

Elisabeth Lutyens and Edward Clark

The composer Elisabeth Lutyens and her second husband, the conductor and music programmer Edward Clark, were innovators in composition, conducting, programming, teaching, and music administration in Britain between 1910 and 1983. Controversial in their professional and personal views and tastes, their achievements obscured by layers of anecdote and some self-inflicted reputational harm, this book critically reassesses their roles as cornerstones of institutions and developments in British music that we now take for granted. Key to understanding their central roles in orchestrating musical progress is the ambiguous role of influence in their work and the intimate connections between British and European music. This study critically charts their professional lives in music, taking a holistic approach to contextualise Lutyens and Clark's multifaceted work in music historically, music-analytically, and culturally.

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The Orchestration of Progress in British Twentieth-Century Music

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Ready, boys?
Hilda Tablet, BBC 1950s

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Preface

To understand Elisabeth Lutyens and Edward Clark's musical work, I needed to follow them into deep goldfish bowls. I therefore learned to hold my breath for extended spells of time; or, to put it differently, writing this book took a while. But the beginnings were inconspicuous. As a student of Musikwissenschaft and Philosophy at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, I was invited to write a biographical entry in the style of the New Grove for the online portal MUGI – Musik und Gender im Internet (mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de), the contact having come about thanks to a previous internship at the Bavarian Radio Programme Note Department. As I browsed the list of composers, I paused at the name *Elisabeth Lutyens* because I did not have the faintest idea how to pronounce her surname. As I began to read her autobiography *A Goldfish Bowl* and Susie and Meirion Harries' biography *A Pilgrim Soul*, I marvelled at this modern, and in her own way formidable, woman. I adored her fighter's gear: the trousers, nails, booze, and cigarettes; and not least her motoring (with Stevie Smith or Dylan Thomas misbehaving in the passenger seat) through the country at a time I knew from my mother's stories of her childhood journey to her pen pal in Runcorn shortly after the consecration of the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral. It was later that I learned about the richness of Lutyens's professional life, the controversies surrounding some of her views, and the beauty of her music.

The idea to give Edward Clark's work in music an airing came a little later, as I tinkered with a thought experiment on how one would write the biography of any man less well known than his wife or female partner. This text was not quite what I had in mind then. It was the stubborn and complex love of music reflected in Lutyens's narrative of Clark's life that sparked the idea to delve deeper into Clark's role in Lutyens's work, and Lutyens's in Clark's.

Lutyens and Clark did not make it easy for one another, and they do not make it easy for any writer on their work. I explore some of the more complex reasons for this in the book, but one quite simple reason is that their work, which spans the years between 1910 and 1983, is difficult to trace. Some of the ventures they set up and several of the collaborations

they embarked on failed or did not catch on, or traces are lost. Sometimes Lutyens and Clark were in the right place at the wrong time; sometimes they lost interest in their own projects; sometimes they fell foul of bureaucracy or alienated friends and allies in the richly complex field that was British music in the twentieth century. They had many friends, and at least as many foes. Yet another reason is that it was not only their musical taste that was controversial but also their personal and professional lifestyles, decisions, and views.

This book is an attempt to trace their orchestration of progress in music of their time, from composing and conducting to programming, teaching and mentoring, organising, and of course listening. It is about their music, their influences, and their craft.

Acknowledgements

My journey towards this text led me into archives, libraries, and universities, but also into pubs, living rooms, and too rarely a concert hall. In all these places, I was offered stories, constructive criticism, and great interest, for which I am grateful. There were also the – in a project such as this perhaps inevitable – moments when my motives and ability were questioned or when I did not know how – or when – to bring this to a conclusion. For different reasons, these hindrances have not prevailed and this is the place to acknowledge the very generous support that made this book possible.

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Solace and entertainment through these years were provided by Castor, Pollux, Sirius, Rigel, Regulus, and Lola. The book belongs to Kenneth Forkert-Smith, for whom each of my clouds has a silver lining; and to the family.