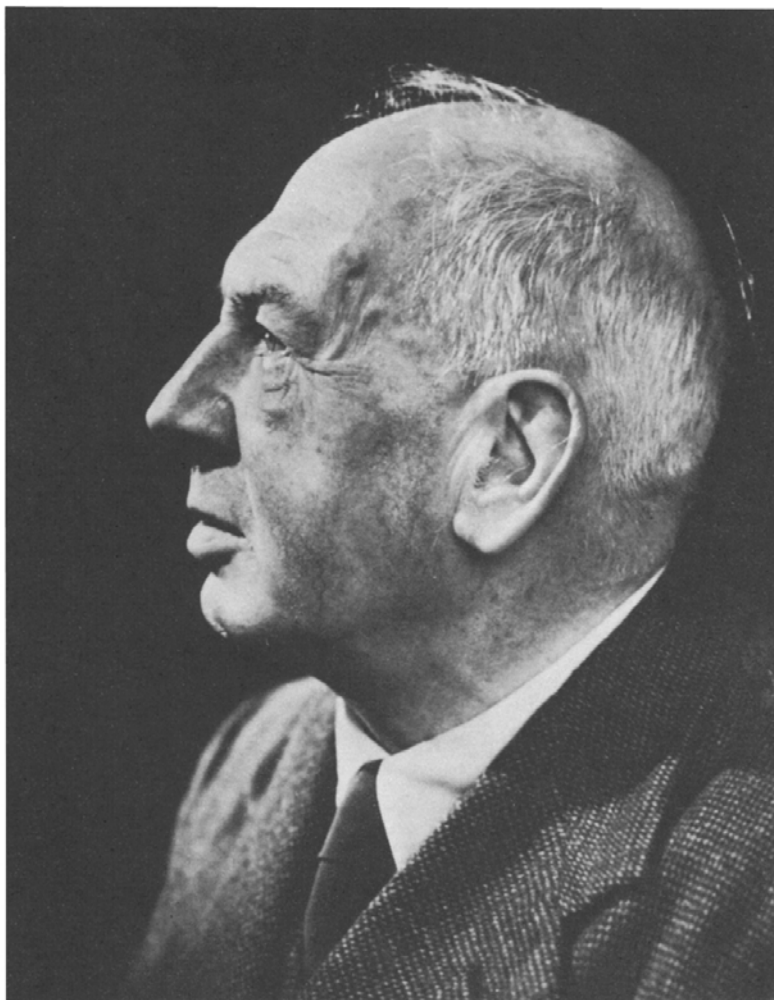


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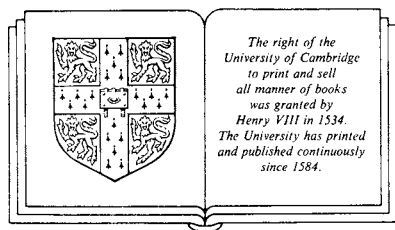


**‘How many characteristics and qualities we who knew him can read in that profile! . . . The Puck, the Rebel . . . the loyal friend and Critic! . . .’
(Basil Sutton)**

**Balfour Gardiner photographed in November 1948 at
Percy Grainger’s request**

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In memory of a wonderful mother
(died 28 March 1983)

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Foreword

When some years ago the young editor of the *Delius Society Journal* confided in me that he longed to write a book on Balfour Gardiner and his music, I was somewhat taken aback. I was impressed by the way he was bringing the journal to its highest peak of perfection, but this enthusiasm for a composer all but forgotten save for two or three pieces for light orchestra and a fine anthem seemed to me incongruous.

I had known Gardiner well through Delius. He had offered me technical advice at the start of my Delius adventure, boosted my confidence and given me whole-hearted support to its close. By then he had abandoned music altogether, maintaining firmly that a man ceases to be musical at fifty. Despite such idiosyncrasies he was unfailing in encouraging talent. His remarkable powers in criticising a score were constantly sought by composer-friends. In this I have never met his equal. The author has made it abundantly clear in dealing with his music that Gardiner gave more thought and care to the vital mechanics of musical structure, especially in writing for the orchestra, than is usual amongst composers. I knew, too, of the mental turmoil he suffered in composing – due to his searing, abortive self-criticism.

Surely this man of such charm and perception had achieved music of greater significance than that by which he was known? The surprise came for me in the revealing Gardiner Centenary Concert at St John's, Smith Square, conducted by Gardiner's great-nephew, John Eliot Gardiner. Here for the first time I heard 'A Berkshire Idyll' – finely wrought, attractive music superbly scored for orchestra – and now I understood Mr Lloyd's enthusiasm.

In ranging from 1877 to 1950 the author's careful researches disclose many hitherto unpublished details of the eager and aspiring English and German musical life of the day. The 'Frankfurt Group' – the fastidious Gardiner, rebellious Percy Grainger, romantic Cyril Scott, lyrical Roger Quilter and handsome Norman O'Neill – figure constantly from student days to full-fledged musicianship, Mr Lloyd rightly concluding, however, that the sum total of their respective works has contributed little of ultimate importance to the heritage of British music. Nevertheless they were all 'characters' of a kind sadly missing today. Gardiner and Quilter, like Bax and Vaughan Williams, were each blessed with private means

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whereas poor Holst was always struggling. Gardiner's private benevolence often eased his troubled way, as it did for many others, and his quiet timely intervention in patronage of the Royal Philharmonic Society can only be described as providential.

Delius, rather than Elgar, is the more prominent in these pages, being like Gardiner at heart a countryman. I love to think of the latter at Grez puffing and blowing as he lopped dead wood from the branches of trees overhanging the river at the banks of Delius's garden; or bottling the cider from nearby Recloses which for one glorious fortnight a year tasted like Pol Roger champagne!

The spirit of this endearing man has been caught in a book that one day had to be written. I am glad Mr Lloyd chose to do it himself with such sincerity and conviction.

Eric Fenby

Preface

In March 1912 a remarkable concert series of British music was launched at Queen's Hall. Although Elgar was by then well established with his two symphonies and major choral works, Vaughan Williams's early large scores like the *Sea Symphony* and *Tallis Fantasia* had not yet been heard in London, and he and a good number of young composers were seeking representation in the music capital. Largely forgotten today, these concerts brought hope to a generation of British composers, and by igniting a spark of interest in native music helped to shake off a good deal of the foreign domination that for too long had thwarted the hearing of native talent. These concerts were the undertaking of one man, the wealthy and altruistic young composer Balfour Gardiner.

It would be utterly characteristic of Balfour Gardiner to have frowned outwardly upon the idea of being chosen as the subject of a book. He was always one to avoid the limelight and shun any public recognition. The few scattered and veiled references to him in books relating to music have hardly altered this position so that today he is a little-known figure. A composer of some distinction, a conductor, an amateur architect, a pioneer forester, a philanthropist, and a champion and generous patron of British music, he numbered among his many friends men like Arnold Bax, Frederick Delius, Percy Grainger and Gustav Holst. Few of those close to him were not touched in some way by his extraordinary kindness, which was invariably tempered with astute judgment, and his memory has lived on like the Olympic flame as long as his friends and acquaintances have been alive. It is much to be regretted that those now dead who knew him well during his most active years did not (apart from Grainger in his private memoirs) put on record the debt in which they stood through his exceptional generosity.

This book is an attempt to make amends and bring to light for the first time the full story of this rare individual. I have purposely avoided the term 'biography' because this is necessarily more than the story of just one man: it is an account of many friendships (chiefly musical) during that exciting period of British music's struggle out of mediocrity to prominence, and as a documentation of one man's achievements and failures against this background, it offers an interesting sidelight on those formative years.

Preface

If, apart from friendship and unselfish benevolence, any one element can be seen to recur throughout this unfolding of his life, it is disillusionment, with the public's attitude towards British music and also with his own composing ability. In the first instance Gardiner did not stand alone, for in 1911 Delius wrote to Bantock: 'I am afraid artistic undertakings are impossible in England – The country is not yet artistically civilized – There is something hopeless about the English people in a musical and artistic way . . .' Delius was to reiterate this extreme view on more than one occasion and in time Gardiner was himself to reach a similar conclusion. Yet it was under such conditions before the First World War that he set out on a large scale to promote British music at a time when such support was most needed. If one of his twin foes was what he felt to be the public's general apathy towards native music, more serious was his almost destructive self-criticism. Like Tchaikovsky, whose works he greatly admired, after the excitement surrounding the birth of a composition Gardiner could often unexpectedly veer from enthusiasm, turn on his own work with a scathing dismissal and not lift a finger to promote it. Those works with which he was dissatisfied he later destroyed. There are parallels here with Duparc like whom, though for different reasons, Gardiner ultimately gave up composition, turning instead to afforestation.

If through Gardiner's critical eyes this evidenced some measure of personal failure as a composer, the obverse of the coin reveals yet another facet of his astuteness. How wisely he realised his own limitations. Even if we may think the pruning of his output too drastic, those compositions he chose to leave behind, though few in number, are of a high quality, and it is hoped that this book may help to undo the neglect that has for too long attended such fine works as *A Berkshire Idyll*, *Movement for Strings*, *April* and *Philomela*.

Many people have been kind enough to assist me in the course of my researches. My thanks are first due to those whose privilege it was to know Gardiner personally and who kindly found time to talk with me about him: Hugh Adams, Charles Andrews, Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Thomas and the late Lady Armstrong, Richard Austin, Denis Blood, Geoffrey Bush, Reginald Cox, Hugh Cruttwell, Eric Fenby, the late Imogen Holst, Guy Warrack and Mrs Winskill.

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Hanbury; Mrs Kirstie Milford; Lady Redcliffe-Maud (Jean Hamilton); the late Mrs Rose L. Scott; Mrs Ursula Vaughan Williams; John War-rack and Miss Avril Wood.

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Finally, two special acknowledgements. I wish to express my gratitude to Lewis Foreman at whose instigation this book began, for his help, advice and encouragement throughout all its stages; and to the various

Preface

members of the Gardiner family, especially the composer's great-nephew John Eliot Gardiner, for their kindness, trust and hospitality without which the present book would not have been possible.

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