

THE HISTORICAL IMPACT OF WILLIAM WALTON'S  
CONCERTO FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA

BY

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*Dedicated*  
*to*  
*Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900)*

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## **Introduction**

William Walton was one of the great composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Britain, he was mostly self-taught, arriving at musical maturity just after WWI, and had a number of early successes that launched him to international renown. His career lasted an astonishing sixty years, and although he created less works than his contemporaries, his output remains to this day fresh and original. Writing mostly with traditional forms, his style can generally be described as neo-romantic. Walton composed in a number of varied genres, including chamber and symphonic repertoire, choral works, film music, as well as music for plays and ballets, and opera. In addition, Walton would take up the baton and conduct his own works throughout the world.

The present study will focus on Walton's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, from 1939, and its historical impact since the time of its composition. It was commissioned and premiered by Jascha Heifetz, one of the last century's greatest violin virtuosos. Fittingly, the concerto is of immense difficulty for soloist and orchestra, yet it is a shining achievement in the genre, combining virtuosity with deep emotional sentiment. This study is divided into three chapters: the first chapter introduces Walton, the second provides details of the Concerto's compositional history and a brief analysis, and the third chapter highlights why Walton's Concerto has made a lasting impression on the musical world.

## Chapter 1: William Walton

### Life

William Turner Walton was born on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1902 in the town of Oldham in Lancashire, close to Manchester. His parents were both singers: “His mother, née Louisa Maria Turner from whom he took his second name, was a contralto from Stretford, close to Manchester. His father was Charles Walton, a bass-baritone from Hale in Cheshire, who had been one of the first students at the Royal Manchester College of Music when it opened in 1893. After they were married in 1989, they lived in Oldham.”<sup>1</sup> At the early age of ten, Walton was admitted to Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford and was educated there for six years. He was active as a chorister, and also studied the piano and violin. At this point in his young life, he already made contacts and supporters that would launch him to greatness. “Luck certainly played a significant hand in a life that was, to a large extent, dependent upon the help, friendship, and generosity of others.”<sup>2</sup> At the cathedral, he was encouraged by Henry Ley, the cathedral organist, and Basil Allchin, Ley’s assistant, both of whom brought Walton to the attention of the dean, Thomas Strong. Strong in turn arranged for the 16-year old to enter Oxford University with financial aid, and also introduced him to the Oxford University Press, which today continues to publish his music. Walton made another important contact in Hugh Allen, who was organist, conductor and later the director of the Royal Conservatory of Music; Allen “...proved to be the most valuable influence on Walton’s development as a composer.”<sup>3</sup> While at Oxford, Walton spent a great deal of time in self-study, analyzing the scores of

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Lloyd, *William Walton Muse of Fire*, (Suffolk: The Boydell Press), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Joiner, *The Violin Concerto of William Walton*, (Dissertation, The Florida State University), 2.

composers of the time, most notably the music of Debussy, Bartok, Ravel, Prokofiev, and Stravinsky. Although he must have learned a great deal in these early years of training, he failed an obligatory BA exam three times, and never earned his degree.

After his undergraduate study at Oxford, Walton continued his autodidactic approach, with the exception of advice from Ernest Ansermet, the Swiss conductor who premiered some of Walton's works, and Ferruccio Busoni, the Italian composer and pianist. He also received some lessons from Eugene Goossens, the English composer and conductor, who would later record the Walton Violin Concerto with Heifetz in 1941.

The decade after his time at Oxford was spent in the company of the Sitwell siblings: Sacheverell, Edith, and Osbert, the three children of Sir George Reresby Sitwell, the 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet of, and an M. P. for Scarborough. Keeping in the family tradition, the 'trio' of siblings attended prestigious institutions like Eton and Oxford, the latter being where they met Walton. Although the siblings focused on producing literary works and being art critics in their own right, they adopted Walton into their circle, providing him with financial security and a cultural education. The four toured Italy in 1920 and the collaboration between music and poetry culminated in Walton's first international success, *Façade*, a collection of Edith's poems set to music. During the 1920's Walton also made the acquaintance of Constant Lambert, an English composer, conductor, music critic, and also co-reciter in the performance of *Façade* with Edith in 1926. Lambert also did much to promote Walton's music.

However, during the 1930's, Walton forged a new path, independent of the Sitwell trio. Commissions were accepted, film scores were composed, and Walton began to conduct his own music. Tierney furnishes an account of the quality of his conducting:

“He conducted economically, with a neat, precise beat, using his baton as little as possible, communicating his wishes to the players efficiently and charging them with the intense electrical energy that flowed from his deceptively shy, self-effacing personality.”<sup>4</sup> All these engagements took him around the globe, and although his fame grew, “...his life was uneventful for its last 20 years.”<sup>5</sup> Walton never had any pupils, and was quite content to do what he did best: compose.

## Works

Attending the cathedral school of Christ Church, it is hardly surprising that some of Walton’s early works focused on vocal composition that were influenced from these years of choral singing. For example, ‘A Litany’, composed in 1917, is scored for unaccompanied four-part choir and is dissonant and haunting. This work was not published until 1930,<sup>6</sup> long after his first published work, the Piano Quartet of 1918-19. Moreover, “...it was his lengthy String Quartet which brought Walton into the limelight.”<sup>7</sup>

The three works that followed *Façade* launched Walton to international success. *Façade* was followed by the oratorio, ‘Belshazzar’s Feast,’ a work of brilliance and opulence. “It revealed a new side to Walton’s musical character: the dramatic.”<sup>8</sup> Another of these early works to garner international distinction was his Viola Concerto of 1928-9, “...which won universal recognition as a masterpiece and assured his future career,”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Neil Tierney, *William Walton His Life and Music*, (London: Robert Hale Limited), 169.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Palmer, “Sir William Walton”, (*The Musical Times* 124 (1983) May, 1983), 316.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Avery, “William Walton”, (*Music & Letters* 28 (1) January, 1947), 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Howes, *The Music of William Walton*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (London: Oxford University Press), xv.

and, "...is regarded by some as his finest achievement,"<sup>10</sup> because of its great lyrical qualities and depth of feeling. The 1930's brought Walton even more acknowledgement with his Symphony: "Mengelberg and Furtwängler sent for scores of the Symphony, and this work was taken up as early as 1938 by one of Walton's finest interpreters, Georg Szell, who conducted it in Scotland and Australia."<sup>11</sup> From this point onwards in his career, Walton was set. "His reputation, even today, rests primarily on these four works."<sup>12</sup>

A pivotal year in British music came in 1934 when Edward Elgar, Gustav Holst, and Frederick Delius all died, leaving the field open for younger British composers, including Arthur Bliss, Alan Rawsthorne, Benjamin Britten, and of course, Walton. Although there were questions regarding the direction British music would take, "...the most positive point arises from the feeling that the only honest musical language for a British composer is tonal romanticism,"<sup>13</sup> and this is essentially the musical style that Walton would embrace. Following the Viola Concerto, the works of the 1930's contain sweeping melodies, lush harmonies, and large scale exciting drama, all traits of romantic music.

The late 1930's had Walton in great demand as a composer, not to mention a new direction: film music. His first score was for the film *Escape Me Never* from 1934, and Walton would compose throughout his life, the last film being *Three Sisters* from 1969. However, "The three 'Olivier scores': Henry V, Hamlet, and Richard III (movies starring

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<sup>10</sup> Avery, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Stewart R. Craggs and Michael Kennedy, *William Walton A Thematic Catalogue*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 27.

<sup>12</sup> Joiner, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Arnold Whittall, "Thirty (More) Years", (*The Musical Times* 135 (1813) March, 1994), 144.

Laurence Olivier) are his most prestigious achievements in this genre.”<sup>14</sup> “It seems that most of Walton’s most vital work was the product of some kind of pressure, tension, or turmoil. It is no wonder he took so readily to the cinema: drama, inner or outer, is of the essence of his best music.”<sup>15</sup> This sense of drama, tension, romance, would also become a feature of Walton’s serious music.

Thus we arrive at the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in b minor from 1939, the year which scholars tend to point to a shift in his creativity as a composer. The early works culminate with the Violin Concerto, and it seems that scholars agree that the subsequent works, especially post-WWII, suffered from lack of creativity and original design. In regard to the Concerto, Walton had “... maintained the imaginative level of the Symphony, increased his command of orchestration and regained the emotional poise of the Viola Concerto....For sheer beauty of melody, brilliance of detail, and impassioned eloquence, it ranks among the greatest of modern violin concertos.”<sup>16</sup> However, “The Concerto served as a turning point in Walton’s musical style. His later works represented a redefinition and relaxed mastery of his skills in established idioms.”<sup>17</sup> Another hypothesis is that, “After the Violin Concerto, when Walton is widely considered to have settled for self-repetition.”<sup>18</sup> Perhaps it was the war, perhaps Walton had poured all his emotion and creativity into the early works, but whatever the reasons, it would seem the works composed after the Violin Concerto do not have the same depth or level of creative, musical imagination.

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<sup>14</sup> Palmer, 316.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 316.

<sup>16</sup> Craggs and Kennedy, 28.

<sup>17</sup> Joiner, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Bryan Northcott, “In Search of Walton”, (*The Musical Times* 123 (1669) March, 1982), 180.

Walton composed less than his contemporaries, i.e. Benjamin Britten or Arnold Bax, and yet his fame and popularity has endured. “He has given to the public a mere handful of works in comparison with the vast outpourings of many of his contemporaries...the secret of his success?”<sup>19</sup> In the case of Walton, quality has been a more important aspect of his composition than quantity.

### **Musical Style**

In terms of musical style, Walton’s music is extremely individualistic. Walton sounds like Walton, and no other. Although there are a number of reasons for this to be the case, it is also important to note that he retains traditional modes of composition: through many of his works he still maintains periodic 4- and 8-measure phrases. For example, at the outset of the Violin Concerto, the whole first theme can be analyzed in 8-measure sentences. On the larger scale, he also maintained the use of traditional forms, such as the Sonata-Allegro form.

However, it is more significant to highlight where Walton differs from others. In particular is his treatment of rhythm. Although Walton studied the scores of many composers, it would seem that Stravinsky had the most influential and profound effect on Walton’s concepts of rhythm: Walton’s works contain an immense amount of rhythmic drive and vitality, notwithstanding his ability to invent rhythmic variations. “Of Walton’s music in general it is true to say that rhythmically he has worked almost always at very high tension.”<sup>20</sup> The climatic passages keep the listener on the edge of their seat, and even the relaxed areas sound facile, even though the printed notes in the score appear overly-complex.

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<sup>19</sup> Avery, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Herbert Murrill, “Walton’s Violin Sonata”, (*Music & Letters* 31 (3) July, 1950), 209.

In terms of harmony, Walton again finds his own path. Not choosing one school of thought or another, he instead takes a bit from every school, "...heavily spiced with added 7ths, 9ths, and modal dissonances... pedals, modal inflections,"<sup>21</sup> and "...He has derived much of his material from the interval of the octave in its perfect, augmented and diminished forms."<sup>22</sup> It is often difficult to distinguish tonal centers, and non-chord tones abound, yet Walton is nowhere near atonality. It would seem he found his own niche, using romantic harmonies, at a more extreme level, meaning more chromaticism, and the addition of jazz and other 20<sup>th</sup> century styles. "In the early phase...his attitude to music was markedly anti-romantic; but, with the Viola Concerto, there came a striking change. The discovery that he had a natural gift for pure, intoxicating melody influenced all the music which he composed from that point onwards."<sup>23</sup>

For an account of Walton sounding only like Walton, one need go no further than Foss' estimation of Walton's music from a 1940 issue of *Musical Quarterly*:

For this is where I find Walton different from the majority of composers. He has a searchingly accurate judgment of the weight and value of his own inventions. He knows precisely whether that passage is right, just there, or wrong, and if he does not know he probes until he finds out, and if it is wrong in his opinion, he is quite ready to go on writing until he at last finds the right passage. He seldom makes a hair's breadth's mistake in the assessment of his music as he writes it. A sense of shape, of temporal design, that it is very hard to appease, is often at war with a mere capacity to invent sounds: the critical sense of style may make peace terms, but the sense of form never loses the battle. Hence there is little of useless merely good-sounding music in Walton's works: hence each work finds an artistic integrity on its own scale.<sup>24</sup>

The author goes on to say that, "Walton has become an artist in moods. He constructs emotionally. You will never find a trace of anti-climax in Walton's works,"<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Meikle, *William Walton: Music and Literature*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited), 68-70.

<sup>22</sup> Murrill, 209.

<sup>23</sup> Tierney, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Hubert Foss, "William Walton", (*The Musical Quarterly* 26 (4) October, 1940), 461.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 461.



and later in the same article, “I think Walton touches us all with his own humanity. There is at once friendliness in this music and an oracular vision that comprehends but stands above sympathy.”<sup>26</sup> Perhaps it is for these reasons that Walton has remained one of the valuable composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One is immediately drawn to Walton’s music, for its dramatic fervor and emotional weight. A final thought to consider is that Walton was writing at a time when some composers were still in the realm of Impression and Expressionism, Neo-Classicism had begun, and atonality was very much in vogue. And yet Walton found his own niche, his own individual voice among scores of other composers; this is evidence of his importance.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 465.

## Chapter 2: The Concerto

### Jascha Heifetz

A discussion of Walton's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra would be incomplete without a brief word about its dedicatee, Jascha Heifetz. Heifetz was born in what is now known as Vilnius, Lithuania (formerly Vilna, Russia) on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1901. Beginning to play violin at the ripe age of two, he received his first instruction on the instrument from his father Ruvim, and at age five studied at the local music school in Vilna with Ilya Malkin, a former student of Leopold Auer. His rise to greatness came quickly, when he studied with Ioannes R. Nalbandian, another Auer disciple, at the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1910, finally entering Auer's class in 1911.

International success was soon upon him, beginning with a concert on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1912 at the University of Berlin (Berlin Hochschule), where an audience of a sold out 1600-seat hall witnessed the adolescent play the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto on a  $\frac{3}{4}$  size violin. Concerts were also given in Norway, Warsaw, and Prague, before Heifetz came to North America. The Heifetz family made the long excursion to the United States via the Trans-Siberian railroad, from St. Petersburg to Japan, stopping in Hawaii and arriving in San Francisco. Travelling across the United States by train, the family arrived in New York with two months to spare before Heifetz's American debut.

"His debut at Carnegie Hall on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1917 created his own October Revolution which is still talked about,"<sup>27</sup> where "...with one concert young Heifetz obliterated every rival before the public...and effectively barred the rise of any competitor for a good decade. Heifetz was king; the public needed no one else."<sup>28</sup> Shortly

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<sup>27</sup> Tully Potter, *Jascha Heifetz – Violin Concertos*, (Naxos 8.110939), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Boris Schwarz, *Great Masters of the Violin*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc.), 435.

after on November 9<sup>th</sup>, he made his first recording for the Victor Talking Machine company (later known as RCA Records), and by the time he made his London debut in 1920, Britons had already bought some 70 000 copies of his records.<sup>29</sup> Heifetz would go on to record for RCA Victor for the next fifty-five years and toured to all the corners of the world, including India, and South America, also returning to Russia in 1934. “He was the image of flawless perfection,”<sup>30</sup> and the day after the 19-year old Heifetz’s London debut, George Bernard Shaw wrote him a now legendary letter: “If you provoke a jealous God by playing with such super-human perfection,” Shaw warned, “you will die young. I earnestly advise you to play something badly every night before going to bed, instead of saying your prayers. No mortal should presume to play so faultlessly.”<sup>31</sup> In May, 1925, Heifetz became a naturalized US citizen, and in 1928 he married the film star Florence Vidor.<sup>32</sup> During the war years, he was extremely active, performing for troops throughout Europe and concertizing in America, giving countless benefit concerts to raise funds for the war effort.

Although he performed many of the ‘classics’ from the violin repertory, Heifetz was also engaged with many composers of his day. “He played the underrated concertos of Glazunov and Elgar, popularized the Sibelius concerto,”<sup>33</sup> and championed Prokofiev’s Second Violin Concerto. Heifetz also commissioned and premiered concertos by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1933), Louis Gruenberg (1944), Erich Korngold (1947), and Miklòs Ròzsa (1956).

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<sup>29</sup> Official Jascha Heifetz Website: [www.jaschaheifetz.com](http://www.jaschaheifetz.com)

<sup>30</sup> Schwarz, 435.

<sup>31</sup> Official Jascha Heifetz Website: [www.jaschaheifetz.com](http://www.jaschaheifetz.com)

<sup>32</sup> Tully Potter, *Jascha Heifetz (1901-1987)*, (Naxos 8.111367), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Schwarz, 437.

Although the Korngold concerto is receiving its dues today, the others have fallen into relative obscurity.

The association between Walton and Heifetz began in the late 1930's when "...Heifetz was established as the violinist par excellence. Fritz Kreisler might be better loved...Yehudi Menuhin might garner more publicity, but Heifetz stood alone for virtuosity and polished perfection. To get a request for a concerto from him, therefore, was tantamount to a royal command."<sup>34</sup> However, a commission from Heifetz was also accompanied by a massive amount of pressure. Just over a hundred years before, the Italian superstar-violinist Niccolò Paganini had requested a work for viola from Hector Berlioz. The violin master refused to play the resultant work, *Harold en Italie*, because of the lack of virtuosic writing and the length of the orchestral *tuttis*. Similarly, Heifetz was very particular about his requirements for such a work. "If it (the concerto) did not have the right mixture of lyric and virtuosic writing for the violin, he was not interested."<sup>35</sup> For example, although dedicated to him, Heifetz refused to play the violin concerto of Arnold Bax (1937-8) and also declined the Schoenberg concerto (1936). The pressure of pleasing the 'king' would also be felt by Walton.

### **Compositional History**

Walton and Heifetz were introduced by Patrick 'Spike' Hughes, an English composer, writer and critic. He and Walton had been friends since Walton's years with the Sitwells in the 1920's and arranged the meeting between composer and violinist at London's Berkeley Hotel in 1936. It was at this meeting that Heifetz commissioned the

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<sup>34</sup> Potter, *Jascha Heifetz (1901-1987)*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Violin Concerto.<sup>36</sup> However, it would be two years before Walton would begin writing it: an already demanding schedule was coupled with the composer going into hospital for a bilateral hernia operation at the end of 1937. His romantic interest, Alice Wimborne, rented the famous Villa Cimbrone in the town of Ravello in southern Italy. Walton recuperated, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea on the Amalfi coast,<sup>37</sup> where he began work on the violin concerto in January of 1938.<sup>38</sup> As always, Italy worked its spell on the composer. On January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1938 he wrote to Hubert Foss: “Morning sickness is beginning, but otherwise not much progress.” For the next three months he worked at it. “Alice was very good at making me work,” he said, “and got very cross if I mucked about.”<sup>39</sup>

Besides working on the violin concerto, 1938 was a year full of activity. In the spring of 1938 he was asked for a work for clarinet and violin by Benny Goodman and Joseph Szigeti, but ultimately declined. The request would go to Béla Bartók who composed his *Contrasts*. In April of the same year he was approached for a choral work ‘In honor of the City of New York’ for the 1939 World’s Fair and asked to be the composer for the film *Pygmalion*, another project he rejected, which went to Arthur Honegger, the Swiss composer. Walton received an honorary Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Music, London in June, and in the autumn of 1938 he completed *Set me as a Seal*: Anthem for Unaccompanied Mixed Chorus and also the film music to *A Stolen Life*.

Although Heifetz had already commissioned a violin concerto, there would be two other requests for a concerto: On April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1938 Walton received a letter from

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<sup>36</sup> Malcolm Hayes, ed. *The Selected Letters of William Walton*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited), 330.

<sup>37</sup> Keith Horner, *Ehnes, James. Concertos for Violin*, (CBC Records SMCD 5241), 4.

<sup>38</sup> Stewart R. Craggs, *William Walton A Source Book* (Aldershot: Scolar Press), 28.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of William Walton*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 97.

Arthur Bliss asking him to write a violin concerto for the 1939 New York World's Fair; in addition, on October 18<sup>th</sup> 1938, Walton wrote to Ernest Makower at the British Council to accept their offer for a violin concerto. The double commission was a coincidence, and it would be wonderful for Walton if he could make it work. "About a fortnight ago, Bliss, authorized by the British Council, wrote me...asking me to write a violin concerto for the concerts at the New York World's Fair. I replied in the affirmative, stipulating that Heifetz should play the first performance....I felt I could try and kill two birds with one stone."<sup>40</sup> However, Heifetz's performing schedule would thwart Walton's plans: "...I've withdrawn my Concerto from the World's Fair not as is stated because it's unfinished but because Heifetz can't play on the date fixed (the British Council only let him know about ten days ago!). Heifetz wants the concerto for two years and I would rather stick to him....so I'm out of the World's Fair altogether."<sup>41</sup>

It is also interesting to note that Heifetz is not the only violinist associated with the work. Having completed the first two movements in Italy, Walton returned to London and asked for advice from the Spanish violinist Antonio Brosa "...whom he had first met at Siena in 1928 and encountered again during the recording of the music for *Dreaming Lips* in 1937."<sup>42</sup> Brosa offered a great piece of advice, "Well, nowadays you can write anything at all, anything you like, for the violin."<sup>43</sup>

Obviously Walton felt the pressure of composing for Heifetz and feared his work would end up on the scrap heap like the neglected Bax and Schoenberg works of years past. In general,

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<sup>40</sup> Hayes, 114.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>42</sup> Kennedy, 99.

<sup>43</sup> Lloyd, 164.

Walton himself was constantly racked by doubt. “ ‘The trouble is, I wasn’t properly trained,’ he used to say, thinking of how he had escaped his Northern background by winning a scholarship to choir school in Oxford, failed university and been taken up first by the Sitwells and then by a succession of beautiful, wealthy women.”<sup>44</sup>

Much apprehension can also be found in the correspondence of Walton whilst he was composing the violin concerto. “The only question is if he (Heifetz) will agree to the first performance being under the auspices of the British Council. I think he probably will do it as it seems to me as good a first performance platform as he will ever get.”<sup>45</sup> In another letter, he states, “But there are other doubts as well. Heifetz may not like the work. I suppose in the case of H. refusing, I can always find someone else, but it would be bad, I think for the work.”<sup>46</sup> And why would Heifetz not like it? Walton continues in the same letter, “It seems to be developing in an extremely intimate way, not much show and bravura, and I begin to have doubts (fatal for the work, of course) of this still small voice getting over at all in a vast hall holding 10 000 people.”<sup>47</sup> Also, while writing the concerto, Walton worried that his dreamy romantic opening was to be the work’s downfall.<sup>48</sup> Yet another worry was addressed in a letter by Dora Foss, “He (Walton) says his difficulty is making the last movement elaborate enough for Heifetz to play it.” Walton’s uncertainty even went so far as to prepare for a contingency plan with the violinist Fritz Kreisler, also of international fame; A month later in February 1939, “He

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<sup>44</sup> Horner, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Hayes, 113.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>48</sup> Horner, 5.

feels Heifetz won't do the Concerto ...Kreisler is Walton's latest idea – a sort of repetition of the Elgar Concerto triumph in his later years.”<sup>49</sup>

Besides Walton's own self-doubt, there were other potential obstacles as well. “Walton found himself in a quandary...to take up the latest tempting and lucrative offer of a film. Walton had a genuinely difficult decision to make. By now he would have been well aware of the formidable sums earned in Hollywood's film studios.”<sup>50</sup> Thankfully, Walton found the solution: “But as it is, it all boils down to this, whether I'm to become a film composer or a real composer. I need hardly say that no one likes refusing the prospect of £1650, but...I am fairly alright for the moment.”<sup>51</sup> Monies aside, Alice Wimborne can also be given much credit, “...in that Walton's decision to persist with the Concerto had much to do with her persuading him that this was the right course to take.”<sup>52</sup>

Doubt was cast aside though, when in early in March Walton was able to report that Heifetz had cabled, ‘accept enthusiastically’.<sup>53</sup> With the failed Bax concerto experience fresh in his mind, Walton made every effort to ensure that his own concerto did not suffer a similar fate.<sup>54</sup> The proof came in May 1939, when Walton and Alice Wimborne crossed the Atlantic on the *Normandie* to visit Heifetz at his farmhouse in Redding, Connecticut, to iron out with him the last details of the solo part,<sup>55</sup> especially the third movement, which could be shaped according to Heifetz's liking.<sup>56</sup> “Heifetz's contribution to the work's final form was minimal – some added accents in the Scherzo

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<sup>49</sup> Lloyd, 165.

<sup>50</sup> Hayes, 106.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>53</sup> Lloyd, 165.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>55</sup> Vincent Giroud, *William Walton, Composer*, (New Haven: University Press of New England), 27-28.

<sup>56</sup> Lloyd, 165.



and alterations in the first movement cadenza which he found too easy, so, to quote Walton, he ‘jazzed it up’.”<sup>57</sup> On May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1939 the arrangement for violin and piano was completed, and soon after on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the full orchestral score was completed.

With the completed score, Walton began to plan the premiere of his new work, but with the outbreak of war in September, 1939, his plans changed. “Instead of travelling to America to conduct the first performances of the Violin Concerto, Walton had to be content with staying at home and reading the enthusiastic telegrams about the work’s reception.”<sup>58</sup> Heifetz gave the premiere on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1939 conducted by Arthur Rodzinsky with the Cleveland Orchestra in Severance Hall, in Cleveland Ohio. Heifetz would also be the first to record the concerto, on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1941, with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Goossens.

However, the journey of the composition did not end: Walton extensively revised the orchestration on the violin concerto in 1943. These revisions were embodied in the published score first issued by Oxford University Press in 1945 and the version still in use today. On December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1943, Walton wrote, “I’ve been taking the opportunity during a lull in *Henry V* to re-score the Violin Concerto. I started out to do a little patching here and there but found it not a satisfactory way of doing it, so more or less I started from the beginning and I have even gone as far as to introduce a bass clarinet!”<sup>59</sup> In an effort to lighten the texture and create more transparency, Walton omitted many of the percussion parts, including castanets, glockenspiel, gong, and bass drum.

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<sup>57</sup> Kennedy, 101.

<sup>58</sup> Hayes, 119.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

An example of Walton's epic focus on the smallest detail can be seen from an account of his thoughts on revisions of the Violin Concerto:

In bar two, it might be better to have the 1st violins play with the solo part for the one bar only, and similarly at 28 and four bars after 33. The xylophone at 34 may be a bit much and be better out altogether. One before 66 the brass may be better *con sord*. At 73 and also one bar before 73 it may be more of a contrast to cut out the celli on the 2nd crotchet of the 9th bar after 73. In the cadenza after 75 the gong and bass drum may also be better out of the way. At 82 you might try this passage with two piccolos instead of flutes. This, I suspect, would be brighter and more military (it was written when conscription was enforced), but perhaps far too shrill for the solo, especially in the bars after 83. They could play an octave lower and change back to two flutes at 84.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, Walton observed, "It may be best, as I had done successfully in the Viola Concerto, to cut down the strings while the solo is playing."<sup>61</sup> As is apparent, much attention is given to making sure the soloist is not covered, as well as making sure to always highlight and showcase the soloist.

Another interesting fact of the compositional history of the concerto is that Heifetz's own score, with his own bowings and fingerings, were lost in transport in the long voyage across the Atlantic. Thankfully photographic copies were made in New York in case of such a war-time misfortune, and these copies were safely sent to Oxford University Press in London. A set of gramophone records was also lost in transit, so that neither Walton, nor Henry Holst (the violinist who gave the British premiere) had heard the work before rehearsals began in Britain.<sup>62</sup> The revised score was given its premiere on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1943 with Holst and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Malcolm Sargent. The Goossens recording is therefore the only one of the original version.<sup>63</sup> Heifetz would go on to make a second recording, this time with the revised

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<sup>60</sup> Joiner, Appendix II.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 56-7.

<sup>62</sup> Howes, 89.

<sup>63</sup> Lloyd, 168.

score, on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1950, with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, finally conducted by the composer himself. With regard to Heifetz's playing, "Heifetz's own sound on the violin was entirely unique. He produced an intense tone with a fingertip vibrato that he would adjust to create impeccable nuances...It gave him the flexibility to sculpt every phrase, no matter its difficulty. His tonal palette was vast, and always perfectly coordinated and controlled."<sup>64</sup> This unique coloring is especially useful for Walton's violin concerto, for example at the very outset of the concerto, in the mini-waltz in the 2nd movement, or during the lyrical second theme in the third movement.

"The Violin Concerto, together with *Belshazzar's Feast* and the *First Symphony*, marked the peak of Walton's achievement before the Second World War. He was thirty-seven. None of his subsequent concert works, despite the emergence of several fine scores, was to repeat those successes or to achieve the same level of excellence."<sup>65</sup>

### **Concerto for Violin and Orchestra: Introduction**

Walton pushes many musical boundaries with his Concerto for Violin and Orchestra. His melodies arise in a purely guarded veil only to soar to the heights of the violin register, while his harmonies are lush and teem with passion and melancholy. While obviously following in a romantic tradition, his contrapuntal control would impress the baroque masters. His intricate rhythms, most likely an influence from his study of Stravinsky, are exceedingly challenging. His instructions regarding expression and articulation are painstakingly laid out in detail to insure his musical language. The orchestral *tutti*s of the Violin Concerto can be rich and playful, as well as tempestuous,

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<sup>64</sup> Official Jascha Heifetz Website: [www.jaschaheifetz.com](http://www.jaschaheifetz.com)

<sup>65</sup> Lloyd, 169.

requiring a skilled orchestra to tackle the work. While adhering to traditional musical forms (the first and third movements are in traditional Sonata form, the second movement is a scherzo-trio), Walton stretches the technique, coming up with innovative and creative designs in each movement. At age thirty-seven, Walton composed this milestone work, not only a triumph of his own oeuvre, but a milestone in the canon of violin repertory.

When compared with earlier works, the Violin Concerto shows that Walton has indeed matured as a composer, and that the early works were instrumental in making Walton the skilled and proficient composer he became by 1939. “Walton’s early works established him as the leading young British composer of his generation...it was their bold modernism and freedom from convention that most struck contemporaries. It might well be said that the Violin Concerto finally revealed Walton in his true colors.”<sup>66</sup> Or in another light, “In the three movements of the Concerto are summed up the elements from which, in other forms, have been distilled the romance, the brilliance, the satire, of his earlier works.”<sup>67</sup> It seems there is an element from each of the early works present in the violin concerto: The contrapuntal first theme of the third movement has as much satire and wit as *Façade*, the *tuttis* from the second movement explode with violence akin to the *First Symphony*, and having created successful formal structures in the *Viola Concerto*, Walton adheres to a similar trajectory in his violin concerto. However, “The essential difference from the Viola Concerto: the Violin Concerto is a virtuoso work,” and the researcher continues with a prediction, “...and indeed it may yet prove to be much more important than the other major works.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Calum MacDonald, *Walton, Barber, Bloch: Romantics in the Shadow of War*, (Decca 475 7710 DOR), 3.

<sup>67</sup> Foss, 457.

<sup>68</sup> Avery, 7-8.

In terms of orchestration, Walton had learned much from his early works. Take for example the overture *Portsmouth Point*, composed in 1925: “Walton’s handling of the orchestra in ‘Portsmouth Point’ is skillful; however, there are times when one feels that too many instruments are being used unnecessarily.”<sup>69</sup> Fast-forward a decade and a half, and Walton has arrived at a new plateau: The use of solo woodwind and his distinctive writing for strings and brass are immediately recognizable. “There sometimes seem to be too many notes at a first glance,” André Previn remarked, “the string parts are diabolical. But every semiquaver is necessary to make that sound.”<sup>70</sup> His attention to every minor detail shows his maturation and individualism as a composer.

Another feature of the Violin Concerto to be noted is the juxtaposition between virtuosity and lyricism. The Violin Concerto is not a ‘virtuoso work’ in the tradition of the concertos of Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst or Henryk Wieniawski, and yet, it also doesn’t quite fit in the protracted lines of the concertos of Edward Elgar or Max Reger. Firstly, virtuosity has a perfectly legitimate and even vital place in the concerto,<sup>71</sup> nevertheless, “...to enter into the mood of this work one must put aside all notions of easy brilliance, for Walton is here an artist of sophistication. Certainly he has a severe and penetrating beauty all his own, but it is a beauty rather to ponder over than to thrill to,”<sup>72</sup> and a third point of view is that, “No one could call this Concerto a show piece, dominated by the desire for display of one player against many. It is rather a quiet and contemplative piece of music wherein the violin leads the other players into an ecstatic world of musical thought. The Concerto with Walton is more symphonic, more abstract in conception, than

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>70</sup> Kennedy, 282.

<sup>71</sup> Diana McVeagh, “The Concerto: Contest or Co-Operation?”, *Music & Letters* 28 (2) April, 1947), 117.

<sup>72</sup> E. L., review of *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* by William Walton, (*Music & Letters* 23 (1) January, 1942), 95.

with many composers.”<sup>73</sup> Undeniably there is much dialogue between the solo artist and the orchestra. For example, at the outset of the second movement, the first orchestral *tutti*, of only one measure, invites the first entrance of the solo violin. This statement is brief, to be again taken up by the orchestra. There is a similar conversation back and forth through the movement.

Additionally, the concerto is conceived on a grand scale. The orchestration is intricate and the texture is almost always overflowing with material. “Walton does not write short pieces for bread and butter. He does not sell his sketches. Rather, not being a miniaturist, he needs an area of large ratios. He prepares to make a big work on a big canvas, and sacrifices everything to that work until he is quite certain that he has placed the details in the right proportion. There is nothing haphazard about his composing; no dashing off a little piece in a moment of heated genius.”<sup>74</sup> Not to mention written score, which is “...richly woven with subsidiary thematic material.”<sup>75</sup> The sometimes bombastic, also grandiose writing style means that “...when Walton makes a statement, we have to listen.”<sup>76</sup>

When comparing Walton’s work to other British concertos, one immediately perceives similarities to the violin concerto of Edward Elgar (1857-1934), “...principally because they share the unusual key of B minor, through which each expresses 'a peculiarly personal and introspective' mood, and also because of the accompanied cadenzas towards the ends of their finales.”<sup>77</sup> Elgar’s concerto was successful a generation before: it was premiered by Fritz Kreisler, and of the compositional process,

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<sup>73</sup> Foss, 463.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 458-9.

<sup>75</sup> Edwin Evans, “Modern British Composers”, (*The Musical Times* 85 (1222) December, 1944), 367.

<sup>76</sup> Palmer, 316.

<sup>77</sup> Meikle, 83.

“...Elgar was helped greatly by his knowledge of the violin, which he played competently and for which he had already composed many short pieces.”<sup>78</sup> Although nearly an hour in duration, Elgar’s concerto is sufficiently virtuosic, combining expressive and sentimental melodies into the fabric of the concerto.

There are comparisons to other British composers as well. Frederick Delius (1862-1934) studied the violin with Hans Sitt in Chemnitz, yet his violin concerto, composed in 1916, has not withstood the test of time. “Of the Violin Concerto (1916): the beauty of individual sections offsets formal weaknesses. Delius was not the composer to organize the subtle interplay of forces essential to the concerto form...he was clearly unsure of what to do with his soloists at times, and invented some perfunctory passage-work. Also, linear melody was not one of Delius' strengths and the concertos emphasize this deficiency.”<sup>79</sup> The work is generally more lyrical in nature, with a lack of virtuosity. Delius maintains the English aesthetic of broad and grand gestures, especially in the orchestra, yet even its exciting moments suffer from a hint of placid writing. It is simply not as exhilarating or flashy, nor does it contain emotional depth when compared with its contemporaries.

Arnold Bax (1883-1953), another British composer, was “...briefly considered the leading British symphonist” of his day, and although he “...developed a vivid orchestral style,” by the end of his life much of his earlier music had been forgotten.<sup>80</sup> The Violin Concerto from 1937-8 has also fallen by the wayside in the course of history. The overall impression of the first movement is that of endless passage work with no clear direction, mixed with attempts at lyrical secondary themes. However, these secondary themes drift

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<sup>78</sup> Potter, *Jascha Heifetz – Violin Concertos*, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Lionel Carly, “Delius, Frederick”, (Grove Music Online, Oxford University Press).

<sup>80</sup> Lewis Foreman, “Bax, Sir Arnold”, (Grove Music Online, Oxford University Press).

aimlessly too. The second movement at least has rich orchestral colors and expressive and moving lines in the violin. Although the third movement begins with a spirited dance theme, again it suffers like the first movement from lack of direction...the passage work lingers endlessly, and the listener eventually becomes fatigued from lack of interest. The work has a duration of about thirty-five minutes...if Bax had omitted ten minutes of material, the overall success of the concerto may have been different.

The concertos of Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) and Samuel Barber (1910-1981) have fared much better. They are both sufficiently virtuosic to please both artists and audiences, they are concise in their thematic material, and the orchestrations are grand and thrilling. “Barber's Violin Concerto was begun in Switzerland in the summer of 1939, at about the time that Walton was completing his. Eight years Walton's junior, Barber was a much less established figure.”<sup>81</sup> However, by this time he had already written his *Adagio for Strings*, one of the most popular works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his concerto would also become popular. “Britten completed his Violin Concerto in the summer and autumn of 1939 when Britain declared war. The work opens in a suitably foreboding manner and ends in melancholy and nostalgia.”<sup>82</sup> Both concertos will most likely remain part of the standard repertoire.

### **Concerto for Violin and Orchestra: Analysis**

A detailed analysis of Walton's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra is not within the scope of this paper, and the current author only provides a simple analysis (see Tables) and a brief discussion of the salient features of each movement. Readers seeking

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<sup>81</sup> MacDonald, 4.

<sup>82</sup> Philip Brett, “Britten, Benjamin”, (Grove Music Online, Oxford University Press).



a more detailed analysis are encouraged to read deZeeuw's comprehensive dissertation, Howes' analysis, or Petrocelli's recently published book. From these three extensive discussions, what can be agreed upon is the fact that, "The aggregate impression left by the Violin Concerto is of an almost embarrassing wealth of material."<sup>83</sup>

As previously mentioned, Walton employs traditional formal structures and it is possible to analyze each movement in this way. However, there is more at work here. A reviewer from a Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra with Gil Shaham as soloist articulates the experience of Walton's use of form:

The concerto at least touches on traditional forms. But that's not how I heard it. All three movements pass as contrasting episodes involving slower, more lyrical music on the one hand and wild dashes of the other. The melodic and harmonic stuff of these episodes relate to one another in various ways, but you don't really perceive themes recurring and then developing and then recurring again, as you do with Beethoven or Brahms (Walton's way of never repeating anything intact has a lot to do with that).<sup>84</sup>

Perhaps because he was largely self-taught, he relies on his own will when it comes to form, and doesn't feel the need to be pressured into composing with stringent rules. By this point in his career he has found his individual path, and rather than adhere to any school, he forges his own way. Although themes can be identified, it seems Walton is after the overall musical perception, "...not only in form, but also in mood; it is apparently the composer's purpose to create a certain tantalizing suspense. There is, in fact, some sort of willful enigma in Walton's music, as if he were indulging in a musical acrostic."<sup>85</sup>

Although the title states that the concerto is in B minor, tonality must nevertheless be addressed when discussing any 20<sup>th</sup> century work. Like Walton's conception of form,

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<sup>83</sup> Evans, 367.

<sup>84</sup> Tom Strini, "Gil Shaham Masters Walton's Violin Concerto", (*Third Coast Digest* March, 2011), 1.

<sup>85</sup> E. L., 96.

it is not entirely logical to analyze the tonality with any strict rules. Rather than isolate each individual chord progression, it is perhaps more productive to see tonal centers in the Violin Concerto. “Walton’s use of a tonal center throughout the various sections of the concerto reflects a possible affinity with tonality, even though...these tonalities as related to each other are not used in a conventional way i.e. tonic vs. dominant relations.”<sup>86</sup>

## I *Andante Tranquillo*

The first movement opens with a dark, ominous orchestral accompaniment in B minor. With no orchestral *tutti* that introduces themes, the concerto is in keeping with the tradition of similar outsets of concertos of the past, for example, those by Jean Sibelius and Felix Mendelssohn. Many thoughts have been expressed about the beginning of Walton’s work, mostly concerning the first theme. “The opening theme of the Violin Concerto is about the most typical Waltonian melody there is,”<sup>87</sup> and “The opening melody is radiant and lyrical and is one of the longest and most convincing melodies Walton ever created. Played *sognando* (dreamily), it soars gloriously high.”<sup>88</sup>

Much has also been said about the rising seventh interval which appears in the anacrusis to measure 7, and plays a prominent role throughout the work. “The rising seventh gives the melody its yearning quality,”<sup>89</sup> and, “The Major seventh asserts itself to be one of the primary stylistic features of the concerto; a glance at the score at almost any

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<sup>86</sup> Robert Pipkin, *An Analysis of William Walton’s Concerto For Violin and Orchestra*, (Thesis, North Texas State College), 43.

<sup>87</sup> Edward Greenfield, review of *Walton Violin Concerto*, (*The Musical Times* 102 (1420) June, 1961), 369.

<sup>88</sup> Horner, 5.

<sup>89</sup> Kennedy, 102.

point throughout the three movements reveals the use of a Major 7th either melodically or harmonically.”<sup>90</sup> The rising seventh is also prevalent in the Violin Sonata, written later in Walton’s career: “The violin cantilena soars as easily and with the same freedom as an operatic vocal line.”<sup>91</sup> In any case, “...the melody which opens the Violin Concerto of William Walton: A melody is a purely intentional object of musical perception, something we hear in a sequence when we respond to its musical potential.”<sup>92</sup> Whatever individual scholars have said, it would appear that all agree that Walton achieved the musical perception he intended: a dreaming, yearning, searching quality at the dawn of this concerto.

In terms of thematic material, the first theme proper appears almost immediately; it is actually a double theme, one melody for the solo violin, a countermelody appearing in the bassoon with half the cellos. “The double melody introduces us to the expressive world, intimate and intense at the same time,”<sup>93</sup> where the second theme is hidden away “...in a delicate piece of counterpoint.”<sup>94</sup> This concealed theme in the orchestra, which begins at the anacrusis to m. 4, comes to fruition later in the movement at the anacrusis to m. 232 in the solo violin part.

A remarkable feature of this movement is a testament to Walton’s genius as a composer: his ability to modify and alter his themes. “The themes and the rhythms continually evolve and re-create themselves.”<sup>95</sup> “The elasticity of Walton’s themes, for the main tune, though repeated again and again throughout the movement, never appears

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<sup>90</sup> Pipkin, 24.

<sup>91</sup> Murrill, 210-11.

<sup>92</sup> Roger Scruton, *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music*, (New York: Routledge), 30.

<sup>93</sup> Michael Steinberg, *The Concerto: A Listener’s Guide*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 499.

<sup>94</sup> E. L., 96.

<sup>95</sup> Pipkin, 23.

in the same guise, and yet it is always unmistakably the same tune.”<sup>96</sup> Like Elgar before him, Walton can also spin a model of ‘developing variation’: a single motif put through a series of varied sequential hoops.<sup>97</sup> However, in the beguiling world Walton has created, this feature goes unnoticed and is difficult for the listener to perceive. Yet without the developing variations, the material may sound uninspired and monotonous.

The movement progresses in a fairly typical Sonata form, although the B-theme is exceptionally short in the recapitulation. See Table 1 for an analysis of this movement. Also, “the development is an extremely frenzied section.”<sup>98</sup> The challenging development section in particular can be seen as a testament for Walton composing with Heifetz in mind.

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<sup>96</sup> Avery, 8.

<sup>97</sup> Northcott, 184.

<sup>98</sup> Pipkin, 25.

**Table 1:** Formal Structure of First Movement, *Andante Tranquillo*

## Exposition

A	m. 1-44
B	m. 45-69

Transition/ Cadential m. 70-74

## Development

Fragments of	m. 75-220
A and B	

Transition/ Cadential/ Dominant Pedal m. 221-231

## Recapitulation

A	m. 231-274
B, briefly	m. 265-268

+ extra theme: orchestra pickup to m. 4: reappears in m. 231 in solo part

## II

### *Presto capriccioso alla napolitana – Trio (Canzonetta)*

The second movement, a rather traditional scherzo – trio – scherzo, employs a number of stark contrasts. Every musical element goes to the extreme: dynamics go from a muted soloist to a *ff tutti*; changes in mood abound, beginning with a virtuosic statement of the main theme, to a sardonic waltz, to a shadowy Trio; the register peaks and drops, “... in both directions, down and up, and permeates, on and off, the greater part of the movement,”<sup>99</sup> and the texture alternates constantly between orchestra and soloist. “That Walton was ever concerned that the concerto might lack the bravura to attract Heifetz when he had written a movement as brilliant and difficult as the Scherzo is hard to believe. The movement seems to be poised on a knife-edge.”<sup>100</sup> Usually virtuosity is traditionally reserved for 3rd movement placement, for example in the Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Wieniawski, and the Sibelius concertos. However, in this work, the bulk of the fireworks occur in the 2nd movement.

The inspiration for the outright ferocity and vehemence of the first theme of this movement came out of a real-life ordeal: Walton was bitten by a tarantula! “Having been bitten by a tarantula...a rare and dangerous and unpleasant experience, I have celebrated the occasion by the 2nd movement being a kind of tarantella. Quite gaga I may say.”<sup>101</sup> The tarantella dance therefore begins the 2nd movement, and while already a turbulent beginning, Walton was, “...Urged by Heifetz to make it difficult...throwing in a storm of irregular accented triplets and constant changes of dynamics, bow-strokes, and specific

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<sup>99</sup> Evans, 367.

<sup>100</sup> Kennedy, 103.

<sup>101</sup> Hayes, 116.

notes within a sequence.”<sup>102</sup> One can just imagine Heifetz’s delight when first perusing the score.

One passage must be addressed, and can be understood as problematic. Upon first hearing this movement, the listener may mistake the material at m. 46 (specifically 8 measures after [31]) as the Trio section. If this area is labeled as the secondary B-theme, then the confusion can be avoided. This movement therefore, “...almost has the makings of two trios, which is presumably why he found it necessary to label the real trio (at [36]), lest the tune at [31] be mistaken for it.”<sup>103</sup> See Table 2 for an analysis of this movement.

Another hurdle for the listener is that the tonality is slightly ambiguous, since the notes which make up the thematic material (A C# E F) create an Augmented triad which could resolve in a number of different directions.<sup>104</sup> The tonal center could be described as ‘A’, neither favoring the major or minor mode. Even the final *pizzicato* chord from the soloist begs the question of tonality because the listener is left with only the tonic and dominant of A. It seems that Walton has left a paradox that can be continually debated.

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<sup>102</sup> Horner, 5.

<sup>103</sup> Meikle, 87.

<sup>104</sup> Anne Marie deZeeuw, *Tonality and the Concertos of William Walton*, (Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin), 216.

**Table 2:** Formal Structure of the Second Movement,  
*Presto capriccioso alla napolitana – Trio (Canzonetta)*

Scherzo:

A m. 1-9

A' m. 10-28 – extended: double harmonics and alternating  
*pizzicato*

Transition m. 29-41

B m. 42-68 – the ‘waltz’

A'' m. 69-88 – different pitch, quintuplets

Transition m. 89-101

Trio (Canzonetta) m. 102-164

Scherzo return:

A''' m. 166-186 – same orchestral material, violin in sixteenth  
 notes

Transition m. 187-196

A'''' m. 197-218 – similar to previous A-section, but different  
 pitch

Transition m. 219-229

B' m. 230-235 – *con sord.*

Trio fragment m. 236-241

A''''' m. 242-252 – *con sord.* and *sul pont.*



### III *Vivace*

The final movement of the concerto can also be classified as a Sonata-form movement, albeit with some expectations thwarted and the inclusion of cyclic elements: the A-theme from the first movement returns and has a prominent role. See Table 3 for an analysis of this movement. After the vigorous and playful A section, a brief transition sets up the B theme, which is loving and passionate, as though it could have been composed for the greatest romance movie of the 1940's. An important compositional technique that Walton adds to the score is the *glissando* marking between certain shifts. Whereas the performer may take his own liberty in choice of slides and shifts, Walton makes sure to pick only certain intervals at certain points in the music for the purpose of effect. Keeping in the overall concept of the concerto is the abundant use of the interval of a Major 7<sup>th</sup>, which is used time and again in this theme.

One of the more important features of the Finale is the motivic variations Walton employs. For example, the listener may mistake the solo material at m. 86 as a new theme; however, in reality it is merely an outgrowth of the A material. Or, put another way, "The principal theme of the Finale is a fertile generator of counter-subjects whose derivation is, however, not made manifest until later in the movement."<sup>105</sup> This is especially true in the development section.

The development is relatively long when comparing the proportions of the rest of the movement, yet it is wildly exciting. Using almost exclusively A-theme material, Walton cycles through keys, going up and down the register of the violin, using triple stops and octaves to vary the theme in the solo part. One peculiar passage occurs at m.

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<sup>105</sup> Evans, 367.

158 where the solo violin plays a mini-waltz, full of Major 7ths, whilst the orchestra continues the excitement, but it is over almost before it begins, and the following *poco animando* builds to an exhilarating *più animato* section.

What happens next is fascinating from a compositional point of view: a false recapitulation occurs. From m. 216 to m. 225 the solo part essentially has a dominant pedal, followed by the A-theme, which is in a lyrical style. However, the B-theme interrupts shortly thereafter (m. 233) *sans* transition, which is a major difference to the exposition, and before long, there is another dominant pedal (m. 243). Therefore, the recapitulation proper only begins in m. 249, the orchestra giving a long introduction before the violin enters, again with double and triple stops exactly like the opening of the movement.

Walton again plays with the expectation of the listener: instead of a return to the B-theme after the transition, the A-theme from the first movement returns. The cyclic nature of this point in the concerto is especially remarkable because Walton continues the material of the third movement in the orchestra, juxtaposed with the theme from the beginning of the concerto, and this takes the place of where the B-theme would have been if it returned in the recapitulation. This represents a testament to Walton's creativity as a composer.

Yet another notable feature is the composition of an accompanied cadenza in this final movement. Walton was obviously indebted to his successor, Edward Elgar, who was the first to use this technique. Walton's cadenza is "...lovingly modeled on the dream-cadenza in the third movement of Elgar's Violin Concerto...and like Elgar, he

actually uses the word *sognando*.”<sup>106</sup> Although much of the cadenza plays out in a subdued and lamenting character, there are moments of acute furor, and it comes to a close with a similar method employed in the first movement: held fermata notes in the solo violin. DeZeeuw also notes the traditional use of tonality in this cadenza in that it, “...begins in the most orthodox possible fashion with a cadential 6/4 chord and closes with a dominant-tonic cadence, which dispels any lingering doubts the listener may entertain concerning the key.”<sup>107</sup> After the tonic is established, a short transition leads to the jovial coda, marked *alla marcia*. After a virtuosic display, the concerto finishes with a descending 7<sup>th</sup> in the solo violin in the tonic. The use of a 7<sup>th</sup> yet again shows the importance that this special interval has had in the cohesion of the concerto in its entirety.

As can be seen from the analysis, this movement is exceedingly multifaceted in its construction. It is by far the longest of the movements, and when attempting to analyze it with traditional methods, it contains many irregularities of form. For these reasons, the concerto is end driven, the balance of weight of the concerto lies heavily here in the Finale.

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<sup>106</sup> Steinberg, 501.

<sup>107</sup> deZeeuw, 240.

**Table 3:** Formal Structure of the Third Movement, *Vivace*

## Exposition

A m. 1-50  
 Transition m. 51-63  
 B m. 64-80

## Development

A m. 81-157  
 ‘waltz’ m. 158-173 (still A material in orchestra)  
 A m. 174-219  
 Transition m. 220-224

## False Recapitulation

A m. 225-232  
 B m. 233-242  
 Transition m. 243-248 (Dominant Pedal in soprano)

## Recapitulation

A m. 249-347  
 Transition m. 348-353  
 False B: m. 354-384 (Material from First Movement)  
 Cadenza: m. 385-410  
 Transition m. 411-428 using A material

Coda m. 429-464

### **Chapter 3: Historical Impact**

In an editorial by Gramophone Magazine, the Walton Concerto for Violin and Orchestra was placed on the list of Top Ten 20th century violin concertos, a pedestal shared with the violin concertos of Jean Sibelius, Alban Berg, and Dmitri Shostakovich. Although only a trifling of an article, it begs the question of what makes this work a great concerto to be compared with the other greats of the violin repertory. There are numerous reasons why the Violin Concerto of William Walton has had a significant impact on the musical world since the time of its composition. Firstly, it was written for Heifetz, an artist of unsurpassed greatness in the past century, and because of this fact, the concerto is exceedingly difficult, expanding the possibilities of violin technique. Both these factors have in turn made a change in the possibilities of composing for the violin. Since its composition more than seventy years ago, more artists are beginning to record this concerto, and when compared to other British violin concertos composed around the same time, the Walton stands out as the most prevalent in terms of performance and recording history. Finally, the concerto has indirectly influenced other composers and artists, and also directly affected the composition of later works. For these reasons, Walton's Violin Concerto has made a significant historical impact.

#### **i. Written for Heifetz**

Although Heifetz commissioned several works, and other concertos were dedicated to him, "...without a doubt, Heifetz's most successful commission was Walton's Violin Concerto."<sup>108</sup> As can be seen from the above discussion, Heifetz was selective about choosing the new repertoire he would play: it had to have the right balance of virtuosic

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<sup>108</sup> Potter, *Jascha Heifetz (1901-1987)*, 3.

writing, but still be of good musical value. It is therefore important to note that Walton had a blank slate on which he could compose anything he desired, knowing that Heifetz would perform his work as faultlessly as any other. “In such a case, it is illuminating to look for the aspects of that performer’s playing style that must have influenced the composer. This is of particular significance in the first half of the 20th century, when playing styles varied greatly.”<sup>109</sup> Also important to note is that “...Heifetz’s perfection inspired many performers of his time and historically raised the level of violin playing forever. In addition, many composers who dedicated their works to Heifetz now felt free to write a piece at any technical level, thus adding new repertoire to the music literature.”<sup>110</sup> Brosa’s quote rings more true than ever when considering the Violin Concerto of Walton: “Well, nowadays you can write anything you like for the violin.”<sup>111</sup> Just as Paganini had done over a century ago, Heifetz can be seen as a new plateau of excellence of performance, Walton’s concerto walking hand in hand with the virtuoso.

## ii. Expansion of Violin Technique

It is therefore necessary to analyze the challenges Walton created for his single foray into the violin concerto genre. Not all the elements are novel to violin technique, but taken together, they form a concerto of immense difficulty, requiring an artist of mature musicianship and a solid technical foundation to conquer it. The technical elements Walton requires of this artist include: a) extreme high register, b) double to quadruple stops, c) alternating *pizzicato* and bowed passages, d) complex rhythms, e) extended

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<sup>109</sup> Jae Won (Noella) Jung, *Jascha Heifetz, David Oistrakh, Joseph Szigeti: Their Contributions to the Violin Repertoire of the Twentieth Century*, (Dissertation, The Florida State University College of Music), 1.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 9.

passages in thirds and sixths, f) alternating between *sul ponticello* and normal playing, g) articulations over every note, h) left-hand *pizzicato*, i) double-stop trills, j) double-stop harmonics. These are all specific examples; however, some other general difficulties can also be mentioned including long passages of fast, ‘random’ 16<sup>th</sup> notes, and throughout the concerto, many large shifts, sometimes in double stops.

In addition to these technical demands, there is another feature that makes Walton’s Violin Concerto difficult: the frequent use of tempo and *rubato* markings. While he provides precise metronome markings, there is still a great deal left up to the performer: the score is littered with extra indications for tempo and mood alterations. For example, in one short fifteen measure section of the first movement, there are seven different markings in regard to tempo (m. 183 to m. 197) area: *allarg.* – *rit...molto* – *poco meno mosso* – *poco rit.* – *quasi ad lib.* – *poco allarg.* – *Vivace sub.* In each of these cases, the right balance must be found and performed in good taste, making enough of a difference to show the changes, and not taking too many liberties to distort the line, otherwise the effectiveness of the music may be lost.

Figure 1a: Example of high register: First movement, m. 33-36



Figure 1b: Example of high register: First movement, m. 121-122



Figure 2a: Example of multiple stops: Third movement, m. 35-39



Figure 2b: Example of multiple stops: Third movement, m. 123-131

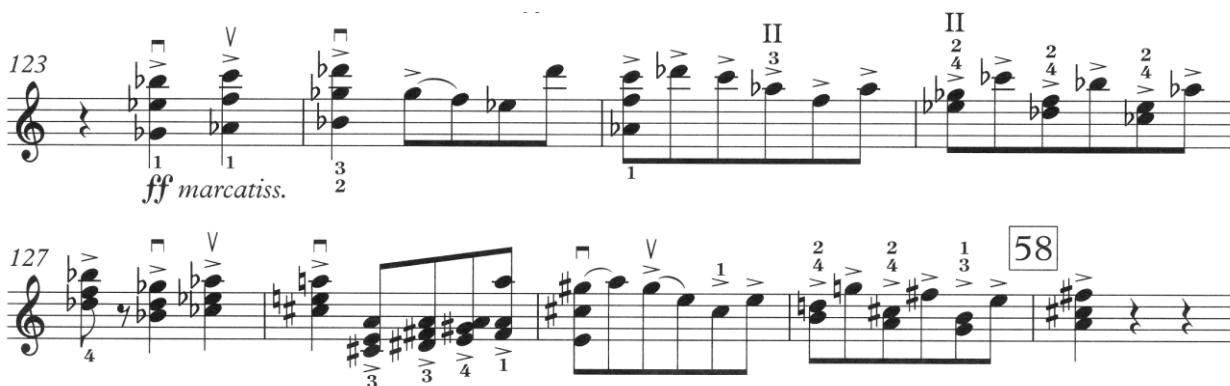
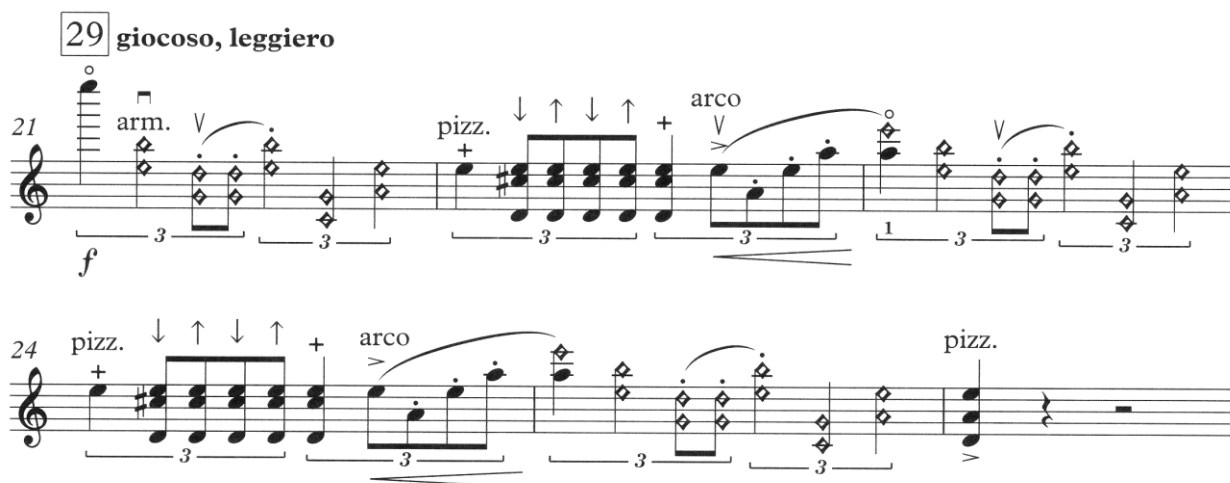
Figure 3: Alternating *pizzicato* vs. bowed passage, Second movement, m. 21-26



Figure 4: Example of complex rhythm: Second movement, m. 75-76: quintuplets

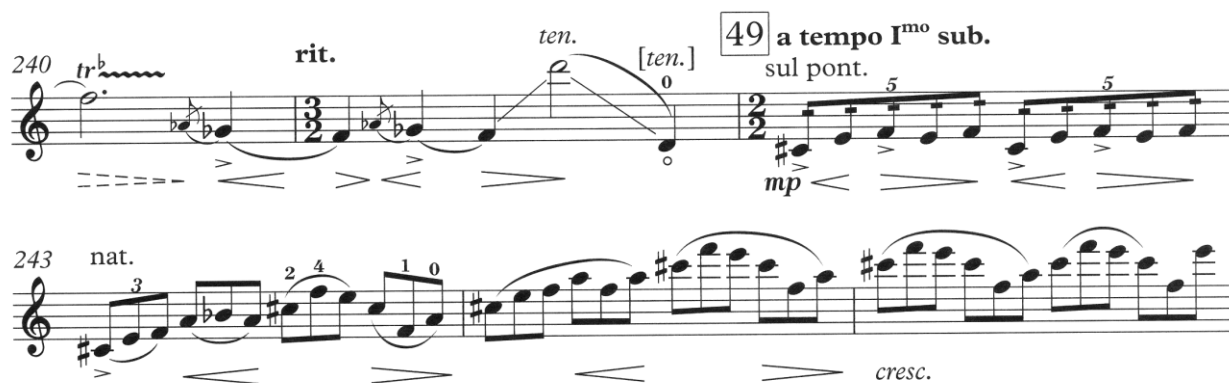
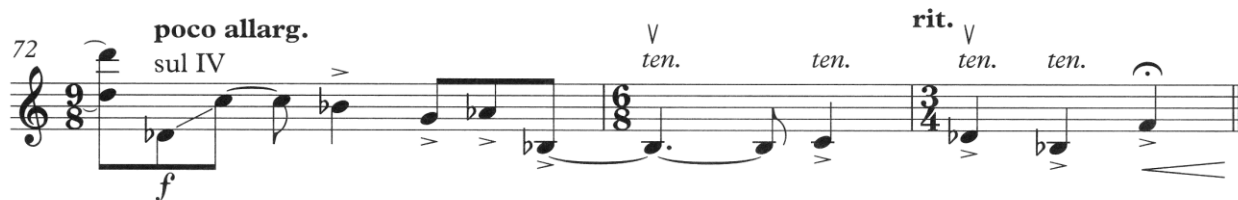
Figure 5: Alternating *sul ponticello* and natural playing: Second movement, m. 240-245Figure 6a: Articulations over every note: First movement, m. 72-74: *tenuto*

Figure 6b: Articulations over every note: First movement, m. 113: accents and staccato marking



Figure 7: Left-hand *pizzicato*: Second movement, m. 36

Figure 8: Double-stop trill: Second movement, m. 236-7



Figure 9a: Double-stop harmonics: First movement, m. 273-274

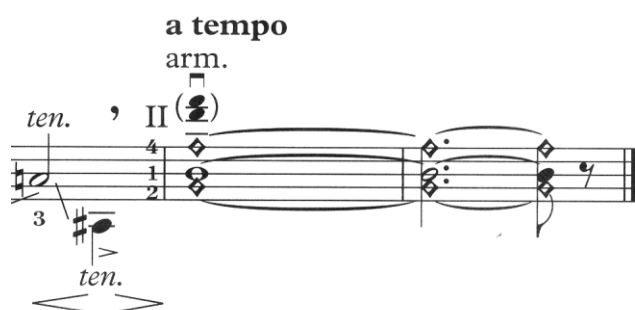


Figure 9b: Double-stop harmonics: Second movement, m. 79-85



Figure 10: Example of extensive passage work of “random” and rapid notes: Second movement, m. 214-219

Figure 10 shows a musical score for measures 214-219. The score is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features rapid sixteenth-note passages with various fingering numbers (1-4) and articulation marks. Measure 214 starts with a fermata over a half note. Measure 216 has a *ff* dynamic marking. Measure 218 has a boxed number '47' above it. The piece ends with a double bar line and a final chord.

Figure 11: Example of long shifts: Third movement, m. 222-228

Figure 11 shows a musical score for measures 220-228. The score is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features long shifts and trills. Measure 220 has a trill (*tr*) and a *colla parte* instruction. Measure 225 has a boxed number '64' and a tempo instruction *a tempo come prima*. Measure 227 has an *8va* instruction. The piece ends with a double bar line and a final chord.

### iii. Expansion of Composition Technique

Due to the immense technical difficulties of the concerto, Walton's work can be seen as an example of a shift in composers' allowance to take more and more liberties in the second half of the 20th century. Yehudi Menuhin was astonished by the 'minuteness of planning, indicating expressive marks in unusual detail, tiny *crescendo* and *diminuendi* on single notes.'<sup>112</sup> An excellent example of Walton seeking to have exact control in having the performer play the he envisioned the concert can be found in the third movement lyrical theme: where performers may be tempted to put in extra shifts or *glissandi* where they see fit, Walton has marked exactly which shifts are to be embellished. This idea of the composer having absolute control is foreshadowed in a moment like this, only to come to fruition with later concertos. Some examples include a) in the second movement of Alfred Schnittke's *Concerto Grosso No. 6* (1993), the *glissandos* are marked between notes, b) in Elliott Carter's *Violin Concerto* (1990) there are many rapid dynamic changes that occur throughout the work, and c) in Krzysztof Penderecki's 'Metamorphosen' *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 2* (1992-1995) there exist a plethora of articulation marks and passages in the extreme high register. Concertos of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century have more and more effects, some composers even inventing their own articulations when traditional technical elements do not suffice, meaning they require a legend at the beginning of the score to fulfill the composer's wishes.

### iv. Comparison to Other British Composers

When compared with other British composers of the time, "Walton's standing as one of the foremost British composers of his generation was that he was asked, in 1936, to

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 10.

contribute music for the forthcoming coronation of Edward VIII,”<sup>113</sup> indeed an important distinction. That request, plus the success of his early works cemented Walton’s position in British musical life. And when the London Philharmonic Orchestra toured in Russia,

The Russians had insisted that what they wanted most to hear was the music of British composers, and the problem of drawing up programmes proved a neat exercise in musical diplomacy as far as living composers are concerned. From contemporary work we selected Walton’s Symphony and Violin Concerto, among other works. We were given the most enthusiastic ovation we have ever known on the first night of the tour.<sup>114</sup>

This account is important as it proves the selection committee could have chosen any number of British violin concertos, but they chose Walton’s concerto to be the example of how the genre was defined in his generation. The committee could easily have selected another concerto of a contemporary British composer, such as Arnold Bax or Arthur Benjamin.

More specifically, Tobias Bröker has compiled a website: [violinconcert.de](http://violinconcert.de), which is a database of violin concertos of the 20th century. When narrowing search results to only ‘Great Britain’ and ‘Violin Concerto’ and ‘Concerto for Violin and Orchestra’ 475 works are revealed. While the bulk of these concertos are written in the latter half of the century, twenty-nine of them are composed around the time of Walton, specifically between 1930 and 1950.

These twenty-nine works are not known today, and few recordings of them have been made. Currently listed are only the works labeled as ‘concerto’ with the exclusion of other works for violin and orchestra including fantasies, romances, concertino, serenades, and double/ triple concertos.

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<sup>113</sup> Giroud, 27.

<sup>114</sup> Maurice Pepper, “The London Philharmonic Orchestra in Russia”, (*The Musical Times* 98 (1368) February, 1957), 67.

Search results for ‘Great Britain’ and ‘Violin Concerto’ between 1930 and 1950 include:

1930 Christian Darnton  
 1930 Stanley Wilson  
 1932 Arthur Benjamin “Dedicated to William Walton with great admiration”  
 1932 Arthur Somervell  
 1933 Haydn Wood  
 1934 Alexander Brent-Smith  
 1934 Douglas Coates  
 1935 Havergal Brian  
 1937 Stanley Bate – No. 1  
 1937 Norman Demuth  
 1937 Robin Milford  
 1939 Benjamin Britten  
 1939 Richard Hall  
 1939 William Alwyn  
 1940 Richard Arnell  
 1941 Richard Dyson  
 1941 Ernest John Moeran  
 1941 Ronald Smith  
 1943 Stanley Bate – No. 2  
 1945 Walter Thomas Gaze Cooper  
 1948 Alan Bush  
 1950 Stanley Bate – No. 3  
 1950 Grace Williams

Search results for ‘Great Britain’ and ‘Concerto for Violin and Orchestra’ between 1930 and 1950 include:

1937 Arnold Bax  
 1939 Richard Arnell  
 \*1939 William Walton  
 1943 Bernard Stevens  
 1945 Alan Rawsthorne  
 1950 Peter Racine Fricker

## **v. Recording History**

Since Heifetz’s recordings, many other artists have recorded Walton’s Violin Concerto, some more successfully than others. Undeniably, the work’s complexity has “...made the task of presenting a lucid, shapely performance extremely difficult, even for

a virtuoso artiste.”<sup>115</sup> Even some 20<sup>th</sup> century masters have received negative reviews of their questionable performances, including Zino Francescatti: “...a slightly whiny vibrato has not the right sense of repose,”<sup>116</sup> and Yehudi Menuhin: “In the Violin Concerto, and especially in the Finale, a strained technique is only too evident...Menuhin seems to be laboring heavily.”<sup>117</sup>

However, other artists have garnered much praise, even from the composer himself. For example, of Kyung-Wha Chung’s recording, Walton wrote in a letter, “Superb! As good as Heifetz or Francescatti.”<sup>118</sup> And he was obviously impressed with Menuhin’s recording, for he wrote in a letter, “Your playing is absolutely astounding, in fact I am unable to conjure up adequate superlatives for your interpretation and performance,”<sup>119</sup> and in a letter to Griselda Kentner the same day, Walton wrote, “You must get the recording your brother-in-law has made of my Viola and Violin Concertos. Both performances are fantastically good – I can hardly believe it – and won’t Heifetz be cross.”<sup>120</sup> Although Oistrakh never recorded the Violin Concerto, Walton’s praise of Oistrakh’s playing of the concerto is shown in a letter, “Would it be possible to bring over David Oistrakh the Russian violinist? I heard him in a quite stupendous performance of the Violin Concerto from Moscow last week...I believe he would make a tremendous sensation.”<sup>121</sup>

So much for the recordings made during Walton’s lifetime. “Today this brilliant, sensuous, and successful concerto has gone into the repertoire of leading violinists the

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<sup>115</sup> Tierney, 87.

<sup>116</sup> Greenfield, 369.

<sup>117</sup> Hugh Ottoway, review of *Violin Concerto by Walton: Menuhin*, (*The Musical Times* 111 (1970) July 1970), 720.

<sup>118</sup> Hayes, 447.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 389.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 389.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

world over and is as well-loved as any of Walton's works."<sup>122</sup> In Appendix I of Joiner's dissertation, "The Violin Concerto of William Walton," the researcher notes, "The Walton Violin Concerto has enjoyed a steady and illustrious performance history since its premiere. Appendix I contains a listing of the performances of the work in the USA since 1952. Over seventy performances have been given in the past thirty years. Every indication suggests that the piece will continue to be performed."<sup>123</sup> The dissertation was published in 1983, and at that point, violinists associated with the violin concerto included Kyung-Wha Chung, Zino Francescatti, Berl Senofsky, Sidney Harth, Aaron Rosand, Miriam Fried, and Yehudi Menuhin. Now, almost thirty years later, many more recordings can be added to that Appendix. The following is a partial list of recordings made from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up to the present day:

Salvatore Accardo

London Symphony Orchestra, Richard Hickox, March 8, 2011 Label: Musical Concepts

Joshua Bell

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, David Zinman, January 9, 2007 Label: Decca

Thomas Bowes

Malmö Opera Orchestra, Joseph Swensen, June 28, 2011 Label: Signum UK

James Ehnes

Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Bramwell Tovey, October 31, 2006 Label: CBC

Ida Haendel

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Paavo Berglund, 1978, re-mastered, 1992 Label: EMI

Dong-Suk Kang

English Northern Philharmonia, Paul Daniel, Oct. 26, 1999 Label: Naxos

Nigel Kennedy

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Andre Previn, Oct. 25, 1990 Label: EMI

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<sup>122</sup> Craggs and Kennedy, 28.

<sup>123</sup> Joiner, 36.



Tasmin Little  
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Litton, Jan. 23, 1996 Label: Polygram  
Records

Lydia Mordkovitch  
The London Philharmonic, Jan Latham-Koenig, 1992 Label: Chandos

Kurt Nikkanen  
New Haven Symphony Orchestra, William Boughton, Aug. 10, 2010 Label: Nimbus  
Records

Akiko Suwanai  
City of Birmingham Symphony, Sakari Oramo, Sept. 2, 2008 Label: Decca Import

Camilla Wicks  
Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Juri Simonov, March 30, 2000 Label: Simax Classics

Joiner concludes, “If the success of a 20th century musical work is measured by its frequency of performances, the William Walton Violin Concerto proves a success.”<sup>124</sup> As can be seen from the list of recordings, international artists have chosen to record the work, and it appears that this will be a continuing trend. Recordings are important for another factor: “The activity of dedicated performers is extremely important...no amount of musicological research can replace the work of the performer, for it is fruitless to transcribe, publish, and study this music if it is not to be played or sung.”<sup>125</sup> In the case of the Walton Violin Concerto, it seems the musicological activity is working hand-in-hand with performances. Further recent performances and recordings are complemented with more articles, books, and dissertations being written on the subject.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>125</sup> Rey M. Longyear, “Principles of Neglected Musical Repertoire”, (*Journal of Research in Music*), 175-6.

## vi. Indirect Influences/ Quotes

Related to the performance and recording history are the testimonials from certain artists. Because these artists have perpetuated the concerto's popularity, it is significant to note their opinions. These quotes are further proof of the work's importance. Eugene Goossens, who conducted the original version with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Heifetz on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1941, has said,

“Willy's concerto is really an amazing piece of work. I know no contemporary concerto which could approach it for technical complexity and well-knit structure. It also has great lyric beauty and Heifetz played it for all it's worth. It is one of the hardest things I have ever had to accompany... Willy is to be congratulated on a real 'tour de force', and I think it proves him to be at all odds the most important figure in contemporary 'Young England music'.”<sup>126</sup>

James Ehnes, a Canadian violinist who won a Grammy for his “Barber/ Korngold/ Walton: Violin Concertos,” album has stated,

“William Walton's Violin Concerto is, in my opinion, one of the great masterpieces of its genre. I think that Walton's reputation in general is unfairly overshadowed by Elgar from the older generation, and Britten from the slightly younger generation...but I think his unique voice can now be fully appreciated, now that time has given us some sense of perspective regarding music of the 20th century. I would hope that his lasting reputation will be as one of the great composers of the 1900's. It has all the qualities one would wish to find in a violin concerto – beautiful soaring melodies, rich orchestral accompaniment, and certainly a great deal of virtuoso firepower. I hope that its popularity continues to rise, and that I will have many opportunities in the future to perform this wonderful work.”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Lloyd, 167.

<sup>127</sup> Paolo Petrocelli, *The Resonance of a Small Voice*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), Appendix, 117-18.

Salvatore Accardo, an Italian violinist who recorded Walton's Violin Concerto in 1991 provides much praise in saying, "Walton's genius is colossal! This concerto, beyond the fact of its technique and violinistic approach, moved me deeply."<sup>128</sup>

Finally, Tasmin Little has said of the concerto, "The Walton Violin Concerto has suffered less neglect than say the Delius concertos. I'm not quite sure why – except, perhaps that Walton's music sparkles more overtly and most of his orchestral works are quite showy so that people can get excited by their color, vitality, and virtuosity."<sup>129</sup>

### **vii. Lasting Appeal to Artists, Students, and Public**

Not only does the Walton Violin Concerto retain its appeal with recording artists, it is also important to note its importance for study. "The college and university campus is the best place for the study and performance of neglected musical repertoire. A performer or conductor on the campus is free from the usual box-office pressures."<sup>130</sup> Not that the Walton concerto is a 'neglected work', rather it is an extremely difficult work, for the soloist, conductor, and orchestra, and it is probable that many musicians shy away from the challenge.

"The violin part, in which Jascha Heifetz had a hand, is insane, a minefield of careening scales at breakneck speeds, lyrical lines that soar to the very top of the instrument, violent rhythms at high speed, and thickets of fast-moving multiple stops. Bumpy syncopations and nasty meter changes make the piece tough for the orchestra, too."<sup>131</sup>

This reinforces the idea that in a university setting, Walton's concerto is an ideal piece to work on: it stretches the technique of the student; it presents problems when

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>129</sup> Official William Walton Website: <http://williamwalton.net>

<sup>130</sup> Longyear, 176.

<sup>131</sup> Strini, 1.

attempting to memorize the work; and overall can increase the musicianship of a student greatly. After practicing this precarious concerto, the student will most definitely reach a new plateau of playing. Also, the difficulty can be appealing. For example, to master a Paganini caprice brings a sense of accomplishment, and conquering (even attempting?) the Walton concerto brings about a similar sentiment.

### **viii. Direct Influence on Later Compositions**

Walton's Violin Concerto has also directly affected the composition of later works.

Hans Werner Henze, a German composer and perhaps one of the most important European composers of the post-war era revealed that:

“William Walton's Violin Concerto, recorded by Jascha Heifetz...I'd never encountered anything similar and I remember being enchanted by the elegance of the melodic and thematic composition. I found the piece to be charming and when, years later, I wrote my first Violin Concerto I most certainly had that piece's Waltonian tessitura in mind. He created a quite elegant and seductive musical language that avoids scandalous solutions. He knows how to express an idea that was freely erotic yet never vulgar. The elegant style is for Walton the point of departure of any musical construction.”<sup>132</sup>

John Corigliano was also affected by the work. His father, John Sr., was the concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic, and performed Walton's Violin Concerto, which “...added further to his fascination with contemporary music.”<sup>133</sup> Interestingly, in 2000, Corigliano won an Academy Award for his score of *The Red Violin*, and three years later would write his own violin concerto based on the music for the film. Whether it is a stretch to make the following connection is up to interpretation and debate: There are many similarities when comparing the two concerti: if Walton's concerto affected

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<sup>132</sup> Petrocelli, Appendix, 116.

<sup>133</sup> Richard Rodda, *Program 5*, (Peninsula Music Festival), 2.

him as a youth, perhaps consciously or subconsciously Corigliano composed with bassoons and trombones in their low register (a similar opening to Walton's concerto), and "Anna's Theme" is very melancholy, solemn, and goes through many variations (just like the first theme in Walton's concerto). Both composers writing scores for film only strengthens the argument.

Another violin concerto with numerous similarities is Korngold's Violin Concerto from 1945. It is not in the capacity of this paper to make a detailed comparison, yet it is important to note the parallels: both composers wrote film music, and both mastered a neo-romantic idiom. Although Bronislaw Huberman, a Polish violinist, convinced Korngold to compose a violin concerto, the work would eventually be premiered by Heifetz on Feb. 15, 1947. Korngold's concerto also has a rich orchestration, providing a similar backdrop for the soloist between gorgeous melody and furious virtuosity. A final thought to consider is that the first theme of Korngold's concerto also opens with a Major 7<sup>th</sup> as the central feature. It would be interesting to compare these two works more closely.

Finally, the remaining person Walton influenced was himself. In his opera *Troilus and Cressida* "...Cressida's arias have a pervasive melodic melancholy that grips the heart of the listener- although, ultimately, not as unforgettable as the comparable music of the Violin Concerto...while Troilus in Act III has the ring of genuine operatic love-music."<sup>134</sup> According to this researcher, perhaps the quality of this late work does not measure up with the concerto, yet an argument can be made that the Neo-Romantic style of his early days foreshadowed some later works. There is a distinct similarity in passion and emotion of melody between these works. Comparably, the Cello Concerto of 1956

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<sup>134</sup>Kennedy, 192.

not only has the same formal structure as the earlier concertos, but it also has the same yearning qualities of the Violin Concerto. And finally, in discussing the Second Symphony Kennedy states, “The first movement is a novel construction...the principal subject is the essence of Walton, a distillation, familiar yet new, of the themes which open the Cello and Violin Concerto.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 192.

## **Conclusion**

In time, the musical public will assuredly hear the Walton Violin Concerto performed with increasing frequency. At the time of its composition, it pushed the limits of what the genre could do and where the genre could go, and it has lost none of its appeal today. The work remains a concerto of dazzling virtuosity whilst at the same time moving the listener with its inherent passion. Since its composition, the Concerto has had an indirect and direct influence on violinists, conductors, and composers. Although there were many other British composers writing violin concertos at the same time as Walton, his work remains the most well-known today. More and more artists are choosing to record it today, and it would seem that the Concerto's appeal will last well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. Walton's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra is a work for the ages.

Further research includes evaluating Walton's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in more detail when contrasted with other British concertos of the same era, and comparing and relating Walton's work to concertos of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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