavers with no rhythmic emphasis, despite the fact that comparisons with other recordings of the inter-war years, already considered in section 5.2 above, show that this kind of rhythmic figure was commonly played with agogic accents on the first and fourth triplet of each group. Later, in bars 56-60 (track 5a_22, ex. 5.2 above), Murchie also imitates the even sextuplets of his colleagues with his first phrase, but when he takes over the passage in bar 58, he introduces a subtle rhythmic unevenness that contrasts with Whittaker's delivery of the oboe line. This is one of many examples of Murchie reserving the use of expressive devices for the most soloistic passages.

Similar observations can be made about Murchie's use of vibrato. In an article published in 1940, he asserted

There is so much of the personal in playing ... I do not hesitate to use vibrato for certain passages. Any solo of a passionate nature is, I think, definitely enhanced by the use of vibrato. In other cases it would never be anything but a breach of good taste ... It is impossible to classify music like a card index and say that this should be played with vibrato and this should not. But I will dogmatise so far as to say that vibrato is emphatically right in certain circumstances. Just where and when is a matter for the player.¹⁴

Murchie's vibrato is consistently fast and shallow, and is possibly of the 'tremble' variety identified by Abigail Dolan.¹⁵ The effect is very delicate and thus often difficult to discern. Close listening to a broad range of recordings suggests that Murchie almost never used vibrato in ensemble passages, in any period of music. The device is confined to solo passages of an overtly expressive nature; and within those, vibrato is used selectively on long notes, such as in the slow movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 (track 5a_23). Elsewhere, in the opening of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, recorded in a live performance with Toscanini in 1935, Murchie uses vibrato at the beginning of the

¹⁴ Murchie, 'The Flute', 6.

¹⁵ See 2.2 Flute: playing styles.

passage but then abandons it in favour of tonal accentuation for the remainder of the phrase (track 5a_24).

Further examples of Murchie's use of vibrato, rhythmic flexibility and tonal inflections can be found in his two recordings of the famous flute solo in the final movement of Brahms's 4th Symphony (ex. 5.6). The BBC SO first recorded the work under Bruno Walter in 1934 and made a second recording under Toscanini just a year later in 1935. In the Walter recording (track 5a_25), the tempo of the passage remains steady, with a degree of flexibility in the ensemble between soloist and orchestra, allowing Murchie to use constant rhythmic unevenness to shape the melody, though he places most of the principal beats precisely with the orchestra. The unevenness usually takes the form of lengthened on-beat quavers. The high notes in bars 98 and 100 are anticipated, and there are marked agogic accents in bars 101 and 104. Unusually, in comparison to his other recordings, Murchie uses near-constant vibrato in the first half of the solo (97–102), but it is flexible and constantly varied from almost none to an intense tremor at the peak of phrases in 100–101. By contrast, as the tessitura of the passage drops in the final bars, he adopts a non-vibrato tone. The use of tonal shaping, already present alongside the vibrato, becomes more marked here, with a distinctly different tone given to the two low Ds in the final bar.

Ex. 5.6 Brahms, Symphony No. 4, Op. 98, mvt. IV, bars 97–105, flute. Temporal and sonic devices, BBC SO, Walter, 1934, and BBC SO, Toscanini, 1935.

(Allegro energico e passionato)

Walter 1934: *vib:* *espressivo* *poco cresc.*

Toscanini 1935: *ag.* *non vibrato* *non vibrato* *A*

Most of these elements remain present in the 1935 recording under Toscanini (track 5a_26), but the way they are deployed and the overall character of the solo are quite different from the earlier recording. Toscanini can be heard vocalising along with the solo, and drives the tempo hard throughout the section, with an *accelerando* to the middle of the solo in bar 101. In this context, Murchie has less space for the gentle rhythmic swing he employed under Walter; but there is still constant rhythmic shaping, with a more frequent use of anticipations in reaction to Toscanini's *accelerando* and a controlled flexibility of ensemble between solo and accompaniment. However, the increased number of even quavers and the reduction in agogic accents show that the emphasis has shifted from small-scale rhythmic flexibility to broader tempo *rubato*. Murchie continues to use vibrato, but rather than a flexible spectrum throughout the opening six bars, there is a delineation between non-vibrato tone in what might be termed the low-intensity phrases, such as bar 97, and a strong vibrato as the intensity peaks, such as at the beginning of bars 98 and 100. The tonal shaping is also more strongly projected, with a wide variety of effects and sudden changes, though the subtle variation in the last bar heard under Walter is not reproduced here. Indeed, Murchie's powerful delivery of the low Ds

in the final bar is an example of 'reedy' tone, though the evidence from other recordings shows that he was capable of great tonal variation in that register.

This direct comparison raises the possibility that Murchie had less expressive freedom in the later recording under Toscanini, who is driving the tempo and actively shaping the solo. It has already been suggested that Toscanini was very involved in shaping wind solos; here there is a strong contrast with Walter, whose more modest and collaborative attitude to orchestras was described by Gerald Jackson.¹⁶ Walter leaves Murchie significantly more time for rhythmic flexibility and tonal effects and appears to allow him the control of the phrase onsets, within the context of a steady accompaniment, but does not resort to the broader tempo rubato that characterises Toscanini's interpretation. Nonetheless, it is striking that Murchie's personal playing style – a combination of rhythmic flexibility, wide dynamic range and a sophisticated command of vibrato effects and tonal shaping – comes across equally strongly in both contexts. These characteristics certainly account for the 'flexibility' of phrasing which Philip points to in Murchie's playing. As for MacGillivray's invocation of 'violent power, clarity and brilliance ... thrilling, dramatic and declamatory', comparisons with other recordings of this solo by London flautists from the 1920s and 1930s¹⁷ do suggest that Murchie employed a wider dynamic and expressive range than some of his contemporaries, and there is a strong case for associating him with the hyper-expressive approach to performance. The intensity demanded by Toscanini appears to have further brought out the power and drama in his playing.

Indeed, just because Toscanini exerted more control over his wind soloists than other conductors does not mean he prevented them from giving an expressive performance: quite the opposite. Some of Murchie's live performances under Toscanini contain his most pronounced use of vibrato and dynamic and temporal shaping. A recording of the BBC SO's 1937 concert of Beethoven's 9th Symphony under the Italian maestro shows Murchie using a fast and intense vibrato and very marked small-scale rubato through

¹⁶ Jackson, *First Flute*, 76–7.

¹⁷ Brahms, Symphony No. 4, LSO, Abendroth, 1927; and LSO, Weingartner, 1938. Though Gordon Walker's tenure as LSO principal flute encompasses both of these recordings, they clearly feature different players, suggesting that a deputy is present in at least one instance.

passages in the slow movement (track 5a_27). The same devices can be heard in the live recording of Toscanini's 1938 performance of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (track 5a_28), which, as already discussed above, shows a very different approach from Murchie's recording under Boult five years before (track 5a_22).

Some of the recordings under Toscanini also provide evidence for the case that Murchie's playing declined toward the end of his BBC career. As early as 1935, an off-air recording of the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* seems to document Murchie struggling with Toscanini's driving tempo in the famous flute solo. A live recording made by HMV of Brahms's Second Symphony, which Toscanini was displeased with and did not consent to release, contains moments where Murchie seems to lack breath control; the same is true of the orchestra's 1937 studio recording of Brahms's *Tragic Overture*. These blemishes may be a symptom of deterioration in his playing, or they may simply show that Murchie found it difficult to produce the intense and sustained tone that Toscanini demanded of his wind players. It is furthermore possible that the two factors were linked, in a vicious circle of performance anxiety and alcohol dependency. Other recordings in which Murchie appears slightly flat in relation to the wind section also provide evidence for Boult's comment that his successor, Gerald Jackson, was more flexible on tuning issues,¹⁸ though Jackson's softer tone would anyway have altered the balance of the wind section, with an inevitable effect on the perception of intonation problems.

Regardless of the possible decline in Murchie's playing in the late 1930s, these recordings show that he was an exceptional artist who rightly deserved his reputation as the leading orchestral flautist of his generation, and they explain why in 1930 the BBC had been determined to him recruit at any cost. His ability to adapt his style to the demands of each conductor, a capacity presumably honed during a long freelance career during which he played with every London orchestra, combined with his strong musical personality and command of the full expressive range of his instrument, should have made him the jewel in the BBC SO's crown. However, as discussed in chapter four

¹⁸ Adrian Boult, 'Letter to Bruno Walter', 5 January 1938. BBC WAC, RCont1, Bruno Walter, 1933-45.

above, his strong personality was not naturally suited to the restrictions of a full-time orchestral contract and the impersonal, paternalistic working atmosphere of the Corporation. Raposo finds few documented performances by Murchie in the ten years between his departure from the BBC and his death in 1948;¹⁹ it appears that the combination of his departure from the BBC SO, an alleged alcohol problem,²⁰ and the coming of the war spelled an effective end to his playing career at the relatively early age of 55.

Murchie's contribution to the BBC SO and the development of orchestral flute-playing was the introduction of an expanded expressive range which few others could match. His use of the impassioned and declamatory end of the expressive spectrum showed a viable stylistic alternative to the flexible and yielding characteristics which were coming to define the French flute school, though Murchie's style did not survive in the aesthetic climate of post-war orchestras.

Gerald Jackson

Table 5.4: Recordings cited featuring Gerald Jackson

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
LPO/Weingartner	Beethoven	Symphony No. 5	31/01/1933 02/02/1933	DX 516-9
LPO/Sargent/ Schnabel	Beethoven	Piano Concerto No. 3	17/02/1933	DB 1940-44
LPO/Beecham	Rossini	<i>Scala di Seta</i> Overture	05/06/1933	LX 255
BBC SO/Toscanini	Beethoven	Symphony No. 4	01/06/1939	DB 3896-9

Gerald Jackson is the only member of the BBC SO wind section to provide a link between the BBC SO and LPO in the 1930s. As has already been noted, he grew up playing in theatres and music halls in Yorkshire before taking lessons privately with Albert Fransella and finally moving to London at the age of 26. Based on this, one might expect him to represent a more traditional British style of playing than others of his generation, but in fact the opposite is true. Examples from the LPO's recordings of Beethoven's 5th Symphony and 3rd Piano Concerto and Rossini's *Scala di Seta* Overture (tracks 5a_29 to 5a_31), all made in 1933,

¹⁹ Raposo, 'Defining the British Flute School', 51.

²⁰ See Adeney, *Flute*, 21, and Raposo, 51.

show that Jackson's use of vibrato during this period was very sparing; moreover, when it is audible it appears to be a slower vibrato than the kind associated with Murchie and other players of the older generation. Jackson's lighter and more delicate sound concept may reflect the influence of Fransella, but his delivery is noticeably modern. His tone is distinctly flexible and he made frequent use of tonal and dynamic shaping. The Rossini excerpts also show his exemplary ensemble skills, highlighting his ability to blend when playing in octaves with his colleagues. Instances of temporal shaping by Jackson are limited, except when he is imitating another player, and he certainly does not display the volatile rhythmic flexibility seen in Murchie's playing. When used, his rubato is more generalised and subtle, in keeping with a more modern approach.

Jackson took over from Murchie in the BBC SO in 1938. There are few recordings of the orchestra during the period 1938–1939 which offer sufficient material on which to assess Jackson's playing during this later period. The available evidence does appear to show him using more vibrato than on his LPO recordings, but it remains a shallow and delicate vibrato, not dissimilar to that used by his oboist colleague MacDonagh. This vibrato, combined with the dynamic and tonal flexibility already noted, come across clearly in his 1939 recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 4 under Toscanini (track 5a_32).

Jackson's recordings are interesting in light of his decision to develop a bigger sound after joining the BBC SO. In his LPO recordings, he is certainly less strong in the balance than Goossens or Kell, but that may be a result of the microphone balance rather than any lack of projection on his part. It is possible that, upon joining the BBC SO, he felt he lacked the power of Murchie, his predecessor. However, the 'Toscanini effect' may also have been a factor; it has already been noted that the Italian conductor provoked the BBC SO's woodwinds to play in a more sustained and intense way and, in some cases, to increase their use of vibrato. It is entirely possible that Jackson, finding himself in an orchestra already known for its lush sound and constantly being pushed for more a *cantando* style by Toscanini, felt his light and flexible tone was insufficient to cut through. It is a pity therefore that there are not more extant recordings by both the LPO and BBC SO during Jackson's periods as first flute to facilitate a more extensive comparison.

Leonard Hopkinson

Table 5.5: Recordings cited featuring Leonard Hopkinson

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
LPO/Beecham	Rossini	<i>William Tell</i> Overture	20/10/1934	LX 339-40
LPO/Beecham	Bizet	<i>La Jolie Fille de Perth</i> Suite	09/04/1934	LX 317-8

Several sources suggest that, following Jackson's departure from the LPO at the end of the 1932-3 season, the principal flute position was taken by a player named Leonard Hopkinson.²¹ Little is known about Hopkinson, who receives no attention in the published histories of wind-playing considered in chapter two. Born in 1892, records confirm that he attended the RCM, where he studied with Murchie.²² There is no information on what he did before joining the LPO as piccolo player in 1932, a year before taking over as principal; nor is it known where he went after leaving the orchestra in 1935.

Recordings of the LPO between 1933-35 show that Hopkinson used more constant vibrato than either his predecessor Jackson or successor Gilbert. His vibrato is narrow, fast and employed very frequently on long notes, as well as during moving passages, such as in the Andante from Rossini's *William Tell* Overture (track 5a_33). Also noticeable here is a rather straighter attitude to rhythm than in recording of the work by the NSO, considered in chapter three.

Hopkinson's tone quality suggests that he played a wooden flute, but as with Jackson and Murchie this did not stop him from playing in a flexible manner, introducing frequent tonal inflections and using broader tonal and dynamic shaping. Excerpts from the *Prelude* and *Danse Bohémienne* from Bizet's *La Jolie Fille de Perth* Suite (track 5a_34) show the contrast between Hopkinson's flexible tone, embellished with vibrato, and the straighter, non-vibrato playing of his second flute, who may well be his son, James Hopkinson (b. 1914).

²¹ See Pirouet, *Heard Melosides are Sweet*, 17; Russell, *Philharmonic Decade*, 136-7; and Concert programmes including *Courtauld-Sargent Concerts*, Queen's Hall, 16 and 17 October 1933, and *Royal Philharmonic Society*, Queen's Hall, 18 October 1934.

²² See RCM, *Student Ledgers, Scholars*, III.

It is tempting to see the influence of Murchie's teaching in Hopkinson's playing, in particular in his selective use of fast and prominent vibrato, as well as the tonal variation and clear dynamic shaping; moreover, his tone is certainly closer to Murchie's powerful, reedy sound than Jackson's softer, lighter tone. Certainly his playing belongs to what has commonly been identified as the more 'traditional' British school, though his extensive use of shaping and nuances once again contradicts Philip's suggestion that players of Hopkinson's generation made scant use of expressive shaping. Based on the evidence at hand, it does however seem that Hopkinson had a more literal approach to rhythm than Murchie and certainly did not use the extensive temporal shaping seen in the flautists of the NSO.

Geoffrey Gilbert

Table 5.6: Recordings cited featuring Geoffrey Gilbert

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
LPO/Beecham	Haydn	Symphony No. 99	04/10/1835	LX 505-7
LPO/Beecham	Delius	<i>Summer Night on the River</i>	04/10/1935	SDX 13-14
LPO/Beecham	Mozart	Symphony No. 39	19/11/1936	[LPO-0040]
LPO/Beecham	Mozart	Symphony No. 39	13/03/1940	LX 927-9
LPO/Beecham	Brahms	<i>Tragic Overture</i>	22/03/1937	LX 638-9
LPO/Beecham	Debussy	<i>Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i>	13/02/1939	LX 805
LPO/Walton	Walton	<i>Façade Suite</i>	05/03/1936	C2836-7

Gilbert arrived to lead the LPO flute section in 1935, after a brief stint as principal of the Hallé orchestra. It was presumably after arriving in London that Gilbert was exposed to the playing of French flautists such as Marcel Moyse and René LeRoy, precipitating his decision to adopt the French style of playing, a change which is documented by Gilbert's recordings with the LPO between 1935 and 1940.

Interestingly, recordings from 1935 and early 1936 suggest that, even before his re-training, Gilbert did not conform to any notion of the 'traditional' British style. Gilbert's tone is softer than that of many contemporaries, including Jackson, as well as extremely

flexible, and he apparently lacked the traditional ‘reedy’ bottom register. He was already making extensive use of dynamic shaping and tonal inflections in 1935, as can be heard in the LPO’s recording of Haydn’s Symphony No. 99, made shortly after Gilbert joined the orchestra (track 5a_35). Gilbert is also somewhat unusual among his peers in playing without tremble or quiver vibrato, and indeed it is rare to hear him use any vibrato at all during this period, even when imitating phrases played by Goossens, as in this example. When vibrato is audible, it is very subtle, shallow and medium-speed, already resembling a French vibrato, such as towards the end of Delius’s *Summer Night on the River* (track 5a_36). A recording of Walton’s *Façade Suites* from May 1936 shows that Gilbert was also capable of producing a slow, low-register vibrato not unlike that practised by the French players (track 5a_37). Based on this evidence, it seems conceivable that, despite Gilbert’s claims that his first teacher Albert Cunningham did not influence his early development, exposure to Cunningham’s French-school teaching methods did indeed have an impact on his playing.

As discussed above, Dolan has shown that Gilbert’s adoption of the French-school approach to the flute involved him developing the range of overtones in his sound and mastering a medium speed, flexible vibrato.²³ Recordings made throughout 1936–1940 do show Gilbert developing this vibrato and increasing the frequency with which he used it, both in solo and ensemble passages. However, Gilbert’s use of vibrato, at least in an orchestral context, remained very selective during this period, and the device appears not to have been treated as a fundamental part of tone production. Raposo has suggested that, even much later in his career, Gilbert used less vibrato in an orchestral context.²⁴

Like his contemporaries, Gilbert also took different approaches to different musical styles and periods, and his vibrato remained particularly sparing in classical works. Recordings of Mozart’s Symphony No. 39 made in 1936 and 1939 show that, though Gilbert had abandoned the completely non-vibrato approach he took to Haydn in 1935, he was still very selective. Indeed, the main difference between the recordings is not the locations of the vibrato, which remain largely the same, but Gilbert’s control over it, as dem-

²³ See 2.2, Flute: players

²⁴ Raposo, ‘Defining the British flute school’, 73.

onstrated by an excerpt of bars 63–68 of the slow movement. Despite the poor balance on the 1936 recording (tracks 5a_38), it appears to show a faster and less controlled vibration than on the 1939 version (track 5a_39).

Gilbert appears to have embraced vibrato more extensively in Romantic repertoire, for example in the LPO's 1937 recording of Brahms's *Tragic Overture*, where he uses medium-speed vibrato throughout ensemble passages, particularly in conjunction with dynamic swells (track 5a_40). Finally, a 1939 recording of Debussy's *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune* documents Gilbert's growing command of a true French-school vibrato, deployed in the appropriate repertoire (track 5a_41). It provides a strong contrast with the three NSO recordings considered in chapter three, not only because of the vibrato and tonal flexibility but also because of Gilbert's ability to sustain the opening solo in a single long phrase, with no breaks for breath, conforming to the modern 'standard' for this solo.

Much has been made of Geoffrey Gilbert's influence as a flautist, both over his colleagues in the LPO and over British flute-playing. However, his orchestral recordings during this period give a far more nuanced picture of his development during the period 1935–1940. Gilbert's story is not simply one of a firmly British-style flute player adopting the French approach, though he did indeed begin that journey during this period. The recordings show not only that he was an atypical player from the outset but that French influences on his playing remained tightly controlled during the period in question. Moreover, as Philip has suggested, Gilbert's vibrato during this period was slower than that of his teacher, René Leroy, a fact which Philip believes points to the influence of Goossens on his colleague's playing.²⁵ If this was the case, Goossens's playing certainly had a less drastic effect on Gilbert than it did on clarinettist Reginald Kell, as will be seen below. That Gilbert took the decision to develop his playing style further in this direction while playing in this orchestra is unsurprising, but it is notable that his use of vibrato and tonal flexibility never approached the extent heard in the playing of Goossens

²⁵ Philip, *Early Recordings*, 116.

and Kell, as regards either the character of their expressive shaping or the broad way it was applied across musical styles and contexts.

Conclusion

A comparison between these four principal flautists shows not only that Beecham had a preference for flexible and imaginative flute players – a taste that is mirrored in every other part of his wind section, as will be seen below – but also that the use of flexible dynamic shaping, vibrato and tonal nuance was well established among British flute players well before Gilbert took the decision to study with LeRoy. Indeed, though this flexibility may reflect the indirect influence of the French school earlier in the twentieth century, these characteristics are also clearly discernible in the playing of Robert Murchie, whose biography does not admit any foreign influences at all. However, Murchie's flexibility was employed in the pursuit of a far more volatile and dramatic expressive language than Gilbert or any of the other flautists discussed here or in chapter three, though his vocabulary of rhythmic nuance did embrace the characteristics observed in the NSO's recordings.

This limited survey also supports Dolan's suggestion that there were two schools of flute-playing in England during the period in question, represented here by the 'reedy' or strong tone of Murchie and Hopkinson versus the softer tonal concept of Jackson and Gilbert. But this may equally be evidence either of a generational divide or of teaching influences. Nonetheless, the evidence of these recordings alone is surely sufficient to prompt a re-evaluation of the conclusions drawn by writers such as Philip and Dolan that the British pre-war flute tradition was defined by plain, un-nuanced playing, and opens up considerable scope for further study into this stylistically transitional period.

5.3.2 Oboe

Two oboists from the North-West of England dominated the London orchestral scene in the 1930s: Léon Goossens (b. 1897), principal of the LPO, and Alec Whittaker (b. 1901), principal of the BBC SO. Boult considered the two players to be 'about of equal calibre';²⁶ other

²⁶ Boult, 'Memo: The Royal Philharmonic Society', 5 March 1934. BBC WAC, R29/194/1, Orchestra General: Orchestra Policy 1933–39.

sources have described them as representing two different streams in British oboe playing.²⁷ A third player, Terence Macdonagh (b. 1908), brought the influence of the French oboe school to the fore when he replaced Whittaker in the BBC SO in 1937. Consideration of 1920s recordings in chapter three has already shown that oboe playing during that period was not as crude as some later sources suggest, and some players were capable of playing with great flexibility of tone. This final consideration of oboe recordings will look at how the style of Goossens related to these two other leading players and whether he can truly be considered the ‘saviour’ of British oboe playing.

Léon Goossens

Table 5.7: Recordings cited in relation to Léon Goossens

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
LPO/Beecham	Bizet	Suite <i>La Jolie Fille de Perth</i>	09/04/1934	LX 317-8
LPO/Beecham	Beethoven	Symphony No. 2	13/10/1936	LX 586-9
LPO/Beecham	Rossini	<i>La Gazza Ladra</i> Overture	20/10/1934	LX 353
LPO/Beecham	Mozart	Symphony No. 36 ‘Linz’	21/12/1938 11/01/1939 13/02/1939	LX 797-9
BBC SO/Busch	Mozart	Symphony No. 36 ‘Linz’	05/03/1936	DB 2191-3
LPO/Beecham	Haydn	Symphony No. 99	04/10/1835	LX 505-7
LPO/Weingartner	Beethoven	Symphony No. 5	31/01/1933 02/02/1933	DX 516-9
LPO/Weingartner	Beethoven	Symphony No. 4	13/11/1933	LX 274-7
LPO/Beecham	Bizet	Symphony in C	26/11/1937	C 2986-9
LPO/Beecham	Rossini	<i>Scala di Seta</i> Overture	05/06/1933	LX 255
LPO/Beecham	Handel arr. Beecham	Suite de Ballet <i>The Origin of Design</i>	12/12/1932	[SOMM-Beecham 7]
Goossens, Thurston et al	Mozart	Quintet K. 452 for Piano and Winds	19/03/1928	NGS 121-3
LSO/Godfrey	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	02/04/1927	L 1938-41
LPO/Beecham	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	19/01/1934	LX 282-5

²⁷ See 2.3: Oboe.

The written sources consulted in chapter two show that Léon Goossens was a figure who inspired his colleagues and had significant influence on the development of British oboe playing through his playing and teaching.²⁸ He has often been portrayed as raising the standard of oboe playing with his mastery of vibrato and tonal flexibility, though the recordings of the NSO, considered in chapter three, show that there were other accomplished players active during the 1910s and 1920s. Goossens's time in the LPO from 1932–9, his only permanent orchestral appointment, marked the peak of his orchestral activity, not least because it coincided with the 'coming of age' of London orchestras and his own maturing as an artist. His playing style, which combined rhythmic, tonal and dynamic flexibility with a prominent vibrato, is well known and immediately recognisable; this section will concentrate on how he used these expressive devices in the context of the orchestral wind section.

Goossens's vibrato is the most obvious hallmark of his playing style. Though his approach is usually described in terms of the use of vibrato as an integral part of tone production or in order to beautify tone, Goossens himself was the first to point out that he did not use constant vibrato and that non-vibrato tone had its place in his expressive repertoire.²⁹ Study of the available orchestral recordings suggests that in fact Goossens was selective in his placement of vibrato in an orchestral context. Most often it occurs on long notes during lyrical solo passages, though in major solos in Romantic repertoire he was prone to vibrate almost constantly throughout, such as in the *Sérénade* from Bizet's *Suite La Jolie Fille de Perth* (track 5a_42).

The LPO's recording of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 2* shows him using vibrato for a variety of purposes in a single work (track 5a_43). In the introduction, Goossens uses a constant, even and very slow vibrato throughout the phrase, including the moving quavers in bar 3, with no emphasis on any particular part of the phrase, suggesting that the vibrato is primarily serving the purpose of beautifying tone. Constant vibrato is also audible in bars 128–135 of the second movement, this time to intensify the fortissimo dynamic. In bars 199–202 of the second movement (ex. 5.7), the vibrato is selective, in response to specifically notated expressive effects: in the first phrase, an expressive vibrato

²⁸ See also Section 5.3.3 Clarinet: Reginald Kell, below.

²⁹ Post, 'Interview with Léon Goossens', online (accessed 1 December 2012).

is used in the piano dynamic, but the second phrase begins without vibrato, which is reserved to intensify the sforzando in bar 202.

Ex. 5.7 Beethoven, Symphony No. 2, Op. 36, mvt. II, bars 199–202, oboe, with annotations from oboe part TBML ORCH 18. Vibrato, LPO, Beecham, 1936.

Another example of selective vibrato is found in Rossini's overture to *La Gazza Ladra* (track 5a_44, ex. 5.8). Here Goossens uses expressive vibrato at the peak of each dynamic hairpin, except in the final iteration in bars 204 and 206, when the same note is marked with a written accent.

Ex. 5.8 Rossini, *La Gazza Ladra* Overture, bars 171–83 and 195–207, oboe. Vibrato and accents, LPO, Beecham, 1933.

These three applications of vibrato – for the beautification of tone, the intensification of dynamic and in relation to specific musical details – are only a few among many

variations that can be observed in Goossens's playing. It was this control and variety that distinguished him from his peers, as can be heard by comparing Goossens's flexible vibrato and the more constant, unvarying vibration of Alex Whittaker on the two players' recordings of Mozart's Linz Symphony. Unlike Whittaker, who begins vibrating from the start of a phrase and makes little variation in the speed and width of the vibrato (track 5a_45), Goossens generally 'warms into' each note or phrase, increasing the intensity of the vibrato towards the middle of the gesture, often in conjunction with a dynamic swell (track 5a_46). Goossens described this approach: 'It [vibrato] becomes interpretive when the music demands it. When you grow in sound, for instance, and the thing gets more vital, then it begins. But as you go away in sound, you hardly hear anything at all. That's how it should be!'.³⁰

It appears that Goossens's use of vibrato, and indeed all expressive devices, was governed by stimuli such as specific harmonic events, notated nuances or a perceived emotional character, rather than texture or orchestration. Goossens did not always conform with the majority of his flute-playing colleagues in using a non-vibrato tone in ensemble passages, when playing with other winds, or when doubling the violins, though he did tend to use a more subtle vibrato in these contexts, such as this in the slow movement from Haydn's Symphony No. 99 (track 5a_47). There is also no evidence that Goossens varied his approach based on the style or period of the repertoire, as he used just as much vibrato in the music of Handel, Mozart and Haydn as Brahms or Delius.

As well as vibrato, Goossens's playing featured the pronounced dynamic shaping that was intrinsic to the LPO's collective style. Like his colleagues, he frequently made use of dynamic swells or *messi di voce* on long notes; the recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony made with Weingartner in early 1933 (track 5a_48), contains examples of this shaping both with and without vibrato. The section of the slow movement of Haydn's Symphony No. 99 already cited in relation to Geoffrey Gilbert's playing (track 5a_35, ex. 5.9) shows Goossens's constant rise and fall, using dynamic accents and tonal inflections to pick out appoggiaturas and melodic shapes. It also shows him using a rather different

³⁰ Post, 'Interview with Léon Goossens', online (accessed 1 December 2012).

Ex. 5.10 Bizet, *Symphony in C*, mvt. II, bars 8–19, oboes, with Beecham's markings and annotations from oboe part TBML ORCH 36. Temporal and sonic devices, LPO, Goehr, 1937.

Ob. (Adagio) ↓

[pencilled staccato] ag. T.I. ag. ag. [pencilled tenuto]

p *espr.* [cresc.]

2. (*p* *espr.*) *cresc. molto* *dim.* *p* ag.

ag. ag. ag. [pencilled tenutos] etc.

poco cresc. *dim.*

Ex. 5.11 Rossini, *La Scala di Seta* Overture, bars 5–21, oboe, with Beecham's markings and annotations from oboe part TBML ORCH 398. Temporal devices, LPO, Beecham, 1933.

Ob. (Andantino)

p *dolce* ag. A A ag. A A

ag. ag. ag. tenuto marks in part ag. ag.

etc.

Goossens's use of rhythmic shaping in less soloistic passages is equally interesting to this survey of his orchestral playing. This sometimes took the form of simple agogics, often to lengthen an appoggiatura, such as in Beethoven's *Second Symphony*, first movement, bars 40–47, where the agogic accent is placed on the first of a line of suspensions (track 5a_52). Another common but more complex device regularly used was to antici-

pate an appoggiatura and its resolution and to delay and rush the notes following, as heard in the Rondeau from Beecham's arrangement of Handel's 'Origin of Design' (track 5a_53, ex. 5.12).

Ex. 5.12 Handel arr. Beecham, Suite de Ballet *The Origin of Design*, mvt. II, Rondeau, bars 24–32, oboe. Temporal devices, LPO, Beecham, 1932.

However, few of these orchestral recordings feature the level of rhythmic flexibility and sway that defined Goossens's chamber music recordings of the 1920s. His 1928 recording of Mozart's Quintet for Piano and Winds, K. 452 (track 5a_54, ex. 5.13) features an unmarked use of rhythmic shaping that is not present to the same degree in his 1930s orchestral recordings. This takes the form of a habitual lengthening of appoggiaturas and of the first note under a slur, shown in ex. 5.13.

Ex. 5.13 Mozart, Quintet for Piano and Winds K. 452, oboe. Temporal devices, Goossens et al., 1928.

Mvt. I, bars 86–9

Mvt. II, bars 113–5

Mvt. III, bars 87–95

This evidence points to the possibility that Goossens's rhythmic style did change during the period in question, a suggestion that is supported by a comparison of his playing on two recordings of Mozart's Symphony No. 41, made with the LSO in 1927 (track 5a_55) and the LPO in 1934 (track 5a_56). In these examples, while some rubato patterns remained much the same, others altered, particularly in the slow movement. Here, the localised rhythmic accentuation heard in the 1927 recording, which is confined within a steady beat, is extended in 1934 to a broad rubato through the phrase. However, it is also possible that the differences stemmed primarily from the two different conductors, Godfrey and Beecham.

It seems that Léon Goossens's orchestral playing involved the same soloistic use of expressive devices that he employed in his career as a solo and chamber musician. Everything about his use of these devices reflected his view of the oboe 'as an extension of the vocal chords',³¹ and he did not shy away from putting his personal imprint on the music he played. This approach had a significant effect not just on fellow oboists, but also on his colleagues in the LPO, such as clarinettist Reginald Kell, who will be discussed below. It seems that Goossens's playing did to some extent reflect the stylistic changes that were happening around him, at least in relation to the use of rhythmic shaping, but in other respects he was more of a trend-leader. However, though his own words give the impression that he used vibrato purely for the beautification of oboe tone, which would point to the move towards the kind of abstract, generalised expressivity that Leech-Wilkinson has associated with modern style,³² the recorded evidence shows that his use of all expressive devices was firmly related to specific musical events, such as the emphasis of appoggiaturas, dissonances, chromaticism, and small-scale phrasing marks, in a manner very similar to the musicians of the generation before. In this sense, his playing was as much the apotheosis of a tradition which had its roots firmly in the nineteenth century as the beginning of the modern performance paradigm.

³¹ Goossens, interview, 1 August 1982.

³² Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and histories of performing style', 252-3.

Alec Whittaker

Table 5.8: Recordings cited featuring Alec Whittaker

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
Hallé/Harty/Szigeti	Brahms	Concerto for Violin	03/12/1928	L 2265–9
BBC SO/Busch	Mozart	Symphony No. 36 'Linz'	05/03/1936	DB 2191–3
BBC SO/Toscanini	Beethoven	Symphony No. 7	12/06/1935	[BBCL 40162]
BBC SO/Boult	Beethoven	<i>Egmont</i> Overture	06/04/1933	DB 1925
BBC SO/Boult	Wagner	<i>Die Meistersinger</i> Overture	06/04/1933	DB 1924
BBC SO/Walter	Brahms	Symphony No. 4	21–22/05/1934	DB 7718–22
BBC SO/Toscanini	Brahms	Symphony No. 4	3–4/6/1935	[76812]
BBC SO/Boult	Brahms	Tragic Overture	30/05/1932	DB 1803–4

There is a clear polarity set out in the oboe narrative between the playing of Léon Goossens and Alec Whittaker. Whittaker has been described as representing a 'traditional' stream in oboe-playing, which proved surprisingly resilient in the face of the Goossens 'revolution'.³³ It was shown in chapter four that the BBC endured considerable controversy in order to secure Whittaker's services from the Hallé orchestra, and archival documents show that the BBC preferred him to Goossens. Indeed, that they found Goossens's playing somewhat overwrought implies that Whittaker was considered a more restrained and tasteful player. All this is interesting in light of the fact that both players originated from the same locality and were presumably subject to similar stylistic influences in their formative years. The main focus of this section is to ascertain how different Whittaker's playing was from Goossens's and why the BBC might have preferred it, whether he did represent the continuation of an older tradition, and why his contribution to oboe playing has received so little post-humous attention.

Whittaker appeared on many recordings with the Hallé orchestra during his time as principal oboe from 1924–1930, and his rendition of the famous oboe solo from Brahms's Violin Concerto on the orchestra's 1928 recording provides a glimpse of his playing im-

³³ See MacGillivray, 273–4.

mediately before joining the BBC SO (track 5a_57, ex. 5.14). The oboe is prominent in the recorded balance to an extent that is slightly unflattering, but it does make it possible to hear every detail of Whittaker's playing. His tone is strong and thick, and his articulation a little heavy, but what is most striking is the medium-fast, intense vibrato he uses throughout the passage. Given the received notion that it was Goossens who pioneered vibrato on the oboe, it is a surprise to hear his contemporary and apparent rival using it with such conviction. Whittaker's vibrato on this recording is relatively uniform throughout in width and speed, and bears little resemblance to the shallow tremor heard in the recordings of Arthur Foreman in chapter three.

Ex. 5.14 Brahms, Violin Concerto, Op. 77, mvt. II, bars 3–32, oboe. Temporal devices, Szigeti, Hallé, Harty, 1928.

The musical score for oboe consists of four staves. The first staff begins with the tempo marking '(Adagio)' and the dynamic marking '*p dolce* (vib. throughout)'. Above the first two measures, a bracket labeled 'uneven' spans the notes, with an 'A' above and a downward arrow below. An 'ag.' marking with a downward arrow is placed above the third measure. The second staff continues the melodic line, ending with a dynamic marking '*p*'. The third staff features several 'uneven' markings, each with an 'A' above and a downward arrow below, interspersed with slurs. A '*dim.*' marking is placed below the middle of this staff, and a '*p*' marking is at the end. The fourth staff begins with an 'ag.' marking above the first measure, followed by a '*mf*' marking below the first measure and a '*p*' marking below the second measure. The score concludes with 'etc.' at the end of the line.

Despite Whittaker's more forthright tone, he also uses a wide dynamic range in this solo, shaping the phrases in great detail, though with less tonal flexibility than one associates with Goossens. A subtle rubato runs throughout the passage, emphasising the middle of each two-bar phrase. Once again, the impression is far from the plain, unshaped, and vibrato-free playing that some writers have associated with British oboe playing in the 1920s.

All of the characteristics observed in this recording of Whittaker can also be heard in his recordings with the BBC SO, 1930–37. Like Goossens, he tended to use vibrato for significant solo passages in music of all periods; an example of his vibrato in Mozart's Symphony No. 36 has already been compared with Goossens (tracks 5a_45 and 5a_46). Solos from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony (5a_58) and 'Egmont' overture (track 5a_59) feature an expressive, fairly flexible vibrato, though he uses a non-vibrato tone when the character of the music is more menacing (track 5a_60). Romantic repertoire is treated similarly, as his selective vibrato in passages from Wagner's overture *Die Meistersinger* and Brahms's 4th Symphony show (track 5a_61 and 5a_62). When Whittaker's playing in the Brahms under Walter is compared with the BBC SO's later recording with Toscanini (track 5a_63), it shows that, like his colleagues, Whittaker used a more intense vibrato and sustained tone when playing for the Italian conductor.

Whittaker's use of strong dynamic shaping also comes across strongly on his BBC SO recordings; indeed, when given a little more distance from the microphone than was the case on the Hallé recording considered above, it is easy to see why the BBC considered him an artist worth pursuing. The dynamic shapes he makes are always very clearly drawn, whether he is responding to notated instructions or his own interpretation. He also makes extensive use of the piano-pianissimo dynamic range, as can be heard from the extracts from Brahms's Fourth Symphony under Walter, cited above (track 5a_62). It was noted in chapter two that, according to Anthony Baines, the long-scraps style of reeds used by Whittaker allowed him 'a more flexible tone, capable of greater variation in dynamics and colour'.³⁴ The recordings certainly bear this out in relation to dynamics, but perhaps not flexibility. Indeed, one element which differentiates Whittaker's playing from that of Goossens is the fact that he makes less use of small-scale dynamic and tonal shaping. Whittaker generally uses a more sustained tone than Goossens, and though there are some instances of tonal inflections, they are less common than in the playing of his peer.

³⁴ Baines, 93.

In the absence of these small sonic nuances, however, Whittaker does make full use of the possibilities of rhythmic shaping and rubato, at least in Romantic music. His rhythm remains generally straight in works by Mozart and Beethoven and in ensemble contexts, but when given an expressive solo or counter-melody, he displays the kind of temporal flexibility observed in the Hallé recording above. The methods of rhythmic accentuation he regularly uses include stretched appoggiaturas, overdotting, and anticipation, heard in extracts from Brahms's Fourth Symphony under Walter and *Tragic Overture* under Boult (tracks 5a_64 and 5a_65, ex. 5.15 and 5.16), as well as a more general rubato demonstrated in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger Overture* (track 5a_66).

Ex. 5.15 Brahms, Symphony No. 4, Op. 98, oboe. Temporal devices, BBC SO, Walter, 1934.

Mvt. I, bars 339–51

(Allegro non troppo)

Ob. *solo* *espr.* *overdotted* *ag.* *sim.* *dolce* *etc.*

Mvt. II, bars 108–10

(Andante moderato)

Ob. *dolce, ma espr.* *rit.* *smorz.* *etc.*

Ex. 5.16 Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81, bars 308–11, oboe. Temporal devices, BBC SO Boult, 1932.

(Allegro ma non troppo)

Ob. *ag.* *uneven* *etc.* *p dolce*

Overall, Whittaker's playing is not as different from Goossens's as the written literature suggests. Certainly he used an equal amount of dynamic and temporal shaping, as well as vibrato. Whittaker's more pungent tone, presumably linked to his choice of reed style, is probably the most important point of contrast between the two players; and it is possible that this tone, though ideal for the concert hall or a recording with a string-heavy balance, was not flattered by close microphones or indeed intimate listening situations, unlike Goossens's more delicate sound and style. This therefore raises the question of why the BBC preferred him, in light of its stated aim that broadcasting should encourage intimate listening. The decision may simply have stemmed from a dislike of Goossens's highly flexible and expressive style, like the actor who 'paints his voice' with 'foot-light sobs'.³⁵ Whittaker's playing, though very expressive, is less personal than that of Goossens, largely as a result of his more sustained tone and broader use of dynamics.

The question was also posed above of how Whittaker relates to the idea of a pre-existing British 'tradition'. Certainly his playing does not resemble the flexible non-vibrato style of Griffiths, the NSO principal in the late 1930s. Comparisons with Foreman are difficult, as he left no electric recordings: there are certainly similarities between their use of strong articulation and temporal flexibility, though Whittaker's style is more sustained, and his vibrato more pronounced. As for Whittaker's legacy, it has already been noted that post-war oboist Sidney Sutcliff was considered to have continued this stylistic stream: however, it is also interesting to note that some students of Goossens, including Evelyn Rothwell and Janet Craxton, played with the long-scrape reeds and associated heavier tone that distinguished Whittaker. It can be concluded, therefore, that not only were Whittaker and Goossens closer in playing style than the polemical descriptions of them suggest but that aspects of their two styles were assimilated and blended by the following generation of players, with the result that the distinctive native style that emerged after the war owed as much to Whittaker as to Goossens.

³⁵ Walford Davies, 'Both Sides of the Microphone', 131.

Terence MacDonagh

Table 5.9: Recordings cited in relation to Terence MacDonagh

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
BBC SO/Toscanini	Brahms	Tragic Overture	25/10/1937	DB 3349-50
BBC SO/Toscanini	Brahms	Symphony No. 2	10/06/1938	[SBT 1015]
Orchestra/Munch/ Morel	Haydn	Sinfonia Concertante	10/1938	OL 83-5
BBC SO/Boult	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	22/05/1933	DB 1966-69
BBC SO/Toscanini	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	03/06/1938	[MP_TT0161]
LPO/Beecham	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	19/01/1934	LX 282-5
BBC SO/Toscanini	Beethoven	Symphony No. 6	21-22/10/37	DB 3333-7
BBC SO/Toscanini	Rossini	<i>La Scala di Seta</i> Overture	03/06/1938	[MP_TT0161]

As a student of both Goossens and the Parisian oboist Myrtil Morel, Terence MacDonagh represented the most direct influence of the French oboe tradition in London orchestras during this period. Having been Beecham's original choice for principal oboe of the BBC Orchestra in 1929, MacDonagh served as the BBC SO's cor anglais player from 1930-37 before replacing Whittaker as principal oboe. He went on to be one of the leading oboists of the post-war period, serving as principal in the BBC SO and RPO. Analysis of his recordings with the BBC SO between 1937 and 1939 will be used to address the questions of how his French training influenced his playing, and what he, as a younger generation of player, brought to orchestral oboe playing in the years leading up to World War II.

A survey of MacDonagh's recordings as principal oboe from the period 1937-39 show that he was an extremely refined player, both tonally and musically. His vibrato was flexible, ranging from a full-blooded, medium-speed oscillation in highly expressive moments to a very delicate tremor, such that it is sometimes difficult to ascertain if he is vibrating or not. His vibrato also varies on a note-by-note basis during the phrase, as shown by this example from Brahms's *Tragic Overture* under Toscanini (track 5a_67). The substantial solo from the third movement of Brahms's Second Symphony shows his use of faster, shallow vibrato in a moving phrase, as well as a subtle rubato and variety of

phrasing and articulation that appears to catch his colleagues out on occasion (track 5a_68 ex. 5.17).

Ex. 5.17 Brahms, Symphony No. 2, Op. 73, mvt. III, bars 1–32, oboe. Temporal devices and articulation, BBC SO, Toscanini, 1938.

Allegretto grazioso (Quasi Andantino)

Ob. *p*

A A A

A + ag.

3 3

detached legato

A ag.

dolce

ag. uneven

p

ag. 2 etc.

It appears that, unlike other BBC wind principals, MacDonagh's vibrato did not change significantly when he played for Toscanini. It also seems that, of his two teachers, his vibrato more closely resembles Morel than Goossens: Morel's 1938 recording of Haydn's *Sinfonia Concertante* documents a similar delicate, fast vibrato, as well as the soft, rounded sound that distinguishes MacDonagh from both Goossens and Whittaker (track 5a_69).

MacDonagh's use of dynamic shaping is finely controlled but broader than the hyper-expressive nuances that Goossens in particular practiced. However, as can be heard in the examples from Brahms above, he did not tend towards the sustained tone of Whittaker, instead playing in a rather articulated fashion, frequently warming into notes in a way that does suggest Goossens's influence. This articulated style also extended to the use of phrasing-off and beginning-oriented shapes on occasion, though he was also

capable of long-line phrasing. Another feature of his playing that differentiates him from his older colleagues is the cleanness of his finger work, and the quasi-portamento effects that were common in Goossens's and Whittaker's playing are very rare in MacDonagh's. An extract from the first movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 played by the three players shows a clear portamento effect from both Whittaker and Goossens: in the former case, it sounds accidental, but the latter, it could be a function of expressive shaping. MacDonagh, by contrast, plays the passage completely cleanly (tracks 5a_70, Whittaker; 5a_71, Goossens; and 5a_72, MacDonagh).

As can be heard in the excerpts already cited, Macdonagh made frequent use of rhythmic flexibility and accentuation. He exhibited a far greater tendency to use agogic accents and rhythmic nuances within a steady tempo than most of his colleagues in the BBC SO, with the exception of Murchie and Whittaker. An example from Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 shows him using an agogic accent to vary the repetition of a phrase (tracks 5a_73), and agogic emphases is in evidence in the first movement of Brahms's Second Symphony (5a_74). His rhythmic vocabulary included the anticipatory rhythmic gestures which were going out of fashion during this period, and his use of them often sounds spontaneous and improvisatory. It is astonishing to note that he is even able to employ rhythmic flexibility in the treacherous *Scala di Seta* solo, using a slight acceleration through the descending scales in order to take extra time on the slurred leaps (track 5a_75).

Overall, Macdonagh's playing is interesting both for its French-style vibrato and for the wide range of expressive devices that he employed in a varied and seemingly spontaneous manner. However it is his sheer technical polish, easy control throughout the instrument and his refined tone that perhaps points to the coming trends in oboe-playing. It is also important to note that, though he is considered here as a BBC player, MacDonagh's creative and flexible approach was surely what made Beecham admire his playing, as reflected by both Beecham's desire to appoint MacDonagh principal oboe in the BBC orchestra in 1929 and in the RPO after the Second World War.

Conclusion

The evidence assessed here gives a clear impression of the varied playing styles of three of the leading oboists of the 1930s. Undoubtedly Goossens was a master of his instrument, with a flexible and nuanced style that no other player could match. Yet, it is wrong to suggest that he was a lone star surrounded by mediocrity. As discussed above, Alex Whittaker was an equally accomplished player, and his playing style had a significant influence over the next generation of oboists. His lack of post-war or posthumous recognition is perhaps due to the dominance of the Goossens legend, which is based on Goossens's work with prominent composers and his high profile as a soloist as well as his actual playing ability.

Terence MacDonagh's pre-war playing raises as many questions as it answers about the rising generation of players whose careers straddled the Second World War. His technical finesse and refined tone certainly foreshadow the oboists of the later twentieth century, and his use of expressive devices is restrained enough to conform to a modern conception of 'good taste'. Yet other aspects of his playing, such as his spontaneous rhythmic shaping and articulated phrasing, are quite atypical, particularly when compared to his colleagues in the BBC SO. It is outside the scope of this thesis to investigate how his playing developed during the post-war years when he played for Beecham in the RPO, but it would be a rich field for further study, especially to compare MacDonagh's French-influenced style with other post-war players such as Sidney Sutcliffe and students of Goossens such as Evelyn Rothwell.

Overall, the recordings of these three players show the playing of three very individualistic oboists, all of whom had subtly different approaches to expressive devices. However, they do strongly suggest that, by the 1930s, oboe-playing that incorporated sonic flexibility and the use of vibrato alongside temporal shaping was becoming the norm in London's top orchestras. More crucially, the evidence shows a far more complex picture than the simple narrative commonly in circulation, which states that it was Goossens and his students who introduced these characteristics into British oboe-playing. The playing of Alec Whittaker and the direct influence of the French School must be consid-

ered equally important in any assessment of changing oboe-playing styles during this period.

5.3.3 Clarinet

If the polarity between the playing styles of Whittaker and Goossens appears to be largely a historical construct, the clarinetists Frederick Thurston (b. 1901) and Reginald Kell (b. 1906) did truly represent opposing approaches to their instrument. Both have left extensive writings which show their contrasting attitudes to the role of the performer. Furthermore, these two players' styles appear to have been shaped by the orchestras they played with, perhaps more than any other wind players under discussion. All this will be considered in an attempt to situate Thurston and Kell within the development of British clarinet playing and the wider changes in attitudes to musical performance, concluding with an assessment of how these two players influenced the generation that came after them, which included Kell's successor in the LPO, Bernard Walton.

Frederick Thurston

Table 5.10: Recordings cited featuring Frederick Thurston

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
BBC WO/Pitt	Rossini	<i>Barber of Seville</i> Overture	11/06/1926	9166
BBC WO/Pitt	Rossini	<i>Semiramide</i> Overture	03/12/1925 16/12/1925	9076
BBC WO/Pitt	Tchaikovsky	<i>Casse-Noisette</i> Suite	19/06/1927	9260-2
Goossens, Thurston et al	Mozart	Quintet K. 452 for Piano and Winds	19/03/1928	NGS 121-3
BBC SO/Walter	Mozart	Symphony No. 39	21/05/1934	DB 7715-7
BBC SO/Boult	Beethoven	Symphony No. 8	21/07/1932	DB 1764-6
BBC SO/Boult	Weber	<i>Der Freischutz</i> Overture	07/10/1932	DB 1678
BBC SO/Boult	Brahms	Tragic Overture	30/05/1932	DB 1803-4
BBC SO/ Toscanini	Brahms	Tragic Overture	25/10/1937	DB 3349-50
BBC SO/Walter	Brahms	Tragic Overture	1939	[MP_TT0123]

Frederick Thurston has been credited with establishing what became the dominant stream in British clarinet playing in the mid- to late-twentieth century.³⁶ His influence as a player and teacher, noted in chapter two, was consolidated by his numerous writings on the clarinet. His support of native composers generated a substantial legacy of new works, and he has been described as a 'central figure' in the 'emerging post-1900 arts establishment'.³⁷ A highly self-critical player who 'lived intensely and worked with a fierce concentration',³⁸ Thurston left no memoirs, but his writings on the clarinet portray a serious and professional-minded musician. His book *Clarinet Technique* stresses the importance of developing 'good taste' by listening to leading players and being 'guided by the accepted canons of criticism',³⁹ suggesting that Thurston saw adaptability and the willingness to conform to the prevailing aesthetic as necessary attributes for a successful musician. Evidence of his own participation in the quasi-moralistic attitude to musical performance that surrounded him at the BBC can be seen in his rejection of the notion of technical showmanship, which led him to advise, 'Your technique must be good only because if it is not your musical expression will be impeded. There is no other reason for technique'.⁴⁰ Sidney Fell's description of Thurston's 'magnificent playing supported by deep, mature musical thought' is testimony to his reputation as a serious artist as well as to the respect he inspired in the post-war generation of players.⁴¹

Thurston's career with the BBC began in 1923, when he joined the BBC Wireless Orchestra (BBC WO) as principal clarinet, aged just 22. He is therefore presumed to be present on the recordings the BBC WO made under Percy Pitt in the 1920s. These include renditions of the Rossini overtures *The Barber of Seville* and *Semiramide* and Tchaikovsky's *Casse Noisette* Suite. The clarinet playing on these is stylish and confident, with a firm, direct delivery somewhat reminiscent of Draper, though with greater dynamic flexibility. On this level, the playing resembles Thurston's later recordings with the BBC SO, though there is also boldness that is absent from the 1930s recordings. Assuming that the

³⁶ Pitfield, 'British Music for Clarinet and Piano 1880–1945', 79.

³⁷ Pitfield, 73.

³⁸ Rees, cited Pitfield, 72.

³⁹ Thurston, *Clarinet Technique*, 47.

⁴⁰ Thurston, 'Foreward', *Clarinet Technique*, n.p.

⁴¹ Fell, 'Chiefly for the rising generation', 39.

clarinettist on these early BBC WO recordings is indeed Thurston, there are also differences in his use of expressive devices compared to his later playing. The Rossini overtures feature clear articulation of the printed slurs, and in *The Barber of Seville*, they are shaped in a beginning-oriented fashion, in contrast to the more sustained and legato phrasing style that characterised Thurston's playing in the 1930s (track 5b_01). The *Semiramide* solo shows Thurston making a clear rhythmic gesture in bar 185, though it is less pronounced than when the flute and piccolo play the same passage (track 5b_02, ex. 5.18). These limited excerpts are insufficient to create a generalised picture of his playing, but when considered alongside his 1928 recording of Mozart's Quintet K. 452 for Piano and Winds, a pattern begins to emerge. This recording also features instances of rubato and rhythmic shaping, though they are less pronounced than in the playing of Goossens, who plays alongside him (track 5b_03). Overall, it seems that, early in his career, Thurston inhabited the stylistic world of the 1920s, though he was slightly more reserved in his use of expressive devices than his peers.

Ex. 5.18 Rossini, *Semiramide* Overture, bars 178–87, clarinet. Temporal devices, BBC WO, Pitt, 1925.

The musical score for Clarinet (A) in Rossini's *Semiramide* Overture, bars 178–87, is presented in two staves. The first staff begins with the tempo marking '(Allegro)' and the instruction 'solo'. The music starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. The second staff continues the piece, featuring an accent (*ag.*) over a note and ending with 'etc.'. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, slurs, and accents, characteristic of the 1920s style.

Thurston's playing in the BBC SO in the 1930s shows very clearly his assimilation into the orchestra's 'house style'. Thurston wrote that vibrato was 'purely a matter of taste. Certain passages (or certain conductors) may call for vibrato',⁴² but there is no evidence of him using it in any recording with the BBC SO. Right from the orchestra's earliest recordings, Thurston's phrasing style is less beginning-oriented, more sustained and 'long-line', his rhythm stricter, and his tonal and dynamic shaping broader and less nu-

⁴² Thurston, 'Clarinet Tone', 53.

anced than in the 1920s. This is particularly the case in Classical repertoire; his straight and literal playing on the 1933 recording of Mozart's 39th Symphony is in stark contrast to the more outwardly expressive shaping of the Piano and Winds Quintet considered above (track 5b_04). The solo in the Trio of Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 is also delivered with a only the barest hint of rhythmic flexibility and little accentuation of the written slurs (track 5b_05). This approach is reflected in his writings; though Thurston advised students to 'listen carefully to a really fine artist on any instrument and ... notice the little ebbs and flows of tone that go to make up his phrasing', he also counselled that 'too many nuances spoil the line of a long phrase'.⁴³ Fell also observed that 'in Thurston one became conscious of the long line, the extended phrase',⁴⁴ supporting the overall impression given by his recordings that Thurston adopted a long-line approach to phrasing as his career progressed. This approach can also be heard in Weber's overture *Der Freischutz*, recorded by Thurston with the BBC SO in 1932, which features a very soft approach to articulation throughout (track 5b_06, ex. 5.19)

Thurston does not address the issue of rubato in his writings, but some recordings include examples of restrained temporal accentuation, particularly in Romantic repertoire. A comparison has already been made between recordings of Brahms's *Tragic Overture* that Thurston made with the BBC SO under Boult and Toscanini during the 1930s.⁴⁵ The earliest, made with Boult in 1932, features rhythmic accentuation in bars 410–12 of the clarinet solo, as well as the subtle stressing of the on-beat quavers throughout the descending phrase (track 5b_07, ex. 5.20). The 1937 recording made under Toscanini, by contrast, shows a much more strict approach, with a sustained tone and heavy, even quavers in the final ritardando (track 5b_08). The return of a little flexibility in the 1939 live recording of the work under Walter (track 5b_09) suggests that this was Thurston's natural approach to this music and that the strictness in the 1937 recording reflected Toscanini's interpretation.

⁴³ Thurston, *Clarinet Technique*, 9.

⁴⁴ Fell, 39–40.

⁴⁵ See Section 5.2.1 above.

Ex. 5.19 Weber, *Der Freischutz* Overture, Op. 77, bars 96–145, clarinet. Articulation, BBC SO, Boult, 1932.

(Molto vivace)
solo
con molto passione

Cl. (B \flat)

ff *f*

p

legato articulation

p

leg. art. leg. art.

leg. art.

dolce etc.

Ex. 5.20 Brahms, *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81, bars 409–23, clarinet. Temporal devices, BBC SO, Boult, 1932.

(Allegro ma non troppo)

Cl. (B \flat)

solo

p espress.

ag.

uneven

un poco sost.

ag.

f dim. *p*

etc.

rit.

These recordings suggest that Thurston felt comfortable with the BBC SO's approach to music-making, which required not only extreme adaptability but also acceptance of a modernist, anti-interpretation approach to performance, the negation of the self in order to realise the truth of a musical work. It is perhaps the case that, at the time he joined the orchestra, Thurston's personal playing style was not yet completely settled, making his

assimilation into the BBC's house style all the more complete. However, his 1920s recordings already show a player who is slightly more restrained than his peers, and the conviction with which he preaches restraint in interpretation in his writings suggests that he genuinely believed in that approach. His style certainly marks a departure from the hyper-expressive playing of his teacher Charles Draper, which makes it difficult to argue for a continuity of tradition. Thurston's own influence over the players who came after him will be considered in the conclusion to this section.

Reginald Kell

Table 5.11: Recordings cited featuring Reginald Kell

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
LPO/Weingartner	Beethoven	Symphony No. 5	31/01/1933 02/02/1933	DX 516-9
LPO/Sargent/ Schnabel	Beethoven	Piano Concerto No. 3	17/02/1933	DB 1940-44
LPO/Weingartner	Beethoven	Symphony No. 4	13/11/1933	LX 274-7
LPO/Beecham	Mozart	Symphony No. 39	1936	[LPO-0040]
LPO/Beecham	Beethoven	Symphony No. 2	13/10/1936	LX 586-9
LPO/Beecham	Brahms	<i>Tragic Overture</i>	22/03/1937	LX 638-9
LSO/Weingartner	Brahms	Symphony No. 4	14/02/1938	LX 705-9
LPO/Walton	Walton	<i>Façade Suite</i>	05/03/1936	C2836-7

Reginald Kell's stance on individualism and the role of the performer stood in stark contrast both to the anti-interpretation movement and to Thurston's own advice to 'be guided by the accepted canons of criticism'. In a 1957 article, he stated:

It has been said quite freely that there should be no personalities, no individuality in music-making; only the instrument and the composer's intentions should be evident. But to my way of thinking, and I'm sure to the thinking of the admirable Léon Goossens and some others too, this is only the beginning. ... The truly great performances I have heard in the past have been a combination of three things: the composer, the peculiar qualities of the instrument or voice, and evi-

dence of the individual, recreative imagination of the performing artist, which in the case of a great performance is always in good taste.⁴⁶

Kell's reference to Goossens in this passage is testament to the fact that it was during his time in the LPO that he took the decision to reject the mainstream style of clarinet playing and strike out in search of a more overt mode of expressivity. This decision led him to develop a unique approach to the instrument. His journey is documented by the recordings of the LPO during his tenure as principal from 1932 to 1937.

Kell described his own playing as a young man as 'in the accepted way ... aiming at a good round sound which in effect remained as pure as a lily ... completely void of any personal contamination ... nothing but good sound and good phrasing'.⁴⁷ This sonic and stylistic ideal comes across clearly on Kell's earliest recordings with the LPO, made during the 1932-3 season. Kell's playing on recordings of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Third Piano Concerto, made in spring 1933, show clear articulation and refined dynamic shaping but none of the tonal inflections and the vibrato that were later to become hallmarks of his playing style (tracks 5b_10 and 5b_11). It is notable, however, that he was already using more defined dynamic shaping and a less sustained, more tonally flexible manner of playing than that which Thurston had by that time developed in the BBC SO.

During Kell's second year in the LPO, his playing began to change. In the recording of Beethoven's Fourth Symphony that the LPO made under Weingartner in late 1933, the clarinet solos in the slow movement are delivered in a more vocal fashion than his earlier recordings, with an increased degree of tonal flexibility, though as yet applied subtly and selectively (track 5b_12). Though Kell's playing on this recording does not yet feature his unique vibrato, the recording is certainly an indication of his beginning to investigate new expressive avenues.

Not long after this recording was made, Kell decided to go one step further in his quest for a more overtly expressive 'voice', and during the 1934 Covent Garden opera season he took the controversial decision to introduce vibrato into his playing. Having

⁴⁶ Kell, 'Britannia Rules the Winds', 58.

⁴⁷ Kell 57-8.

'tired of his own characterless playing of the clarinet', Kell sought to emulate the vibrato of Casals and the 'tender, sometimes violent, vibrant quality of a singer like Flagstad'.⁴⁸ The first recordings that give clear examples of Kell's vibrato are from 1936. A live recording of Mozart's Symphony No. 39 shows that he was less reserved about using vibrato in Classical repertoire than some of his colleagues, employing it near-constantly in the Trio melody, alongside tonal and rhythmic inflections (track 5b_13). The slow movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 demonstrates that he was happy to vibrate whilst playing the leading voice; but he used vibrato more sparingly when in octaves with another instrument, in this case the bassoon, played by John Alexandra, who did not use vibrato (track 5b_14). Brahms's Second Symphony, recorded the same year, also includes instances of Kell using vibrato when he had the leading voice in what might be considered an ensemble passage (track 5b_15). Nonetheless, he was selective about locations for vibrato, not on the basis of the musical texture but rather the character of the line he was playing. Vibrato was reserved for passages of a lyrical or passionate nature, such as the dramatic clarinet solo in the last movement of Brahms's Second Symphony (track 5b_16), and the closing of Brahms's *Tragic Overture* (track 5b_17), which also features a far more pronounced version of the rhythmic accentuation heard in Thurston's recording. A non-vibrato tone was still employed in other contexts, such as the rising arpeggios in the first movement of the Second Symphony (track 5b_18). These examples also contain multiple instances of rhythmic and tonal shaping, devices which were as much a part of the Kell style as his vibrato. However, though his particular expressive style did take into account musical events, such as appoggiaturas, local dissonances, and phrasing marks, he was by no means consistent in this regard. This can be heard perhaps most clearly in Kell's later recordings, such as Brahms's 4th Symphony, made with the LSO in 1938 (track 5b_19, ex. 5.21). In particular, individual slurred groups are frequently elided by a crescendo or a quasi-portamento, and there are frequent tonal inflections on upbeats, meaning that though he also emphasises the principal melody notes with vibrato or dynamic shaping, the sense of bar hierarchy and phrase structure that

⁴⁸ Kell, 58.

can be heard in the playing of Léon Goossens is replaced by a more personal and improvisatory shaping.

Ex. 5.21 Brahms, Symphony No. 4, Op. 98, mvt. II, bars 4–13, clarinet. Sonic devices, LSO, Weingartner, 1938.

The musical score for Clarinet (A) is presented in two staves. The first staff begins with the tempo marking '(Andante moderato)' and the dynamic marking 'pp sempre e legato'. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some slurs and accents. The second staff continues the melody, marked 'quasi portamento' and 'etc.', showing a more fluid and expressive phrasing.

Further evidence of Kell's view of vibrato and tonal flexibility as vehicles for expressing earnest emotion, devoid of any associations with dance-band vulgarity, can be found in the LPO's 1936 recording of selected movements of Walton's *Façade Suites*. Despite the strong jazz and dance music influences in this music, Kell does not use any vibrato in the recording and in fact plays with a straight tone more reminiscent of his first recordings with the LPO. Indeed, any suggestion that Kell's playing during this period might have reflected jazz influences is strongly countered by his statement in a 1940 letter to the BBC that 'To play (for the want of a better word) jazz, one must be a specialist in more ways than one, and I am convinced that this style is detrimental to my playing and position as a Royal Academy of Music professor'.⁴⁹

Despite Kell's belief in his new style, his colleagues in the LPO did not initially appreciate the change in his playing. His account of the resistance he encountered is worth reproducing in full, not least because it documents the pressure orchestral musicians can be placed under to conform to an accepted style, and the consequent difficulty in making a radical stylistic change:

I remember quite well the unhappy time I had, when my first steps along the road of individuality in clarinet-playing prompted me to use vibrato while play-

⁴⁹ Kell, Letter to G Willoughby, 25 April 1940. BBC WAC, R29/59/2, BBC Salon Orchestra Members K-W, 1939–42.

ing in the orchestra in Covent Garden. It was like persisting in wearing one's hat in church. I was ostracized by my friends, for they suspected I had become mentally disoriented. I was the youngest principal in the wind section, who had suddenly gone beserk. An early end to my career was forecast, for my efforts were destined to bring disrepute on the orchestra, and so I was shunned by my colleagues.

This unhappy, though in a way exciting, time proved very trying for me, for I was used to lots of friends and badinage, and to find myself alone in effect nearly dictated my abandoning the idea of breaking away from tradition. Some time later, Furtwängler was conducting a rehearsal of *Tristan und Isolde*, when for no apparent reason he stopped the orchestra, pointed to me and said, "What is your name?" My first thoughts as I collected myself were - "Here we go again!" I replied "Kell", spelling it out letter by letter. "Then, Mr. Kell," said Furtwängler, "I would like you to know, you are the first clarinetist I have heard who plays from the heart" ... from that moment there was never again any doubt in my mind with regard to the introduction into my playing of any personal trait I feel is necessary to the music I am performing.⁵⁰

Kell's decision to adopt such a personal approach to his instrument made him a controversial figure for the rest of his career. His playing reflects the rise of the hyper-expressive performing style in the 1930s, in reaction to the reverent, objective approach to the emergent canon which Thurston exemplified. However, more perhaps than the playing of his colleagues, Kell's approach also prefigured the coming age of abstract expressivity, the communication of a personal expressivity that was less grounded in specific cues within the music.

⁵⁰ Kell, 'Britannia rules the winds', 59.

Postscript: Bernard Walton

Table 5.12: Recordings cited featuring Bernard Walton

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
LPO/Weingartner	Mozart	Symphony No. 39	26/02/1940	LX 881-3
LPO/Lambert	Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 5	1-2/03/1939	C 3088-92

Bernard Walton took over as principal clarinet in the LPO when Reginald Kell went to the LSO in 1937. Walton was only 20 when he took the job, but a number of extant recordings from the period 1937-40 give a snapshot of his playing at this young age. Described by Baines as representing the 'traditional London tone' associated with Henry Lazarus and Walton's teacher George Anderson, Walton had a denser sound than Kell or Thurston. This is reportedly the result of his use of a long-lay mouthpiece, chosen 'to carry the full liquidness and expressive power up to the top of the upper register - especially on the crucial note c⁴.⁵¹ This setup did not prevent Walton from using some tonal flexibility in his playing, though it was of a more restrained character than Kell's quasi-vocal nuances. There are examples of tonal flexibility in Walton's playing in a variety of repertoire, from the Trio of Mozart's Symphony No. 39 (track 5b_20) to Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony (track 5b_21). These examples also show his use of a wide and flexible dynamic range. However, Walton did not mimic Kell's vibrato, retaining a straight tone throughout all the recordings surveyed, and he generally avoided rubato and rhythmic flexibility. Walton is cited by Richard Adeney as being one of the 'few wind players who resisted the Goossens influence' and who, though seeming to him 'stiff and wooden at the time, now sound on their old recordings beautifully stylish and twenty-first century'.⁵²

Based on the available evidence, therefore, though Walton seems to represent the limited influence of Kell's tonal flexibility on a player whose sound production is otherwise considered to be representative of an older tradition, he also belonged to the incoming restrained aesthetic that was epitomised by Thurston, making him a true blend of stylistic attributes.

⁵¹ Baines, *Woodwind Instruments*, 122.

⁵² Adeney, *Flute*, 68.

Conclusion

Writers have pointed to two polarities in the development of clarinet playing in London during the period under review: the first is the contrast between Charles Draper's 'broad tone' and George Anderson's 'traditional London tone' and the second a stylistic dichotomy and even rivalry between Frederick Thurston and Reginald Kell.⁵³ Nowhere is the contrast between the individualist and the modernist approaches to performance more strongly drawn than between Thurston and Kell, as seen in the rich selection of writings left by both players. There is a correspondingly marked difference between the two men's playing styles; moreover it is striking, having begun their careers playing in a manner similar to one another and typical of their generation, that during the course of the 1930s they developed in completely opposite directions. Certainly the orchestras in which they worked contributed to this: Thurston's playing became more straight and restrained during his time in the BBC SO under Boult and Toscanini, while for Kell the LPO was a stimulating environment where he was inspired to develop a soloistic, hyper-expressive approach to his instrument. Yet one could not say that the situation would have been reversed had Thurston joined the LPO and Kell the BBC SO; the two men were apparently eminently suited to the ensembles they played in. In particular, it is hard to imagine that Kell's experimentation with vibrato would have been tolerated by the BBC or indeed that working in the BBC SO would have prompted him to take that route.

The playing of Bernard Walton shows that the older, traditional 'London tone' associated with Lazarus and Anderson was still evolving in the late 1930s and beyond, albeit married with a highly restrained playing aesthetic. Walton became an influential player of the post-war generation, but it was the reputations of Thurston and Kell that had the greatest longevity, the two men both being associated with the developing British clarinet tradition. It has been suggested that Kell's idiosyncratic and controversial playing style was merely a stylistic dead end;⁵⁴ but his flexible, vibrato-laden approach did live on in several iconic players of the post-war generation, including Jack Brymer and Gervase de Peyer. Nonetheless, it is Thurston who has arguably achieved the most signifi-

⁵³ Pitfield, 'British music for clarinet and piano', 75.

⁵⁴ Pitfield, 178.

cant posthumous reputation. Perhaps the comments of Sidney Fell, cited above, are the best explanation of Thurston's influence, pointing to his maturity of musical conception and his ability to control the tone and flexibility of the clarinet in order to express his concept of the long musical line, hallmarks of a clean, reserved approach that reflected the incoming musical aesthetic.

5.3.4 Bassoon

The late-twentieth-century conviction that musical expressivity must be communicated through vibrato, dynamic and tonal flexibility has led writers to suggest that British bassoonists of the inter-war years played in a largely inexpressive style, exemplified by the plain and abrupt playing of Archie Camden.⁵⁵ The dearth of solo bassoon recordings from this period has also contributed to this impression by limiting the opportunities to hear these players at work. However, as already seen in chapter three, at least one player – Ernest Hinchcliff – was capable of expressive and soloistic playing, relying primarily on temporal flexibility to shape the music in a way that reflected the prevailing style and that of his colleagues. His selective use of fast, shallow vibrato was also observed. Building on that conclusion, this section will plot the changes in bassoon playing during the 1930s to see how bassoonists reacted to the practical and aesthetic changes that surrounded them in orchestral wind sections. The players in questions are Camden (b. 1888), Richard Newton (b. 1895) and John Alexandra (b. 1891).

⁵⁵ Philip, 135–6.

Richard Newton

Table 5.13: Recordings cited featuring Richard Newton

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
New Chamber Orchestra/Kreshover	Juon	Chamber Symphony	31/12/1929	NGS 144-6
BBC SO/Boult	Beethoven	Symphony No. 8	21/07/1932	DB 1764-6
BBC SO/Boult	Mozart	Symphony No. 41	22/05/1933	DB 1966-69

The only known recording of Richard Newton prior to his joining the BBC SO is a 1929 National Gramophonic Society recording of Paul Juon's Chamber Symphony. The recording pre-dates Newton's change to the German bassoon, which took place in the summer of 1931. In this recording, which features several exposed bassoon passages, Newton plays without vibrato. His tone is also free from the 'buzz' that was associated with the French playing tradition, and indeed is a little rounder than Hinchcliff's tone on the French bassoon. There is significant dynamic shaping, particularly in the passages marked *espressivo*. The running quavers in the last movement show his ability to inject clear and musical shaping into technical passages, again by means of dynamic accentuation (track 5b_22, ex. 5.22). Though this single recording is not sufficient evidence on which to evaluate Newton's orchestral playing before he joined the BBC, it shows a player of great refinement and suggests that his reputation as one of the top players in the country was well justified.

Ex. 5.22 Juon, Chamber Symphony, Op. 27, bassoon.

Mvt. I, bars 6–8, 41–3, and 75–83

(Allegro ma non troppo)

Bsn. *mf* *espressivo* *mf*

Mvt. IV, bars 26–36 and 184–92

(Moderato)

espress. p *cresc. poco a poco* *f* *etc.* *p* *f* *etc.*

Unfortunately, the BBC SO only began making recordings twelve months before Newton stepped down as principal bassoon in favour of Camden, around eight months after he switched to playing a German system instrument. Of these recordings, made between April 1932 and May 1933, only a limited number feature Newton prominently enough to assess his playing. Most useful is a 1932 recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 8, which shows that Newton had quickly developed a fine, ringing tone and excellent control of his new instrument (track 5b_23). Again there is no trace of vibrato, but by no means could Newton's sound be described as hard or inflexible. The dynamic and tonal shaping so clearly audible in his French bassoon playing is also perceptible in the second movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 41 (track 5b_24, ex. 5.23), where it is inter-

esting to note his detached phrasing, unusual in the context of the usually sustained BBC SO style. All of Newton's recordings show him to be restrained in his use of temporal shaping, with no use of rhythmic accentuation or agogic accents and only the slightest rhythmic flexibility in expressive passages.

Ex. 5.23 Mozart, Symphony No. 41, K. 551, mvt. II, bars 87–91, flute and bassoon. Phrasing, BBC SO, Boult, 1933.

(Andante cantabile)

The musical score shows two staves: Flute (Fl.) and Bassoon (Bsn.). The tempo is marked '(Andante cantabile)'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The flute part begins with a rest, followed by a slur over a series of notes, including triplets. The bassoon part begins with a rest, followed by a slur over a series of notes, including triplets. The bassoon part is marked with a piano 'p' dynamic and the word 'detached' with an upward-pointing arrow. The score ends with 'etc'.

Archie Camden

Table 5.14: Recordings cited in relation to Archie Camden

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
Hallé/Harty/ Camden	Mozart	Bassoon Concerto	18/03/1926	L 1824-6
BBC SO/Toscanini	Sibelius	Symphony No. 2	10/06/1938	[EMI 63307]
BBC SO/Toscanini	Beethoven	Symphony No. 6	21-22/10/37	DB 3333-7
BBC SO/Boult	Brahms	Tragic Overture	30/05/1932	DB 1803-4
BBC SO/Toscanini	Brahms	Tragic Overture	25/10/1937	DB 3349-50
Thurston, Camden, Thonger et al	Beethoven	Septet Op. 20	29/09/1936	DB 3026-30

Though widely recorded and considered the leading player of his generation by the BBC, Philip suggests that Archie Camden was in fact an old-fashioned player, who played without significant dynamic or tonal shaping and whose phrasing was 'plain to the point of abruptness'. This plainness can be heard in his 1926 recording of the Mozart Bassoon Concerto, the very recording that inspired many London players to pick up a German bassoon. In this recording, Camden's articulation is rather heavy, and he often begins and ends his

phrases very bluntly, with little or no dynamic tapering. However, it is not completely devoid of expressive shaping: the slow movement in particular contains dynamic shaping, occasional tonal inflections and rhythmic accentuation (track 5b_25, ex. 5.24), and Camden certainly uses a shallow, fast vibrato on the high notes in the cadenza (track 5b_26, ex. 5.25). These features show that Camden was capable of all these expressive devices, though it also demonstrates the restraint with which he used them, and more general the difficulty the bassoon suffered in projecting nuances even in a closely-recorded solo work. The temporal shaping, which includes rhythmic anticipations and frequent lengthening of appoggiaturas, is a reserved version of that which has been observed elsewhere in 1920s recordings in the playing of Draper, Foreman, and Hinchcliff.

Ex. 5.24 Mozart, Bassoon Concerto, K. 191, mvt. II, bars 7–20, bassoon. Temporal and sonic devices, Camden, Hallé, Harty, 1926.

(Andante ma adagio)

Bsn.

Ex. 5.25 Camden, cadenza for mvt. II of Mozart, Bassoon Concerto, K. 191 [transcribed by the author]. Camden, Hallé, Harty, 1926.

Bsn.

In orchestral recordings made with the BBC SO from the years 1933–39, Camden’s phrasing remains quite plain, with little development in the sound during long notes or lyrical passages. His rendition of the bassoon solo from the second movement of Sibelius’s Second Symphony, recorded live with Toscanini in 1938 (track 5b_27), seems intent on projection and gives little indication of the articulation and dynamic markings in the score (ex. 5.26). The BBC SO’s studio recording of Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, made under Toscanini in 1935, does show some broad dynamic shaping, in the form of diminuendos at the end of phrases, and Camden also shows great skill in blending with the cello section (track 5b_28) but once again there is an apparent lack of any small-scale expressive nuances. It is possible that the poor balance and sound quality of these recordings, both of which were recorded in the rather resonant Queen’s Hall, may be masking the details of Camden’s phrasing; but on the 1937 recording of the Beethoven Septet for strings and winds made by the BBC SO’s principal players, in which Camden can be heard quite clearly, the delivery is similarly unshaped. Camden’s playing both in the slow movement solo and the variations is plain and sustained, with little or no dynamic or tonal shaping, and though the playing is not quite as blunt as in the Mozart concerto, it also lacks the rhythmic flexibility of the earlier recording (track 5b_29).

Ex. 5.26 Sibelius, Symphony No. 2, Op. 43, bassoon.

Mvt. I, bars 35–40

(Allegretto) solo (♩. = ♩)

Bsn. *mf* *p* *cresc.* *f* *dim.* *pp* etc.

Mvt. II, bars 40–55

(Tempo andante, ma rubato)

mf lugubre *dim.* *pp* *mf* *dim.* *pp* *poco f* *dim.* *pp* *mf* *dim.* *pp* etc.

This raises the question of why the BBC considered that Camden exceeded Newton in 'artistic ability', when recordings suggest that he was in fact a far plainer player than Newton. Moreover, both men demonstrate excellent ensemble playing, as well as the ability to project solo passages, and Camden does not appear to have been superior to Newton in tone. Indeed, based on the admittedly limited evidence, and bearing in mind the numerous caveats relating to tone quality in early recordings, it does appear that Newton's sound had more of the compact 'ring' usually associated with the German bassoon than Camden's did, despite the latter being more familiar with the instrument, as can be heard by comparing the two players in a short excerpt from Brahms's *Tragic Overture* (Camden, track 5b_30 and Newton, track 5b_31). Finally, though Camden's solo recordings and some orchestral passages show him to have had a prodigious technique, there is no evidence to suggest that Newton did not match him in this area as well. It is tempting to conclude, therefore, that the BBC's opinion of Camden's playing ability was influenced by external factors. These may have included his status as principal bassoon of the Hallé and Camden's high-profile recording activities, which had brought him wider fame than his colleagues in London. The situation was perhaps compounded by the fact that Richard Newton was a rather modest and gentle individual, judging by his correspondence with the BBC and Camden's own accounts of his colleague.⁵⁶ Though this made him in some ways an ideal BBC employee, as evinced by his long tenure in the BBC SO, it may have influenced the BBC to think of him as less of an 'artist' than the more flamboyant and self-confident Camden.

⁵⁶ See above, section 4.2.4: Recruitment and management of players, and Camden, *Blow by Blow*, 132.

John Alexandra

Table 5.15 Recordings cited in relation to John Alexandra

Performer	Composer	Work	Date	Cat. No.
Thurston, Goossens, Alexandra et al	Mozart	Quintet K. 452 for Piano and Winds	19/03/1928	NGS 121-3
Société Taffanel	Mozart	Quintet K. 452 for Piano and Winds	18/03/1929	D 1804-6
LSO/Coates	Prokofiev	<i>Le Pas d'Acier</i>	18/02/1932	DB 1680-1
LSO/Elgar	Elgar	<i>Flastaff</i>	11-12/11/1931 04/02/1932	DB 1621-4
LPO/Weingartner	Beethoven	Symphony No. 5	31/01/1933 02/02/1933	DX 516-9
LPO/Sargent/ Schnabel	Beethoven	Piano Concerto No. 3	17/02/1933	DB 1940-44
LPO/Weingartner	Beethoven	Symphony No. 4	13/11/1933	LX 274-7
LPO/Beecham	Bizet	<i>Suite La Jolie Fille de Perth</i>	09/04/1934	LX 317-8
LPO/Beecham	Haydn	Symphony No. 99	04/10/1835	LX 505-7
LPO/Walton	Walton	<i>Façade Suite</i>	05/03/1936	C 2836-7
LPO/Lambert	Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 5	1-2/03/1939	C 3088-92
NSO/Ronald	Tchaikovsky	Symphony No. 5	18/04/1928 19/04/1928 02/05/1928	D 1511-6

The playing of John Alexandra provides another opportunity to investigate the transition from French to German bassoon. Alexandra made both orchestral and chamber recordings on his French bassoon before changing to the German System in the mid-1930s, and the evidence discussed in chapter two suggests that he took some time to make the switch, using both bassoons interchangeably in the interim. His recordings therefore provide the opportunity to compare the two instruments in the hands of a single player and assess what impact the change of equipment had on his playing.

The earliest example of Alexandra's French-system playing is the 1928 recording of Mozart's Quintet for Piano and Winds, already considered above in relation to Goossens and Thurston. Like Newton, Alexandra eschewed vibrato. His playing in this work can

be contrasted with the bassoonist of the Société Taffanel des Instruments à Vent, who recorded the Quintet the following year (tracks 5b_32). The French player uses a near-constant shallow vibrato, and also demonstrates the somewhat 'reedy' sound that Baines ascribes to French players of the instrument, noticeably different to Alexandra's rather smoother tone (track 5b_33).

Comparison with the Société Taffanel recording also confirms Philip's suggestion that British bassoonists used less tonal and dynamic shaping than their French counterparts. Alexandra's playing is not wholly plain or unshaped, nor does it feature the bluntness of attack of Camden's Mozart Concerto recording; however, his use of expressive devices is simply more reserved than those of the French player, in keeping with the brisker interpretation of the British ensemble. Interestingly, the most pronounced instances of dynamic shaping in the bassoon part come not in the limited number of solos, but in ensemble passages (track 5b_34). These excerpts show that Alexandra, like Newton, had a flexible dynamic range; the fact that he does not employ it significantly in the solo passages of this recording could be for reasons of projection. However, it is also in keeping with the observations made throughout this thesis that dynamic shaping was not most musicians' primary expressive device during this period, at least in a recording situation. Alexandra does participate fully in the rhythmic flexibility already observed elsewhere in the recording, particularly when he is shadowing Goossens (track 5b_35), as well as demonstrating a degree of rhythmic shaping in his solo passages (track 5b_36).

These traits are also present in Alexandra's orchestral playing pre-LPO. Two recordings that he made whilst principal of the LSO show his range of tonal and dynamic flexibility in an orchestral situation, as well as his impressive command of contemporary repertoire. Excerpts from movements I and III of Prokofiev's Suite *Le Pas d'Acier* demonstrate both the rough and characterful sound a French bassoon was capable of making in its low register and the ethereal quality of the high range (track 5b_37). Elsewhere, the extended cadenzas from Elgar's *Falstaff*, which depict the drunken title character, show Alexandra's use of dynamic and tonal shaping (track 5b_38).

Judging by the surviving recordings, Alexandra continued using his French instrument throughout his first year in the LPO, 1932–33. His playing can be clearly heard on the orchestra's January 1933 recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, made with Weingartner (track 5b_39). In this recording Alexandra uses the same relatively sustained tone and strong articulation that can be heard on the Mozart Quintet recording, though there is also strong dynamic shaping throughout. Other recordings made during the LPO's first season, including Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto, show the same characteristics of phrasing by articulation and dynamic emphasis.

Recordings from the period 1933–1935 seem to document Alexandra's transition to the German bassoon. It is often very difficult to determine which instrument he is using: he may be switching bassoons during recordings sessions, or using French fingerings on the German bassoon for certain notes, which would alter their sound quality; alternatively, it could simply be that Alexandra's personal sound-concept overrode the differences between the instruments. The November 1933 recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 4 under Weingartner is an example of this ambiguity: the solos in the introduction to the first movement sound very much as though Alexandra was using a German instrument, whereas the notoriously difficult fourth-movement solo is almost certainly played on a French bassoon (track 5b_40). The opening of the *Marche* from Bizet's Suite *La Jolie Fille de Perth*, recorded in April 1934, is clearly played on Alexandra's more familiar French instrument and displays beautiful control and dynamic shaping (track 5b_41).

From the 1935–36 season onwards Alexandra appears to have settled on his German instrument, though there are still occasional instances when his tone suggests the French bassoon. There is no significant change to Alexandra's playing style as a result of the instrument change; he remains understated in his use of expressive devices, with solos simple and well-projected, and staccato passages characterful and poised. In the 1935 recording of Haydn's Symphony No. 99, his refined shaping of the phrases in the first movement matches that of his colleagues, while the trio is executed with poise and the clipped staccato typical of the LPO's house style (track 5b_42). Alexandra's playing in the 1936 recording of Walton's *Façade* suites shows him employing an extended expressive range for comic effect, including portamentos, while the deftly delivered solo in the

'Popular Song' movement suggests a growing confidence on the German bassoon (track 5b_43).

The LPO's 1939 recording of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony shows Alexandra's playing a few years later, when he had presumably become fully at home on his German instrument. The dynamic contrasts in the solos are still somewhat understated and if anything, Alexandra's phrasing is more blunt than in some earlier recordings; the playing is certainly less expressive and less technically secure than, for instance, the 1931 recording of *Falstaff*. However, there are several instances of temporal shaping in this recording, including Alexandra's matching of Goossens's rubato in the third movement (track 5b_44) and also his own solo (track 5b_45). It is also interesting to note that he observes Tchaikovsky's slurs very strictly in this passage, rather than articulating the downward intervals for technical security, as Hinchcliff did in his 1925 recording (track 5b_46) discussed in chapter three, though the result of Alexandra's diligence is a portamento which in this case is perhaps not a deliberate expressive gesture.

This survey of recordings presents a mixed picture of Alexandra's playing. He was undoubtedly an extremely polished player on the French bassoon, capable of the tonal and dynamic flexibility that Philip suggests is lacking in players of this period, though his recordings from the early 1930s do conform to Philip's suggestion that British players avoided vibrato and used a more restrained expressive range than their French counterparts. Alexandra's French bassoon recordings also illustrate some of the characteristics ascribed to the French bassoon by the writers considered in chapter two, such as its vocal flexibility and ethereal high register, but they also show how close in tone the French and German bassoons could sound. This indicates that Alexandra, and perhaps other players, were already pursuing a German sound concept before they took the decision to change instruments. The lack of perceived dynamic shaping in the later recording of Tchaikovsky's 5th Symphony could be taken as evidence of the charge that the German bassoon possessed a more homogeneous, unvarying sound and could appear fixed in dynamic; alternatively, this slight loss of flexibility could have been the result of Alexandra's continuing discomfort on the German instrument. Aside from this, it seems that there was no significant change in Alexandra's playing over the course of the 1930s. He

certainly participated in the nuanced style of the LPO through the use of dynamic and tonal shaping and some limited temporal devices, though like the other bassoonists considered, he was more reserved in this than his colleagues in the upper winds. The biggest question posed by the recorded evidence is, given that changing to the German bassoon apparently did not offer him greater scope for expressive flexibility and may indeed have limited his expressivity compared to his obvious ease and polish on the French bassoon, why did Alexandra make the decision to change instruments?

Conclusion

Comparison of these three leading bassoonists of the 1930s leads to some interesting conclusions. First, there is no strong evidence to justify Camden's reputation as the best pre-war bassoonist: if anything, both Newton and Alexandra were capable of far more flexible and nuanced playing than their colleague. Moreover, Camden, already a tonally straighter player, seems to have lost his rhythmic flexibility while working for the BBC. The BBC's determination to have Camden as their principal bassoon, even at the cost of demoting Newton, is one of the most intriguing stories to arise from the archival evidence considered in chapter four; and, as already discussed, it must have reflected extra-musical influences, as the recorded evidence shows that Newton was at least as much of an 'artist' as the man who replaced him.

It seems that all three bassoonists were more reserved in their use of expressive devices than their colleagues in either orchestra. Not only are there fewer instances of temporal shaping compared to the recordings considered in Chapter Three, but the three players considered here used less dynamic and tonal flexibility than the flautists, oboists and clarinetists they played with. This undoubtedly reflects to some degree the low status of the bassoon as a solo instrument; however, the issue of projection may also be a factor. It is possible that the difficulty of projecting in both recording and performing contexts prevented bassoonists from feeling that they could exploit the tonal and dynamic ranges of their instruments to the extent that other woodwind players did, opting instead to sustain a relatively high dynamic level.

The issue of French and German bassoons has been discussed at length, and the conclusion is that though British players were indeed able to produce a similar sound on both instruments, there was still a discernible difference between them. Changing instruments appears to have had no significant effect on the playing style of the players considered; what is more of a surprise is that these leading players sounded arguably as good on French as German, raising the question of why they made the change at all. There is also some truth in Brooke's suggestion, discussed in chapter two, that the sound-concept pursued by the inter-war generation of bassoonists increasingly leaned more to the German than the native French tradition. This is evinced by the lack of 'buzz' and smoother tone of Newton and Alexandra in their early recordings on French bassoons, already more Germanic than that of Hinchcliff, considered in chapter three. However, the rise of the German bassoon was also symptomatic of the changing musical environment; it offered greater technical safety in high-pressure situations, and the forces of competition and comparison, fed by the increased availability of orchestral recordings, pushed players to make the pragmatic decision to switch. What is ironic, in the case of Alexandra, is that he abandoned the French bassoon on which he excelled in favour of the German instrument on which for a long period he was less comfortable and technically secure simply because, in the words of Brooke, he thought it was 'the thing to do'.⁵⁷

5.4 BBC SO and LPO recordings: conclusions

Conclusions about playing styles on each individual instrument have been drawn throughout this chapter, and will not be restated here. However, it is illuminating to consider characteristics across sections. Several players, Murchie, Kell, and the three oboists discussed, have been associated with the use of significant temporal shaping, though in every case it was combined with the extensive use of sonic expressive devices. Of these, all but Kell and MacDonagh were already active as orchestral principals during the 1920s, a fact which may explain their propensity to rhythmic flexibility in particular. In the case of Kell and MacDo-

⁵⁷ Brooke, recorded interview, 21 January 1994.

nagh, their use of temporal and indeed sonic expressive devices appeared more spontaneous and improvisatory than their older colleagues, pointing to the possible emergence of a musical aesthetic where the use of expressive devices was no longer tied to specific cues in the music, such as dissonances, chromaticism and small-scale phrasing marks, but rather used as a means of communicating abstract personal expression. Despite this distinction, however, Kell can be placed alongside Murchie and Goossens as a proponent of a hyper-expressive playing style.

Other players are interesting precisely for their restraint and avoidance of using extensive soloistic or expressive shaping in their orchestral playing. Prime among these must be Thurston, with whom can be included Gerald Jackson and all of the bassoon players. However, while Thurston and Jackson were certainly proponents of the incoming modern approach to clean, literal realisation of the score and modest expression, two of the bassoon players studied may have been more effected by the practicalities of changing instrument, itself a development that reflected the emergent desire for technical finesse and security.

The influence of Léon Goossens is a theme which has run throughout this chapter and indeed this thesis. His name is constantly evoked as a symbol of a particularly flexible and soloistic playing style, and his impact on his orchestral colleagues cannot be underestimated. The bringing together of Goossens, Kell and Gilbert in Beecham's LPO wind section of the mid-1930s was indeed a significant moment in the history of British wind playing, not only for the influence that Goossens had on Kell, but also because it created the environment of creative freedom and experimentation within which Gilbert felt he could undertake the re-invention of his style. The effect of this decision on his playing is not fully evident on the pre-war recordings studied here, but the artistic context that gave rise to it certainly is.

Generalisations can also be made about marked and unmarked stylistic characteristics in this period. Though it has been observed that some players developed an overtly flexible and soloistic style within which they continued to employ many of the expressive devices heard in the recordings of the NSO in chapter three, there was nonetheless a

change in the effect of those devices. In Toscanini's recordings, where the underlying rhythmic character is very literal, temporal flexibility is used as a strongly marked device. Even within the LPO, whose players utilised significant rhythmic flexibility, the default approach to rhythmic notation was straighter than in the NSO, so that the frequent deployment of rhythmic shaping and rubato is often perceived as a marked characteristic, rather than the unmarked, habitual mode of accentuation that constitutes in the NSO's recordings. On all levels, dynamic, tonal and temporal shaping and gestures became clearer and more marked than previously.

In relation to the observations made about the two orchestras in chapter four, it can be asserted with some confidence that the principal wind players of the BBC SO and LPO were recruited in recognition of their compatibility with the different aesthetics of the two orchestras. As observed above, it is difficult to imagine Kell or Goossens operating successfully in the BBC SO, or indeed Whittaker or Thurston in the LPO. Comparison of the LPO principals during this period suggests that Beecham had a preference for wind players who could combine beauty and flexibility of tone with an overtly expressive approach to the music they played. The BBC SO, on the other hand, contained a more mixed group, ranging from the restraint of Thurston and Camden to the strong and to some extent old-fashioned style of Murchie and Whittaker, though it is telling that Murchie and Whittaker did not ultimately thrive in the BBC SO. Jackson and MacDonagh are more difficult players to locate, especially when one takes into account that after the War they both went to work for Beecham. This perhaps points to a convergence of the musical preferences of Beecham and the BBC, helped by the fact that the hyper-expressive style of the 1930s LPO did to some extent go out of fashion after the war.

This chapter has shown nothing if not the extraordinary diversity of wind playing styles in evidence during the short window of 1930–39, as the last of the players trained before the First World War entered the autumn of their careers, and a new, much younger generation, who learnt their trade in the 1920s or even in some cases within the orchestras in question, brought a fresh approach to their instruments and to the music they played. The emergence of this generation of players coincided with a revolution in the funding and management of orchestras, resulting in the establishment of two very

different models of the 'ideal orchestra' that competed to define the future of British orchestral playing. Where these streams might have led had they not been so swiftly interrupted by the coming of a Second World War is an intriguing thought indeed.

Chapter Six

Conclusions

6.1 Overview

Concluding a thesis that covers an area as broad as that tackled here presents a significant challenge. Conclusions have been drawn throughout the preceding chapters; those which relate to historical discussions of individual orchestras will not be re-stated here, but attention will be focussed on issues relating to the broader themes raised in chapters one and two and on connections between areas previously considered separately. Sections 6.2 to 6.4 look at the relationship of the recorded evidence considered in chapters three and five to the discussion of written sources in chapters one and two, under three broad headings of performance style, instrument traditions, and causes of style change. Following this, section 6.5 considers the questions posed in relation to the historiography of orchestral performance and wind playing in Britain in the twentieth century. Finally, section 6.6 looks back at the personal aims and research questions stated in the introduction and considers whether these have been resolved, as well as making suggestions for further research.

6.1.1 Summary of argument

Before embarking on the conclusion proper, it is helpful to summarise the argument of this thesis as it has progressed on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Chapter one surveyed accounts of performing style in the early twentieth century, with a particular emphasis on discussion of temporal expressive devices, which were abandoned as the century went on in favour of a more strict approach to the musical score. The roles played by recording and broadcasting in changing musical performance were also given preliminary consideration. David Patmore's suggestion that the influence of recording can be distilled to the impact of repeatability and finance was broadened to accommodate the agenda of cultural leadership brought by the BBC as a non-commercial broadcasting monopoly.

In chapter two, an evaluation of writings on instrumental traditions and schools questioned the notion that a British tradition existed for each orchestral woodwind

instrument. It was suggested that, in most cases, there was little basis for a claim that a 'school' of playing existed and that what have been referred to as 'traditions' are more often customs or in some cases invented traditions. The roles of the leading players of the 1920s and 1930s in relation to these 'traditions' were also discussed, in particular the pervasive trope of an individual performer rescuing the native 'tradition' from mediocrity. Finally, the significance was considered of the fact that most of these leading players were principals in the BBC SO and LPO.

In chapter three, a study of the activities of the New Symphony Orchestra made the case for the importance of this neglected orchestra. Evidence was presented that the orchestra was an established ensemble during the 1910s and 1920s and played a significant role in the development of orchestral recording. A survey of its recordings showed that the wind-playing style of the NSO featured significant use of temporal shaping, as well as a tendency towards beginning-oriented, articulated phrasing, an approach very different to that which became prevalent from the mid-twentieth century. The NSO's approach remained relatively constant throughout the period surveyed, with some limited reduction in the amount of temporal shaping in its later electric recordings. It was suggested that the NSO's recordings may document a coherent London wind-playing style that developed among the generation of players who trained at the RCM in the late nineteenth century and that the recordings represent a challenge to the suggestion that wind-playing style before 1930 was predominantly 'plain'. This posed the question of what happened to this style with the advent of contracted orchestras in the 1930s.

Chapter four explored the emergence of London's first two contracted orchestras in the early 1930s, showing how in each, wind players were selected and trained in accordance with a very different model of the ideal orchestra. A polarity was drawn between the two ensembles. At one end was the BBC's pursuit of expressive restraint and unaffected, 'truthful' performance, as well as higher performance standards through a system of orchestral management that reflected the paternalistic attitude of the wider corporation. At the other was Beecham's skill of selecting and managing principal players so as to channel their creativity without challenging their sense of autonomy. Despite the different approaches to player management, commonalities were observed in the way that technology was used by both orchestras' principal conductors to develop and improve playing standards and interpretation.

Finally, chapter five compared wind-playing styles in the BBC SO and LPO. The different working atmospheres of the two ensembles and the musical styles of their principal conductors were reflected in the orchestras' music-making. It was found that the two orchestras had very different approaches to matters of expressivity and that the playing of the musicians also differed on a generational basis. Furthermore, changes of principal player brought different styles into the wind sections of both orchestras. Therefore, the overall impression was one of diversity, both in the form of the contrasting styles of the BBC SO and LPO, which opposed the notion of a single emergent British orchestral style, and in the range of individual playing styles in evidence, which challenged the notion of a simple narrative of style change in wind playing.

6.2 Performing style

Performing style among orchestral wind players is the main focus of this thesis, and observations have been made throughout about the individual styles and wider trends in evidence in the particular orchestras studied, as well as possible reasons for the marked changes that took place during the period under review. The following section summarises and discusses these observations according to the topics that were first defined in chapters one and two: temporal and sonic expressive devices; articulation and phrasing; plain and hyper-expressive style; modern style; and finally the border between style and playing standard.

6.2.1 Temporal and sonic expressive devices

The recordings of the NSO show a group of orchestral wind players who made extensive use of temporal shaping in an orchestral context. The devices used included agogic accents, rhythmic unevenness, and anticipation, as well as localised rubato, often against a steady accompaniment. The complexity of the rhythmic inflections and the unanimity with which they were delivered is evidence against the suggestion that the players were simply playing inaccurately or with little regard for ensemble. Indeed, precise coordination was frequently achieved both in the context of ensemble rubato and in challenging and virtuosic passages. Furthermore, a parallel may be drawn with the use of temporal flexibility and ambiguity of phrasing by pianists during the same period,

suggesting that the approach heard on the NSO's recordings reflected the prevailing performance aesthetic, which prized flexibility and ambiguity over clarity, neatness and the articulation of musical structure.

Temporal flexibility is the primary mode of expression in the NSO's recordings. While there are numerous instances of broad tonal and dynamic shaping, these devices are less pervasive and strongly projected and more selectively applied than temporal flexibility. However, some individual players, notably the oboist identified as David Griffiths, did make extensive use of sonic expressive devices. Comparison of the NSO's late electric recordings with earlier acoustic versions of the same works does point to a diminishing use of temporal flexibility, though there is not enough evidence to draw a firm conclusion.

The playing of the BBC SO is in stark contrast to that of the NSO. The BBC SO's 'house style' was one of rhythmic strictness and expressive restraint. There was a notable absence of temporal flexibility in the playing of some of its wind players, particularly in music of the Classical period. In Romantic music some player-led flexibility was allowed by Boult, which was exploited mainly by Robert Murchie and Alex Whittaker. Under Toscanini, a basically strict and driving approach to rhythm was frequently contrasted by the use of broad rubato to emphasise specific moments in the music. This rubato was interpreted here as conductor-led, due to the presence in some cases of audible vocalising by Toscanini.

The BBC SO players generally used relatively sustained tone, and were restrained in their use of tonal and dynamic nuances. Vibrato was used by the flautists and oboists, though it was more prominent in the playing of Murchie and Whittaker than Jackson and MacDonagh. It appears that Toscanini encouraged the wind section to adopt a hyper-sustained tone and more intense vibrato, which probably relates to his insistence on a *cantando* or singing style.

The LPO wind section had a much more overtly expressive style than the BBC SO. The players made extensive use of both sonic and temporal devices, often in combination. Léon Goossens's playing in particular contained many of the elements of rhythmic flexibility found in the NSO's playing, including the use of agogic accents, rhythmic unevenness and anticipation. These devices were also used by the section as a

whole, which testifies to Goossens's influence over his younger colleagues. Comparison with recordings by the NSO and BBC SO suggests that the LPO's approach to rhythm was more controlled than the NSO's, though less literal than that of the BBC SO. Arguably, the LPO wind section's use of temporal shaping was marked rather than unmarked, that is to say it was used to show heightened expressivity rather than as the primary means of shaping each and every phrase, as in the NSO's recordings.

The LPO's use of sonic expressive devices exceeded that of the NSO and BBC SO. The wind principals had a very flexible approach to tone and used constant tonal and dynamic nuances. The three key players in the LPO wind section of the 1930s, Goossens, Kell and Gilbert, all brought or developed a flexible approach to vibrato, which was applied liberally throughout all periods of repertoire.

These three orchestral case studies do not support a simple model of stylistic change where 'plain' wind playing was replaced by a more flexible and nuanced French-influenced style, as suggested by Philip. Neither does there appear to have been a straightforward transition from a hyper-expressivity reliant on extensive temporal flexibility to a more restrained, 'modern' style where expression was primarily communicated through dynamics, tone and vibrato, though this shift is in evidence here. Rather, the recordings of the BBC SO and LPO appear to show two different streams developing in parallel: in the former, a rejection of the temporal flexibility exemplified by the NSO in favour of a restrained style featuring sustained tone and literal rhythm; in the latter, a harnessing of the expressive freedom of the NSO, which was combined with greater sonic flexibility. How these two distinct directions related to the identity of the orchestras in question will be considered further below.

6.2.2 Articulation and phrasing

Articulation in wind playing is a subject that has not been previously studied. It was not within the scope of this thesis to undertake an extensive investigation of this subject, which would be a rich area for future research, that could perhaps be assisted by the use of computer analysis. However, some general observations can be made on the basis of the limited number of players studied.

Several of the wind players considered in chapters three and five had what might be characterised as a 'blunt' or 'heavy' approach to articulation, notably Archie Camden, Arthur Foreman, and the unidentified NSO flautists; some examples of Alex Whittaker's playing also seem to show this tendency. Based on this, it might be concluded that blunt articulation was a feature of the playing of the older generation of musicians. However, it should be observed that Camden's articulation appeared less blunt in his BBC SO recordings, and Foreman displayed a greater range of articulation style on his solo recording of Schumann's *Romance No. 1* than on the orchestral recordings attributed to him. These observations are therefore inconclusive and would merit a more extensive comparative study.

Others players studied here displayed a more 'cushioned' approach to articulation, where the tongue attack is inaudible and the note onset soft and slightly delayed. The clearest example of this was the NSO oboist David Griffiths. Generally speaking, the tendency among players in the 1930s orchestras was towards delicacy of articulation, with notes and phrases started cleanly but with no audible tongue stroke. Again, there is not sufficient evidence to form a conclusion, but it appears that an increasing delicacy of articulation was part of the modernisation of wind-playing style.

The three orchestras considered showed three different approaches to phrasing. The NSO frequently phrased by the slur, with slurred groups clearly articulated and sometimes separated, and shaped in a beginning-oriented fashion. This appears to have been an unmarked feature of style, being simply the way that slurs were treated. The LPO also used articulated, beginning-oriented phrasing on a regular basis, particularly in Mozart, but more as a marked stylistic feature, and often as a response to Beecham's extensive annotations in orchestral parts. In repertoire where he used fewer markings, such as Brahms, the phrasing style is correspondingly less articulated and has a more long-line approach. Nonetheless, even in recordings where the phrasing style is predominantly legato, the LPO's use of detailed expressive dynamic and tonal shaping generally precluded a sustained phrasing style. The BBC SO, by contrast, did have a generally sustained approach, creating long-line phrases with little intermediate emphasis, both collectively and individually. This reflected the fact that at least one of the players, Frederick Thurston, was considered to be an advocate of long-line phrasing, as was the BBC's first Music Critic, Percy Scholes. The use of sustained phrasing was

intensified under Toscanini, who, as has been observed, seems to have encouraged it by demanding a *cantando* style.

The observations made here about phrasing styles appear to accord with David Milsom's suggestion that there was a movement away from small-scale articulated phrasing and towards long-line phrasing by successive generations of musicians in the early twentieth century.¹ The NSO's tendency to phrase according to slurred groups rather than a longer line is particularly interesting as it opens the possibility that the treatment of slurs as distinct phrasing groups, a practice normally associated with Baroque and Classical performance practice, may have persisted into the twentieth century. Also interesting is the lack of commonality between the BBC SO and LPO, the former embracing long-line phrasing, the latter developing articulated phrasing into a marked expressive device, further evidence of the radically different stylistic approaches taken by the two orchestras.

As was mentioned in chapter one, phrasing is a subject that has received less scholarly attention than other aspects of performing style, despite the fact that it provides the rationale for the use of expressive devices. There is important work to be done to understand more deeply how changing attitudes to musical phrasing underpinned the various performance styles and practices of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This limited consideration has gone some way to show that recorded evidence has much to contribute in this field, where written evidence is generally insubstantial.

6.2.3 Plain, hyper-expressive and modern style

As already mentioned above, section 1.2.6 considered Robert Philip's suggestion that wind playing in British orchestras during the 1920s was generally 'plain', that is lacking in tonal flexibility, dynamic shaping or vibrato in the modern sense, tendencies that only gradually began to emerge during the 1930s. The evidence considered in chapters three and five challenged this assertion, showing that these devices were used to some extent in all of the orchestras considered and that in the NSO, where sonic expressive devices were least prominent, there appears to be compensation in the form of increased

¹ See 1.2.4 Phrasing.

temporal flexibility. Thus, though some of the playing considered might be judged 'plain' according to modern expectations, which place a great emphasis on sonic flexibility, it can be argued that the players in question were putting the expressive weight on a different aspect of their playing.

Section 1.2.6 also considered Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's model of performance style history, which described soloists born during the latter part of the nineteenth century and active during the period under review as exhibiting a 'hyper-expressive' approach to performing style, an 'emotional-pictorial approach' in which 'every note is mined for its expressive potential'.² Analysis of recordings has indeed identified several wind players who conform to this model, in Charles Draper, Robert Murchie and Léon Goossens, with the further suggestion that Reginald Kell's playing represented a more modern development of this style. The playing styles of the NSO and LPO wind sections could also be described as hyper-expressive, though as discussed above there were subtle but important differences between the ways that expressive devices were deployed by the two sets of players.

Chapter one also outlined the key attributes of the performing style that was incoming during the period in question, referred to here as 'modern' style. Prime among these were a concern for fidelity to the score, the literal interpretation of notated rhythms, restraint in the use of rubato, and the use of vibrato and richness of tone as the prime carriers of expression. Other attributes identified were the use of corresponding expressive devices – for instance the combination of *diminuendo* and *ritardando* – to delineate key structural points, and a general preoccupation with articulating a unified, unambiguous interpretation.

Aspects of this style were observed in the recordings of the BBC SO and LPO, though the relationship with wind playing style is more complex. Certainly the wind section of the BBC SO displayed the qualities of strict rhythmic accuracy associated with modern style and though certain players made use of rhythmic flexibility for expressive purposes in specific situations, the rhythmic style of the BBC SO can be considered to have been literalistic. This was a considerable departure from the established practices at the time of the orchestra's creation, as seen by the study of the NSO. However, in terms of sonic

² Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and histories of performing style', 252.

expressivity, the BBC SO was not wholly modern, as none of its wind principals during the 1930s exhibited the expressive vibrato and rich tone that are associated with the modern performance style. This was a result of its recruitment of older, experienced players, whose playing styles did not encompass these emerging trends, and of the preference within the BBC SO's management for players with a relatively restrained playing style.

The LPO's wind section, by contrast, did contain players who prefigured the modern tendency to expressive vibrato and tonal richness. Goossens can be identified as a leading player in this regard, while Reginald Kell and Geoffrey Gilbert developed their playing styles in this direction while playing in the orchestra. However, as has been observed, the LPO's players did not rely solely on these expressive devices, and Goossens and Kell in particular combined sonic expressivity with a flexible approach to timing and the localised shaping of the musical line that was closely related to the hyper-expressive rather than the modern style.

Nonetheless, it can also be argued that the LPO's use of expressive devices was more modern than the NSO's. Both sonic and temporal devices were primarily deployed in order to articulate a unified interpretative concept, originating from Beecham. Though Beecham encouraged his wind principals to be autonomous and soloistic, his preparation of parts and rehearsal technique centred on establishing interpretative control such that his players' personal creativity was channeled towards the realisation of a clear, overarching musical concept. The use of expressive devices by the LPO wind section, though controlled at a micro level by the players, can thus be described as conductor-led. This contrasts with the complex and sometimes ambiguous but nonetheless exciting results of the NSO's truly player-led expressivity, which may have resulted from a less detailed level of rehearsal and preparation but also echoed the musical style of many solo and chamber music performers of the time, which contained a greater degree of complexity and ambiguity.

The modern concept of unified, conductor-led interpretation is a point of commonality between the BBC SO and LPO, despite the difference in their playing styles and indeed the interpretative approaches of their conductors. The BBC SO's restrained style of performance, uncluttered at a micro-level, was tailored towards the realisation of

the 'architectural' interpretative approach shared by Boult and Toscanini. Under Boult, expressive devices were sparingly applied to articulate key points in the music; under Toscanini, these devices were exaggerated in accordance with the conductor's own intense musical style, but the use of them was similarly specific and controlled. Even more than the LPO, therefore, the BBC SO's wind section can be said to have conformed to the modern concept of conductor-led expressivity. This helps to explain why strong-minded players such as Murchie and Whittaker, who prior to joining the BBC SO had been accustomed to a more player-led aesthetic, ultimately did not thrive in the BBC SO and were replaced by younger and more accommodating musicians.

6.2.4 Style and standard

The question of the relationship between performing style and playing standards has been reserved until now so that the conclusions relating to style could be fully enunciated. As described in the opening chapters, the playing standard of London orchestras before 1930 has long been considered to have been mediocre, as a result of lack of funding for adequate rehearsal time and the prevalence of the deputy system. It has frequently been suggested that the London orchestras were drawn from the same group of freelance players, with little distinction between their memberships. However, in chapter three, the case was put that the NSO had a distinct and relatively stable cast of players. This argument was supported by the NSO's recordings, which appear to show a continuity of wind principals on all instruments except the flute. Furthermore, the precision achieved by the NSO wind section in both virtuosic passages and passages with complex rubato, along with the unexpectedly high standard of many of the recordings, points to them having played together regularly.

It is true that the NSO's recordings do not conform to modern orchestral playing standards. However, in the sections above, lines have already been drawn between style and standard that merit re-stating here. In particular, it has been contended that an absence of sonic flexibility and vibrato does not equate to inartistic or inexpressive playing, where temporal flexibility can instead be seen to carry the expressive load, and that the player-led expressivity of the NSO, which was primarily expressed through temporal flexibility, was part of the aesthetic paradigm of the early twentieth century

and not simply the chaotic result of poor discipline and lack of rehearsal. That is not to say, when faced with instances of poor tuning, crude breath-points or slips of ensemble such as are present on the NSO's recordings, that the players might not have wanted to improve them. But, just as arguing that Beethoven might have preferred a modern Steinway to a fortepiano does not prevent us from appreciating the qualities of the older instrument, so saying that the NSO's musicians might have wanted to improve aspects of their ensemble does not negate the observations made about their playing style.

Nonetheless, though the subject of playing standard in the BBC SO and LPO has not been addressed extensively in the chapters above, it should nonetheless be noted that both orchestras were themselves capable of lapses in ensemble, intonation and finesse. While the general playing standard of these orchestras was more polished, particularly in the strings, a fact which reflects the increased amount of rehearsal time available to the orchestras, it is contended here that they did not bring the wholesale 'revolution' in playing standard that has often been suggested, as high standards were achieved on occasion during the 1920s. Rather, the contracted orchestras brought a significant improvement in the consistency of playing standards, as well as a profound shift in orchestral playing style.

6.3 Instrumental traditions

As discussed in Chapter Two, traditional accounts of the development of wind playing in Britain and elsewhere during the first half of the twentieth century are dominated by references to national schools of playing and teacher-pupil lineages. However, recent scholarship suggests that the situation was more complex than this model suggests. The study of recordings made in the subsequent chapters has a further bearing on this issue which will be summarised here in relation to each instrument in turn.

6.3.1 The flute

Discussions of the notion of a British 'flute tradition' focussed on the recent work of Abigail Dolan and Jessica Ann Raposo. Raposo evaluated the suggestion that there was a definable British 'tradition' distinguished by the use of the wooden flute, a non-vibrato sound and a 'reedy' tone in the low register, and that this style was challenged from the

1930s by the influence of the French school. Raposo suggested instead that British flautists displayed a multiplicity of styles and had been subject to foreign influences, including from France, since the nineteenth century. The fact that there was a lack of homogeneous playing style among the flautists studied in this thesis is evidence in support of Raposo's argument. In particular it seems that Robert Murchie, who has been cited by some as a representative of the British 'tradition', was in fact a very individualistic player, particularly in his hyper-expressive approach to performance.

In relation to the legend of Geoffrey Gilbert, the evidence of his early recordings with the LPO suggests that he was a stylistically atypical player even before his decision to study with René LeRoy. His 1930s recordings do not show a radical style change, but rather a development of the flexibility that was already inherent in his playing, as well as a growing mastery of French vibrato. Therefore, while his playing did undoubtedly change under the influence of LeRoy, no radical transformation is apparent during his orchestral recordings of the 1930s.

Specific stylistic characteristics not usually associated with the British 'tradition', such as tonal flexibility and the use of vibrato, have been constantly observed in the playing of the flautists considered here. These findings in part reflect the conclusions of Dolan, who observed that most British flautists used some variety of fast, shallow vibrato, though this thesis contends that British flautists made more extensive use of tonal flexibility and inflections than she suggests. Dolan's idea that two opposing tonal concepts existed in Britain in the late nineteenth century – the 'reedy' tone and the 'soft' tone – has also been echoed here, as both Gerald Jackson and Geoffrey Gilbert have been identified as possible 'soft-tone' players.

Overall, based on the evidence presented here, it can be concluded that flute players in London orchestras were a stylistically diverse group during the period in question. Though there were differences between flute playing in Britain and France, there is no strong case for a single, reedy-toned British 'tradition' that existed in direct opposition to the strongly-defined French school. It seems that this polemical narrative may instead have emerged after the Second World War, in response to the increasing international dominance of French-school flute playing.

6.3.2 The oboe

Discussion of oboe-playing traditions centred on the role of Léon Goossens and the entrenched narrative of his transformation of a supposedly mediocre British oboe-playing tradition. This thesis has attempted to show that oboe playing pre-Goossens was of a far higher standard than most accounts suggest by citing the flexible and expressive playing of Arthur Foreman and David Griffiths, who succeeded Foreman as NSO principal in the mid-1920s. Both players showed great tonal flexibility, which in Foreman's case was combined with a fast vibrato and much temporal shaping. The playing of Alex Whittaker was also considered, and it was found that in contrast to descriptions of him as representing a rival oboe tradition to Goossens, Whittaker's playing actually displayed many of the same traits as Goossens's. In particular, it is interesting to note that he made extensive use of vibrato and temporal shaping, though his tone was less flexible than that of Goossens. The final player to be considered, Terence MacDonagh, had quite a different sound and playing style to Whittaker and Goossens, and has been cited as representing the influence of the French oboe tradition. MacDonagh's recordings indeed showed no obvious conformity with the playing styles of either Whittaker or Goossens, his one-time teacher, which perhaps confirms the influence of his time studying in France. His playing was also noted for its level of technical polish and finesse.

Overall, this study of the orchestral recordings of a select group of oboists provides strong evidence against the notion of a uniformly mediocre British oboe-playing tradition that was transformed by the sole influence of Léon Goossens. The standard of playing observed in the recordings of the NSO, along with the stylistic traits noted in the playing of Alex Whittaker, make a clear case that Goossens did not emerge from a void. Though Goossens was undoubtedly a very influential player with an immediately recognisable playing style, the other players considered here were also highly accomplished oboists with individually-drawn playing styles, and they have been ill-served by the Goossens-centric narrative of British oboe-playing.

6.3.3 The clarinet

The three most prominent players in the British clarinet story in the twentieth century were identified in chapter two as Charles Draper, Frederick Thurston and Reginald Kell. Draper has been credited with breaking away from an established nineteenth-century tradition of 'dignified continence' by embracing breadth of tone and an impassioned use of rubato, both of which can clearly be heard on his orchestral recordings. Draper was Thurston's teacher, but though the two players have been described as representing a common approach, comparison of their recordings suggests that there was little of Draper's stylistic legacy in Thurston's playing, which was extremely restrained. Indeed it was Reginald Kell, who studied with Draper's nephew and pupil Haydn Draper, who carried forward Draper's flexible and soloistic approach to the instrument. However, Kell's approach to the clarinet embraced extreme tonal flexibility and a prominent use of vibrato as well as rubato; by contrast, with the exception of one of two isolated instances in Draper's early solo recordings, there is little evidence that Draper used vibrato, and his tone was firmer and more direct than Kell's.

Despite the greater stylistic continuity between Draper and Kell, it is Thurston who has been most often cited as establishing a British school of clarinet-playing that stretched into the mid twentieth-century. Based on the recordings surveyed here, he seems a less remarkable player than Draper or Kell, but it is important to consider that in the 1930s, his clean, reserved playing and intellectual approach to interpretation may indeed have seemed strikingly modern in relation to the hyper-expressive playing of Draper and Kell. In this sense, it was undoubtedly Thurston's playing that showed the direction that clarinet playing would take later in the century. That, combined with Thurston's close association with numerous British composers, perhaps did much to secure his reputation as the 'father' of the British clarinet tradition.

In summary, the recorded evidence supports the assertion that, as with the flute and oboe, no clear British clarinet 'tradition' existed in the early twentieth century. Rather, that leading players displayed markedly individual styles, all of which represented a break from the nineteenth-century approach.

6.3.4 The bassoon

The discussion of bassoon-playing in Chapter Two was dominated by the subject of the abrupt abandonment of the French-system bassoon in favour of the German instrument by players in the 1930s. Based on the available sources, the reasons for this change appeared to be the German instrument's greater reliability, a growing preference for a Germanic sound concept among younger generations of players, and preference for the German bassoon among conductors. The stylistic consequences of the change were less clear, with some sources suggesting that it made little impact on the personal styles of individual player.

Of the bassoonists studied here, one, Archie Camden, trained from the outset on the German system; one, Ernest Hinchcliff, remained loyal to the French system throughout his career; and the other two, Richard Newton and John Alexandra, changed from French to German bassoon in the early 1930s. The recorded evidence supports Robert Philip's suggestion that Camden's rather plain playing bore a close resemblance to the French-system players of his own generation, despite his use of the German bassoon; however, it was also observed that both Camden and Hinchcliff used decorative vibrato and a restrained amount of temporal shaping in their playing. In terms of British playing style on the French bassoon, comparison of Hinchcliff's playing with recordings of Newton and Alexandra on French instruments does seem to show that the younger players embraced a smoother, more Germanic tone concept even before changing instruments. Finally, though evidence of Newton and Alexandra's French-bassoon playing was limited, comparisons of their playing before and after changing instruments supports the theory that it had little effect on playing style in these cases.

Some other important points were raised by the study of bassoon playing. In chapter two it was suggested, based on the testimony of Gwydion Brooke, that the change of bassoon was a far more difficult undertaking than some written accounts suggest. Recorded evidence does seem to confirm that John Alexandra used both instruments side by side for some time during the mid-1930s, until he felt secure on the German instrument; and indeed recordings from the later 1930s suggest that he had not by that point regained the freedom of expression that was evident on his recordings on the French bassoon. Meanwhile, comparison of the playing of Richard Newton and Archie

Camden offers no explanation for why the BBC thought Camden sufficiently superior as an artist to merit demoting Newton in 1933. Indeed, based on the admittedly limited evidence, it seems that Newton was the more expressive player, and the conclusion has thus been drawn that the BBC's judgement of Camden was primarily based on his reputation.

Overall, consideration of orchestral bassoon playing during the period under review appears to show that bassoonists were more reserved in their use of expressive devices than their colleagues in the upper winds, though this may reflect the fact that the bassoon was less able to project expressivity, particularly in the sonic realm. The stylistic distinctions between players are not strongly enough drawn to facilitate a discussion about different playing styles among the players considered here, except to observe that there does seem to be a difference in sound-concept between the older players and the younger that was to some degree unrelated to their choice of instrument.

6.3.5 Instrument traditions: conclusions

Overall, consideration of the written and recorded evidence suggests that accounts of a British woodwind 'tradition' in the inter-war years are not founded in fact. Rather, though there are some shared stylistic traits among older generations of players, it seems that woodwind playing was in flux during this time. However, it is important to note that the differences between players seem to result as much from individual stylistic choices as outside influences, such as that of the French woodwind school, which was emphasised by Philip. It is likely that accounts of a British woodwind 'tradition', which are primarily found in post-World War Two writings, were the result of the desire to define national identity both before and after the war, compounded by a reaction against the growing internationalism of wind-playing styles.

6.4 Causes of Style Change

The remit of this thesis was to consider not just how style changed during the period in question but why, with specific reference to the rise of recording and broadcasting. First, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's theory of how performance style changes will be considered,

after which the discussion will turn to the effect that recording and broadcasting had on the performing style of the orchestral wind sections in question.

6.4.1 Mechanisms of style change

Leech-Wilkinson's theory of the mechanism by which performance style changes focusses on style change among elite soloists such as violinists, string players and singers. He argues that young performers develop their style based on the influence of peers and teachers and feedback from audiences and critics, honing a personal style that is 'distinctive' without being 'upsettingly new'. This helps them stand out from the crowd and emerge by a process of 'natural selection' as successful performers. After this point, there is no motivation for them to continue changing style, and indeed Leech-Wilkinson suggests that it is unusual to find significant style change in performers whose entire career has been captured on record.³

Leech-Wilkinson's theory begs the question of how this model applies to wind players of this period, who, being primarily engaged in orchestral rather than solo careers, are subject to different pressures and expectations. Some players were evidently highly adaptable, able to alter their playing style in accordance with the demands of a given conductor. Frederick Thurston's advice that players should be 'guided by the accepted canons of criticism' bears a close relation to Leech-Wilkinson's model of individuality achieved by acceptable variations on the generational norm. However, at least two of the players studied – Kell and Gilbert – went against this principal and significantly changed their playing styles after having established themselves in prestigious orchestral positions. While Gilbert's decision to alter his technique was influenced by the awareness that the record companies were showing a preference for French-school players, the primary motivation of both players was artistic, in the form of dissatisfaction with their existing playing style and the desire to find a more overtly expressive musical voice. This suggests that, while orchestral wind players during this period may have had no external motivation to change playing style, they were free to respond to the influences around them and allow their style to develop and change. Indeed, it seems that the players in question only reached musical maturity and found

³ Leech-Wilkinson, 'Recordings and histories of performance style'.

their individual 'voices' after embarking on their careers, a possibility that is not accommodated in Leech-Wilkinson's model. This is reflected by the fact that first-hand accounts by players studied here seem to emphasise the influence of peers over that of teachers. The influence of Goossens has already been noted; two of the players studied, Gerald Jackson and Reginald Kell, also cited the influence of string players on their playing.

Consideration of Leech-Wilkinson's model highlights the dangers inherent in discussing the history of performing style solely in reference to elite soloists from the worlds of vocal, violin and piano performance. The training, career and musical lives of such soloists are vastly different from those of their colleagues in orchestras, and to posit them as the representatives of the performing style of a given period is a gross misrepresentation. Moreover, such elite musicians are an inherently biased sample, as their reputations were invariably founded on promotion by record companies and concert agents, who are influenced by the demands of the musical marketplace. It is little wonder, then, that a study of such musicians led Leech-Wilkinson to propose a model where style change is limited by the degree of individuality that consumers will tolerate. By definition, few performers whose personal style diverges significantly from the generational norm will find success as elite soloists, because their brand appeal is less broad. Leech-Wilkinson's model, then, is perhaps as much an account of how the musical marketplace, and in particular the recording industry, has contributed to the narrative of style change by defining the stylistic norm for a given generation. By contrast, the study of orchestral wind players, whose career trajectories are not so reliant on the promotion of a record company, shows not only a model within which performing style is more flexible, but that the process of style change outside of the realm of elite soloists and recording artists is a more chaotic and less rigidly defined process.

6.4.2 The effect of recording and broadcasting on performance style

To borrow David Patmore's model, the impact of recording (and by extension, broadcasting) on musical activity was due to two factors: the financial means that the associated organisations brought to classical music and the change in the ontology of

musical performance brought by the repeatability of recording, which made it possible to divorce musical performance from the time and place of its utterance.

The financial impact of recording and broadcasting on London orchestral performance is relatively simple to deal with. The extent to which the NSO's recording contract with The Gramophone Company (later HMV) brought the ensemble a degree of financial stability is unknown in the absence of the relevant documents. However, the fact that the orchestra was able to make a substantial number of high-quality recordings in the 1920s, despite having significantly reduced its public concert profile, suggests that recording may have played a role in sustaining the organisation. Whatever the circumstances, the NSO's recordings appear to reflect the work of a group of virtuosic wind players who were familiar with each other's playing styles, resulting in performances marked by significant player-led small-scale flexibility.

The circumstances of the BBC SO and LPO are better known. The financial means of the BBC allowed it to establish London's first contracted, full-time orchestra and to attract leading players, including a group of experienced wind principals. These players were offered the stability of a fixed-term contract, as well as guaranteed working hours and annual holiday, a level of security that was new and unique among British orchestras. The LPO's finances were less stable than the BBC's, being founded on a portfolio of concert engagements combined with a significant recording contract, but the core players were similarly employed on a near full-time basis. In both cases, by offering favourable employment terms, the orchestras were able to secure the services of leading players and to enforce a no-deputies policy, ensuring a stability of personnel. Both orchestras were also able to fund adequate rehearsal and thus achieve a high standard of playing. The effect on wind playing style was, in the case of the BBC SO, the development of a restrained and literal style in keeping with the BBC's own aesthetic, which was moreover a significant departure from established London orchestral practices. In the case of the LPO, record-company funding enabled Beecham to create an orchestra where the creative freedom of the individual wind principals was encouraged, even as far as the radical stylistic changes undertaken by Kell and Gilbert, but by way of extensive rehearsal the players' creativity could be channeled towards the realisation of unified, conductor-led interpretations.

Given the high proportion of recording and broadcasting work undertaken by these orchestras, it would be expected that the experience of playing for the acoustic horn and recording and radio microphones would have an impact on the playing of their wind sections. There are no accounts of whether Ronald and the NSO used recordings and playbacks to improve their performances, but the standard of their recordings, combined with the fact that many of the more ambitious projects were completed over months or years, does point to the use of reflective listening to achieve the best possible result. The use of playbacks by Boult and Beecham are documented, and it seems that both conductors valued the insight given by recording technology into issues of balance and interpretation. Beecham used test pressings to help shape his recorded interpretations, a fact made possible by recording works over multiple sessions. By contrast, the BBC SO's commercial recordings were almost always done in a single day, which suggests that the broadcast process and blattnerphone playbacks were the prime source of reflection on the orchestra's playing; and, indeed, it is known that the BBC preferred to record repertoire that had recently been broadcast. There are no accounts of orchestral musicians listening to test takes during sessions, and it is assumed that feedback was mediated via the conductor; however, the performers considered here were all experienced in the studio both as soloists and orchestral players, and over time must have developed an understanding of how best to play for recording. Knowledge of the sensitivity of microphones in particular drove rising technical standards and perhaps fostered a risk-averse performing atmosphere.

In terms of specific 'phonograph effects', it was suggested in chapter one that musicians in acoustic recordings may have suppressed sonic expressive devices and exaggerated temporal shaping in compensation. However, the playing of the NSO was largely the same on their acoustic and electric recordings, with the exception of some reduction of the use of temporal shaping in works that were re-recorded in the late 1920s, a fact which stands in opposition to the hypothesis. Thus, while the limitations of acoustic recording may have discouraged the use of subtle sonic effects, it does not appear to account comprehensively for the NSO's playing style, with its emphasis of temporal shaping over sonic flexibility.

Given that the three orchestras considered were all closely involved in recording and broadcasting, one might have expected a degree of commonality in the development of

their performing style. Indeed if technology was responsible for shaping performance style during this period, one might expect to see new characteristics emerging in the NSO's playing on its electric recordings which prefigured a common stylistic approach shared by the BBC SO and LPO. The reality as documented by the recorded evidence is quite different, with all three ensembles maintaining very different musical identities. This suggests that the advent of recording and broadcasting technology did not stimulate a homogeneous response in the musicians who worked with it and that the changes in performance style that occurred during the period under review were the result of a combination of factors.

6.4.3 Other factors

In chapter four, strong differences were identified between the organisational structure and management style of the BBC SO, which existed within a hierarchical and paternalistic corporation, and that of the LPO, which was based around Thomas Beecham's shrewd management of his players. In both cases, these characteristics were reflected in the orchestras' music-making, in the sense that the LPO players were encouraged to retain their individuality and autonomy, while the BBC SO players were under constant pressure to satisfy the BBC's exacting requirements. The working atmosphere of the NSO is not documented, but as a player-run orchestra it can be assumed that it was different from both the BBC SO and LPO, and perhaps more similar to that of the LSO, which was noted for being proudly independent. If this was indeed the case, it might explain why the NSO's playing style remained constant throughout the period under review, rather than developing to accommodate the changing tastes of critics and audiences.

The changing aesthetic climate of the inter-war years can be seen by comparing the three orchestras. The NSO, it has been argued, represents the fruits of the revolution in orchestral and wind-instrument training brought by the establishment of the Royal College of Music in the late nineteenth century, and so its recordings offer an insight into wind-playing style at the turn of the twentieth century. This suggestion fits with the identification of the NSO's playing as hyper-expressive. The playing of the LPO, which in some ways represents an evolution of the NSO's style, reflects the 'expressive

inflation' that Daniel Leech-Wilkinson contends took place in the inter-war years, resulting from the combination of the temporal flexibility of the earlier generation with an increase in the use of sonic expressive devices. The LPO's relationship with Beecham is also symptomatic of the emergence during this period of the 'superstar' conductor, and like Stokowski's Philadelphia Orchestra, Koussevitzky's Boston or Furtwangler's Berlin Philharmonic, the LPO was an instrument honed to realise the musical vision of a single director.

The power of the superstar conductor can also be seen in Toscanini's relationship with the BBC SO in the second half of the 1930s, as he increasingly became their main visiting conductor. What distinguished the BBC SO from the NSO and LPO, however, was its adaptability, which was related to the BBC's fundamentally modernist approach to musical performance. In the BBC SO, the BBC created a orchestral machine deliberately devoid of individuality, where the players' creativity appears to have been suppressed in order to realise a higher musical goal. Under Boult, this goal was to serve the composers' intentions, but the orchestra was also expected to be a blank canvas on which visiting conductors, including Toscanini, could paint their musical personality.

6.5 Historiography

Throughout this thesis, questions have been raised about why certain orchestras and musicians dominate the histories of British orchestral activity and wind playing. Recordings and other evidence have been used to show that individuals and ensembles previously overlooked are in fact worthy of attention. The final section of this conclusion will address these issues and look at the way the historiography of instrumental performance in Britain during this period has been shaped.

6.5.1 Orchestral history

Chapter three was concerned with an orchestra that has, up until now, been almost entirely omitted from accounts of British orchestral history. The reasons for this relate to the activities of the NSO itself, as well as to the subsequent establishment of the BBC SO and the role of the recording industry in defining a canon of musicians and ensembles who are considered historically significant.

The NSO's relationship with Landon Ronald is probably the biggest factor in the orchestra's disappearance from history. Since 1945, as a result of the rise of the cult of the conductor, evaluations of the importance of an orchestra have been based primarily on the status of those who conducted it. Ronald himself has received no scholarly attention, despite the fact that early in the century, he was poised to be one of the most important British musicians of his generation. It would merit further investigation to establish how a figure who was active and influential in every area of musical life, frequently lauded by the contemporary press for his exciting conducting style, and considered one of the leading interpreters of Elgar's works could end up so poorly regarded by the scrutiny of history. Certainly Ronald's failure to move with the times in terms of concert programming and his association with populist forms of concert activity such as the Royal Albert Hall Sunday Afternoon Concerts have counted against him. Greater historical significance has been attributed to his contemporaries, such as Beecham and Henry Wood, because of their association with highbrow musical activity, and Ronald's own important contribution to the development of recording has as yet been overlooked. All these factors have led the NSO, whose activities and recorded legacy was bound up with Ronald, to be largely overlooked to a greater extent than if they had continued to collaborate with Beecham.

The reputation of the NSO has also been affected by the low status afforded to the forms of recording and concert activity in which it engaged. As already discussed in chapter three, the orchestra's move away from symphony concerts and towards presenting popular and ballad-type concerts in the 1920s was certainly detrimental to its reputation, and its extensive work with British composers has been largely overlooked. That the NSO's important work in the recording field has not served to redress the balance is partly due to the fact that most of its symphonic recordings were made with Ronald. These recordings became obsolete after World War II; and unlike other artists, the orchestra did not resurrect a post-war profile by making new recordings on LP, meaning that it vanished from the record catalogues and ultimately from the collective memory. Performers who remained active into the LP era had their work preserved in a high-fidelity format that remained current for an extended period of time (from the 1950s to the 1980s) and at a standard of reproduction that was not surpassed by later developments, thereby helping to ensure their survival in the record catalogues. The

emerging trend for historical re-issues, which draws primarily on recordings of the LP era, continues to reinforce a canon of 'great' performers that includes the likes of Thomas Beecham, but excludes those who ceased recording before the Second World War. Thus the NSO, Ronald and various other artists who dominated the recording catalogues of the 1920s have been largely neglected.

In chapter three, it was suggested that the climate surrounding the foundation of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1930 skewed the historical narrative. It has already been seen that the BBC deliberately set out to revolutionise British orchestral playing by creating a new flagship orchestra. When the BBC SO began touring in the mid-1930s, the BBC's own press releases set out the story of how it had 'stepped into the breach' to 'save' orchestral music in Britain from the widespread deputising and inadequate rehearsal provision that resulted from the precarious finances of the orchestras of the 1920s.⁴ The details of these press releases were frequently reproduced verbatim in the local press when the orchestra was on tour, thus fixing the achievement of the BBC SO in the collective conscious.⁵ In this way, the BBC established the role of its orchestra within a narrative of redemption from past mediocrity, an account that forms the basis of most modern scholarship.

Though it is undeniable that orchestral standards suffered across the board during the 1920s, the example of the NSO demonstrates that, contrary to the received history, high-quality playing did still occur. It shows that the accounts of London orchestral activity in the years before the Second World War have largely focussed on those who survived to continue making recordings in the post-war era and on individuals and organisations whose pre-war activity is considered sufficiently highbrow. It also reveals the extent to which the development of commercial recording has shaped the perception of history by determining which performers endure in the collective memory, and the power of the BBC as a national cultural institution to write history. By considering the playing of a lost orchestra, however, we are reminded that those who fell by the wayside can have a different but equally important version of history to tell.

⁴ See [n.a.], 'BBC Symphony Orchestra to visit Southampton, Wednesday 10 March 1937', 2–3. BBC WAC, R79/15/2, BBC SO Provincial Tour 1936–7.

⁵ For instance, 'BBC Orchestra: Edinburgh's Civic Luncheon: Service to Music', in *The Scotsman* (1 April 1937), n.p. BBC WAC, R79/15/2, BBC SO Provincial Tour 1936–7.

6.5.2 Individual wind players

The preliminary discussion of wind-playing ‘traditions’ in chapter two showed how the established narrative of wind playing in Britain centres on a small number of distinguished players, most of whom were principals of the BBC SO and LPO in the 1930s. The pervasive trope of the redemption of a mediocre tradition – already addressed above in reference to orchestral activity as a whole – was also very much in evidence here, particularly in relation to the flute and oboe. The discussion of recordings in chapters three and five has shown not only that the stylistic legacy of the nineteenth century was not as mediocre as has been suggested but also that there were many other fine players of the 1920s and 1930s who have been overlooked.

The clearest case of a player’s recorded performances failing to justify his predominance in the received history was that of Archie Camden, whose reputation completely overshadowed that of Richard Newton and John Alexandra, despite them both being very fine players. No explanation for this can be offered other than the fact that Camden was well known as a pioneer of the German bassoon in England, his reputation established in the 1920s by his recording of the Mozart bassoon concerto, confirmed in the 1930s by his appointment to the BBC SO, and spread among the general public in later years by his radio talks and published memoirs. Newton and Alexandra, by contrast, were simply orchestral bassoonists, who engaged less in forms of activity that would have brought them wider recognition.

Breadth of activity seems to have been equally important in building the reputations of other musicians considered in this thesis. It has already been suggested that Frederick Thurston’s fame reflected not just his position in the BBC SO but also his publications and his work with British composers. The association with leading composers certainly also contributed to Goossens’s position as arguably the most famous British wind player of the twentieth century. As has repeatedly been discussed, Goossens was also viewed as a transformative figure, to the extent that it is difficult to extract his personal legend from the broader history of British oboe-playing, to the disadvantage of his contemporaries.

The truth of Geoffrey Gilbert’s role in the story of British flute-playing is similarly contentious, as the audio evidence considered here strongly supports the conclusions of

Raposo that British flute-playing style was diverse and varied during the period in question. Gilbert's turn to the French style occurred neither against a prevailing background of mediocrity nor in opposition to a strongly defined British 'tradition', suggesting that once again the desire for a transformative narrative has resulted in an over-simplified version of events.

The lack of transformative influence and the absence of significant activity outside of the orchestral sphere to some extent accounts for the relative lack of recognition of other performers considered here, such as Alec Whittaker and Gerald Jackson, though arguably they were simply overshadowed by their more famous peers. In the case of the older generation of players, Murchie, Foreman, Draper and Hinchcliff, their association with an earlier style of playing and indeed their lack of post-Second World War activity makes their contribution to the development of British wind-playing style and orchestral activity seem disproportionately remote, considering they were working concurrently with players whose influence is still cited today.

It is perhaps the modernist trope of 'making it new' that is most important to understanding the construction of the British wind playing 'tradition' in the inter-war period. The fact that certain players were singled out as emblems of change – such as Gilbert and Goossens – or tradition – such as Murchie – reflects the tendency identified by Bennet Zon for British music history to be written in terms of isolated individuals, as well as the modernist need to simultaneously break with the past and yet define the place of the present in terms of a historical narrative, and the nationalist desire to define a British 'tradition'. It is perhaps for this reason that the broad variety of individual styles that appears to have made up the British wind-playing scene of the 1920s and 1930s has been reduced to a simpler story of British versus French style and the transformative influence of a handful of well-known players.

6.6 Summary

In the introduction to this thesis, the following aims were stated: to use historical orchestral recordings to gain an insight into wind-playing style in early-twentieth century London; and to understand better the aesthetic paradigm shift that appears to have taken place during the first half of the twentieth century, which makes the

performance style captured on the earliest recordings seem so alien to the modern listener. In order to achieve this, the recordings of three orchestras made during the period 1909–1939 were studied, and the organisation, training and activities of those orchestras were considered through archival and ephemeral evidence, as well as first-hand accounts by orchestral wind players active during the period in question. This summary will consider whether these aims have been fully addressed, and what possible areas of further research have arisen as a result.

The findings of this study in relation to wind-playing style have been summarised extensively above. What is most revealing is that the recordings of the NSO, BBC SO and LPO document a greater diversity of playing styles than anticipated, both between the orchestras and among the individual principal players. The impact of recording and broadcasting might have been expected to have fuelled a straightforward raising of standards and the emergence of a more modern performance style. In fact, the picture painted by the evidence is more complex, showing that while the financial and technological resources of recording and broadcasting permitted the creation of two orchestras that reflected the desire for a greater degree of unity and clarity in orchestral performance, they both maintained strongly contrasting musical identities. A natural extension of this study would be to investigate the playing style and organisation of the other orchestras active during the period, the LSO and Queen's Hall Orchestra, in order to see if the playing of the NSO was representative of or different from the wider orchestral scene of the 1910s and 1920s; and to see how the LSO reacted to the challenge presented by the BBC SO and LPO in the 1930s.

So extensive were the musical and cultural upheavals that took place during the period in question that a full consideration of the reasons for the changes in performance style that have been observed could fill one if not several theses. This study has concentrated on the impact of recording and broadcasting on the activities and playing style of a small group of orchestras in a limited locality, leading to the suggestion that technology was a direct and indirect cause of change in orchestral performance. Importantly, recording and broadcasting were also tools for the realisation of personal artistic objectives, as in the case of Beecham, and for the furtherance of a modernist aesthetic agenda, as in the case of the BBC.

What remains to be undertaken is a fuller exploration of the origins of this aesthetic agenda. An in-depth study of the reception of orchestral performance and recordings

during the period in question would be the logical means to pursue this, to discover whether the turn towards the modern aesthetic was the result of a unanimous desire for greater clarity and restraint in musical performance, or whether this view triumphed over other, opposing schools of thought. The comparison of the BBC SO and LPO, two orchestras that represented the twin poles of objectivity and hyper-expressivity, suggests the latter.

It is appropriate here to evaluate the methodology employed in this thesis. The approach chosen of studying the performance style of individual orchestral musicians has offered a different perspective on the subject than studies based on elite soloists. As well as providing a greater quantity of material for study than would have been the case had the project been limited to solo recordings, the study of orchestral recordings brought to attention the playing of various musicians who were previously almost unknown and gave a broader view of the work of wind players who are primarily known for their solo recordings. The result was to show the range of playing styles in evidence in London during the period, as well as providing an account of playing style and stylistic change that was not limited to the work of prominent solo recording artists. The results, in relation to particular instruments, may be inconclusive, but this perhaps reflects the fact that the subjects were not filtered according to the criteria of the recording industry. Suggestions for further research in this area might include a turn back to the available solo recordings, to evaluate them in light of the evidence accumulated from orchestral recordings. In time, advances in computer analysis software may also make it possible to isolate single instruments on orchestral recordings, to analyse more empirically the use of sonic and temporal expressive devices by orchestral wind players.

Another important aspect of this study was the comparison of audio evidence with written accounts of orchestral history and style change. This showed that, in many cases, the established narrative was not a full or indeed an accurate account of the abilities of wind players of the period. Some explanations of this have been offered, among which the influence of the BBC and the record industry is of particular interest, alongside the modernist desire for a break with the past. Meanwhile, the use of archival evidence and musicians' memoirs enabled a contextual interpretation of the recorded evidence, by providing an insight into the working atmospheres of the BBC SO and LPO. The inaccessibility of the EMI archives at this time was regrettable, and it is hoped that this

situation will be rectified in the future, permitting an in-depth archival study of the NSO's recording activity.

In the introduction, the desire was stated to provide an account of wind-playing style on early orchestra recordings that would be of interest and use to performing musicians. It is hoped that, by showing how the foundations of modern playing style were established in the 1930s and how certain institutions shaped both tastes and the historical narrative, this thesis has gone some way to challenging the notion that order, restraint and fidelity to the score are the universal standards by which musical performance should be judged. In the recordings of the NSO, it is possible to see the playing of musicians who were trained in a different expressive paradigm, with different priorities. These recordings show that that which is personal, subjective and spontaneous has not always been taboo in musical performance. The loss of this style in favour of a more polished and controlled approach, as seen in the recordings of the BBC SO and LPO, was welcomed by some but not by all. Writing in 1934, Basil Maine lamented the new intensity and seriousness of orchestral concerts, which attracted audiences 'consisting for the most part of hawk-eyed analysts of music which has first been masticated for them by innumerable Masters of Appreciation and then is played by an orchestral machine'.⁶ Recordings from the period before 1930 are a window into an era when performers were still permitted to act as autonomous creative artists, rather than servants of the composer. Perhaps a truly historically-informed performance would be one where the performers took back their right to interpret. Indeed, in the current climate where classical music has to fight for its right to exist, perhaps the time for restraint and objectivity is past.

⁶ Maine, 'Unmusical Audiences', 587.

Appendix:
Woodwind sections of the NSO, BBC SO and LPO, 1900-1940

Table A.1: NSO Wind Section personnel, 1907–1932

Date	Venue	1st Flute	Flutes	1st Oboe	Oboes	1st Clarinet	Clarinets	1st Bassoon	Bassoons
22/11/07	Queen's Hall	Eli Hudson	Gilbert Barton Charles Souper George Ackroyd	Arthur Foreman	Herbert Goldie Gordon Foreman W. H. Shepley	Charles Draper	J. Hughes Haydn Draper E.J. Augarde	Walter Cordwell	P. Langdale H. C. Thornton W. Conrad
3/12/07	Queen's Hall	Eli Hudson	Gilbert Barton Arthur Ackroyd	Arthur Foreman	Herbert Goldie W. H. Shepley H. Stanislaus	Charles Draper	J. Hughes Haydn Draper Augarde	Walter Cordwell	P. Langdale W. Conrad
14/04/08	Queen's Hall	Eli Hudson	Gilbert Barton Arthur Ackroyd	Arthur Foreman	Gordon Foreman W.H. Shepley	Charles Draper	Haydn Draper Robert Angus J. Hughes	Walter Cordwell	P. Langdale H.C. Thornton W. Conrad
02/12/09	Queen's Hall	Eli Hudson	Gilbert Barton Robert Murchie Charles Steiner	Arthur Foreman	Horace Halstead Herbert Goldie	Charles Draper	Haydn Draper Robert Angus	Walter Cordwell	E.J. Cox W.H. Foote
08/06/10	Queen's Hall	Eli Hudson Gilbert Barton	Robert Murchie Charles Steiner	Arthur Foreman	Horace Halstead Herbert Goldie	Charles Draper	Haydn Draper Robert Angus	Walter Cordwell	E.J. Cox W.H. Foote
31/10/12	Queen's Hall	Gilbert Barton	J. C. Steiner GP Monk Robert Murchie	Arthur Foreman	Horace Halstead Walter Hinchcliffe	Charles Draper	Haydn Draper Robert Angus	Walter Cordwell	E.W. Hinchcliff W.H. Foote
12/04/20	Queen's Hall	Gilbert Barton	Gordon Walker J. C. Stainer	Arthur Foreman	Horace Halstead A.C. Horton	Charles Draper	Louis Booth Daniel Craig	Ernest Hinchcliff	Frederick Wood A. Penn P. Langdale
15/12/23	Royal Albert Hall	Gilbert Barton	GP Monk J. C. Stainer	Arthur Foreman	Horace Halstead A.C. Horton	Charles Draper	Louis Booth Daniel Craig	Ernest Hinchcliff	Frederick Wood A. Penn
21/01/26	Queen's Hall	Gilbert Barton	G.P. Monk J. C. Stainer	David Griffiths	Horace Halstead A.C. Horton	Charles Draper	Louis Booth Daniel Craig	Frederick Wood	Ernest Hinchcliff A. Penn

Based on concert programmes, RCM CPH, London-Halls; Queen's Hall, 1905–1939; and RAH Archives, event database.

Table A.1 continued

Date	Venue	1st Flute	Flutes	1st Oboe	Oboes	1st Clarinet	Clarinets	1st Bassoon	Bassoons
09/10/30	Royal Albert Hall	Bruce McLay	Bruce McLay	McCarthy	J.R. Brand	Charles Draper	Louis Booth	Frederick Wood	A. Penn
20/11/30	Royal Albert Hall	Arthur Gleghorn	Bruce McLay Willfred Smith	Alec Whittaker	James McDonagh	Ralph Clark	Louis Booth	Ernest Hinchcliff	F. Wood A Penn Paul Draper
3/01/31	Royal Albert Hall	Arthur Gleghorn	Bruce McLay	John McCarthy	A.C. Horton	Charles Draper	Louis Booth	Frederick Wood	A. Penn
31/01/31	Royal Albert Hall	Arthur Gleghorn	Bruce McLay Gerald Jackson	John McCarthy	David Griffiths	Charles Draper	Louis Booth	Charles Draper	A. Penn
26/02/31	Royal Albert Hall	Gordon Walker	Bruce McLay Gilbert Barton	Goossens	John Black David Griffiths	Charles Draper	J. Maggs Daniel Craig	Charles Draper	A Alexandra A. Penn
19/03/31	Royal Albert Hall	Gordon Walker	Bruce McLay Gilbert Barton	Halstead	John Black	Charles Draper	J. Maggs Daniel Craig	Paul Draper	A. Penn
3/04/31	Royal Albert Hall	Arthur Gleghorn	Bruce McLay	McCarthy	A.C. Horton	Charles Draper	Louis Booth	Frederick Wood	A. Penn
24/10/31	Royal Albert Hall	Arthur Gleghorn	Bruce McLay	McCarthy	A.C. Horton	Charles Draper	Louis Booth	Paul Draper	Frederick Wood
28/11/31	Royal Albert Hall	Arthur Gleghorn	Bruce McLay	McCarthy	A.C. Horton	Charles Draper	Louis Booth	Paul Draper	Frederick Wood A. Penn
02/01/32	Royal Albert Hall	Arthur Gleghorn	Gerald Jackson	McCarthy	A.C. Horton	Charles Draper	Louis Booth	Paul Draper	Frederick Wood
24/01/32	Royal Albert Hall	Arthur Gleghorn	Gerald Jackson Bruce McLay	McCarthy	Titherington A.C. Horton	Charles Draper	Louis Booth Daniel Craig	Paul Draper	Frederick Wood
25/03/32	Royal Albert Hall	Arthur Gleghorn	Bruce McLay	McCarthy	A.C. Horton	Charles Draper	Louis Booth	Paul Draper	Frederick Wood

Table A.2: BBC Wireless Orchestra wind section personnel, 1923–1930

Date	Flute	Flutes	Oboe	OBoes	Clarinet	Clarinets	Bassoon	Bassoons
22/12/1922	Albert Fransella		T. Whitley		Hurd			
10/1923	Frank Almgill		John Field		Frederick Thurston	Haydn Draper	Ernest Hinchcliff	Thomas Dickie
1924	Frank Almgill		John Field		Frederick Thurston	Haydn Draper	Ernest Hinchcliff	Thomas Dickie
1926	Frank Almgill	Gordon Walker Robert Murchie	John Field	W Hinchcliff	Frederick Thurston	Charles Draper	Ernest Hinchcliff	Thomas Dickie
1927	Frank Almgill		John Field		Frederick Thurston	Charles Draper	Ernest Hinchcliff	Thomas Dickie
1929-30	Robert Murchie	Edward Walker	Terence McDonagh	David Griffiths	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clarke	Richard Newton	A. E. Wilson

Based on 'London Orchestras' [undated, c. 1939]. BBC WAC, R29/193, Orchestra General Orchestral Music, 1937–39.

Table A.3: BBC SO wind section personnel, 1930–1939

Date	1st Flute	Flutes	1st Oboe	Oboes	1st Clarinet	Clarinets	1st Bassoon	Bassoons
1929	Robert Murchie	Edward Walker Arthur Gleghorn	Terence MacDonagh	David Griffiths James MacDonagh	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clarke, Walter Lear	Richard Newton	A. E. Wilson A. Alexandra
1930	Robert Murchie	Frank Almgill Edward Walker Charles Stainer	Alec Whittaker	Terence MacDonagh, Jesse Pantling, John H. Field	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clark Anissim Tchaikov William Lear Pat Whelan	Richard Newton	A. E. Wilson Ernest Hinchcliff Thomas Dickie
1931	Robert Murchie	Frank Almgill Edward Walker Charles Stainer Keith Whittaker	Alec Whittaker	Terence MacDonagh, Jesse Pantling, John H. Field	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clark Anissim Tchaikov William Lear Pat Whelan	Richard Newton	A. E. Wilson Ernest Hinchcliff Thomas Dickie
1932	Robert Murchie	Frank Almgill Lambert Flack Keith Whittaker Edward Walker	Alec Whittaker	Terence MacDonagh, Jesse Pantling, John H. Field Helen Gaskell	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clark Anissim Tchaikov William Lear Pat Whelan	Richard Newton	A. E. Wilson Ernest Hinchcliff Norman Fawcett Thomas Dickie
1933	Robert Murchie	Frank Almgill Lambert Flack Keith Whittaker Edward Walker	Alec Whittaker	Terence MacDonagh, Jesse Pantling, John H. Field Helen Gaskell	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clark Anissim Tchaikov William Lear Pat Whelan	Archie Camden	Richard Newton A. E. Wilson Norman Fawcett Ernest Hinchcliff
1934	Robert Murchie	Frank Almgill Lambert Flack Keith Whittaker Edward Walker	Alec Whittaker	Terence MacDonagh, Jesse Pantling, John H. Field Helen Gaskell	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clark Anissim Tchaikov William Lear Pat Whelan	Archie Camden	Richard Newton A. E. Wilson Norman Fawcett Ernest Hinchcliff

Based on Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*; BL, *BBC Symphony Orchestra 1929-39* [programmes of concerts], WP.192; and BBC WAC, R21/18/1, BBC SO Recording Contracts January-June 1935, and R29/205, Orchestra General, Permanent Orchestra, Contracts (1929-32).

Table A.3 continued

Date	1st Flute	Flutes	1st Oboe	Oboes	1st Clarinet	Clarinets	1st Bassoon	Bassoons
1935	Robert Murchie	Frank Almgill Lambert Flack Keith Whittaker Edward Walker	Alec Whittaker	Terence MacDonagh, Jesse Pantling, John H. Field Helen Gaskell	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clark Anissim Tchaikov William Lear Pat Whelan	Archie Camden	Richard Newton A.E. Wilson Norman Fawcett Ernest Hinchcliff
1936	Robert Murchie	Frank Almgill Lambert Flack Keith Whittaker Edward Walker	Alec Whittaker	Terence MacDonagh, Jesse Pantling, John H. Field Helen Gaskell	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clark Anissim Tchaikov William Lear Pat Whelan	Archie Camden	Richard Newton A.E. Wilson Norman Fawcett Ernest Hinchcliff
1937	Robert Murchie	Frank Almgill Lambert Flack Keith Whittaker Edward Walker J. Slater	Terence MacDonagh	Jesse Pantling, John H. Field Helen Gaskell David John	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clark Anissim Tchaikov William Lear Pat Whelan	Archie Camden	Richard Newton A.E. Wilson Norman Fawcett Ernest Hinchcliff
1938	Gerald Jackson	Frank Almgill Lambert Flack Robert Boddington J. Slater	Terence MacDonagh	Jesse Pantling, John H. Field Helen Gaskell David John	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clark Anissim Tchaikov William Lear Pat Whelan	Archie Camden	Richard Newton A.E. Wilson Norman Fawcett Ernest Hinchcliff
1939	Gerald Jackson	Frank Almgill Lambert Flack Robert Boddington J. Slater	Terence MacDonagh	Jesse Pantling, John H. Field Helen Gaskell Horace Green	Frederick Thurston	Ralph Clark Anissim Tchaikov William Lear Pat Whelan	Archie Camden	Richard Newton A.E. Wilson Norman Fawcett Ernest Hinchcliff

Table A.4: LPO Wind Section personnel, 1932–1940

Date	1st Flute	Flutes	1st Oboe	Oboes	1st Clarinet	Clarinets	1st Bassoon	Bassoons
1932	Gerald Jackson	Percy Whitaker John Francis Leonard Hopkinson	Léon Goossens	H. Lyons William Whitaker Horace Green	Reginald Kell	Leo Collins E.J. Augarde A.G. Stuteley	John Alexandra	Gwydion Brooke George Vintner A. Alexandra
1933	Leonard Hopkinson	Percy Whitaker Geoffrey Gilbert	Léon Goossens	Horace Halstead Horace Green	Reginald Kell	Leo Collins E.J. Augarde	John Alexandra	Gwydion Brooke Jason Lewkowitzsch
1934	Leonard Hopkinson	James Hopkinson William Smith Percy Whitaker	Léon Goossens	Horace Halstead William Whitaker Horace Green	Reginald Kell	Leo Collins Frank Hughes E.J. Augarde	John Alexandra	Gwydion Brooke George Vintner Jason Lewkowitzsch
1935	Geoffrey Gilbert	Percy Whitaker Arthur Ackroyd	Léon Goossens	Horace Halstead Horace Green	Reginald Kell	Leo Collins Richard Temple-Savage	John Alexandra	George Alexandra Anthony Baines
1936	Geoffrey Gilbert	Percy Whitaker William Smith Arthur Ackroyd	Léon Goossens	Horace Halstead William Whitaker Horace Green	Reginald Kell	Leo Collins Frank Hughes Richard Temple-Savage	John Alexandra	George Alexandra Stanley Downing Anthony Baines
1937	Geoffrey Gilbert	Percy Whitaker William Smith Arthur Ackroyd	Léon Goossens	Horace Halstead William Whitaker John Cruft	Bernard Walton	Edward Augarde Frank Hughes Richard Temple-Savage	John Alexandra	George Alexandra Stanley Downing Anthony Baines
1938	Geoffrey Gilbert	Percy Whitaker William Smith Arthur Ackroyd	Léon Goossens	Peter Graeme William Whitaker Horace Green	Bernard Walton	Edward Augarde Frank Hughes Richard Temple-Savage	John Alexandra	George Alexandra Anthony Baines
1939	Geoffrey Gilbert	Percy Whitaker Arthur Ackroyd	Léon Goossens	Horace Halstead Peter Graeme Peter Newbury	Bernard Walton	Edward Augarde Richard Temple-Savage	John Alexandra	George Alexandra Anthony Baines
1940	Geoffrey Gilbert	Percy Whitaker Arthur Ackroyd	Horace Halstead John Black	Peter Graeme Peter Newbury	Bernard Walton	Edward Augarde Richard Temple-Savage	John Alexandra	George Alexandra Anthony Baines

Based on Pirouet, *Heard Melodies are Sweet*; Russell, *Philharmonic Decade*; and concert programmes, RCM CPH, London-Halls, Queen's Hall, 1932–1939.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in the main text:

BBC	British Broadcasting Company (1922–6) or British Broadcasting Corporation (from 1927)
BBC SO	BBC Symphony Orchestra
BBC WO	BBC Wireless Orchestra, BBC Wireless Symphony Orchestra (pre-1930).
BBC WAC	BBC Written Archives Centre
BLASR	British Library Archival Sound Recordings
CHARM	Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music
HMV	His Master's Voice
LPO	London Philharmonic Orchestra
LSO	London Symphony Orchestra
MP	Music Preserved
NSO	New Symphony Orchestra (known as Royal Albert Hall Orchestra between 1915 and 1928)
ORPS	Orchestra of the Royal Philharmonic Society
QHO	Queen's Hall Orchestra, New Queen's Hall Orchestra
RAH	Royal Albert Hall
RAM	Royal Academy of Music
RCM	Royal College of Music, London
RCM CPH	Royal College of Music, Centre for Performance History.
TGC	The Gramophone Company

Annotations used in musical examples:

Most annotations to the musical examples are fully written out. However, the following symbols and abbreviations are used for common features:

ens.—| Notable feature of ensemble playing

----- Thomas Beecham's markings

—→ Acceleration/rushing

~~~~~        Vibrato

A              Anticipation

ag.            Agogic accent

T.I.            Tonal inflection



## Resource List

### Archival material

#### BBC Written Archives Centre

##### *Radio files:*

- R21/18/1 BBC SO Recording Contracts January–June 1935.
- R29/57/1 Orchestra General, BBC Salon Orchestra, series 1, file 1, 1939.
- R29/59/2 Orchestra General, BBC Salon Orchestra, Members K–W, 1939–42.
- R29/80/1 Orchestra General, BBC SO Contacts 1933–5.
- R29/109/1 Orchestra General, BBC SO Players' Committee.
- R29/192 Orchestra General, Orchestral Meetings 1929–30.
- R29/193 Orchestra General, Orchestral Music 1937–9.
- R29/194/1 Orchestra General, Orchestral Policy, file 1 1933–9.
- R29/204 Orchestra General, Permanent Orchestra, Committees, 1929
- R29/205 Orchestra General, Permanent Orchestra, Contracts, 1929–32.
- R29/209 Orchestra General, Recruitment of orchestra players, 1939–51.
- R46/69/1 and 2 Recording General, Recording correspondence, 1932–9.
- R46/71/1 Recording General, BBC SO Contracts 1937–9.
- R49/38 Staff Policy, Auditions 1927–37.
- R49/48/1 Staff Policy, Payment of artists, , 1922–37.
- R79/12/2 Concert Organisers' Office, BBC SO, London Music Festival 1938.
- R79/14/1 Concert Organisers' Office, Finance, BBC SO, Provincial Concerts 1937–8.
- R79/15/2 Concert Organisers' Office, Finance, BBC SO Provincial Tour 1936–7.
- R79/19/1–3 Concert Organisers' Office, BBC SO, Symphony Concerts 1937–9.

##### *Radio contributor files:*

- RCONT1: John Alexandra, file 1 (1931–62).
- RCONT1: Ernest Ansermet.
- RCONT1: Archie Camden, file 2 (1946–9).
- RCONT1: Helen Gaskell, file 1 (1931–62).
- RCONT1: Geoffrey Gilbert, file 1 (1937–49).
- RCONT1: Léon Goossens (1932–42).
- RCONT1: Serge Koussevitzky, file 1 (1939–62).

RCONT1: Walter Lear, file 1 (1934–55).

RCONT1: Terence MacDonagh, file 1 (1931–62)

RCONT1: Richard Newton (1928–62).

RCONT1: Hermann Scherchen.

RCONT1: Igor Stravinsky, file 1a (1931–33).

RCONT1: Arturo Toscanini.

RCONT1: Gordon Walker (1941–62).

RCONT1: Bruno Walter.

RCONT1: Bernard Walton, file 1 (1940–62).

RCONT1: Alec Whittaker, file 1 (1932–62).

#### *Talk Transcripts:*

Reel 458: Percy Scholes:

‘Weekly Musical Criticism’ No. 7, 26 July 1923.

‘Weekly Musical Criticism’ No. 25, 20 November 1923.

‘Weekly Musical Criticism’, 17 April 1924.

‘Weekly Musical Criticism’ No. 25, 20 November 1923.

‘Weekly Musical Criticism’, 7 February 1924.

#### **British Library**

##### *EMI microfilm collection*

Reels 361. HMV Artist Sheets, ‘New Symphony Orchestra’, and ‘Royal Albert Hall Orchestra’.

Reel 376 and 378. HMV Recording Sheets, 1921–1954. ‘New Symphony Orchestra and ‘Royal Albert Hall Orchestra’.

Reel 364. HMV Artist Sheets, ‘BBC Symphony Orchestra’.

Reel 373. HMV Recording Sheets, 1921–1954, ‘London Philharmonic Orchestra’.

#### **EMI Archives**

Subject Index: EMI Board Minutes, EMI Archives, Hayes.

Artist File: Landon Ronald.

Artist Sheets, ‘Royal Albert Hall Orchestra’ and ‘New Symphony Orchestra’. EMI Archives, Hayes.

**RCM Archives**

RCM Student Registers, 'Scholars', Volumes 1-2, and 'Students', Volumes 4-7.

**Thomas Beecham Music Library**

Beethoven, Ludwig van. Symphony No. 2, Op. 36. Score, PAM 257, and parts, ORCH 18 and 19.

\_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 4, Op. 60. Score, PAM 258 and Q 35, and parts, ORCH 21.

\_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 5, Op. 67. Score, Q 36, and parts, ORCH 22.

Bizet, Georges. *La Jolie Fille de Perth. Scènes Bohémiennes*. Score, PAM 276 and parts, ORCH 36.

\_\_\_\_ Symphony in C major. Score, Q54, and parts, ORCH 37.

Brahms, Johannes. Symphony No. 2, Op. 73. Score, Q 65, and parts, ORCH 43.

\_\_\_\_ *Tragic Overture*. Score, PAM 295, and parts, ORCH 46.

Debussy, Claude. *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. Score, Q 80, and parts, ORCH 57.

Handel, George Frideric, arr. Thomas Beecham. *The Origin of Design Suite*. Scores, PAM 770-3 and Q158-62, and parts, ORCH 360-2.

Haydn, Joseph. Symphony No. 99, Hob. I:99. Score, BEECHAM 21, and parts, ORCH 97.

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. Symphony No. 36, K. 425. Score, PAM 497, and parts, ORCH 168-170.

\_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 39, K. 543. Score, PAM 500; parts, ORCH 173 and BEECHAM 101.

\_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 41, K. 551. Score, PAM 501-2 and Q 253 and 253a, and parts, ORCH 178.

Rossini, Gioacchino. *Guillaume Tell Overture*. Score, PAM 531, and parts, ORCH 201-2.

\_\_\_\_ *La Scala di Seta Overture*. Score, PAM 791, and parts, ORCH 398.

**Concert Programmes**

*For the NSO:*

RCM CPH, London - Halls: Queen's Hall, 1905-1939. Programmes for Beecham Symphony Concerts (1908-9), NSO Symphony Concerts (1909-14) and special concerts.

RCM CPH, London - Halls: Royal Albert Hall, 1909-1929. Programmes for RAH Sunday Concerts and Royal Choral Society Concerts.

RAH Archive, computer database of performances and ephemera: records for 'New Symphony Orchestra' and 'Royal Albert Hall Orchestra'. Programmes and orchestra lists for RAH Sunday Concerts and Royal Choral Society Concerts.

*For the BBC SO:*

*BBC Symphony Orchestra 1929–39* [concert programmes, bound volume], BL, WP.192.

RCM CPH, London – Halls: Queen's Hall, 1930–1939. Programmes and prospectuses for BBC Symphony Orchestra concert series, and London Musical Festivals.

*For the LPO:*

RCM CPH, London – Halls: Queen's Hall, 1932–1939. Programmes for concerts of the Royal Philharmonic Society, the Courtauld-Sargent Concerts, and the Beecham Sunday Concerts.

*For other ensembles (in date order):*

*RCM Orchestra Concerts. 1888–1900*, multiple venues [bound volumes]. RCM Library.

*Queen's Hall Orchestra Saturday Symphony Concert. Queen's Hall, 6 October 1895.*

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## Recordings

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\_\_\_\_\_ *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 8 September 1922. 78rpm disc, HMV D 130.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 24 September 1925. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1128.

Delibes, Leo. *Sylvia: Cortège du Bacchus*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 1913. 78rpm disc, HMV 0845.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Sylvia: Pizzicato*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 3 February 1913. 78rpm disc, HMV D 161.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Sylvia: Prelude des Chasseresses*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 27 May 1916. 78rpm disc, HMV D 134.

Delius, Frederick. *Brigg Fair*. NSO, Eugene Goossens, cond. Recorded 31 December 1923. 78rpm disc, HMV D 799-800.

\_\_\_\_\_ *A Song Before Sunrise*. NSO, John Barbirolli, cond. Recorded 7 June 1929. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1697.

\_\_\_\_\_ *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*. NSO, Eugene Goossens, cond. Recorded 15 January 1923. 78rpm disc, HMV D 800.

\_\_\_\_\_ 'The Walk to the Paradise Garden' from *A Village Romeo and Juliet*. NSO, Geoffrey Toye, cond. Recorded 13 September 1929. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1738.

Dukas, Paul. *L'apprenti sorcier*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 15 November 1919. 78rpm disc, HMV D 461.

Dvořák, Antonín. *Symphony No. 9, Op. 95, 'From the New World'*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 1 November 1919, 7 October 1921, 29 November 1921, and 6 December 1922. HMV D 537, D 587, D 937, D 613.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Symphony No. 9, Op. 95, 'From the New World'*. NSO Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 21 January 1927. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1250-4.

Gardiner, Balfour. *Shepherd Fennel's Dance*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 8 September 1921. 78rpm disc, D 159.

German, Edward. *Henry VIII Dances*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 22 May 1915. 78rpm disc, HMV D 143.



- Gounod, Charles. 'Judex' from *Mors et Vita*. NSO, Laurence Collingwood, cond. Recorded 9 May 1930. 78rpm disc, HMV C 1969.
- Grainger, Percy. *Shepherd's Hey*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 22 May 1915. 78rpm disc, HMV D 159.
- Grieg, Edvard. *Lyrische Suite*, Op. 54. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. 10 and 13 November 1925. 78rpm disc, HMV 1081-2.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1, Op. 46: Anitra's Dance. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 20 June 1922. 78rpm disc, HMV D 156.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1, Op. 46: Death of Ase. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 8 September 1921. 78rpm disc, HMV D 156.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1, Op. 46: Morning. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 27 March 1923. 78rpm disc, HMV D 156.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1, Op. 46: Morning. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 11 December 1911. 78rpm disc, HMV D 156.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1, Op. 46: In the Hall of the Mountain King. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 18 November 1911. 78rpm disc, HMV D 157.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Peer Gynt* Suite No. 1, Op. 46: In the Hall of the Mountain King. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 29 May 1923. 78rpm disc, HMV D 157.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Piano Concerto, Op. 16. Arthur de Greef, piano, NSO, Landon Ronald cond. Recorded 19 April 1921. 78rpm disc, D 551-2.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Piano Concerto, Op. 16. Arthur de Greef, piano, NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 19 January 1927. 78rpm disc, D 1237-40.
- Hérold, Ferdinand. *Zampa* Overture. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 25 August 1916. 78rpm disc, HMV 2-0571 and 2-0572.
- Haydn, Joseph. Sinfonia Concertante, Hob. I:105. Myrtil Morel, oboe, Fernand Oubradous, bassoon, Roland Charmy, violin, André Navarra, cello, anonymous orchestra, Charles Munch, cond. Recorded October 1938. 78rpm, Oiseau-Lyre 83-5.
- Järnefeld, Armas. *Praeludium*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 18 September 1915. 78rpm disc, HMV D 154.
- Liszt, Franz. *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*, S.244/2. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 20 October 1911. 78rpm disc, HMV 0726.

- \_\_\_\_ *Hungarian Fantasia*, S. 123. Arthur de Greef, piano, NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 27 October 1920. 78rpm disc, HMV D 523 and D 528.
- \_\_\_\_ *Hungarian Fantasia*, S. 123. Arthur de Greef, piano, NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 18 and 21 January 1927. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1306-7.
- \_\_\_\_ Piano Concerto no. 1, S. 124. Arthur de Greef, piano, NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 11 September 1922, 7, 21 and 22 November 1922, and 21 September 1923. 7rpm disc, D 890-2.
- Mendelssohn, Felix. *A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*, Op. 21. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 2 March 1913 and 18 September 1915. 78rpm disc, HMV 0853.
- \_\_\_\_ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Nocturne. Aubrey Brain, horn, NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 27 July and 9 September 1925. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1034.
- \_\_\_\_ Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 25. Benno Moiseiwitsch, piano, NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 27 January 1925. 78rpm disc, D 969-71.
- \_\_\_\_ *Spring Song*, Op. 62 No 6, and *Bees' Wedding* [Lieder Ohne Worte, Op. 67 no. 4]. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 17 February 1923. 78rpm disc, D 160.
- Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. Concerto for Bassoon, K. 191. Archie Camden, bassoon, Hallé Orchestra, Hamilton Harty, cond. Recorded 30 March 1926. 78rpm disc, Columbia L 1824-6.
- \_\_\_\_ *Le Nozze di Figaro*, K. 492, Overture. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 7 October 1911. 78rpm disc, HMV 0682.
- Puccini, Giacomo, arr. Tavan. *Tosca*: selection. NSO, Eugene Goossens, cond. Recorded 3 October 1922, and 7 March 1923. 78rpm disc, D 659.
- Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai. *Scheherazade*, Op. 35. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 24 November 1917, 8 March 1919, and 13 March 1923. 78rpm disc, HMV 131-2.
- Ronald, Landon. *The Garden of Allah*. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 19 July 1920. 78rpm disc, HMV D 488.
- Rossini, Gioachino. *William Tell*, Overture: Andante. NSO, cond. Landon Ronald. Recorded 16 March 1912. 78rpm disc, HMV 0753.
- Rossini, Gioachino, arr. Ottorino Respighi. *La Boutique Fantasque*, selection. NSO, Eugene Goossens, cond. Recorded 3 July 1925. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1018.
- Saint-Saens, Camille. Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 22. Arthur de Greef, piano, NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 26 June 1928. 78rpm disc, HMV 7458-60.

- Schubert, Franz. *Rosamunde Overture*, D. 797. NSO, Malcolm Sargent, cond. Recorded 7 February and 4 April 1927. 78rpm disc, HMV 9475.
- \_\_\_\_ *Symphony No. 8*, D. 759, 'Unfinished', Mvts. I and II. NSO, Landon Ronald cond. Recorded 20 January 1912. 78rpm disc, HMV 0731-0733.
- \_\_\_\_ *Symphony No. 8*, D. 759, 'Unfinished', 2nd movement. NSO, cond. Landon Ronald. Recorded 7 July 1922. 78rpm disc, HMV D 165.
- \_\_\_\_ *Symphony No. 8*, D. 759, 'Unfinished'. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 9 September 1924. 78rpm, HMV D 934-6.
- Sibelius, Jean. *Finlandia*, Op. 26. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 7 October 1911. 78rpm disc, HMV 0683.
- \_\_\_\_ *Finlandia*, Op. 26. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 1926. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1089.
- Stravinsky, Igor. *Petrouchka – Ballet Music*. NSO, Eugene Goossens, cond. Recorded 21 December 1923 and 15 January 1924. 78rpm disc, Victor 552645-8.
- Tchaikovsky, Piotr Illych. *1812 Overture*, Op. 49. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 27 May 1916 and 8 July 1916. 78rpm disc, HMV D 122-3.
- \_\_\_\_ *Capriccio Italien*, Op. 45. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 29 September 1917. 78rpm disc, HMV D 124.
- \_\_\_\_ *Piano Concerto No. 1 in B minor*, Op. 23. Mark Hambourg, piano, NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 28 September 1925. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1130-3.
- \_\_\_\_ *Slav March* Op. 31. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 29 September 1917. 78rpm disc, HMV D 123.
- \_\_\_\_ *Suite No. 3 in G*, Op. 55, Mvt. IV, variations 8-10. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 19 October 1912. 78rpm disc, HMV D 163.
- \_\_\_\_ *Symphony No. 4 in F minor*, Op. 36. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 20 July 1925. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1037-41.
- \_\_\_\_ *Symphony No. 5 in E minor*, Op. 64. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 18 and 19 April and 2 May 1928. 78rpm disc, HMV D 1511-6.
- \_\_\_\_ *Symphony No. 6 in B minor*, Op. 74, 'Pathetique', Mvt. III. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 18 September 1915. 78rpm disc, HMV D 163.
- Trad., arr Percy Grainger. *Londonderry Air*. NSO, Malcolm Sargent, cond. Recorded 28 November 1928. 78rpm disc, HMV B 2913.

- Wagner, Richard. *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* Overture, WWV 96. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 2 March 1912. 78rpm disc, Opera Disc Company 65365.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *The Flying Dutchman* WWV 63, Overture. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 8 July 1916. 78rpm disc, HMV D 128.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Götterdämmerung* WWV 86D, Siegfried's Funeral March. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 11 June 1920. 78rpm disc, HMV D 502.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Tannhäuser* WWV 70, Overture. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 20 June 1922. 78rpm disc, HMV D 133.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Tristan and Isolde* WWV 90, Prelude and Liebestod. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 29 January 1921 and 7 October 1921. 78rpm disc, HMV D 542 and 592.
- Weber, Carl Maria von. *Oberon*, J. 306, Overture. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 16 December 1911. 78rpm disc, HMV D 154.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Invitation to the Waltz*, Op. 65, J. 260. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 11 July 1914. 78rpm disc, D 144.

*Other recordings:*

- Beethoven, Ludwig van. *Egmont* Overture. BBC SO, Adrian Boult, cond. Recorded 6 April 1933. 78rpm, DB 1925. Transferred by CHARM.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Piano Concerto No. 3. Arthur Schnabel, piano, LPO, Malcolm Sargent, cond. Recorded 17 February 1933. 78rpm disc, HMV DB 1940–44. CD, Naxos 8.110639, remastered by Mark Orbert-Thorne, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Septet Op. 20 for Wind and Strings. Frederick Thurston, clarinet, Archie Camden, bassoon, Aubrey Thonger, horn, Arthur Catterall, violin, Bernard Shore, viola, Ambrose Gauntlett, cello, Eugene Cruft, double bass. Recorded 29 September 1936. 78rpm disc, HMV DB 3026–30. Transferred by CHARM.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 2, Op. 36. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 3 October 1936. 78rpm, Columbia LX 586–9. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 4, Op. 60. LPO, Felix Weingartner, cond. Recorded 13 November 1933. 78rpm, Columbia LX 274–7. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 4, Op. 60. BBC SO, Arturo Toscanini, cond. Recorded 1 June 1939. 78rpm, HMV DB 3896–9. Transferred by BLASR.

- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 5, Op. 67. LPO, Felix Weingartner, cond. Recorded 31 January and 2 February 1933. Transferred by BLASR. 78rpm, Columbia DX 516-9. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 6, Op. 68. BBC SO, Arturo Toscanini, cond. Recorded 21 and 22 October 1937. 78rpm, HMV DB3333-7. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 7, Op. 92. BBC SO, Arturo Toscanini, cond. Live, Queen's Hall, recorded 12 June 1935. CD, EMI 23334, 2013.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 8, Op. 93. BBC SO, Adrian Boult, cond. Recorded 21 July 1932. 78rpm, HMV DB 1764-6. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony no. 9, Op. 125. BBC SO, Arturo Toscanini, cond. Live, Queen's Hall, recorded 3 November 1937. Off-air recording, Music Preserved, MP\_TT0126.
- Berlioz, Hector. *Les Francs Juges* Overture. BBC SO, Adrian Boult, cond. 78rpm disc, HMV D 3131-2.
- Bizet, Georges. Suite *La Jolie Fille de Perth*. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 9 April 1934. 78rpm, Columbia LX 317-8. CD, Dutton 9753, remastered by Michael Dutton, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony in C. LPO, Walter Goehr, cond. Recorded 26 November 1937. 78rpm disc, Columbia C 2986-9. Transferred by CHARM.
- Brahms, Johannes. Concerto for Violin. Joseph Szigeti, violin, Hallé Orchestra, Hamilton Harty, cond. Recorded 3 December 1928. 78rpm, Columbia L 2265-9. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 2, Op. 73. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 13 September and 3 December 1923, and 5 February 1924. 78rpm, HMV D 871-4. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 2 Op. 73. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 14 March 1936. 78rpm, Columbia LX 515-9. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 2, Op. 73. BBC SO, Arturo Toscanini, cond. Recorded 10 June 1938. CD, Testament SBT 1015, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 4, Op. 98. LSO, Hermann Abendroth, cond. Recorded 27 March 1927. 78rpm, HMV 1265-70. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 4, Op. 98. BBC SO, Bruno Walter, cond. Recorded 21 and 22 May 1934. 78rpm, HMV DB 7718-22. Transferred by BLASR.

- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 4, Op. 98. BBC SO, Arturo Toscanini, cond. Recorded 3–4 June 1935. CD, Grammophono 2000 76812, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 4, Op. 98. LSO, Felix Weingartner, cond. Recorded 14 February 1938. 78rpm, LX 705–9. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81. BBC SO, Adrian Boult, cond. Recorded 30 May 1932. 78rpm, HMV DB 1803–4. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 22 March 1937. 78rpm, Columbia LX 638–9. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81. BBC SO, Arturo Toscanini, cond. Recorded 25 October 1937. 78rpm, HMV DB 3349–50. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ *Tragic Overture*, Op. 81. BBC SO, Bruno Walter, cond. Live, Queen's Hall, recorded 18 January 1939. Off-air recording, Music Preserved, MP
- Debussy, Claude. *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un Faune*. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 13 February 1939. 78rpm disc, Columbia LX 805. CD, Dutton 9753, remastered by Michael Dutton, 2005.
- Delius, Frederick. *Summer night on the river*. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 4 October 1935. 78rpm disc, Columbia SDX13–14. CD, Dutton CDBP 9745, remastered by Michael Dutton, 2004.
- Elgar, Edward. Cello Concerto, Op. 85. Beatrice Harrison, cello, NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 23 March and 13 June 1928. 78rpm, HMV D 1507–9. CD, Dutton 9776, remastered by Michael Dutton, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_ *Falstaff*. LSO, Edward Elgar, cond. Recorded 11 and 12 November 1931 and 4 February 1932. 78rpm disc, HMV DB 1621–4.
- Grieg, Edvard. *Allegro molto moderato* from Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, [abridged]. Wilhelm Backhaus, piano, NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 15 July 1909. 78rpm disc, HMV 05523/4. Transfer, *Wilhelm Backhaus: The Complete British Acoustic Recordings, 1908–25*. Pearl GEM 102, 2001.
- Handel, George, arr. Thomas Beecham. *Suite de Ballet – The Origin of Design*. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 12 December 1932. 78rpm (unissued), Columbia CAX 6618/21. CD, SOMM-Beecham 7, remastered by Gary Moore, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_ *The Gods Go A'Begging* (excerpts). LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 5 January 1933, 14 November 1934, 12 and 13 October 1937, and 9 November 1938.

- 78rpm, Columbia CAX 6637, 7222, 8078, 8086, and 8389. CD, SOMM-Beecham 7, remastered by Gary Moore, 2000.
- Haydn, Joseph. Symphony No. 99, Hob I:99. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 4 October 1935. 78rpm, Columbia LX505-7. Transferred by BLASR.
- Juon, Paul. Chamber Symphony Op. 27. New Chamber Orchestra, Charles Kreshover, cond. Recorded 31 December 1929. 78rpm, NGS 141-146. Transfer: Andrew Rose, for Pristine Audio, unreleased.
- Mendelssohn, Felix. *The Hebrides Overture*, Op. 26. BBC SO, Adrian Boult, cond. Recorded October 1933. 78rpm disc, HMV DB 2100. CD, Dutton 9763, remastered by Michael Dutton, 2006.
- Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Così fan Tutti Overture*, K. 588. BBC SO, Adrian Boult, cond. Recorded 27 March 1934. 78rpm disc, HMV DB 2190. CD, Dutton 9763, remastered by Michael Dutton, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_ Quintet for piano and winds, K. 452. Léon Goossens, oboe, Frederick Thurston, clarinet, John Alexandra, bassoon, Aubrey Thonger, horn, Kathleen Long, piano. Recorded 19 March 1928. 78rpm, NGS 121-3. Transfer: Andrew Rose.
- \_\_\_\_ Quintet for piano and winds, K. 452. Société des instruments au vents Taffanel. Recorded 18 March 1929. 78rpm, D 1804-6. Transferred by CHARM.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 36, K. 452 'Linz'. BBC SO, Fritz Busch, cond. Recorded 5 March 1936. 78rpm, HMV DB 2191-3. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 36, K. 452 'Linz'. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 21 December 1938, 11 January and 13 February 1939. 78rpm, Columbia LX 797-9. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 39, K. 543. BBC SO, Bruno Walter, cond. Recorded 21 May 1934. 78rpm, HMV DB 7715-7. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 39, K. 543. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Live recording, BASF Feierabendhaus, Ludwigshafen, Germany, 19 November 1936. CD, LPO-040. Transferred by Roger Beardsley, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 39, K. 543. LPO, Felix Weingartner, cond. Recorded 26 February 1940. 78rpm, Columbia LX 881-3. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 39, K. 543. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 13 March 1939. 78rpm, Columbia LX 927-9. Transferred by BLASR.

- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 41. LSO, Albert Coates, cond. Recorded 27 August and 16 October 1923. 78rpm, D 942-45. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 41, K. 551. LSO, Dan Godfrey, cond. Recorded 2 April 1937. 78rpm, Columbia L 1938-41. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 41, K. 551. LSO, Albert Coates, cond. Recorded 25 October 1927. 78rpm, CHARM D 1359-62. Transferred by BLASR.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 41, K. 551. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 19 January 1934. 78rpm, Columbia LX282-5. Transferred by CHARM.
- \_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 41, K. 551. BBC SO, Arturo Toscanini, cond., Queen's Hall, London (public performance). Recorded 3 June 1938. Off-air recording, Music Preserved archive MP\_TT0161.
- Prokofiev, Serge. Suite *Le Pas d'Acier*. LSO, Albert Coates, cond. Recorded 18 February 1932. 78rpm, DB1680-1. Transferred by CHARM.
- Rossini, Gioachino. *Semiramide* Overture. BBC WO, Percy Pitt, cond. Recorded 3 and 16 December 1925. 78rpm, HMV 9076. Transferred by CHARM.
- \_\_\_\_ *Barber of Seville* Overture. BBC WO, Percy Pitt, cond. Recorded 11 June 1926. 78rpm. HMV 9166. Transferred by CHARM.
- \_\_\_\_ *La Gazza Ladra* Overture. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 20 June 1934. 78rpm disc, Columbia LX 353. Transferred by Neal Kurtz, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_ *La Scala di Seta* Overture. BBC SO, Arturo Toscanini, cond, Queen's Hall, London (public performance). Recorded 3 June 1938. Off-air recording, Music Preserved archive MP\_TT0161.
- \_\_\_\_ *La Scala di Seta* Overture. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. 78rpm disc, Columbia LX 255. Transferred by Neal Kurtz, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_ *William Tell* Overture. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. 78rpm disc, Columbia LX 339-40. Transferred by Neal Kurtz, 2009.
- Rossini, Gioachino, arr. Ottorino Respighi. *Rossiniana*. LPO, Thomas Beecham, cond. Recorded 22 March, and 3 and 17 April, 1935. 78rpm disc, Columbia LX 391-2. CD, Dutton 9753, remastered by Michael Dutton, 2005.
- Schubert, Franz. Symphony No. 9, D. 944 'The Great'. BBC SO, Adrian Boult, cond. 78rpm disc, HMV DB 2415-20. CD, Beulah 1PD32, remastered by Nick Morgan.



- Schumann, Robert. Romance for oboe and piano, Op. 94 No. 1. Arthur Forman oboe, unknown pianist. Recorded 23 November 1911. 78rpm disc, HMV 9442. CD, Oboe Classics CC2012, remastered by Lani Spahr 2005.
- Sibelius, Jean. Symphony No. 2, Op. 43. BBC SO, Arturo Toscanini, cond. Recorded 10 June 1938. CD, EMI 63307.
- Tchaikovsky, Piotr Illych. Suite *Casse-Noisette*, Op. 71. BBC WO, Percy Pitt, cond.. Recorded 19 June 1927. 78rpm, HMV 9260-2. Transferred by CHARM.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Nutcracker Suite*, Op. 71. London Palace Orchestra, Hermann Finck, cond. 78rpm. Odeon 0745/78, released April 1909.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 5, Op. 64. LPO, Constant Lambert, cond. Recorded 1 and 2 March 1939. 78rpm, Columbia C 3088-92. Transferred by CHARM.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Symphony No. 6, Op. 74, 'Pathétique'. NSO, Landon Ronald, cond. Recorded 30 January, 1, 15, and 29 May and 23 June 1923. 78rpm, Victor 44240-4. Transferred by Bryan Bishop, 2011. Downloaded from <http://shellackophile.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/symphonies-from-sir-landon.html>.
- Wagner, Richard. *Der Meistersinger von Nürnberg* Overture, WWV 96. BBC SO, Adrian Boult, cond. Recorded 6 April 1933. 78rpm disc, HMV DB 1924. CD, Dutton 9771, remastered by Michael Dutton, 2004.
- Walton, William. *Façade* Suites 1 and 2. LPO, William Walton, cond. Recorded 5 March 1936. 78rpm disc, Columbia C2836-7.
- Weber, Carl Maria von. *Der Freischütz* Overture, Op. 77. BBC SO, Adrian Boult, cond. Recorded 7 October 1932. 78rpm disc, HMV DB 1687. CD, Dutton 9771, remastered by Michael Dutton, 2004.