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Michael J. Payne

PhD Thesis  
(University of Durham)

**‘The Man Who Writes Tunes’:  
An Assessment of the Work of  
Eric Coates (1886-1957) and  
his Role Within the Field  
of British Light Music**

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**Volume 1**

2007

- 3 MAY 2007



Sing a song by Eric Coates  
Of Birds at Eventide  
Of Joyous Youth and Summer Days  
And Britain's Countryside.

Sing of old Stonecracker John  
And Three Bears of renown,  
And march along to Knightsbridge  
With the throng of London Town.

Suddenly she [Ethel Smyth] stopped in mid-sentence as if a thought had struck her,  
and in that brusque voice we all know so well:  
“You are the man who writes tunes?”  
I bowed my acknowledgements.  
She then fired off at me:  
“Come and sit down beside me and tell me how you manage to make your effects!”<sup>1</sup>

### Frontispiece

Pen and ink drawing of Eric Coates by E.H. Allcock.  
from *Sunray: The Magazine of Hucknall Carnival*, 1935, 9.

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<sup>1</sup> Coates, Eric. *Suite In Four Movements*. London: Heinemann, 1953, 152.

## **Statement of Copyright**

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## Abstract

The light-music composer Eric Coates was one of the most successful and popular composers of the twentieth century. This thesis seeks to address how he achieved this status through the various media that were open to him.

After a biographical and teleological discussion of Coates, light music, his position within this 'school' of composition and his views on light music this thesis discusses his relationship with the BBC. Looking at the BBC's policy towards light music shows how his music fitted into their broadcasting schedules and was tailor made for use as signature tunes. Concomitant to this was a mutual symbiosis, the BBC needed his music and Coates desired their promotion and performances of his music. Key BBC personnel were important in programming, obstructing, commenting and performing his music, especially Stanford Robinson and the BBC Theatre Orchestra. Coates' popularity was sealed by his legacy of gramophone records, though these contained frequent cuts, changes of orchestration and deviations from the published score.

Coates' slender output was all of a high standard because of its sincerity, melody, countermelodies, orchestration, integration of dance bands and jazz music. Though he was alive to a compositional formula that governed light music, it was never creatively limiting, as demonstrated by an in-depth discussion of several pieces.

Coates often appeared in newspapers as a minor celebrity and these interviews often drew in his latest compositions. Allied to this was the foundation of the Performing Right Society which enabled him to earn a comfortable living through his music. The final aspect of his career dealt with is the music festivals held at many seaside resorts and the BBC Light Music Festivals which gave Coates the chance to conduct with important luminaries and to produce new works. All these issues united to create a unique and well-loved composer.

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## Introduction

*When those musicians whose normal habitat is Wigmore Street are asked about light music, they will say rather tolerantly that the great masters had their lighter moments, but they will probably feel that Mr. Eric Coates is beyond the pale. On the other hand, those who pay tribute to Charing Cross Road would regard Mr. Eric Coates as a long-haired highbrow whose approach is academic rather than commercial. Meanwhile, Mr. Coates continues to be one of the most richly rewarded composers in Europe.<sup>1</sup>*

The music of Eric Coates is known by many who do not even know his name. His music has given countless hours of pleasure to millions; mention ‘Knightsbridge’ March (‘In Town Tonight’), *Calling All Workers* (‘Music While You Work’), *By the Sleepy Lagoon* (‘Desert Island Discs’) or *The Dam Busters* March (from the film of the same name), to a certain generation, and the memories will come flooding back. His music has become part of the musical landscape and cultural heritage of England. Nevertheless, many significant pieces by Coates and the school of light music, which were prevalent in England, have not fared well, though in common with most British music of that period are favoured more on CD than in the concert hall. Indeed, the whole sub-genre of light music has been shunned and neglected for too long by the academic world which dismisses it as frivolous and of limited value. Norman Demuth believed that: ‘...there are a great number of composers who write admirable music of no great importance. To include these side by side with giants like Sibelius, Vaughan Williams and Schoenberg would be unfair to the composers themselves and would make them look ridiculous.’<sup>2</sup> Stephen Banfield dismissed the ballads and the ‘lighter songs’ of the 1920s and 1930s as a ‘...continuation of the ballad’s complacency, associated more with the classroom and nursery than the drawing room but still an unhealthy twilight zone between the artistic

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<sup>1</sup> Clifford, Hubert. ‘Some Problems of Broadcast Musical Entertainment’. In *BBC Quarterly* viii (1953-1954) 158-163, 158.

<sup>2</sup> Demuth, Norman. *Musical Trends in the Twentieth Century*. London: Rockcliff, 1952, vi.

and the commercial...<sup>3</sup> Despite these criticisms, the genre is growing significantly in popularity, outside the world of academia, with a resurgence of public interest.<sup>4</sup> This is music that is not merely tuneful, effervescent and jocose but is of real craft and artistic value, worthy to stand with all other orchestral music of the period.

My interest in Coates grew out of a love of British music from the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries when, one evening, I was introduced by a friend to the world of British light music which hitherto I had not previously encountered. Here, I heard music that I had known all my life, whether as background music or through broadcasting and I felt compelled to discover more. As I listened to the genre, I found that one man dominated the sphere of light music, and still does to this day – Eric Coates. The sheer beauty and musicality of writing I encountered when listening to his *Four Centuries Suite* and the *Saxo-Rhapsody*, made me want to find more information about their composer. After reading all the literature available on the composer, I realised that little had been written about the music and I felt many questions were left unanswered. However, one question dominated this list: how and why did Coates achieve, and more importantly, retain his position at the forefront of light music? While pursuing this issue I was struck by the skill of this composer, not just in his delightful compositions, but also in his exploitation of new technologies, organisations and existing opportunities. In short, here was a composer who knew exactly what he was doing and how to successfully exploit his music to attain such a position in the musical world. Nearly fifty years after his death he is still the one composer of light music who makes it into the concert hall and is performed by the world's leading orchestras.

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<sup>3</sup> Banfield, Stephen. *Sensibility and the English Song*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 5.

<sup>4</sup> The renaissance of light music began in the early-1990s with the revival by Ernest Tomlinson of the Light Music Society. A landmark series of new recordings by Coates, Haydn Wood, Torch, Binge, Tomlinson, Duncan and Curzon by Marco Polo drew attention to the genre, which finally reached its apotheosis in 2005 with an hour-long television programme on the genre entitled *Music for Everyone*.

As LeMahieu argued, the twentieth century was a century of immense change and it was through this cultural change that Coates wrote his music:

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the development of popular national daily newspapers, the cinema, the gramophone, and other forms of mass entertainment threatened to upset traditional patterns of British culture, attracting an audience of unprecedented size, this ‘mass’ or ‘commercial’ culture – no single term unambiguously defines the phenomenon – was created for profit, dependant upon new technologies, and often dominated by individuals outside the mainstream of British cultural life. Writers, artists, musicians, critics, and their numerous sympathizers responded in a variety of ways. Some retreated into self-conscious isolation from the popular and the profane. Others engaged in detailed polemics against the mass media. Still others embraced new technology and sought to uplift tastes. All these groups struggled against a culture that measured success by popularity rather than aesthetic merit.<sup>5</sup>

During the interwar period, the average working week decreased from fifty-four hours to forty-eight and the average salary, per capita, rose from £1-12-0 in 1913 to £3-10-0 in 1938 – leisure activities were at last within the range of the average man.<sup>6</sup> The early decades of the twentieth century were marked by: a widespread expansion of the press; the widespread adoption of the gramophone; the foundation and phenomenal growth of the BBC; the wide availability of ensembles which performed orchestral music; the twilight of mass sales of sheet music; and the foundation of the PRS. The 1930s were characterised by a development of what LeMahieu called a ‘common culture’, a culture shared by all regardless of class.<sup>7</sup> It was into this environment of widespread cultural change that Coates entered, with his Edwardian musical values and he consciously and successfully exploited the new technologies and crazes.

I was anxious to avoid a standard ‘composer study’, but felt that this theme of using the rapidly changing media tied all the issues of Coates’ life together and would make an effective doctoral thesis. With this in mind, the thesis is structured in such a way

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<sup>5</sup> LeMahieu, D.L. *A Culture for Democracy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, 2-3. These changes were also seen, on a more marked level, in popular music of the period, see Nott, James. *Music for the People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Nott: 2002, 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> LeMahieu: 1988, 227.

as to expound on his well-honed commercial acumen. After a biographical chapter, there is a teleological discussion of light music within the context of England and its ramifications on Coates. A discussion of light music may seem tangential, but provides a firm basis for the discussions in the following sections. After this, the thesis is split into three broad areas, each assessing how he achieved his supreme status through a specific sphere of light music.

The first of these three sections deals with the new media available to Coates through the BBC and gramophone recordings. He was one of the first composers to reap the dual benefits of frequent broadcasting and informal commissions offered by the BBC and the gramophone companies. The symbiotic relationship he enjoyed with BBC was one of the lynchpins of his entire career. Here, his music, whether through broadcasts, concerts, transmissions of his gramophone records or the use of his music as signature tunes, was catapulted into the homes and affections of the listening public.

The second-part investigates all matters musical; had Coates' music not been of a consistently high-standard owing to its melody, harmony, orchestration and to Coates' stroke of genius in integrating elements of the dance bands into his music, he could not have achieved his position within the field.

The final tranche is devoted to three case studies. The vignettes deal with Coates' exploitation of his relationship with the Press, the PRS and the numerous light orchestras (two of these genres reached a peak during his lifetime) and how these relationships cemented his reputation.

This thesis is based on original research using Coates' own private papers, letters (he often retained a carbon-copy of his type-written replies), scrapbooks and manuscripts. His private papers and manuscripts have had a rather tortuous history. After his death in 1957 they passed to his wife, Phyl (who carried out several purges on his correspondence) and subsequently to his son, Austin. Austin, who lived in Hong

Kong and latterly in Portugal, deposited this material with numerous friends who lived on the South Coast. After Austin's death in 1997, the material was split into two halves, one part (largely letters, photographs and the scrapbooks) to a family friend, Harry Smith of Southwell, who has worked hard to keep the name and music of Coates alive in Nottinghamshire. The other half (predominately manuscripts and sketches) to the conductor John Wilson, who in turn donated them to his *alma mater*, the RCM.

Little did I realise how much archive work would be involved when I undertook this project, including locating many of his gramophone records, several of which were only available on the original and long obsolete 78rpm pressings. Wherever possible I have tried to use Coates' own words, not solely from his autobiography *Suite in Four Movements* but also from letters and press interviews. The surviving material paints a picture of a man who was punctilious about his business affairs, exceptionally well-connected with many society figures and above all, a man, who, like his music, exuded a great sense of *joie de vivre*.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the following people and institutions for their assistance in this thesis: Accrington and Burnley Public Libraries; David Ades (Secretary, Robert Farnon Society); Allegri String Quartet; Gareth Atkins (for alerting me to the Christopher Hassall material); Paul Banks (Royal College of Music's Performance Archive); Duncan Barker; Lady Bliss and the Bliss Trust; Ray Bickel (Hucknall Public Library); George Capel (Harrogate Library); Frances Cook (Archivist, London Philharmonic Orchestra); E-bay (for the provision of many items out-of-print music and records of Coates); Elgar Birthplace Museum; Liz Fawcett (Jack Hylton Archive, University of Lancaster); Lewis Foreman; Katherine Gale (formerly Archivist of Boosey and Hawkes); Michael Grey (for information regarding Decca); Rod Hamilton and Ike Egbetola (National Sound Archive); Alan Heinecke; Beresford King-Smith (Archivist, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra); Valerie Langfield (for information regarding Roger Quilter); Daniel Leach-Wilkinson (King's College Sound Archive, London); Paul Lilley (EMI Archives); Stephen Lloyd (for much useful information regarding the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra); Ray Luker (Performing Right Society); Ruth Mariner and Tom Creedy (Selsey Local History Society); David Nathan (National Jazz Archive); Louise North and Julie Snelling (BBC Written Archives Centre); Max Paddison; Bridget Palmer (Royal Academy of Music); Michael Ponder; Mark Pool and J Cooper (Torquay Reference Library); Libby Rice (Archivist, London Symphony Orchestra); Eleanor Roberts (Archivist, Hallé Orchestra); Royal Archives, Windsor; the Staff of Palace Green Library, University of Durham; June Upton (formerly of Vintage Light Music Society); Patrick Zuk (for the aural assistance for Chapter 5); and to the many people, too numerous to mention, who have replied to my e-mails and letters and supplied me with information.

There are several people who have been invaluable to my research: Malcolm Bulcock who has introduced me to many great things both musical and not, and who has been a great help on all matters regarding the BBC and recording.

Marjorie Cullerne (Haydn Wood's great niece) and Gilles Gouset for sharing the fruits of their research on Haydn Wood; they have supplied me with far more information than I have reciprocated with.

Peter Edwards who originally introduced me to light music and a chap called Eric Coates. I am grateful for all the conversations we have had about music, for Peter listening to my eternal rambles on Coates and also for all the light music discs we have swapped over the years.

Peter Horton and all the Staff of the Royal College of Music Library, who have been so helpful and accommodating me late into the night on my numerous 'extended' visits.

Geoffrey Self, who was a researcher's dream, and who one day sent me his entire collection of Coates material, including the letters between Austin Coates and himself.

Senior Common Room, University College Durham for a generous Travel Scholarship in 2004.

Harry and Ann Smith for their welcome, hospitality and opportunity to share ideas about Coates and for providing information about him from a Nottinghamshire perspective.

Ernest Tomlinson and his late wife Jean (Light Music Society). Without Ernest's foresight in preserving so many sets of light orchestral music, a large proportion of music would have been lost for future generations. This thesis would not have been possible without their help in providing scores. I am also grateful to them both for providing me with food and conversation on all aspects of light music, leading to many stimulating

ideas and avenues to ponder during many memorable lunchtimes whilst I was working for the Light Music Society in the summers of 2005 and 2006.

Liz Wardle who has made me so welcome at her Brighton residences and helped with the Family Records Office.

John Wilson has provided several useful comments on the worklist and alerted me to the orchestral version of *Eight Nursery Rhymes* and has given me chance to be involved in the forthcoming complete edition of Coates' music. His superlative recordings of Coates' lesser known works have enabled me to comment with some knowledge on these pieces.

I wish to thank my supervisor Jeremy Dibble (and his delightful wife Alison), for the many hours of discussion, and his endless patience and guidance in putting this thesis together – he undoubtedly ranks alongside a Nuits-St-Georges!

My parents, Alan and Christine Payne, who have endured many mealtimes with my discussions on bizarre points of Coates' style, and put up with his music wafting through my bedroom door at all times. They have also been of the greatest financial assistance possible.

And finally to my fiancée Anne, who not only has strategically placed relations for the places I needed to visit, but has also read and commented on this thesis and put up with the 'other person' in our relationship, which must, at times, have felt like a *ménage à trois!*

## Abbreviations and Library Sigla

### Abbreviations

ASCAP	American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CD	Compact Disc
HMV	His Master's Voice (Record Company)
LP	Long-playing Record
LPO	London Philharmonic Orchestra
LSO	London Symphony Orchestra
N/A	Not applicable or available
PRS	Performing Right Society
RAM	Royal Academy of Music
RCM	Royal College of Music
RPM	Revolutions per Minute
SACAM	Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs, et Editeurs de Musique
SATB	Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass
TTBB	Tenor, Tenor, Bass and Bass

## Library Sigla

<i>GB-Bcbso</i>	City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham
<i>GB-Cu</i>	University of Cambridge Library, Cambridge
<i>GB-HCKI</i>	Hucknall Public Library
<i>GB-ILMprivate</i>	Private Collection of Geoffrey Self, Ilminster
<i>GB-LAu</i>	University of Lancaster
<i>GB-Lam</i>	Royal Academy of Music, London
<i>GB-Lbbc</i>	BBC Library, London
<i>GB-Lbb</i>	Boosey and Hawkes, London
<i>GB-Lbl</i>	The British Library, London
<i>GB-Lcm</i>	Royal College of Music, London
<i>GB-Llpo</i>	London Philharmonic Orchestra, London
<i>GB-Llso</i>	London Symphony Orchestra, London
<i>GB-Lprs</i>	Performing Right Society, London
<i>GB-NO</i>	University of Nottingham Library, Nottingham
<i>GB-PRlms</i>	Library of Light Orchestral Music (Light Music Society), Longridge, Preston
<i>GB-Rwac</i>	BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading
<i>GB-STHprivate</i>	Private Collection of Harry and Ann Smith, Southwell
<i>US-Wc</i>	National Library of Congress, Washington D.C., United States of America
<i>US-Wgu</i>	Georgetown University Library, Washington D.C., United States of America

## General Notes

Each musical example and table has been placed as close as possible to the text that it illustrates. Where this is not possible (predominately due to length) the example is placed on the following page.

All musical examples are by Eric Coates unless otherwise stated.

All durations are given in minutes and seconds, i.e. 4m30s is four minutes and thirty seconds and times are given in standard twenty-four hour format.

*By the Sleepy Lagoon* refers to the orchestral Valse Serenade, whereas 'Sleepy Lagoon' refers to the song based on the Valse Serenade, but is a separate work.

Coates always referred to his orchestral works first by genre then title, i.e. March: *The Seven Seas* or Suite: *The Three Men*. In accordance with the parlance of today, I refer to them as *The Seven Seas* March and *The Three Men* Suite; the genre is not part of the title.

In this thesis I use a pitch system in which middle C equates to  $C^4$ ,  $C^5$  is an octave higher than  $C^4$  and  $C^3$  is an octave lower than  $C^4$ .

## Part I

### Background

#### Chapter 1 Biography

*I have never been taken for a composer. The reason for this may be that I wear my hair short; cannot work unless properly dressed; dislike being late for an appointment; dislike even more being kept waiting for one; make a point of always being in good time for a theatre, a cinema, a train or a plane; in fact, I am what one might call orthodox.<sup>1</sup>*

‘**A**ugust 27th, 1886 was an important day for me, for at four-thirty in the afternoon, while the rest of the family was at tea, I descended on the Coates *ménage*.<sup>2</sup> Born into a musical family in Watnall Street, Hucknall Torkyard,<sup>3</sup> Nottinghamshire, Eric Francis Harrison Coates’ medical father played the flute and conducted the local Church Choir and his mother was an able pianist. All three of his sisters, Gladys, Dorothy and Meta, were musical and the young Eric would arrange music for them, which must have sounded bizarre – flute, violins, piano, ‘cello and mandolin!<sup>4</sup> From his first sighting of the ‘queer-looking black box’ of Pen Payton,<sup>5</sup> he wanted to learn the violin.<sup>6</sup> After initial study with a local teacher, he went to be tutored by Georg Ellenberger (a pupil of the violinist Joseph Joachim) and studied harmony and counterpoint with Ralph Horner (a local organist).

Early musical life was hectic for the young Coates; two violin lessons a week and a harmony lesson, along with travel to Nottingham, practice time and writing exercises

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<sup>1</sup> Coates, Eric. *Suite in Four Movements*. London: Heinemann, 1953, 3.

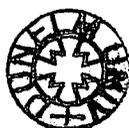
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 4. He was baptised 26/02/1887 at St. Mary Magdalene’s Church, Hucknall, the resting place of Lord Byron.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Coates’ Birth Certificate. The family soon moved to Tenter Hill, Duke Street. Coates was originally called ‘Frank Harrison Coates, but the name was soon changed to Eric Francis Harrison Coates. (Eric Coates’ Birth Certificate).

<sup>4</sup> 20/06/1951 Eric Coates In ‘Desert Island Discs,’ broadcast, BBC Light Programme. *GB-Rwac* S133/18/7 Special Collections Plomley, Roy ‘Desert Island Discs.’ Scripts 91-109.

<sup>5</sup> A visitor to the Coates’ household, and friend of his mother’s family.

<sup>6</sup> Coates: 1953, 7.



for Horner in addition to the normal rigors of youthful academic work. He was never educated at a school, but at home with a governess,<sup>7</sup> and music was always the most important aspect of his education. As Coates progressed with his violin playing he was invited to join Ellenberger's own string quartet in addition to all his other activities. Coates came to learn the viola almost by accident: Ellenberger wanted to perform Brahms' Clarinet Quintet with his own quartet and after disastrous results with a local cleric playing the clarinet part,<sup>8</sup> Ellenberger found the Brahms edition for solo viola rather than the usual clarinet: Coates was asked to play the viola part, although he had never played the viola before. Playing the viola opened up many avenues for Coates; it was his passport to many a local orchestra, including several performances under the rising Henry Wood. With local orchestras, Coates was able to try out several youthful compositions, notably a *Ballad* for String Orchestra, first performed in the Albert Hall, Nottingham in 1904, under Arthur Richards, which received reasonable press notices.<sup>9</sup>

In 1906, as his childhood years drew to a close, a quandary arose as to Eric's future. Coates was determined to pursue a career in music, but his father was less keen, having been persuaded by the local bank manager that a career in finance was the only option for his son. Eventually, Coates persuaded his father to allow him to try for entrance to the Royal Academy of Music, for one year's study, though Ellenberger was keen for him to study in Germany, believing that London would ruin him as he would end up playing in theatres and restaurants.<sup>10</sup> For his audition at the RAM, he took with him his *Three Songs for Mezzo-Soprano and Orchestra* Op 10 (believed to have composed as a

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<sup>7</sup> 18/08/1985 Austin Coates to Geoffrey Self. *GB-ILMprivate*. Austin believes that the governess was present to teach Coates' elder sisters, Dorothy and Meta and that Coates joined in. Coates' father seemed to have no belief that the young Eric should go to school.

<sup>8</sup> See Coates: 1953, 39-40 for the full story.

<sup>9</sup> Undated, c. November-December 1904. *Nottingham Guardian*. In Coates Scrapbook, Volume 1, 1900-1935. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box M127.

<sup>10</sup> Meadmore, W.S. 'Eric Coates.' In *The Gramophone* 15 (1936-1937) 235-237, 236.

love token for a local Nottingham singer)<sup>11</sup> and played the viola and piano. After the examination, the Principal, Alexander Mackenzie said to him: ‘... Mark my words, young man, ye’ll start as a viola player but ye’ll end up as a composer!’<sup>12</sup> He started at the RAM in Michaelmas term 1906, studying viola (as his principal study) under Lionel Tertis, piano (second study) under Braithwaite and harmony under Fredrick Corder,<sup>13</sup> not, as he states in his autobiography, *Suite in Four Movements*, composition as principal study and viola as second study.<sup>14</sup> It is probable that Coates studied more composition than harmony with Corder, having studied harmony and counterpoint from an early age, but, in accordance with normal pedagogical procedure at the RAM, all students, especially those wishing to pursue composition, had to register initially for the harmony course in order to qualify. The ardent Wagnerian Fredrick Corder produced a very different breed of composer to that generated by the Brahmsian Charles Stanford at the RCM. Bantock, William Wallace and Bax to a certain degree all absorbed elements of Corder’s Wagnerian influenced teaching, Corder’s composition pupils of Coates’ period, such as Holbrooke, McCunn, York Bowen and Montague Phillips, all seemed to have a lighter edge in a handful of their compositions. In the case of Coates, and to a far lesser degree in that of Montague Phillips, they were content to become light composers. Whether this lightness of style has anything to do with Corder’s teaching, or was largely inherent in the pupils is impossible to say, though Coates remembers studying and playing the scores of Sullivan and German with his teacher.<sup>15</sup>

During Coates’ time at the RAM, Montague Phillips and B. Walton O’Donnell dominated Academy life, winning all the major competitions and prizes. In many respects, Coates’ time at the Academy was well-spent, but he did not have a distinguished

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<sup>11</sup> 02/04/1999 *Hucknall Dispatch*. ‘Love Secrets of Eric Coates.’ These songs were written to a local singer with whom Coates was infatuated at the time.

<sup>12</sup> Coates: 1953, 58.

<sup>13</sup> RAM Students’ Register G: Lent 1906 – Michaelmas 1907, Page 371. *GB-Lam*.

<sup>14</sup> Coates: 1953, 58.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

student career, frequently practising his 'slow bowings' as dictated by Tertis, performing string quartets and playing in the Academy Orchestra. In October 1907, with the news that the existing holder of the Viola Orchestral Scholarship was leaving the Academy, Coates applied for, and was awarded the Scholarship. For most RAM students (of which the vast majority was female) a course of three years was the normal span of study. This was not the case with Coates, although he had the support of the Viola Scholarship. His studies at the RAM drew abruptly to a close at the end of the Midsummer Term of 1908, even though he remained on the register of the Academy until the end of the year (and then only for the study of harmony).<sup>16</sup> The reason for this precipitate conclusion to his studies was, on Tertis' recommendation, to replace his teacher in the Hambourg String Quartet.<sup>17</sup> Although it is likely that he was only intending to spend a year at the RAM (funded by his father), his departure confirmed that he was already recognised as a player of proficiency and that his instrument, the viola, assured him of a living as a professional musician. Being launched into a career with the Hambourg Quartet also provided Coates with valuable practical experience.

Little record exists of the Hambourg Quartet, but they were founded in April 1907 by brothers Jan (leader) and Boris (cellist), brothers of the pianist Mark, and gave their inaugural recital in London's Bechstein Hall. Eric Coates joined them in 1908. They seem to have been quite an established Quartet, playing much of the standard repertoire. The Quartet came to an unexplained, abrupt end, probably not long after the end of the five Subscription concerts at the Aeolian Hall, held in late 1908-1909. For the youthful Coates working with the Quartet meant not only concerts in London, but also national tours with concerts in other urban centres and even tours abroad. One such tour, in 1908, took Coates to South Africa. Before travelling to the southern hemisphere, Coates learned that *Two Songs for Baritone and Orchestra* were to be published by Boosey. They had

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<sup>16</sup> RAM Students Register G: Lent 1906 – Michaelmas 1907. *GB-Lam*.

<sup>17</sup> RAM Minutes of Committee, November 1906 – June 1910. *GB-Lam*.

been first performed at a RAM Student Concerts at Queen's Hall the previous year and were well received by the *Musical Times*: 'two effective songs, respectively named 'Swedish Love-Song' and 'Devon to me' from the pen of Mr. Eric Coates, were sung by Mr. Percy Driver. 'Devon to me' is a robust and manly ditty worthy of publication.<sup>18</sup> These songs were Coates' first published compositions and must have been a notable encouragement to him, all the more so since, though he was living the life of a professional viola player, he was troubled with neuritis in his left arm and, deep down, he knew that his chances of becoming a 'second Lionel Tertis' were evaporating.

Besides the abovementioned songs, there were other unpublished songs by Coates that Boosey elected not to print, though they still survive in the publisher's archives.<sup>19</sup> Clearly he was conscious of his potential as a composer, and his confidence was bolstered by a request from the Hambourg Quartet to contribute a movement based on the 'Londonderry Air' to form a 'collective string quartet' for their 1908-1909 season of Subscription Concerts at the Aeolian Hall. Other contributors were older and more established names and included Hamilton Harty and Frank Bridge. Coates' own creation was 'Menuetto on an Old Irish Air' which, though it has remained unpublished, is a highly competent and attractive miniature essay.<sup>20</sup> In addition to the 'Menuetto', Coates wrote *Four Old English Songs* on familiar texts by Shakespeare which proved to be his most widely esteemed work for a number of years (until the arrival of his *Miniature Suite* in 1911) after their first performance at a RAM Student Concert on 15 December 1908. The songs were taken up by Henry Wood and his wife Olga and frequently appeared at concerts at Queen's Hall, notably the Promenades;<sup>21</sup> the Woods even recorded the songs

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<sup>18</sup> Review of RAM Student Concert, 13/12/1907, *Musical Times* 49 (1908), 31.

<sup>19</sup> GB-Lbb Song File.

<sup>20</sup> The Suite was first performed at the Aeolian Hall 28 November 1908. Only the finale, by Frank Bridge, received a favourable review by *The Times*, (20/11/1908), and was published. The Hambourg Quartet played the work at a concert to mark a visit by Vincent d'Indy to London in March 1909. During Coates' time teaching at the RAM the work proved popular in a guise for String Orchestra and was played at several prizegivings during the 1910s.

<sup>21</sup> The songs were sung at the 1909, 1913, 1930 and 1944 Promenade Concerts.

in 1909. Olga Wood invited numerous composers (including Parry and Stanford) of the day to write or orchestrate songs for her. Coates' settings of familiar Shakespeare lyrics, projected a buoyant humour, tinged with a wistful edge (take, for example, 'Under the greenwood tree' and 'Orpheus with his lute'). Though not in the 'light' style with which he was later to become associated, they are a curious hybrid of art song and ballad. The other notable success of this period was the rustic West Country ballad 'Stonecracker John', conceived on top of a London bus, which, despite initial reluctance from the publishing house of Boosey, was eventually published in 1909 and exceptionally well received at its first performance, sung by Harry Dearth, at a Boosey Ballad concert that year.<sup>22</sup>

After the Hambourg Quartet was disbanded in 1909, he played in several theatre orchestras (he had played in these bands whilst a student) before joining the Beecham Orchestra (and becoming sub-principal viola under his former teacher, Tertis). His membership included a tour of England and Ireland, but his involvement with the orchestra turned out to be short-lived, due to the ephemeral nature of Beecham's orchestras. Looking for more permanent employment, Coates joined the viola section of the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1910, rising quickly to the first desk and then becoming leader of the violas in 1912 under Henry Wood, a conductor then at the height of his powers and energy.<sup>23</sup> The Queen's Hall Orchestra was one of London's premier orchestras, offering a gruelling schedule under the indefatigable Wood as well as many other outside engagements that Sir Henry was able to offer. Eugene Goossens recalled his four-year stint in the orchestra (which ran concurrently with Coates' time there):

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<sup>22</sup> Coates: 1953, 118-119.

<sup>23</sup> It is almost impossible to ascertain the exact dates that Coates was in the (New) Queen's Hall Orchestra, as most of the records of the Hall disappeared with its destruction and many concert programmes do not survive from the period, and if they do there is rarely a list of the orchestra. Coates was definitely Principal Viola by November 1912, as a programme for a Queen's Hall Symphony Concert lists him as Principal. 16/11/1912, *GB-Lm* Performance Archive, 1912 Queen's Hall Box. During Coates' time with the (New) Queen's Hall Orchestra it featured such names as Eugene Goossens, Basil Cameron, Rebecca Clarke and the young John Barbirolli.

...[I] got a first-hand knowledge of practically the entire symphonic repertoire. Under no other conductor could a more thorough and authentic grounding in orchestral repertoire have been obtained... The season of summer Promenade Concerts... gave me my first sample of real orchestral high-jinks. Ten weeks of nightly three-hour symphony concerts, with three rehearsals a week (and Sunday afternoon concerts thrown in for good measure), is a back-breaking – but worthwhile – experience. Needless to add, we covered the whole gamut of the symphonic repertoire during those sixty or more concerts, which invariably began punctually at eight and ended at eleven.<sup>24</sup>

In the orchestra, Coates played under Debussy, Saint-Saëns, Strauss, Scriabin and many native composers such as Parry, Stanford, Elgar, Mackenzie, Smyth, German and Walford Davies. He may have also played in the notorious first performance of Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces* in 1912.<sup>25</sup> Coates was also in frequent demand as a viola player with other orchestras and during this decade he would be seen playing in the Royal Philharmonic Society concerts. With the Royal Philharmonic Society Orchestra he played in the premiere of Elgar's Second Symphony on 24 May 1911.<sup>26</sup>

Coates' membership of the Queen's Hall Orchestra proved to be a vital cultural platform for him, in terms of his development both as a performer and as a composer. From its completion in 1893 until its destruction on the night of 10 and 11 May 1941, London's Queen's Hall was the epicentre of musical life in the capital. It was not just a hall, but a cultural icon for the nation; it symbolised Britain's sense of musical confidence before and after World War One and, consequently, it was held in great affection by concert-goers of the era. When it was bombed in 1941, London felt its absence acutely and after the war there was undoubtedly a need to fill the vacuum which was not filled by the Royal Festival Hall. Many important works, especially by native composers, received

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<sup>24</sup> Goossens, Eugene. *Overture and Beginners*. London: Methuen, 1951, 90&92.

<sup>25</sup> It is often difficult to pin down exactly who was playing in which concert for two major reasons: firstly, often the members of the orchestra were not listed on the programmes, and secondly, with the 'deputy system' rife in London orchestras, there is no guarantee that Coates would have played in the concert.

<sup>26</sup> 14/05/1911 Programme of RPS Concert. *GB-Lcm Performance Archive*, Queen's Hall 1911. The programme states that Coates played the viola in the symphony's premiere under the composer. The first performance of Granville Bantock's *Dante and Beatrice* was also given that night.

their first performances there, either in the main hall, or the small hall; the Gramophone Company used the halls for recording purposes until the completion of their studios at Abbey Road in 1931. In 1895, Robert Newman founded a series of Promenade Concerts under the unknown conductor, Henry Wood and formed the Queen's Hall Orchestra especially for these concerts. Chappell & Co, the music publishers, were the lessees of Queen's Hall (almost from the hall's foundation) and ran the events. From August 1914 they took over the running of the Queen's Hall Orchestra (it then became the New Queen's Hall Orchestra). This was no mean investment on the part of Chappell; it cost them £35,000 a year to keep the New Queen's Hall Orchestra afloat during the years of the First World War, compared to £4,000 it had cost Edgar Speyer before the War.<sup>27</sup>

Henry Wood brought an interesting and unconventional artistic policy to his programmes, especially to the Promenade Concerts. They show a particular interest in Russian music, for orchestral music with a colourful palette, and for works with a powerful exotic aroma, Wood liked to programme pieces of a 'serious' nature, such as the symphonies of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky, Liadov, Beethoven and the symphonic poems of Liszt and Smetana. He also showed a preference, in deference to an audience less familiar with the 'classics', for music in a lighter vein and he was quite happy to juxtapose the 'masters' with works by Sullivan, German and Montague Phillips with popular bassoon and cornet soli. Wood also believed in performing compositions by his own orchestral players, and Coates' first orchestral piece,<sup>28</sup> *Miniature Suite*, was first performed during the 1911 season of Promenade Concerts. This was indeed a high-profile outlet for his music and many of his orchestral works featured at the concerts until the BBC took over the running of the concerts in 1927.<sup>29</sup> Working at Queen's Hall, Coates was able to

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<sup>27</sup> Edgar Speyer quoted in Jacobs, Arthur. *Henry J. Wood*. London: Methuen, 1994, 165.

<sup>28</sup> This was his first venture into orchestral writing. His only contact with the orchestra before this work was in writing orchestral accompaniments to his songs (cf. *Three Songs for Mezzo-Soprano and Orchestra* Op 10 (1906), *Two Songs for Baritone* (1907) and *Four Old English Songs* (1908)).

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix 3 for more details.

secure performances of his work by the Queen's Hall Orchestra in their Sunday Concerts (played twice; once in the afternoon and once in the evening) and also by the New Queen's Hall Light Orchestra (founded in 1916, with Alick Maclean as conductor) playing at Chappell's Ballad Concerts. It is perhaps inevitable that Coates should have had his music published by Chappell, as his orchestral music was often performed by Chappell's orchestras at Chappell's concerts; indeed, Coates himself was paid by Chappell in his capacity as principal viola of the New Queen's Hall Orchestra.<sup>30</sup>

When Coates became principal viola of the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1912 he began writing more music purely for the orchestra, since Wood and the orchestras attached to the Hall gave him encouragement and a means of having his music performed. His music was proving popular in London and he was occasionally absent from Queen's Hall on Sundays in order to conduct the struggling LSO in concerts at the London Palladium and in other theatres in the capital.<sup>31</sup> Such was the intensity of his employment, he must have realised at this time that a career as a composer had serious possibilities. In addition, with the changes in copyright brought about by the 1906 Musical Copyright Act and the 1911 Copyright Act, and especially with the formation of the Performing Right Society in 1914, the musical landscape for many composers and their earnings changed for ever. They could now make a living as composers of orchestral music instead of having to write popular ballads to supplement their income; the days of being exploited (as Coleridge Taylor was by Novello with his cantata *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* of 1898) by publishers should at least have come to an end. Eric Coates was one of the earliest members of the PRS, joining in May 1914.<sup>32</sup> He was however, initially forced to withdraw his membership due to intimidation from

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<sup>30</sup> There is no documentary evidence to support this argument, but they must have certainly played a large part in Coates' early composing career.

<sup>31</sup> Coates: 1953, 193.

<sup>32</sup> Coates was in the second batch of members, with membership number 125. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

performers of his music.<sup>33</sup> After persuasion by Pierre Sarpy, the PRS's first General Manager, Coates withdrew his resignation and eventually rose to become a director of the Society.<sup>34</sup> This change in climate spurred him on to write more orchestral music, where his heart lay, but he still continued to write ballads as source of income to supplement his earnings as a viola player.

In 1911 a steady income had become a necessity for Coates. During that year he had fallen in love with Phyllis Black (always known as 'Phyl'), a student at the RAM. He wrote several recitations for voice and piano with her in mind, and most of his œuvre written between 1911 and 1913 are dedicated to her; the most notable dedication of the period is the 'Intermezzo' of the *Miniature Suite* whose evocative violin solo exudes love. Despite much interference and obstruction from the Black family largely in connection with their eight-year gap in age, they were married on 3 February 1913 at the New Jerusalem Church, Camden Road, London with Phyl's parents acting as witnesses.<sup>35</sup> Phyl became the epicentre of his life and they remained a close couple until Eric's death.<sup>36</sup> She was his muse, as he recalled in 1952:

I don't mind settling down to orchestration or some such work which has already been completed in sketch form, providing I know that it will not be long before Phyl is with me again, but to continue working in solitude usually ends in a state of restlessness which makes any sort of concentration out of the question.<sup>37</sup>

He often regarded his creative collaborations with her as his finest artistic achievements.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> 20/01/1915 Eric Coates to PRS. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

<sup>34</sup> 21/01/1915 P Sarpy to Eric Coates & 03/02/1915 Eric Coates to PRS. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

<sup>35</sup> Coates' Marriage Certificate. Phyllis' mother was most worried about their relationship and wrote to Coates' Mother (Undated. Annie Black to Mary Coates *GB-STHprivate*).

<sup>36</sup> They had married to be together and even after the arrival of Austin, whom they sent to boarding school at the earliest opportunity, remained close. Writing to Phyl after Eric's death a friend recalled, '...he mentioned that he had celebrated his wedding anniversary by spending the entire evening alone with you, and he wondered how many men who had been married as long as he had would be content to do so!' (31/12/1957 PRS to Phyllis Coates. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 2.)

<sup>37</sup> Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements* 424. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box M127.

<sup>38</sup> Coates: 1953, 217. Especially *The Jester at the Wedding* and *The Enchanted Garden*.

When war broke out in August 1914, Coates was deemed unfit for military service and retained his position as principal viola with the New Queen's Hall Orchestra. In 1915 he accepted the post of professor of viola at his *alma mater*, whilst the incumbent, James Lockyer was on military service,<sup>39</sup> and continued teaching at the RAM until early 1922, though his heart was never in pedagogy and it was largely done for pecuniary reasons. By the mid-1910s, his orchestral music was steadily gaining popularity and he was repeatedly absent from Queen's Hall (much to Wood's chagrin) to conduct his works wherever and whenever he could. To do this, he had to resort to the practice of hiring deputies which, even then, was generally frowned on by established conductors. It was perhaps unsurprising that, in July 1918, Coates' contract as principal viola at Queen's Hall was not renewed.<sup>40</sup> For many years he always told the public in his interviews with the press that he, Coates, had left the orchestra of his own freewill to concentrate on his composition, not been dismissed as he later admitted.<sup>41</sup> Coates believed the basis of his dismissal was:

...the deputies I had sent to take my place when I had been invited to conduct the London Symphony Orchestra at the Palladium on Sunday afternoons,<sup>42</sup> and to the rehearsals when my arm was troubling me more than usual. I had certainly been growing tired of my orchestral life and had already wondered more than once how I could manage to get away from it, but not in this undignified way.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> RAM Club Magazine 46 (November 1915), 14.

<sup>40</sup> It is unclear when Coates' was finally dismissed from the New Queen's Hall Orchestra, some sources state 1918 and others 1919. However a letter in *GB-Lprs* confirms that he would be absent for the 1918 season of Promenades holidaying with Phyl in Seaton until September 1918. In the letter the impecunious composer was anxious about the none-appearance of that year's PRS royalty cheque which had been mislaid (24/07/1918 Eric Coates to PRS. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates, file 1).

<sup>41</sup> One of the first occasions he admitted to the dismissal was in Meadmore, W.S. 'Eric Coates.' In *The Gramophone* 15 (1936-1937) 235-237, 236.

<sup>42</sup> He recalled a humorous story in 1937 of the first time he had departed to conduct the LSO: '...the programme at the Queen's Hall contained a Rhapsody by Enesco, my *bête noir*, for it has a vile and very tricky viola solo which always rather scared me. So I was doubly relieved when Wood agreed that my services could be dispensed with for one afternoon.

On the following Monday, walking along Oxford Street, I encountered Purcell Jones, the principal 'cello of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, who was notoriously extremely short-sighted. Jones stopped me and said: 'My word, Coates, I've never heard you play that solo as well as you did yesterday afternoon. It was magnificent!'" (Meadmore, W.S. 'Eric Coates.' In *The Gramophone* 15 (1936-1937) 235-237, 236.)

<sup>43</sup> Coates: 1953, 193.

He remained slightly acerbic towards Wood for many years, as he recounted in autobiography,

Some ten years later, while conducting at the Bournemouth Festivals, I ran across Sir Henry and Lady Wood having tea... In response to their invitation to join them I pulled up a chair... We got onto the subject of orchestral musicians and, in particular, the principals in the old Queen's Hall. It was a pleasant meeting, reviving old memories. As I was taking leave, Lady Wood asked me if I often played the viola; my reply, that I had not touched it since the day Sir Henry had given me the opportunity of giving it up, caused a flutter.<sup>44</sup>

After Coates' dismissal, Wood conducted *Wood Nymphs* during one of that season's Promenade concerts instead of the composer, who since 1916, had conducted his music personally. Now in July 1918, aged nearly thirty-two, Coates had finally emerged as a freelance composer and, emancipated from the day-to-day burden of orchestral playing from which he had wanted to free himself for some time, had to earn his living in the most precarious of professions. At his marriage in 1913, he gave his profession as a 'musical composer' rather than as an 'orchestral musician.'<sup>45</sup> Initially, and by good fortune, he was cushioned by a publishing contract from Chappell (from 1919),<sup>46</sup> and also by his piecemeal teaching at the RAM (until he grew bored and finally concentrated solely on composing and conducting). After his dismissal from the New Queen's Hall Orchestra, he stated that he never played his viola again,<sup>47</sup> which is untrue, since he was still teaching at the RAM and in 1922 he played in the orchestra at the RAM Centenary Concert.<sup>48</sup> He eventually gave away his viola in 1941 to a player from the LPO whose instrument was destroyed in the devastation of Queen's Hall (though from 1937 Coates had loaned his instrument to Tertis).

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 194.

<sup>45</sup> The Coates' Marriage Certificate.

<sup>46</sup> 10/07/1942 Eric Coates to Louis Dreyfus. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>47</sup> Coates: 1953, 194.

<sup>48</sup> RAM 1922 Centenary Celebration Programme. *GB-Lam*. Coates played viola in the Gala Concert (28/07/1922) held at Queen's Hall. Several of his pieces were performed at the various centennial celebrations.

During the late 1910s the Coates' were impecunious partially as a result of the lack of performances of Eric's music. According to Coates, writing in 1952, a director of Chappell had deliberately been obstructing customer-interest in his music. After Coates had had a confrontation with William Boosey the director was dismissed and subsequently more performances of Eric's music took place.<sup>49</sup> In order to supplement their finances, Phyl sought work on the stage (much to the displeasure of her family). Phyl was only a minor figure in theatrical circles having a relatively short career but did enjoy some success, including a part in the 1922 production of Noël Coward's *The Young Idea*,<sup>50</sup> as well as several tours of the provinces. Coates wryly observed he was in danger of becoming 'Mr Phyllis Black.'<sup>51</sup> Being associated with the theatre certainly influenced his early orchestral music; indeed, both the *Wood Nymphs* and *Moresque* were written for stage productions (the former for an elfin ballet),<sup>52</sup> as were several songs of the 1910s and 1920s. He wrote several songs for Phyl's stage appearances. Encouraged by her associations with the dramatic arts and the Coates' lifelong enjoyment of the theatre, Coates made his first attempt to write a musical-comedy, *Mary's Orchard*, with the librettist Daisy Fisher (with whom he would write several popular songs during the 1920s) in 1920. No doubt he was spurred on by productions in which he had played in the orchestra in his youth, as well as the successes of other light music composers in this area; namely Haydn Wood (*Tina*, 1915 and *Cash on Delivery*, 1917), Archibald Joyce (*Toto*, 1916, written in conjunction with Merlin Morgan), Montague Phillips (*The Rebel Maid*, 1916-17) and later Billy Mayerl. After much wrangling and many changes, Coates probably teamed up with James Heard to complete the musical-comedy, but alas this collaboration also proved to be a fruitless venture and the project was abandoned. There

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<sup>49</sup> Coates: 1953, 185-187.

<sup>50</sup> Coward, Noël. *Present Indicative*. London: Heinemann, 1937, 179.

<sup>51</sup> Coates: 1953, 200.

<sup>52</sup> 02/10/1921 Promenade Programme, notes by Rosa Newmarch and Eric Bloom. *GB-Lcm* Performance Archive, Queen's Hall 1920-21.

are also several other sketches for another production, possibly entitled *All Through My Life*, which appears to be contemporary with *Mary's Orchard*, but this regrettably remained unfinished (see Appendix 1). For both projects Chappell, were keen to publish the works, as their copyright stamp features on several of the sketches. There is no surviving evidence to show why his forays into the world of musical comedy failed; the surviving musical material is of a relatively high standard. This was not Coates final sally into the world of light opera: there was press speculation that he was teaming up with Phyl in the 1930s, to produce a work based on an expanded format of the 'Jester at the Wedding',<sup>53</sup> though nothing concrete came of the project until a new collaboration in the 1940s.<sup>54</sup> As the 1920s progressed, his flirtations with the theatre subsided and he concentrated almost exclusively on writing light orchestral music for the concert hall, which was what he wanted to do and where his skills and fortunes lay.

As part of the centenary celebrations of the RAM, Coates was awarded a fellowship of the Academy (FRAM), (along with Lionel Tertis), in June 1922;<sup>55</sup> Coates was never a man for honours, but the FRAM was the only one he ever used. Also in 1922, after the birth of their only child, Austin Francis Harrison Coates, on 16 April 1922 the Coates' bought a cottage in Selsey on the seafront. This acted as a retreat from London and was especially useful for school holidays.

London was always the main centre for inspiration and composition, but often the more 'mundane' task of orchestration was completed down in Selsey, as he recounted to the *Evening News* in 1940, 'I can't work in the country. I have a lovely house near Chichester. I thought the environment would be good for composition. Yet it is no good

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<sup>53</sup> The two-act libretto by Phyl is housed at *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>54</sup> During the 1930s Phyl was active as an author, writing numerous short stories, several written under the pen-name Leslie Sands, including, 'The Golden Door', 'Cherry Trees' and 'The Lily-Pond', all are unpublished and housed at *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>55</sup> 07/06/1922 RAM Management Committee Minutes, 4. *GB-Lam*.

at all! The beauties of the countryside are too distracting.<sup>56</sup> He further expanded his views in 1953:

A flat on a top floor in the heart of London with a writing-room looking across the city far away to the Surrey hills and the sounds of traffic coming up to me from way down below and my fellow creatures giving the appearance of pygmies going about their daily tasks: add to this a pile of music paper (25 to 30 staves) and a well-sharpened pencil – this is my recipe for composing...

I should like to live either in a balloon suspended 1000ft. above Regent's Park, or in my own private lighthouse on a rock 200ft. above a semi-tropical sea, or, failing this, on a summit of a mountain, in a house with a tower, from which I could see 300 miles each way. As it is, I have to be content in living 100ft. up on the top floor of a block of flats.<sup>57</sup>

The South Coast was always their retreat from London for the rest of their lives as 'the air' was thought to be better; the cottages were always called after Coates' orchestral pieces.<sup>58</sup> Selsey was also held a similar position for R.C. Sherriff, whose mother had a cottage in Selsey.<sup>59</sup> Several of Coates' works were inspired by this stretch of coast, notably the valse serenade of 1930 *By the Sleepy Lagoon*. One evening whilst the Coates' were on the East Beach at Selsey, the colours of the sunset looking towards Bognor Regis and Pagham and the faint pink-glow of Bognor Regis Gas Works, inspired him to write the now famous melody. The purchase of property in Selsey (initially Phyl leased a cottage 'Stonecracker' and the Coates' bought 'Summer Days' in 1923)<sup>60</sup> heralded the arrival of Coates' mature orchestral works, beginning with the completion of the superb miniature overture, *The Merrymakers*, completed in January 1923. From this followed *Two*

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<sup>56</sup> 08/11/1940 *Evening News*.

<sup>57</sup> 12/10/1953 *Daily Mail*.

<sup>58</sup> Notably 'Stonecracker Cottage' (after the song), 'Summer Days Cottage' (after the suite), 'Tamarisk Cottage' (after the intermezzo, *By the Tamarisk*, also, the cottage was near a patch of tamarisk) and 'Bear's Cottage' (after *The Three Bears*).

<sup>59</sup> Sherriff later wrote the screenplay to the 1954 film *Dam Busters*, to which Coates contributed his famous march. There were also negotiations between Coates and the BBC in 1957 for a possible collaboration between Coates and Sherriff to write a musical for the BBC, but alas the production never materialized (05/02/1957 Minutes of Light Music Policy Committee. *GB-Rwac* Light Music Policy Meeting Minutes file 2, 1955-1957).

<sup>60</sup> I am indebted to Tom Creedy of Selsey Local History Society for information regarding the Coates' properties in Selsey.

*Light Syncopated Pieces*, and the orchestral phantasies *The Selfish Giant* (1925), *The Three Bears* (1926) and later *Cinderella* (1929).

Both Coates and his wife were enthusiastic dancers, frequently dancing the night away in the London hotels and clubs. This love of dance remained until the end of Coates' life in 1957; In 1948 Collie Knox reported in *Home Notes*:

Every Friday night they go and dance "Samba" together to the strains of the Carroll Gibbons band. Eric Coates is a mad keen "Samabite," and loves dancing. He tells me "it keeps me young." Whatever engagements they have to fulfil, or however much work there is, nothing is allowed to interfere with Friday night – when Eric Coates and his attractive, young-looking wife set forth on their Samba expedition.<sup>61</sup>

This predilection to the dance scene meant that they soon befriended the great bandleaders of the time; Jack Hylton, Jack Payne and Henry Hall.<sup>62</sup> This influence from the world of the ballroom started to creep into his songs during the early part of the 1920s and a few years later into the orchestral works. He was not alone in using influences of ragtime and dance band; Satie, Debussy, Stravinsky and Milhaud all got there first, but Coates was one of the earliest English composers to take up this technique, in his *Two Light Syncopated Pieces* (published in 1925). Reflecting in 1935, he said: '... [A great] influence on my work, probably, was the dance band. I am quite certain I could not have composed "Knightsbridge" or "Three Bears" without studying post-war dance rhythms.'<sup>63</sup>

During the 1920s most eminent hotels employed a band which accompanied the diner's dancing after their meal (such as at London's Savoy Hotel where the Savoy Orpheans and Havana Bands performed, or at the Midland Hotel, Manchester where Henry Hall started his career). These bands were heavily influenced by the American jazz, albeit with a very English flavour since little or no improvisation featured. The vast

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<sup>61</sup> 19/03/1948 *Home Notes*. 'Collie Knox: Talking With You.'

<sup>62</sup> For whom he was contemplating writing a piece. (06/06/1934 *The Era*.)

<sup>63</sup> 03/05/1935. *Radio Times*. 'He Wrote 'Knightsbridge'.

majority of the lesser hotels and restaurants employed small groups, often referred to 'palm-court orchestras', to entertain their customers; even many of the Lyon's Corner Houses employed a trio. All these groups from the large dance bands to the humble trio required music and it was into this world that Coates' music entered. Also, these groups were catalysts for a wide dissemination of music over the country; live music was everywhere.

Thanks to the bands that he heard at the exclusive London hotels and restaurants, his compositions of the 1920s marked a period of experimentation, for he tried, successfully, to integrate syncopation and the idiom of the dance band in his music, a trait which marked him out from the rest of the light music composers of the time. However, both his light-music contemporaries Ketèlbey and Haydn Wood had also experimented earlier with these ideas, though they never assimilated the ideas into their work long-term. These elements crept into Coates' output initially through his songs; 'Pepita' (published in 1920) is written in a Habanera rhythm and this rhythm was used in the orchestral miniature *Moresque* of 1921. However, it was probably the series of five concerts at Queen's Hall by the augmented bands of the Savoy Hotel (the Orpheans and Havana bands), beginning in January 1925,<sup>64</sup> that led to a serious attempt to integrate the 'dance band style' into his orchestral compositions, both in melody, harmony and scoring (notably the *Two Light Syncopated Pieces*). To aid this experimentation Coates adopted the *nom de plume* Jack Arnold and had several songs (especially those he wrote for stage productions in 1924 and 1925) published, as well as several other un-datable works in manuscript under this name. All the works bear the hallmarks of music by Coates, but tend to have a more popular flavour. The songs 'Ev'ry Minute of Ev'ry Day' and 'K-

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<sup>64</sup> See Dickinson, Peter. *Marigold: The Music of Billy Mayerl*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999, Appendix 1, 223-229 for the programmes. Coates probably attended the concerts, but if not, must surely have known about them.

Naughty Kanute' are song foxtrots. He also used the pen-names of Ciré,<sup>65</sup> and also Charles Hylton, though the pieces that resulted were for use in the theatre.<sup>66</sup>

His first extended work in his new 'more advanced syncopated idiom' was the Phantasy, *The Selfish Giant*, which set a precedent for Coates of using familiar stories (he had a great love of fairytales), syncopation and dance rhythms (including the foxtrot, which became a great favourite of his) in his pieces; and the audiences loved it. It also marked the start of his summer excursions to conduct the coastal orchestras: the Phantasy was first performed in Eastbourne in November 1925. He appears to have enjoyed going to Eastbourne, where they played several first performances of his works in the 1920s and 1930s, and to Bournemouth. More often than not he would come into contact with the titled musicians of the day including Edward Elgar and Ethel Smyth. Live music making was very much in vogue during the 1920s and 1930s, and most coastal and spa towns (including Eastbourne, Torquay and Scarborough, Harrogate and Buxton) had an orchestra (often double-handed, playing more than one instrument). They would be expected to play whatever music the public wanted to hear: from popular melodies of the day to Beethoven symphonies. These seaside and spa orchestras enabled Coates' music to be heard by the masses while they holidayed.

The rise of the gramophone happened almost concurrently with the rise of the music in hotels, teashops and holiday resorts. The advent of the gramophone revolutionised music making and its reception. Whilst relatively expensive (both for the gramophone player and the recordings) the gramophone enabled many to listen to music whenever they had an inclination to do so. The 1920s brought Coates' first gramophone recordings as a conductor (he may have taken part in several of the acoustic sessions as a

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<sup>65</sup> 24/04/1924 Eric Coates to C.F. James. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1. William Boosey (of Chappell) disliked Coates' pen name and requested he change it, Coates chose Jack Arnold.

<sup>66</sup> 16/07/1931 Eric Coates to C.F. James. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1. Coates was not the only light music composer to write under a pseudonym: Ketèlbey also 'experimented' under an alias, as André de Basque in his *Japanese Carnival Overture*.

viola player with the (New) Queen's Hall Orchestra): *Joyous Youth Suite* for the Vocalion Record Company in 1923 and *The Merry-makers* and *Moresque* for Columbia, (with whom he made the majority of his recordings during the 1920s and 1930s) later the same month.<sup>67</sup> These early recordings were recorded by the acoustic process, but in 1926 he cut his first disc recorded by the new electrical methods of recording, the evergreen *Summer Days Suite*. The gramophone proved to be the fulcrum of Coates' creative output and he recorded most of his major works (and smaller works to act as 'fillers') at regular intervals throughout his life, the last recording being four months before his death in 1957. Along with Elgar, Holst, Ketèlbey and Stravinsky, Coates was amongst the first wave of composers to take the gramophone seriously and to exploit its potential.

In many respects, the rise of the gramophone and the BBC were very similar developments; both marked the beginning of widespread access to music by a majority of the public. Whilst listeners of the gramophone had to purchase music they thought they would like, the broadcasting schedules of the BBC enabled listeners to listen to music that they may never have listened to before; after all, one of the BBC's major 'aims' was to educate the listening public. The foundation of the British Broadcasting Company on 15 October 1922 started a process of colossal change in the musical life in England (not just for the listeners, but also the performers and providers of music). From their foundation, the Company placed an enormous emphasis on live music, and it was not until the Second World War that they began to rely on records to a greater degree. Coates' music featured from the foundations of the Corporation in their programme schedules and his first engagement as a conductor on 26 February 1925 on radio and in 1937 on the infant television service.<sup>68</sup> On average, he conducted about two broadcast concerts of his music each year and occasional 'one-off' performances of certain pieces

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<sup>67</sup> See Appendix 1 for further details.

<sup>68</sup> See Appendix 1 for details. It is difficult to ascertain when Coates made his first appearance as a conductor for the BBC, as the BBC's records of Coates only start in 1928.

with the BBC's in-house orchestras. However, it was during the 1930s that a close working relationship between the two parties helped him to become a household name as a composer.

Thanks to the foundations of the BBC, recording several pieces of his music during the 1920s and also to frequent performances of his music by musical ensembles all over the country he was becoming well-known as a composer of light music. Towards the close of the decade his style as a composer was changing and the elements of theatre music in his compositions were diminishing. 1930 was the last time Coates fraternized with the theatre as a composer (though his concert valse *The Footlights* was a nostalgic hark back to halcyon days) with his *The Seven Dwarfs* written for a revue staged by Andre Charlot, though he was still fascinated by ballet; works such as *The Three Bears* and *Cinderella* were frequently staged as ballets, the former was broadcast twice on BBC Television in 1937.<sup>69</sup> *The Seven Dwarfs* became highly popular through BBC broadcasts, despite its unusual scoring for theatre orchestra and Coates later reworked the score to become *The Enchanted Garden* (the largest single-movement work he wrote) in 1938. 1930 also marked an upturn in the Coates' lifestyle, they moved into a top floor flat with views of Regent's Park and the City, in the new luxurious apartment block, Chiltern Court, built by the Metropolitan Railway above Baker Street Underground station (Coates' abhorrence of the Underground notwithstanding).<sup>70</sup> From the start, the flats proved successful among London's elite, as besides the Coates', Arnold Bennett and H.G. Wells also resided in Chiltern Court. *From Meadow to Mayfair* Suite, written in 1931, assimilated his formal adoption of London as his home (despite having lived there since 1906).<sup>71</sup>

In 1931 Austin contracted a serious case of measles and for a time his life hung in the balance. Phyl moved down to Selsey to nurse Austin, Eric joining 'the other two'

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<sup>69</sup> Choreographed by Joy Newton and broadcast on BBC Television at 15:00 and 21:45 on 07/02/1938.

<sup>70</sup> Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements* 522-523. GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box M127.

<sup>71</sup> Coates: 1953, 21.

whenever he could. Austin eventually returned to school in 1933. In an atmosphere such as this it must have been difficult for Coates to keep composing and working. Despite this, throughout the 1930s he made visits to the provinces to conduct his music, including his first visit to Blackpool in 1932 (he drove from London) and Liverpool in 1935.

In 1933 came the greatest turning point in his compositional career so far, and the ramifications for the rest of Coates' life and work cannot be over emphasized: the adoption of his 'Knightsbridge' March (from the *London Suite*) as the signature tune of the BBC radio feature 'In Town Tonight'. To a certain extent, he was already a well-known musical figure through his success with *The Three Bears* and *The Four Ways Suite*. Until then, the *London Suite* had only a lukewarm reception after its premiere by the BBC. Eric Maschwitz picked Coates' *London Suite* out of the BBC's Gramophone Library and decided to use it to introduce his new programme, as it had the word 'London' in the title. Coates was unaware of the BBC's use of it until:

...One Saturday evening, deeply absorbed by my camera, I heard Phyl calling me. Reluctantly I dragged myself away from my dark-room and went to see what it was all about. They were playing something on the radio. It was a blare of trumpets. It sounded familiar. We exchanged glances. It was the introduction to the Trio of the Knightsbridge March, my own recording. Looking in the *Radio Times* we discovered the announcement of a new weekly feature entitled 'In Town To-Night'... We listened to the broadcast until the fanfare of my march and the few bars of the melody faded out and the half-hour came to a close. "At any rate", we agreed, "it cannot do the Suite any harm."

The telephone started to ring. It appeared that listeners had been in touch with Broadcasting house to ask the title of the tantalising few bars which they had just heard on the radio, and having been told it was by me, they had rung through to the flat to ask further information about the music. No sooner was the receiver down then the bell rang again... I resigned myself to coping with the eulogies of complete strangers, ranging from old ladies of eighty down to young ladies in their 'teens, while Phyl looked on and laughed.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 220.

Coates had had difficulties in getting Chappell's to publish the Suite after he completed the score in 1932 as a result of the complicated string writing. He had then to fight to get the Columbia Gramophone Company to record it. Writing in 1952, Coates captured the sense of drama in Abbey Road Studios:

At last, after much ringing of bells, more insistent shouts of "Gentlemen, please", the musicians were once again in their places. The clock showed 12.20. Two minutes more to restore silence and at 12.22 we started on the first movement of the 'London Suite'. All went fairly smoothly and we managed to get the first two movements completed by just on ten minutes to one. We now had only the last movement to record, the 'Knightsbridge March'. At 12.53 we started recording. At 12.54 someone blew a wrong note. At 12.55 we started again. At 12.57 a wax split. I was in despair. Something inside me told me it was absolutely imperative that I should get the disc somehow, and I knew it was now out of the question to achieve a recording before one o'clock. I also knew it was of no use appealing to the recording manager for a few minutes' grace, for every minute overtime meant a considerable increase in the expense of the recording session; and besides, had he not said to me that he did not think much of the new work? So I took my courage in both hands and asked the musicians if they would, as a personal favour to me, spare me a minute or so longer to give me the chance of getting the record. Two signals on the buzzer – we held our breath – the red light glowed and, at three minutes past one o'clock, thanks to a sturdy wax and the good natured gesture on the part of the orchestra, the 'Knightsbridge March', which was to prove to be the biggest seller the Columbia Gramophone Company had ever had, was made.<sup>73</sup>

Despite all the difficulties of Coates getting the Suite published in the first place and then the nail-biting recording session, the work proved to be a popular success, almost overnight. He once remarked: 'When I wrote the 'London Suite' I moved from the music page to the news page, and it's one of the few moves I have never regretted. (They were always moving.)<sup>74</sup> After the adoption of 'Knightsbridge' as the signature tune to 'In Town Tonight's' first broadcast 18 November 1933, there were several pejorative aspects, as Coates recalled in an edited passage from his autobiography,

We had to discontinue booking our usual box at the Palladium through being put on "the spot" by Flanagan and Allen, aided and abetted by Richard Crean and the orchestra, who stood up and thundered "Knightsbridge" at us while I stood and

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>74</sup> Eric Coates quoted in 26-27/12/1984 Austin Coates to Geoffrey Self. *GB-ILMprivate*.

bowing my acknowledgements, feeling very foolish, bathed in light, while the audience shouted its approval.<sup>75</sup>

Austin Coates remembered their London flat being laid siege to by the public, and police guarding the entrance to Chiltern Court where they lived; the composer exiting only through a concealed side exit.<sup>76</sup> As a result of the March, Coates was rushed all over the country to conduct. The ‘Knightsbridge’ March became so popular that Chappell had to work overtime to keep up with demand for the piano edition of the March, which was subtitled ‘In Town To-Night March.’ After composing the *London Suite* he became and, more importantly, remained a celebrity, and he was often in the newspapers. He also received an invitation to rejoin the staff of the RAM to assist Benjamin Dale:

“After all my dear Coates” said the kindly old fellow, “we do not always want to have to work twelve hours a day, and I thought Mr Dale’s surplus pupils might be of assistance to you. As I said to the Principal” (Sir John B. McEwen): “Why not ask Mr Eric Coates to help Mr Dale out. He used to do a bit of writing when he was at the Academy”. I thanked him for his offer and gently told him I was afraid that I was too busy to entertain the idea. “Of course, my boy, I expect your viola keeps you too occupied.” I hadn’t the heart to tell that my viola hadn’t been out of its case for nearly twenty years.<sup>77</sup>

As a result of the success of the ‘Knightsbridge’ March, although not immediately, Coates, on a tide of ‘London fever’, wrote another March, *London Bridge*. Spike Hughes once commented, ‘When Eric Coates came to London, he saw something, thought about it and turned it into his own infectious kind of music.’<sup>78</sup> The March was accompanied by the ‘ultimate sales gimmick’: the recording and first performance was

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<sup>75</sup> Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements* 472. GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box M127.

<sup>76</sup> 19/08/1986. *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. GB-Lbl/National Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA0398. Austin Coates further recalled: ‘Eventually the police and my father between them worked out a routine for the porters and the telephone operator monitored incoming calls, which was a great help and didn’t put any call through after 9pm unless it was from the continent. From then on and for the rest of their lives, wherever they lived in London they never answered the front door except to the ‘call sign’ which was only know to the porters. The ‘call sign’ was dit-dit-dit-da, Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony on electric bell. (Ibid.)

<sup>77</sup> Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements* 475. GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box M127, though nothing of the invitation survives in the RAM Management Committee Minute Books, GB-Lam.

<sup>78</sup> Spike Hughes quoted in 06/06/1959 Concert from the 1959 BBC Light Music Festival, broadcast from the Royal Festival Hall, BBC Light Programme.

made during a broadcast of 'In Town Tonight' in May 1934 and the resulting record was marketed as 'the one that listeners heard being recorded.' The recording session was also recorded by Pathé news, for distribution in cinemas all over the country; the film, about four minutes in length, was recorded at Abbey Road Studios, and shows Coates introducing the March and then conducting the orchestra for the cameras.<sup>79</sup> Though never as popular as the 'Knightsbridge' March, the piece added to Coates' popularity. Coates spent the rest of decade touring the country (and also making several foreign tours) as a result of the popularity of these works and of others popularised by frequent BBC broadcasts. On various occasions during the 1930s he appeared on 'the bill,' with an orchestra at several London cinemas in their variety spots.<sup>80</sup> It is believed that the aggregate audience for Coates 1935 excursions into cinema variety spots was 45,000 people.<sup>81</sup> In 1938 Coates appeared on the winning team in a BBC Radio spelling competition (Listeners against BBC Staff), he had very much become a popular figure.<sup>82</sup>

The increased popularity of the 'Knightsbridge' March enabled Coates to make several foreign tours; Belfast (1935), Sweden (1936) and Scandinavia, Holland and Denmark (1938) and to conduct at the 1937 Radiolympia at London's Earl's Court in front of a large audience. He always found time to go back to Hucknall, to conduct their orchestras or to crown the Hucknall Carnival Rose Queen, as in July 1935 (shortly after the death of his father).<sup>83</sup> The 1930s also brought frustration, as he was frequently left out of the Promenade Concerts (which he held in high esteem). Later he wrote of the

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<sup>79</sup> 28/05/1934 A Camera Interview With Eric Coates – The Famous Composer and Conductor. [www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com).

<sup>80</sup> Notably the Victoria Cinema, London (with 40-piece orchestra), week commencing 14/10/1935 and also Dominion Theatre, Tottenham Court Road (with a 50-piece orchestra) and Gaumont Cinema, Hammersmith, both in 1935.

<sup>81</sup> 07/03/1936 *Belfast News and Letters*.

<sup>82</sup> 02/05/1938. *The Times*. 'BBC Team Lose at Spelling.'

<sup>83</sup> He found this visit quite a moving experience, as he had not grasped the level of his celebrity status in his native town: 'It was a boiling hot day and the market place was jammed with about ten thousand people. When I crowned the Carnival Queen mothers held up their babies to look at me. Old people I didn't know from Adam pressed forward and warmly shook my hand and called me Master Eric. It was all very much like a National hero returning home after the wars! Any rate, it rather made me feel like that.' (Meadmore, W.S. 'Eric Coates.' In *The Gramophone* 15 (1936-1937), 235-237, 237.)

series of concerts: 'For a composer of Light Orchestral works to be admitted to the Promenade Concerts is like entering the Kingdom of Heaven.'<sup>84</sup> Coates conducted *The Three Bears* in the 1934 series, but frequently wrote to the BBC asking to be included in future seasons, unfortunately occasioning a negative response. During this period, his crusades against snobbery toward light music commenced, particularly in the popular press.

Whilst the avenue of the Promenade Concerts was largely closed for Coates he continued to compose and had many outlets for his music. The orchestral works of the 1930s were characterised by two major compositional styles; the pastoral, 'Edward German vein', in works such as *From Meadow to Mayfair* and *Springtime Suites*; and the more up-beat, syncopated dance-band style in *The Three Men* and *London Again Suites*. He wrote a small number of songs, more sporadically during this period, to fulfil his publishing contract. Coates' 1938 Chappell's contract only committed him to write one large and two smaller orchestral works a year, and one song to qualify for his retaining fee of £300 per annum.<sup>85</sup> The 1938 contract is the only one to survive, so one can only surmise what the previous contracts entailed by looking through his catalogue of works and speculating how much his retaining fee must have been. Coates' contract with Chappell ended in 1940 when he ceased to have a definite contract *per se* with Chappell or with any other publishing firm, a freedom he was glad of.<sup>86</sup> His heart was never in writing popular songs during the 1930s unless it involved him teaming up with Phyl. By the start of the 1930s the ballad had practically been abandoned by most composers and was quite

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<sup>84</sup> 16/06/1943 Eric Coates to Henry Wood. *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>85</sup> Chappell Contract, 12 October 1938, *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>86</sup> 10/07/1942 Eric Coates to Louis Dreyfus & 13/07/1942 Edwin Goodman to Eric Coates, *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

unpopular, despite several attempts to resurrect it, though in his *Report on Light Music*, written for the BBC in 1943, he did advocate the return of the Ballad Concerts.<sup>87</sup>

In several orchestral works of the 1930s, Coates changed his musical direction and tried his hand at composing more ambitious light works. Initially, it was with the six-movement ballet Suite *The Jester at the Wedding* for the 1932 Torquay Festival, which was a marked departure away from the usual three-movement suite pattern.<sup>88</sup> Whilst in many ways it is a collection of five shorter pieces and a final march, the work is an ambitious one. Coates' other radical departure was his *Saxo-Rhapsody* for alto saxophone and orchestra, written for the eminent saxophonist Sigurd Rascher in 1936. Coates had long been an admirer of the saxophone, incorporated a solo tenor saxophone part in 'The Man-About-Town' movement from *The Three Men Suite*. He had furthermore sanctioned saxophone parts to be issued for the *London* and *London Again* Suites. The *Saxo-Rhapsody*, dedicated to Rascher, was written to demonstrate the lyrical possibilities of the instrument, which it undeniably achieves in the final pages. Initially, Coates had been unenthusiastic to write this work, receiving a commission from the 1936 Folkestone Festival; he reluctantly agreed to write a work, but only if they could entice Sigurd Rascher to play the work – Coates wished to pursue work with his camera. The Festival engaged Rascher and Coates had to write the work hastily as Rascher wanted 'to make good the practice.'<sup>89</sup>

Towards the close of his time under contract to Chappell in 1938 (which expired in 1940), he was caught on the horns of a creative dilemma. A surviving letter from his publishers to him in late 1938 shows him thinking of taking a new road in the world of light music:

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<sup>87</sup> Coates, Eric. *Report on Light Music*. Presented to the BBC 22/05/1943, 14a *GB-Rwar* Music General Light Music file, 1939-1943 and *GB-STHprivate*. This appears to be very much an afterthought, hence the page-number 14a.

<sup>88</sup> The plot for the work was provided by Phyl who subsequently expanded it into a libretto for a two act light opera. The script is held at *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>89</sup> Coates: 1953, 229.

What I earnestly feel is that it is very important that you should keep the closest contact with the music buying public and not lose the popular market particularly since the advent of "IN TOWN TONIGHT". I personally know how you feel about your compositions and your future work but at the same time I would urge that it is most essential that you do your best to give us some lighter numbers that will carry on the continuity of your success with the large circle of music buyers, in addition to furthering and developing your position in the musically artistic world. It is a nuisance that we have to consider the commercial side of things if we are to carry on but I know you understand and appreciate the situation.<sup>90</sup>

Quite what this 'new direction' was is unclear as only one side of the argument survives.

However, I suspect that Coates wished to take light music in a more symphonic direction, rather than move away from composing light works to write serious works. One only has to look at *The Enchanted Garden* written during 1938 (based on the ballet *Snowdrop*), which is his most ambitious and longest single-movement orchestral piece, scored for the largest orchestra he used, lasting nineteen-minutes, to see a marked change in style. This new idiom can also be seen in *The Four Centuries Suite, First Meeting* (published for violin and piano) and *The Three Elizabeths Suite* he pushed the boundaries of the adjective 'light' in these works. They have a new dimension, and are certainly on a larger scale and use a more generous orchestra. Nevertheless, Coates still produced his 'tuneful lollipops', especially marches during the ensuing War years.

A piece he wrote for Lionel Tertis, published in 1941, *First Meeting*, provided an unusual diversion as it marked a complete change of style, unique in his output, with its intensity and style akin to the chamber works of Brahms, a side hinted previously in the *Three Lyric Pieces*, no mere fripperies, written for Phyl's sister Joan in 1930. This dilemma of a 'new direction' was not new to any composer, Arthur Sullivan had always felt insecure about his Savoy Operas whilst his 'serious' works paled into insignificance. The waltz from Geoffrey Toye's ballet *The Haunted Ballroom* (made famous in the arrangement and orchestration by Frank Tapp) has rendered his other compositions and his work as a

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<sup>90</sup> 28/11/1938 Edwin Goodman to Eric Coates, GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box 186.

conductor inconsequential (how many remember that Toye was a respected conductor and presented the premiere of Vaughan Williams *A London Symphony*?).

With the arrival of the Second World War, Coates' compositional powers had begun to wane, though he continued to compose and several of his finest works date from this period. With the cessation of his contract with Chappell he had lost any of the pressure of composition which suited him. He struggled to compose in London due to the incessant bombing raids, and it is possible to understand why he pessimistically proclaimed of this period: 'it was all too patent that my writing days were over.'<sup>91</sup> He wrote to Robinson on visiting his eighty-year old mother-in-law at Chesham Bois:

She is all by herself and we are with her, partly for company and partly to get some decent sleep. I manage to get up to London when I have sufficient petrol, otherwise I come by train and spend the day at the flat trying to do some writing. What a life!<sup>92</sup>

No doubt being temporally evicted from their flat in September 1940 may well have shaken the composer:

As a matter of fact we had to evacuate our flat at an hour's notice in the middle of the night early last week on the account of there being four time-bombs around the building, with the result that all our letters were hung-up at King's Cross for over a week... We came back to our flat last night and had a sample of London bombing – being on the top floor does not improve things!<sup>93</sup>

They were forced to leave the flat permanently in June 1941 and it was not until November 1942 they could move back into central London – Coates hated being away from the centre of the capital.

In August 1940 Jack Hylton provided an unusual diversion for Coates and invited the composer to tour with Malcolm Sargent, Basil Cameron and the LPO performing in the provinces in an effort to keep the orchestra in business. The tour, while only lasting

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<sup>91</sup> Coates: 1953, 243.

<sup>92</sup> 11/09/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1943.

<sup>93</sup> 26/09/1940 Eric Coates to Arthur Wynn. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

for a few weeks provided an interesting and welcome diversion for the composer,<sup>94</sup> though it proved detrimental for his health. He later recalled, 'I think it was a mistake to have taken on so much conducting at a time when I had only just recovered from a sharp attack of congestion of the lungs.'<sup>95</sup>

Life during wartime was increasingly becoming a struggle for him, however, he did continue to write; mainly miniature pieces, often marches and very few songs along with the significant works discussed above. His first major success of the war years was a March, *Calling All Workers*. Coates had wanted to compose a work for war use, and had struggled to compose anything suitable. The fillip for the March was an invitation by Phyl to write a piece for her Red Cross depot, (where she went to sew); he maintained that Phyl always called the March 'her signature tune'.<sup>96</sup> The compositional stimulus of the piece was the composer watching his wife depart to her work, from his roof-garden and the view of London in the distance, especially the twin towers of Crystal Palace.<sup>97</sup> Self has noted the 'sewing-machine-like' counterpoint to the second subject (figures 4-5), linking its associations with a sewing depot.<sup>98</sup> Phyl penned the preface to the score: 'To go to one's work with a glad heart and to do that work with Earnestness and Goodwill.'<sup>99</sup> The title originated when Coates saw an American gangster film and the line, bellowed out by a policeman, 'calling all cars', was subtly altered as the title of the new March.<sup>100</sup> Coates was so pleased with the title that the whole March was surrounded in secrecy until the first performance had been broadcast by the BBC Theatre Orchestra, and the solo piano edition had already been published, to prevent anyone plagiarising the title.<sup>101</sup> From

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<sup>94</sup> See Coates: 1953, 236-237, for full details of the tour.

<sup>95</sup> Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements*: 512. GB-L<sub>cm</sub> Coates Archive, box M127

<sup>96</sup> Coates: 1953, 235.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Self, Geoffrey. *Light Music In Britain Since 1870*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001, 197.

<sup>99</sup> Piano-Conductor score to *Calling All Workers*. London: Chappell, 1940.

<sup>100</sup> 26/08/1948 Eric Coates in *Around and About*. BBC Midland Home Service. GB-L<sub>bl</sub> National Sound Archive MT12048 & Coates: 1953, 235.

<sup>101</sup> 30/07/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. GB-R<sub>wac</sub>, Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942. The first performance was on 01/09/1940, BBC Theatre Orchestra, conducted by Stanford Robinson.

the outset he was keen for the work to be adopted as a signature tune for workers' programmes, although it was initially rejected from that function,<sup>102</sup> the trio introduced and closed broadcasts to 'Music While You Work' from October 1940 (the show had commenced in June that year).<sup>103</sup> The programme was a huge success, being broadcast to factories all over the country, usually twice a day, occasionally three times. The March proved to be a popular success, and even today it has associations with 'music that helped us to win the war', being featured in several television programmes. Later during the War, thanks to the success of the March, he would sketch a *Hymn for the Workers* which remained unpublished and unperformed.<sup>104</sup>

*Calling All Workers* started a vogue in Coates' writing marches, which not only lasted during the war, but until the end of his life. Just as his early works had frequently been walses, the later works tended to be marches. His wartime marches were written on a variety of subjects and for various causes: *Over to You* (dedicated 'to those who make and fly our aircraft'), *London Calling* (for the BBC's Overseas Children's Programme) *The Eighth Army* and *Salute the Soldier* (for the National Savings Committee). By *Salute the Soldier* (1944) he had become slightly exasperated by the genre and was only tempted by Sir Harold Mackintosh's gift of a box of his Toffee de Luxe!<sup>105</sup> The resultant March was written for the 'Salute the Soldier' campaign (run by the National Savings Committee), with all of the composer's royalties, including mechanical rights, being assigned to the Army Benevolent fund. As he wrote to Stanford Robinson: '...I am very anxious to hand over a substantial sum to it.'<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> 07/08/1940 DDP to MPD (Stanford Robinson). *GB-Rwac*, Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>103</sup> 14/09/2002 *The Music Factory*: Music While You Work. BBC Radio 4.

<sup>104</sup> The tune (in double common metre) is undated and untexted, but was probably written between 1942-1945 and exists in two versions. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, Boxes 184 and 192 and the words, penned probably by the Coates' is in *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>105</sup> Coates: 1953, 242. The inspiration came during lunch with Mackintosh and he wrote down a few sketches on the back of the menu and after lunch returned home to write and orchestrate the March in full. (15/03/1944 *Evening News*).

<sup>106</sup> 07/03/1944 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

The stimulus of the war gave rise to two of Coates' finest works; the Suites *The Four Centuries* and *The Three Elizabeths*, possibly the result of the aforementioned change in direction from 1938.<sup>107</sup> The idea for *The Four Centuries* came to Coates in mid 1941; to portray dancing throughout the ages, in a pseudo-pastiche compositional style and scoring. The idea of writing in pastiche, especially in dance styles, was nothing new in English music of the period, this style can be seen in the writing of Parry (the posthumously published *English Suite*), of Stanford, Edward German (especially in his 'Old English' vein, as in the Dances from *Nell Gwyn* and *Henry VIII*), Warlock and of Glazunov in his *From the Middle Ages Suite*. The *Four Centuries Suite* opens with a hornpipe in duple metre, as a hornpipe of the mid-seventeenth century would have been;<sup>108</sup> a Pavane and Tambourin for the eighteenth; a Valse to represent the nineteenth and; a nostalgic look at the dance bands for the final movement 'Rhythm'. The scoring of each movement represented the conventions of the century; the finale complete with a trio of saxophones. The work was written during turbulent times; the Coates' had been evicted from their flat at Berkeley Court, Baker Street, with just ten-minutes notice to collect their belongings and were forced to move out of London, initially to Amersham and later Hampstead. The Suite hardly shows any of these anxieties and is one of Coates' most carefree and lively scores, possibly his finest. Upon completion the score was offered to Boosey & Hawkes, which caused a dispute with Chappell, although his contract with Chappell had expired.<sup>109</sup> He was lured to Boosey & Hawkes by Leslie Boosey, who had been keen to publish a work of Coates for some time, out of loyalty; Boosey & Co. had started his publishing career in 1908 and also, perchance, on the promise of a full score for the work. The BBC was offered the first performance of the work, of which it kept

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<sup>107</sup> 28/11/1938 Edwin Goodman to Eric Coates, *GB-Lcm Coates Archive*, box 186.

<sup>108</sup> As in the hornpipes in John Playford's *Collections*. Dean-Smith, Margaret. "Hornpipe ii" In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, ed. Stanley Sadie: xi, 736-737. London: Macmillan, 2001, 737.

<sup>109</sup> 10/08/1942 Eric Coates to Louis Dreyfus and 13/08/1942 Edwin Goodman? to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm Coates Archive*, box 186.

changing the date until July 1942. Robinson gave Coates several pointers on the publication of the full score and the percussion part of the last movement.

By the late 1930s Coates had enough of his works being published in piano-conductor scores, (the exceptions being the early *Miniature* and *From the Countryside Suites* and *The Three Bears Phantasy*). The production of such scores presumably served to keep costs down as full scores were an expensive luxury, and, as many light combinations used the piano to cover the missing instruments, a full score was superfluous. He was constantly exasperated having to loan his manuscript full scores to conductors.<sup>110</sup> No doubt fired on by Boosey's publication of *The Four Centuries* with a full score and Chappell continually publishing full scores for the works of Arnold Bax, although this was a necessity. Coates always took pride in the appearance of his scores and was horrified in 1939 when Chappell discussed photographing the manuscript parts of *The Enchanted Garden* and *Footlights* instead of having them engraved.<sup>111</sup> In 1942, on his insistence, and with an offer of funding, Chappell started to print some of his more ambitious works (*London Suite*, *Jester at the Wedding* and *The Enchanted Garden*) in full score format.<sup>112</sup> Coates had agreed to pay for the printing of *The Enchanted Garden* in 1939, because he felt his extended works were suffering from the absence of published full scores, which they indubitably were, but the project was shelved with the advent of hostilities.<sup>113</sup> It is perhaps a testament to Chappell's loyalty to Coates and his music, that when the War was at its height when engravers, metal, ink and paper were in such short supply, they sought to print his full scores. When *The Three Elizabeths* was published in 1944, it was published with a full score, as well as the more usual piano-conductor.

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<sup>110</sup> 07/01/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac*, Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942. For certain works, such as *The Three Men*, important information is completely omitted from the score, making it almost impossible for the conductor to gauge what should be happening.

<sup>111</sup> 22/06/1939 Eric Coates to Edwin Goodman. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>112</sup> 07/01/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac*, Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942 & 09/08/1942 Eric Coates to Louis Dreyfus. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>113</sup> 22/07/1939 Eric Coates to Edwin Goodman. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

*The Three Elizabeths* was Coates' last extended work and was orchestrated whilst the Coates' holidayed in the Vale of Evesham; a good deal of the scoring was undertaken in the hotel bar!<sup>114</sup> The suite was undoubtedly helped by its inspired choice of subject material; the three royal Elizabeths (at the time of composition, 1944: Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Elizabeth and Princess Elizabeth), from an idea by Arthur Hall and also by its dedication to H.M. the Queen. The BBC were offered first refusal on the premiere, which was given by BBC Symphony Orchestra under the composer on Christmas Eve 1944, though the work had been recorded earlier by Decca in November 1944 (Coates' second recording for the company). The work, possibly because of its ingenious subject matter, remains one of his best known and loved pieces, especially the evocative and pastoral second movement 'Springtime in Angus' with its fine solo oboe melody. The opening movement 'Halcyon Days' became popular in the 1960s as the signature tune to the BBC's 1967 production of John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* (albeit rearranged by Stephen Duro). The Suite was Coates' final extended work and from then until his death, he only infrequently composed short miniatures.

Post-war austerity had much to do with his lack of enthusiasm for composition, which was intensified by prolonged bouts of ill health. Writing in the bitter winter of 1947 to Max Dreyfus (Managing Director of Chappell) Coates stated:

... We are going through an awful time over here with this stupid coal shortage and at the same time one of the worst winters for years. Our wonderful and far-seeing Government (?) never had the sense to save while it could and as a result our electricity is being cut off for five hours a day (even the light, too) and we have to resort to sitting in rugs with hot-water bottles at our feet (that is, if you are fortunate enough to have gas laid-on – Heaven help you if you rely on electricity for the hot-water supply!) and if there happens to be one of our glorious London fogs then a candle is brought into action to enable you to see which end of the paper you are

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<sup>114</sup> Coates: 1953, 244. Austin Coates maintained that the first movement was composed in Chesham Bois whilst the Coates' were visiting Phyl's mother-in-law in September 1940. After the work had been composed (as an overture), Coates decided that it belonged to another work and left it until 1944, when it was integrated into *The Three Elizabeths*. (26/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. GB-Lbl/National Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA0399.)

writing on. I don't think the country has been in such a mess as it is today and it does not look like getting any better.<sup>115</sup>

The post-war era brought a new direction in composition for Coates. For years, he had had a schedule of writing, as his son Austin recalled in 1986 that was very strenuous,

My father and I were very close, though as a child I would only see him for half an hour a day... He had a very strict working routine. He would go into his writing room in the morning... and then write straight onto paper. He never used a piano.<sup>116</sup>

as well as very formal, '... he couldn't settle down to write music until he was properly dressed in the morning, complete with tie and Harris Tweed coat – and, perhaps a Turkish cigarette.<sup>117</sup> After the War, Coates was determined to write no more marches as he told the *Evening News* in 1944;<sup>118</sup> however his name had become synonymous with the genre and he was to write nine more after making this remark.<sup>119</sup> In an interview conducted days before his death, he was quoted as tiring of the genre, 'I want to write something sweeter and more lyrical', as seen in *The Unknown Singer* and *Impressions of a Princess*.<sup>120</sup> In 1947 he informed the *Evening News* that he would not write any more suites, possibly as a response to more calls for 'mood music.<sup>121</sup> Little composition took place in the post-war years, with much energy being translated instead into the PRS and a collaboration on a new light opera project with Austin. He was under no obligation to compose, as his contract with Chappell had expired and could 'pick and chose' from the offers that came his way (the BBC often asked him for new pieces, but he only offered them works when he felt like it). Whilst the compositions of the post-war years and the early 1950s do not have the vigour and ebullience of the works of the 1930s, all of the

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<sup>115</sup> 08/02/1947 Eric Coates to Max Dreyfus. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>116</sup> 02-08/08/1986 *Radio Times*. 'Coates of Many Colours.'

<sup>117</sup> Austin Coates quoted in Lace, Ian. 'Foreword' In *Suite in Four Movements*. Eric Coates, iv-x. London: Thames, 1986, 1986, vii.

<sup>118</sup> 13/03/1944 *Evening News*.

<sup>119</sup> This includes the March 'Youth of Britain' at the close of *The Three Elizabeths* and the military band *Men of Trent*, but excludes *South Wales and the West* which was a re-titling of *Seven Seas*.

<sup>120</sup> 15/12/1957 *Daily Express*.

<sup>121</sup> 24/08/1947 *Evening News*.

works are very much up to his usual high standards, despite being composed to a backdrop of illness and writer's cramp on Eric's part. In 1950, he was advised by his doctor to give up smoking (he had smoked since he was a child), which he did, and at the same time lost his creative impulses. When he returned to smoking in early 1952 the ideas returned, and led to the composition of *The Unknown Singer*.<sup>122</sup> During 1952 Phyl was forced into hospital to have an emergency appendectomy and Eric feared for her life, though she was to make a full recovery. As a result, he composed *The Unknown Singer* which came to him in a dream one night whilst Phyl was in hospital.<sup>123</sup> As a consequence of Phyl's illness and of Eric's fragile state of health, the Coates' moved permanently away from London to Bognor Regis in April 1954 for a year. This arrangement proved to be too much for Eric who was travelling to London for at least one day a week, so in 1955 they returned to London. The move to Bognor gave him a new lease of compositional life, which had begun with *Sweet Seventeen*, for that year's BBC Light Music Festival, completed just before the move, concerning which he informed the *Evening Standard*, 'I feel twice the person I was a few years ago: I can do such a great deal more nowadays.'<sup>124</sup>

Aside from composition and other routine musical business, there were many other causes and events which he was involved in, including a 'celebrity' accolade, appearing with Roy Plomley as a castaway on 'Desert Island Discs' in 1951, a show for which his *By the Sleepy Lagoon* has, since 1942, acted as the signature tune.<sup>125</sup>

Since the mid-1930s, he had been seen as being at the forefront of British light music, and as such he began to feel that the genre was attracting a lot of pejorative

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<sup>122</sup> Self, Geoffrey. *In Town Tonight*. London: Thames, 1986, 91.

<sup>123</sup> Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements*: 582-585. GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box M127. The original title of the work had been *A Voice in the Night*.

<sup>124</sup> 27/04/1954 *Evening Standard*. 'Goodbye Mayfair'.

<sup>125</sup> Broadcast 20/06/1951 on the BBC Home Service, Coates was the ninety-second castaway. Coates' fellow castaways during the third series included Stanley Holloway (a notable friend of Billy Mayerl), A.E. Matthews, Cicely Courtneige and Jimmy Edwards. See Appendix 5 for Coates' musical choices.

criticism which needed to be addressed. He explained his views in a reply to a request from the cellist Beatrice Harrison for a work for 'cello and orchestra'.<sup>126</sup>

I am blessed by coming under the category of “popular” and “light”, and any conductor who is of any standing giving a performance of one of my works runs the risk of being taken off conducting “serious” works, unless he be a man who has the strength of his convictions, and I can not honestly think of many who would answer to this description. And so you see my difficulties – it all comes down to this country being over-ridden with a form of musical snobbery which there does not seem to be any way of dealing with. And so I shall have to wait until a time as such the “Powers that Be” get it into their dull heads that there is as much musicianship required in the turning-out of a good light orchestral work as there is in the producing of the so-called symphonic stuff of which we hear so much on the Radio to-day, before I can give myself the pleasure of writing something for you.<sup>127</sup>

Perhaps Coates' comments are still relevant today, regarding the performance of light music? Fuelled by a Directorship of the PRS in 1940, he began to attack policies regarding the performances of light music. In 1943 he was commissioned by the BBC to write a *Report on Light Music* which involved him listening to 168 broadcasts of light music over a three month period.<sup>128</sup> In 1944, he also had a contretemps with the BBC over the inclusion of light music in the Promenade Concerts in 1944, though to no avail. Until the end of his life he believed in, and fought for, the values of light music, predominately through his work for the PRS on international conferences (he travelled to the USA in 1946, London 1947 and South America in 1948) as well as through constant petitioning of the BBC over their policy towards light music. With these activities taking precedence, few works were written during the period 1945-1950.

On return from South America in 1948, his health deteriorated again, writing to Deems Taylor in New York:

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<sup>126</sup> 05/06/1943 Beatrice Harrison to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186. Harrison wanted a work to partner Elgar's Cello Concerto, which she was performing with Malcolm Sargent on 13/07/1943.

<sup>127</sup> 17/08/1943 Eric Coates to Beatrice Harrison. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>128</sup> 27/05/1943 Arthur Bliss to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948. The *Report* was presented to the BBC on 22/05/1943. *GB-Rwac*, Music General, Light Music file 1 and *GB-STHprivate*.

For the past [*sic.*] month (damn this typewriter) I have been having daily injections in my buttocks and then my veins and I am thankful to say I am at last beginning to get better. Have you ever had bronchitis with asthma? I can tell you it's about the most horrible thing you will ever get. And so my doctor will not let me take another sea trip until next year when I shall be completely recovered and my bronchials restored to their normal state.<sup>129</sup>

His major compositional project of the late-1940s was to compose a musical comedy based around *A Knight of Malta*. After the failure of the musical comedies in the 1920s (not known in many circles), the BBC had tried to commission him to write them an operetta in 1941, inviting Geoffrey Bridson (then a BBC employee) to write the libretto,<sup>130</sup> though Coates turned these invitations down several times.<sup>131</sup> Also, Rutland Boughton had made a suggestion for a book to be fashioned into a suitable libretto.<sup>132</sup> Coates procrastinated as he was notorious pernickety over a libretto. Towards the end of the War he made another attempt to write a musical comedy, based on Laurence Howard's book *A Knight of Malta*.<sup>133</sup> Initially the project was to be with Howard, but soon Christopher Hassall (who had written the text to several of Coates' songs in the 1930s) was brought in to assist. The project was abandoned due to Hassall's commitments in the Army. However the idea resurfaced again in 1946-1948 this time with his son, Austin providing the libretto based on Howard's book.<sup>134</sup> Work progressed well during 1947, and many of the songs and general sketches still survive, but it was brought to an abrupt end by two major factors: fundamentally, there were complications over who owned the rights of Howard's book, and Coates' solicitors advised him to terminate work on the

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<sup>129</sup> 25/09/1949 Eric Coates to Deems Taylor. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>130</sup> 05/12/1941 D.H. Clarke to D.S.A. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates Copyright file, December 1941-1942. Coates' response to the initial 1941 suggestion may well have been oral, as no written record of his views regarding this proposal survives.

<sup>131</sup> 13/05/1943 R. Howgill to Copyright Director. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>132</sup> 29/08/1945 Eric Coates to Rutland Boughton. *GB-Lbl*, Rutland Boughton Collection, Add MS 52364.

<sup>133</sup> 12/11/1944 Eric Coates to Christopher Hassall. *GB-Cu*, Christopher Hassall Collection, Add 8905/10/C/61.

<sup>134</sup> Several copies of Austin Coates' script and also plot synopses still survive (*GB-STHprivate*), as do a large number of the songs and sketches made by Eric (*GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 183 and 184 & *GB-STHprivate*). Phyl believed (perhaps falsely) that the *Malta* sketches were complete and contained some of her husband's best writing. (Phyllis Coates quoted 18/04/1969 R.H. Whale to Albert Mallia. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 2).

production.<sup>135</sup> Secondly, Austin Coates wanted to leave to begin a career in the Far-East, so the project was abandoned like the previous productions. Austin Coates did publish eight songs from the production in 1968. Despite this failure, Coates still yearned to compose a musical comedy and teamed up with Eric Maschwitz in 1954 to write *Polly Pryde (Trelawney of the Wells)*, based on the play by Pinero, with financial backing from Jack Hylton, who had wanted to stage *A Knight of Malta*. He was forced to abandon the project due to writer's cramp in his right hand.<sup>136</sup> However, it appears that Maschwitz fashioned a complete libretto and may have looked around, without success, for another composer to take Coates place.<sup>137</sup> Patrick Mahoney in New York also tried to entice him to compose incidental music to the play *The Blue Bird*; despite Mahoney announcing Coates' participation in the project, he was not keen and repeatedly suggested that Norman O'Neil's published score would be best.<sup>138</sup> In 1956 he was also having his 'arm twisted' by an American to adapt some of his published music for the stage, but this too was abandoned.<sup>139</sup> The idea still continued after Coates' death; Phyl was still being pestered to allow a musical featuring some of Eric's music.<sup>140</sup>

Even though Coates' work in the field of musical comedy had failed, he was still able to find new outlets for his orchestral music. In 1949 the BBC started a series of concerts to be broadcast on the Light Programme known as the 'Light Programme Festival of Music', which became universally known as 'Light Music Festival' and which were later broadcast from the Royal Festival Hall. From their inception, the Festivals were designed to be a series of concerts at the lighter end of the symphonic spectrum. These Festivals did showcase much of the new talent of British light music (composers

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<sup>135</sup> 10/07/1950 M.E. Ricketts to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>136</sup> 24/02/1954 Eric Coates to Eric Maschwitz. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186. Contracts had been drawn up with Jack Hylton and a date for production had been set.

<sup>137</sup> Maschwitz, Eric. *No Chip on My Shoulder*. London: Herbert Jenkins, 1957, 188.

<sup>138</sup> 21/08/1955 & 26/09/1955 Eric Coates to Patrick Mahoney. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>139</sup> 08/11/1955 Eric Coates to William Pitt. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>140</sup> 27/08/1961 Phyllis Coates to Christopher Hassall. *GB-Cu*, Christopher Hassall Collection, Add 8905/10/C/73.

such as Ronald Binge and Ernest Tomlinson), and also the old favourites (Eric Coates and Haydn Wood). Coates was invited to write a work for the 1949 Festival, a rhapsody for piano and orchestra, but as there was little time (the invitation came in January 1949 and the BBC wanted completion by the end of February), he declined.<sup>141</sup> In the end, Coates conducted his *The Three Elizabeths Suite* from the Kingsway Hall on 28 March 1949. He was invited to have new works performed at these festivals and wrote the valse *Sweet Seventeen* for the 1954 Festival.

Most of Coates' time and energy during 1951 and 1952 was channelled into writing his memoirs, published in 1953 as *Suite in Four Movements*. The project had dated back to the 1940s when as Austin recalled, 'After 1941, he was seriously ill with pneumonia and asthma and did not get any better... Phyl thought he needed another medium and said to him: "You remember those letters you wrote to Eric [*sic.*] Morley in Hucknall. Why not have another look at them."<sup>142</sup> Coates informed *The Leader* in 1945 that the memoirs were practically finished,<sup>143</sup> though it was not until 1952 that a publisher and a manuscript were ready. The cut off date for information was 1951, though the autograph of the book does have some information relating to 1952, when, unfortunately, notable works such as *The Dam Busters March* had not yet been written. Coates had constantly struggled in writing words and had always feared speaking on radio broadcasts. In the book, he drew on many nostalgic memories from broadcasts, scrapbooks and letters. Despite his fears, his writing style is far from jejune; the book's major failure is the lack of dates; he is rarely accurate about the dates of key events. It is essentially the work of a private man and is full of reminiscences of musical life in England in the 1910s. When the book was published it was well received by the critics

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<sup>141</sup> 05/01/1949 Herbert Murrill to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>142</sup> 05/09/1986 *Hucknall Dispatch*. The majority of the letters were actually written to Henry Morley, Eric Morley's father.

<sup>143</sup> 17/11/1945 *The Leader*.

and sold well, being reprinted several times.<sup>144</sup> It also justified a reprint in 1986, Coates' centenary year.

Coates' principal success of the post-war years and arguably his greatest success came with the composition of *The Dam Busters* March, completed on 14 June 1954 for the film released in 1955. Throughout his career, Coates often received offers to compose film scores; in 1947 the Press had rumoured that he had turned down a lucrative £10,000 contract to write a film score in America.<sup>145</sup> He had written the song 'A Song of the Wild' for Cherry Kearton's adventure film 'Wild Life [*sic*.] Across the World' in 1923. By 1954 he had neither the inclination nor the patience for the demanding and tiring work for films and always refused. In the case of *The Dam Busters*, his resistance was broken down by pressure from Louis Levy and Teddy Holmes (a director at Chappell) and Coates produced a 'standard march,' which was probably finished before the commission went out,<sup>146</sup> which Leighton Lucas used in his the score for the film; Coates was overjoyed with the finished film. However, this joy was soon tarnished when he was cabled by his son Austin (who also cabled the film company), who had seen the overseas cut of the film and was incensed to find that his father's name had been omitted from the credits. Coates wrote to Associated British Pictures to complain: '...but you do realise that... THE DAM BUSTERS MARCH has actually been credited [*sic*] to another composer!<sup>147</sup>' The oversight was partially blamed on the overseas distributors wanting to shorten the film and an employee of Associated British Pictures ticking the wrong box, thereby enabling Coates' name to be removed from the credits.<sup>148</sup> This oversight was rectified in

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<sup>144</sup> Coates' fourth scrapbook is solely dedicated to reviews and press notices of the book – almost all are laudatory.

<sup>145</sup> 24/12/1947 *Sketch*. Whether the rumour was true remains a matter for doubt.

<sup>146</sup> 26/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. GB-Lbl National Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA0399.

<sup>147</sup> 05/12/1955 Eric Coates to Robert Clark. GB-STHprivate. Austin had organised a delegation of some of the most important government officials to go and see the film. Austin was proud of his father's work for the film and was incensed at the omission of his father's name from the credits. He at once cabled his father, Teddy Holmes at Chappell and also Associated British Pictures to try and rectify the position.

<sup>148</sup> 04/11/1955 Robert Clark to Eric Coates. GB-STHprivate.

all subsequent overseas editions of the film. The March nonetheless, went from strength to strength and has since acquired a patriotic flavour which it was never composed to have, it started out as just another ‘ordinary’ march. Nevertheless, being in the ‘pomp and circumstance’ tradition, it has become very much part of the core national works that are known to practically all.

In his final years, he kept busy with conducting engagements, holidays and occasional composition and maintaining his position as a ‘celebrity’, as he outlined to Patrick Mahony in 1955:

Life is very hectic for me over here with writing and conducting. My new Commercial TV March was launched last week (I said a few words about it on TV last Saturday); I go up to Birmingham in a few days’ time to conduct the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in a concert of my works,<sup>149</sup> and then off to Copenhagen to conduct a concert for the State Radio; after which there are other concerts at Bournemouth and Plymouth, etc. I have been invited by the BBC to write a new work for production at the Royal Festival Hall in the New Year, also a Test Piece for next year’s Brass Band Festival but I find it almost impossible to get down to serious writing with all this travelling and conducting. My march for the DAM BUSTERS film is ‘in the news’ and going well, I am glad to say.<sup>150</sup>

Coates continued to compose until the end of his life, the March *High Flight* being his last orchestral work, finished in January 1957 (and used in a film similar to *The Dam Busters*). His life drew to a close in a blaze of glory: *The Four Centuries Suite* received its Promenade Concert premiere in 1956 under the composer<sup>151</sup> (Austin Coates recalls the orchestra breaking down at several points);<sup>152</sup> he received an Ivor Novello award for *The*

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<sup>149</sup> 01/10/1955. Coates conducted the first half of the programme, which featured: ‘Prelude and Hornpipe (*Four Centuries Suite*), ‘Scène du Bal’ (*Miniature Suite*), *The Three Bears*, *Saxo-Rhapsody* (soloist, Walter Lear), *Sweet Seventeen* and ‘Springtime in Angus’ and ‘Youth of Britain’ (*The Three Elizabeths Suite*). *GB-Bois* Programme Collection.

<sup>150</sup> 26/09/1955 Eric Coates to Patrick Mahony. *GB-Lcm* Eric Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>151</sup> Promenade Concert, 18/08/1956, broadcast on BBC Light Programme. Malcolm Sargent conducted the rest of the concert with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Unfortunately no recording of the concert survives in the BBC Archives.

<sup>152</sup> Austin Coates quoted in Lacey: 1986, iv-v. Ernest Tomlinson was in the audience for the concert and does not recall anything untoward happening with the playing of the orchestra (Conversation with Ernest Tomlinson, 26/01/2007).

*Dam Busters March*;<sup>153</sup> and his seventieth-birthday concert from the Albert Hall in Nottingham was broadcast by the BBC. However, he did seem disgruntled by the BBC's approach to his seventieth birthday, as there was no mention of his birthday on the day, as the concert was broadcast the month after his birthday.<sup>154</sup> By 1957, there was an ever more marked deterioration in his health, he was forced to take life easier than he would have liked: as, he said, apologising to R.F. Whale at the PRS for his non-attendance at several meetings, '...I am having a great deal of trouble with my eyes and am having a little rest to see if they improve. It's just 'one of those things'...' <sup>155</sup> He was planning to have the cataracts removed in the following year. Despite his sight problems, he managed to conduct at the BBC's Light Programme Festival of Music that year and take part (playing a toy instrument) in the premiere of Malcolm Arnold's *Toy Symphony*, written for the Musician's Benevolent Fund<sup>156</sup> as well as recording several of his latest compositions for HMV four months before his death.

Eric Coates died from cerebral thrombosis in the early hours of the 21 December 1957 with Phyl by his side at the Royal West Sussex Hospital, Chichester after suffering a massive stroke four days earlier.<sup>157</sup> His funeral on Christmas Eve was only sparsely attended by family (Austin had become a Special Magistrate in Hong Kong in 1956 and was unable to attend); the BBC Singers under Leslie Woodward provided musical

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<sup>153</sup> Songwriters' Guild of Great Britain. *Success Story: 1947-1968*. London: The Songwriters' Guild of Great Britain 1968. Coates won the award for that year's 'most Outstanding Piece of Light Music', along with Phillip Green. The ceremony was broadcast on BBC Television, 11/03/1956, though Coates did not attend. The awards were billed as 'The Oscars for British popular and light music.'

<sup>154</sup> 28/08/1956 *The Newcastle Journal*.

<sup>155</sup> 11/10/1957 Eric Coates to H.L. Walter. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 2.

<sup>156</sup> Meredith, Anthony and Harris, Paul. *Malcolm Arnold*. London: Thames/Elkin, 2004, 158n. The first performance, with Malcolm Arnold conducting, was part of the St. Cecilia's Festival Dinner on 28/11/1957 at the Savoy Hotel, London. Thomas Armstrong (Principal of the RAM), amongst others, also took part. Coates played the dulcet and was photographed in numerous newspapers. He had taken part in Haydn's 'Toy' Symphony at the Festival in 1954. Malcolm Arnold was an admirer of Coates' music, and in 1953 he had written to Coates to ask him to autograph his copy of *Suite in Four Movements*. (09/02/1954 Malcolm Arnold to Eric Coates. *GB-STHprivate*.)

<sup>157</sup> Eric Coates' Death Certificate.

accompaniment and his ashes were interred at Golders Green Crematorium. Writing to Christopher Hassall, Phyl described Eric's final days:

I can only rejoice that Eric was released as he would have been paralysed had he lived, and I don't think he could have borne it – he loved life and health... He never regained consciousness completely, and he died gently in his sleep as I held his hand – it was such a wonderful way to go – gentle, as he always was.<sup>158</sup>

As a mark of respect, the BBC broadcast a tribute programme a few weeks later, including contributions from Arthur Bliss (Master of the Queen's Musick), Basil Cameron, Stanford Robinson and Sidney Torch.<sup>159</sup> Coates' estate was valued at £53,124-0-3 (£37,458, net), leaving his part-share in their Bognor Regis cottage to Phyl (they rented their London homes) demonstrating that his career as a light music composer had proved profitable as well as rewarding.<sup>160</sup> In 1960, after initial impetus from Frank Wade (Head of Light Music at the BBC) Phyllis Coates, along with financial help from Chappell, established an Eric Coates Composition prize at his *alma mater*, the RAM, for the composition of a piece of light music. His centenary year, 1986, saw: an exhibition of Coates memorabilia at Hucknall; concerts in Hucknall and Nottingham (the latter by Charles Groves and the BBC Concert Orchestra, subsequently broadcast on Radio 3);<sup>161</sup> Coates (along with Edward German) as 'Composer of the Week' on BBC Radio 3;<sup>162</sup> and a four-part appreciation of his life (with musical examples) by his son, Austin.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> 01/01/1958 Phyllis Coates to Christopher Hassall. *GB-Cu* Christopher Hassall Collection, Add.8905/10/C/72.

<sup>159</sup> Broadcast on 21/01/1958 on the Light Programme. The programme was so well received that it was decided to use it as a template for tributes to other light music composers (Minutes of Light Music Policy Committee, 28/01/1958. *GB-Rwac*, Light Music Policy Meeting Minutes file 3, 1958-1961.)

<sup>160</sup> *The Times* 07/03/58. Haydn Wood (died 1959) left £76,770-13-10, Albert Ketèlbey (died 1959), left £28,492-8-7, Billy Mayerl (died 1959) left £20,329-10-8 and Charles Williams (died 1978) left £78,131, all gross. (Values taken from the respective *Dictionary of National Biography* entries.)

<sup>161</sup> 27/08/1986. The day also saw the centenary of Rebecca Clark who also had her own tribute programme.

<sup>162</sup> 25/08/1986-29/08/1986.

<sup>163</sup> See Bibliography for more detail. Both Radio 3 programmes featured many examples of Coates conducting, several taken from the long-obsolete 78rpm discs.

Coates name has been kept alive in his native Hucknall, a place he held fondly in his memories as he remembered, writing to Henry Morley in 1947:

... My early days in Hucknall when I used to wander about the dusty lanes on my bicycle before motor-cars used to come along to spoil the peace of the countryside. I remember how I loved to get away on my own and spend a whole day with no-body knowing where I was, my bicycle, a waterproof cape, sandwiches and a bottle of ginger beer (put up by my mother) and an Ordinance Map borrowed from my father. I wish that all children could spend the kind of life I lived as a child.<sup>164</sup>

With the work of the *Hucknall Dispatch* and notable exhibitions at Hucknall Library, particularly in 1970 and 1986, a Rotary plaque on Tenter Hill, both his childhood homes being listed in tourist literature for Hucknall<sup>165</sup> and the regular Eric Coates' concerts in Southwell, his name is still alive and associated with the county of his birth.<sup>166</sup>

Eric Coates was a fun-loving man, with a good sense of humour who could tell a good story and this comes across in his music. A letter in *Journal into Melody* is a typical example of his affable manner:

...I did get to meet Eric Coates and his wife, who were staying at the Imperial Hotel in Torquay at the same time as I was with my parents in August 1951. We had afternoon tea together, chatted about music (well I did, as I already had several of his 78s...), but he wrote out the first couple of bars of the *Television March* in my autograph album. I remember mentioning Bob Farnon to him, but I don't think he had met him at that time, but he knew of him. When I returned home I wrote him a letter and in September received a nice reply from him. I also remember (I had only just turned 11 at the time) that Billy Munn was the hotel band conductor (about 12-piece) and one evening during our stay, he introduced Eric to the audience in the lounge and the small band played *Calling All Workers*.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> 29/05/1947 Eric Coates to Henry Morley. Copy held at GB-HCKI. Coates remained fond of his childhood home and returned to visit family and official functions, but London was his adopted home and probably more important

<sup>165</sup> However, one official Nottinghamshire County Council leaflet, 'Hucknall Heritage Trail' lists one of his 'famous' compositions erroneously as 'the Knightsbridge Suite' rather than march, or even the *London Suite*.

<sup>166</sup> The proceeds from the most recent concerts have gone to help establish the Girls' Choir of Southwell Minister.

<sup>167</sup> John Parry, letter to the Editor in *Journal into Melody*, 167 (March, 2006), 29. Coates also made the same effort when he was invited to write a 'house tune' for Coates' House of Mowlands School, Mansfield. Coates replied offering to send a photograph, autobiography and any of his gramophone records they would like. (Correspondence between Eric Coates and Joy Young, GB-Lcm Eric Coates Archive, box 186).

Or as Stanford Robinson remembered, ‘although at the top of his profession he was modest, diffident and unassuming and the most delightful of colleagues.’<sup>168</sup>

Today, his music still lives on through his vibrant and superb recordings and is currently receiving an upsurge in performances and recordings; perhaps the ultimate accolade is the recent recordings by the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra of several of his major orchestral pieces.<sup>169</sup> Like P.G. Wodehouse, Coates’ work is still well-known and well-loved today, though with both their name may not mean much, but mention Jeeves and Wooster in Wodehouse’s case and ‘Knightsbridge March’, *Calling All Workers*, *The Dam Busters* or *By the Sleepy Lagoon* in Coates’ case, then affection will come brimming back. Summing up his life in *Suite in Four Movements* he stated: ‘... I am a *very* ordinary man... set before me some music-paper or put a bâton in my hand and I feel instantly at home, but ask me to compose a difficult letter or make an impromptu speech and the little door... shuts in my face.’<sup>170</sup>

It is paradoxical that a composer who gave so much to popular music was never honoured by his country in any way. Ralph Burnham tried to start the process of having Coates knighted in 1943, but this failed to achieve its desired objective, perchance because there was already a knighted Eric Coates (well-known in financial circles).<sup>171</sup> There were also other attempts for an honour in the 1950s. Writing to Patrick Mahoney in 1955, Coates stated: ‘I have frequently been knighted over the past thirty-five that, if it does come, I shall turn up my nose at anything lower than a Viscounty!’<sup>172</sup> Despite a lack of official honour in his lifetime, today, Eric Coates is still thought of as *the* light music composer; the ‘uncrowned king of British light music.’

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<sup>168</sup> 21/12/1957 *Nottingham Evening Post*.

<sup>169</sup> See Discography.

<sup>170</sup> Coates: 1953, 262.

<sup>171</sup> 27/08/1943 Ralph Burnham to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive box 186.

<sup>172</sup> 26/09/1955 Eric Coates to Patrick Mahoney. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive box 186.

## Chapter 2 Light Music

*When a competent orchestra plays good light music, it invariably scores a success with its audience. The tragedy is that so many of our finest composers either refuse to recognise this, or if they do, will not condescend to write music which the public can understand.<sup>1</sup>*

It was a Viennese friend of mine, who years ago, was teasing me about English music. ‘What is all this about “light music”?’ he asked. ‘Are you still such a nation of shop keepers that you even sell music by weight?’<sup>2</sup> England has always had more than its fair share of light music composers, of whom it is generally agreed that Eric Coates was both the finest and the most renowned. Yet, it is evident that Coates and many of his fellow composers of ‘light’ music disliked the term owing principally to its potentially pejorative connotations: ‘What a misleading term “Light Music” is!’<sup>3</sup>, Coates informed the BBC in 1948. Negative, or at least patronising, regard for light music, has emerged, during the twentieth century, as a result of a range of criteria which still resonate at the beginning of the twenty-first century. One of the main criteria was almost unequivocally the change in concert practice, brought about by a new attitude to broadcasting perpetrated by the increasingly confident BBC. In the 1920s light music still held its place (as it had done in the years before the First World War – cf. Henry Wood’s Promenade Concerts), ideas and categorisations began to change radically as the BBC took hold of London’s Promenade concerts and effectively imposed a new standard (or at least that is how it was perceived) where Promenade programmes became more serious and ‘educational.’ As a result, light music was either completely marginalised or was limited either to music of the Strauss family, or to first performances of new ‘light’ works by British composers such as Hely-Hutchinson, Bax, Lambert and later Thomas Dunhill.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Coates quoted in November 1948 *Radio Camera*.

<sup>2</sup> Spike Hughes: Introductory Note to 1955 Light Programme Festival of Music. *GB-Rwac* Recent acquisition.

<sup>3</sup> 16/09/1948 Eric Coates to C.B. McNair. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

The BBC also considered that it was a vital educational, even didactic, agency within the edifice of the new post-war Britain (some might now add that it was paternalist) and that 'serious', cerebral music dedicated to 'serious' issues of human existence – philosophy, religion, politics, national identity and culture – needed to be set apart from other musics. The principal consequence of this thinking was the formation of the BBC's Third Programme in 1946, the very icon of didactic 'high art' in this country for the patrician. Light music was thereby relegated to the Home and Light Programmes and became associated with a socially, or at least educationally inferior strata of society. Nonetheless, there was still an avenue for light music broadcasts on the BBC as the Corporation still had a large tranche of its broadcasting schedule devoted to orchestral music and many of its orchestras would often perform light music within their broadcasts. With the advent of the post-war era the light music of Coates, Haydn Wood and Ketèlbey had become old-fashioned and dated as a result of the new concepts of scoring for orchestra brought about by the Canadian, Robert Farnon. In addition, the BBC had, to a certain extent, safeguarded light music's future with the Light Music Department (predominantly within the field of sound broadcasts) initially under the Australian composer Hubert Clifford and later under Frank Wade. Attitudes towards light music were then to deteriorate further. Though the BBC had funded many light orchestras such as the BBC Theatre Orchestra, the BBC Salon Orchestra, the BBC Revue Orchestra, the BBC Midland Light Orchestra and the BBC Orchestra 'Section C' (the BBC Symphony Orchestra was split into different groups, the 'C' Section being devoted to light music),<sup>4</sup> the change in artistic policy as well as financial constraints led to amalgamations and eventually to extinction of *all* of these bodies with the exception of the BBC Theatre Orchestra (which after a flirtation with studio opera, became the BBC Concert Orchestra in 1952, and even today,

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<sup>4</sup> BBC Year Book, 1931, 160-162.

is the orchestra most likely to perform ‘light’ repertoire.)<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, municipal orchestras (such as the one at Bournemouth under Dan Godfrey, succeeded by Richard Austin), seaside and pier orchestras and light orchestras in the provinces have almost disappeared without exception, as have the smaller ‘tea shop’ trio and ‘palm court’ ensembles. Light music composers devoted much of their time, now that these resources were steadily closing to them, to other expanding genres such as mood music (especially for radio and the emergent television), film scores, signature tunes and incidental music for all forms of the aural media available, most of which called for tuneful, tonal orchestral music to accompany the action. This was very much the educational environment of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s when BBC policy was reinforced by the establishment of Radios 2 and 3 in 1967. And more importantly by William Glock, Controller of Music at the BBC (from 1959-1972) who, in his zeal to encourage both avant-garde and early music deliberately excluded light music (as well as a great deal of British ‘serious’ music). The influx of ‘pop’ music, rock ‘n’ roll and American musicals also removed the support and patronage of the younger generations away from ‘art’ and light music and, in a sense, light music was isolated from many. Even the new styles of light music with its influences of dance and big band scoring could do little to keep light music as popular as it had been, though the BBC still had a large space of broadcast time to fill with light music, even during the 1950s and 1960s. The position of light music, therefore, was one that languished in a closed world of devotees and those inclined towards nostalgia. Reception of the genre was (and still is, in elevated musical circles) largely one of condescension: ‘light’ music is ‘lightweight,’ educationally unchallenging, one-dimensional, culturally vapid, and compositionally frivolous and worse still, ephemeral. Hugo Cole argued that:

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<sup>5</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/orchestras/co/about/history.stml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/orchestras/co/about/history.stml) Whilst the BBC Concert Orchestra still frequently perform and record light music, they also play ‘popular’ music from musicals and when the occasion demands, become a small symphony orchestra (whenever the Concert Orchestra takes part in the Promenade Concerts they always perform symphonic, not light repertoire.)

Serious composers have, of course, been known to draw on light music for their material. But it is rare for the composer to use such sources without, as it were, putting inverted commas round his work. The witticisms of Poulenc and Lambert are self-conscious utterances, strongly flavoured with parody. Serious music has, in fact, been compelled to manufacture its own brand of light music; but somehow it is rarely the genuine article. Sinfonietta and Sonatina are slightly suspect terms—the composer of today does not find it easy to be agreeable and intelligent at the same time. Erwin Stein, in ‘Orpheus in New Guises’, has said: ‘Schoenberg writes, not to please, but because he must’. Are the two things incompatible?

As serious music has found it necessary to create its own light music, so light music must create its own heavy music...

...Light music, the natural language of small-talk is still very much alive, for all its vulgarity, triviality and cynical eye to finance. While we ignore its existence, we wilfully limit our vocabulary and expressive range. I suspect that the solution to the dilemma lies on the musical rather than on the sociological level. One day soon, perhaps, some genius will show us the way to relax, musically, without being facetious or trivial, and music will again become a single art. When no part of the range of music is taboo, the language will be able to operate fully and with maximum power.<sup>6</sup>

The truth, however, is that ‘light music’ has never attracted a proper, rigorous study as a genre, nor has it properly attracted an ‘Urtext’ definition; *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* does not have an entry for ‘light music’ or the adjective ‘light’ as applied to music; this in itself is a staggering omission.<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Self’s book on light music, *Light Music in Britain Since 1870* offers little in the way of a definition of the music that it tries to survey.<sup>8</sup> The nearest to a definition is supplied by Alison Latham in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, though here it is worth noting that the entry is for the adjective ‘light’ and not the genre of ‘light music’:

An adjective applied broadly (often pejoratively) to music deemed of no great intellectual or emotional depth, intended for light entertainment, and usually for orchestra. There is a large repertory of British light music, much of it witty, imaginative, and skilfully orchestrated by such as Ketèlbey, Coates, Ronald Binge, Robert Farnon and Gilbert Vinter. Elgar and Britten composed in the genre, which flourished from the 1950s with the expansion of radio broadcasting. Such music is often played by light orchestras.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cole, Hugo. ‘Light Music – and Serious.’ In *Musical Times* 97 (1956), 521-522, 521-522.

<sup>7</sup> Whereas ‘Gay and Lesbian Music’ warrants nearly eleven pages.

<sup>8</sup> Self, Geoffrey. *Light Music in Britain Since 1870*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, 1-8.

<sup>9</sup> Latham, Alison (ed). *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 695.

But Latham's definition is exactly as she states it, that the term is 'applied broadly' with no attention given to issues of compositional craftsmanship, stylistic originality, or what light music *was* and *is*, nor does she challenge the pejorative perception light music has received, nor the loose belief that light music is un-intellectual or that it deploys un-intellectual processes. Others have attempted to provide brief glimpses. Andrew Gold, who was, for a short while until his early death, head of the BBC's Light Music Unit defined light music as: '...Music where the tune is more important than what you do with it,<sup>10</sup>' suggesting that the music is one-dimensional and inorganic. This may well be a conspicuous characteristic of light music, but could equally be applied to the music of Grieg (e.g. the Piano Concerto and the Violin Sonatas). Light music composer Ernest Tomlinson builds on Gold's definition: 'in light music tunes follow tunes, each one self-contained and contrasting'<sup>11</sup> but this too can be misleading and applied to a great deal of 'serious' music with the wrong effect. Spike Hughes, a composer, journalist and former double bass player with Hylton's band, said of the difficulty of classifying light music that:

... 'Light' music is a ridiculous term unless you are going to be logical about it and describe what is not 'light' music as 'heavy' music. But 'heavy' music has never been a very complimentary term; it is used as fair criticism of a great deal of music (and its performance) and is not a very good selling point... I have yet to see the announcement of a concert of 'heavy music by the BBC Heavy Orchestra.' But tell the public there will be a concert of music by Wagner and Brahms played by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the box office will tell quite a different story.<sup>12</sup>

But what is meant by 'heavy,' and how are we to categorize the dances of, say, Dvořák, in the light of his 'heavy' symphonic canon, and what of the extensive repertoire of French ballet music by Delibes, Offenbach, Massenet, Gounod and Bizet? This music can hardly

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<sup>10</sup> Tomlinson, Ernest. 'Foreword' In *British Light Music – A Personal Gallery of Twentieth Century Composers*, Phillip Scowcroft, 9-19. London: Thames, 1997, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Spike Hughes. Introductory Note to *The 1955 Light Programme Festival of Light Music*. GB-Rwac recent acquisition.

be described as ‘serious’ or intellectually challenging, yet from the cultural point of view, remains nebulously separated from light music. Perhaps it is because they are the authors of ‘serious’ music that their lighter works are given stage room? In a suppressed article for the *Radio Times*, Fred Hartley, the BBC’s Light Music Supervisor during the 1940s believed that light music:

...is difficult to define – it is not serious (or if you prefer “straight”) music, nor is it dance music – it is in between; personally I prefer to call it entertainment music – although we are, of course aiming to attain a high standard artistically – the main job of light music is to entertain and not to educate.<sup>13</sup>

Light music may appear frolicsome, but is overall of a high artistic standard using the harmonic language and resources of any other composer of ‘art music’. Yet even if one describes light music as entertainment music, there is a vast amount of music written that could be described as ‘entertaining’, but yet falls well outside the scope of light or entertainment music; light music does have the potential to be edifying, especially in musical education. Light music when programmed into a concert can offer a break from the rigours of concentration required for a good deal of the symphonic canon and offers the listener enough respite and enjoyment to enable him to return to the level of attentiveness required. As Albert Ketèlbey humorously thought:

...is not light music akin to the ‘sweets’ of a good dinner? The *patissier* of a high-class kitchen is considered of equal standing to the ‘joint’ *chef*, and, I am told, has to have more imagination. I think a light-music composer is, in fact, a musical confectioner, and he can be just as ‘serious’ about his work as a highbrow composer. I know, because I have tried both kinds.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps incongruously, Arthur Bliss disagreed with Ketèlbey and light music’s inclusion into the concert hall:

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<sup>13</sup> Undated (late 1942) Basil Nichols to Arthur Bliss. The article by Fred Hartley is attached. *GB-Rwac* Music General, Light Music file 1, 1939-1943.

<sup>14</sup> 08/09/1944 *Radio Times*. ‘Letter from Albert W. Ketèlbey’.

This is the realm of light music: music, that is to say, whose first and conscious aim is to please and entertain, not only once but continuously... This music wins its audience by a melodic beauty, rhythmic vitality, a freshness and sparkle of orchestration, weaving its spell and charm. It is wholly secular in feeling, and most at home in the opera house, the theatre, or in the open air. It shies a little stiff at the formality of a concert hall, and it no longer presumes to compete in the ballroom or dance hall.<sup>15</sup>

Richard Addinsell rightly believed that, 'the trouble is that no two people mean the same thing by 'light music'... For 'light music' can be both an art form and an art pervasion.<sup>16</sup> The polarity of light music is clearly marked at the beginning of the twentieth century, when there were the numerous salon and palm-court orchestras playing music to the masses, and light orchestral music performed by orchestras in the concert hall. The likes of Alfredo Campoli, Albert Sammons, Edward de Groot, Tom Jenkins, Fred Hartley and Max Jaffa, despite their flawless musicianship and technique, were often discriminated against because of their repertoire rather than their performance of that repertoire. This world largely disappeared in the 1950s, due to the onset of piped music and the focus of light music switched towards light-orchestral music. Yet today, the world of salon orchestras is hardly thought of as an important sub-genre of light music, as it often thought that light music is solely orchestral. The worlds of brass and wind band do not have a category of 'light' music, all music being equal; Malcolm Arnold's *Padstow Lifeboat March* will happily appear in the same programme as with Arthur Bliss' *Kenilworth Suite* and Vaughan William's *English Folk Song Suite* with Holst's *First Suite for Military Band*.

Light music, if argued as a genre of emotional buoyancy, has existed throughout many centuries; 'Summer is Icumen in' and the catches of Purcell, both of which, incidentally, are examples of technical dexterity, are undoubtedly 'light' pieces in terms of their sentiment. These two examples potently demonstrate that in past centuries there

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<sup>15</sup> Bliss, Arthur. 'The Appeal of Light Music.' In *Music for Millions*. 4 London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1958, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Addinsell quoted in 11/08/1944 *Radio Times*. 'Tastes in Light Music.'

was little or no distinction between the aesthetic status of 'buoyant' and 'grave', just as there was no distinction between the profane and the sacred. Certainly by the mid-nineteenth century the schism between 'light' and 'serious' music had become two quasi-independent genres. Paraphrasing the philosopher Theodor Adorno in his essay *Leichte Musik* (translated by Ashton as 'Popular music'; Adorno's sentiments could equally be applied to popular as well as light music), talks of light and serious music as initially originating from the same circle, but later splitting into two semicircles; they had both come from the same source but bifurcated into two polarised elements.<sup>17</sup> On the one hand there was a true symphonic school and on the other, there was a growing light trend in the works of Offenbach, Bizet, Massenet, Strauss Family and Tchaikovsky, often in their opera and ballet music. A lighter style of music was very much part of the writing of the nineteenth century despite the intellectual strains that pervaded music. In England this concept was simply grasped and assimilated by many composers during the second half of the nineteenth century who then wrote a good deal of lighter music. By the early decades of the twentieth century there was a growing trend of composers writing solely light music, later intensified by demand from the growing radio, film and television industries.

However, whilst Adorno's concept of the segmentation of light music from serious music in the nineteenth century is true, it rather belittles the whole concept of light music and its origins from the art form of music. Ultimately, Adorno's concept is a false perception as serious and light music cannot be separated from one another as they share so much common ground. As Coates stated in his 1943 *Report on Light Music* for the BBC:

... music of the Light School (Johann Strauss, Massenet, Lehar, Delibes, Bizet, Gounod, Edward German, etc.) can be appreciated, not only by those who do not

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<sup>17</sup> Adorno, Theodor W (trans. E.B. Aston). 'Popular Music.' In *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. New York: Continuum, 1989, 24.

care for symphonies or jazz, but by both the extremists groups [lovers of jazz or lovers of symphonies] as well. It [light music] is in fact, the public meeting-ground in all music.<sup>18</sup>

This was proved by a poll conducted in 1939 which supported Coates' claim, Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1 Musical Preferences by Class.**<sup>19</sup>

Genre	Men (Middle Class)	Women (Middle Class)	Men (Working Class)	Women (Working Class)
Classical	21%	34%	8%	14%
Light	27%	14%	37%	26%
Jazz	12%	14%	42%	32%
All Types	40%	24%	9%	15%
None	0%	3%	1%	3%
Unclassified	0%	11%	3%	10%

Whilst light music may be a popular common meeting ground for all listeners, it can still be good music, despite its popularity. One must surely debunk the myth that exists in the historiographical study of music that serious or high art music must be great music. Hubert Parry in his *Evolution of the Art of Music* propagated the view of music being one of the greatest achievements of man, but all music must be worthy of the highest forms of expression.

The song from the music hall may be excellent and characteristic, and often is; the music of people who have every opportunity to be refined and cultivated may be detestably bad, and often is. There is an infinite variety of moods which admit of being expressed, from the noble, aspiring, human sincerity of a great nature like Brahms', to the rank, impudent, false sentimentality of impostors who shall be nameless. The unfortunate art may be made to grovel and wallow as well as soar. A man may use the slender resources to very good ends, and great resources to very bad ones. It rests with a very wide public now to decide what the future of the art shall be; and if its members can understand a little of what music means and how it came to be what it is, perhaps it may tend to encourage sincerity in the composer, and to enable themselves to arrive at an attitude which is not too open to be imposed upon by those who have other ends in view than honouring and enriching their art.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Coates, Eric. *Report on Light Music*. Presented to the BBC 22/05/1943, 2 GB-Rwac Music General Light Music file, 1939-1943 and GB-STHprivate.

<sup>19</sup> Nott: 2002, 195 (Table 6).

<sup>20</sup> Parry, C. Hubert H. *Evolution of the Art of Music*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1896, 336-337.

Vaughan Williams, influenced by Parry's *Evolution of the Art of Music*, writing in the 1920s, believed that:

...the object of an art is to obtain a partial revelation of that which is beyond senses and human faculties – of that, in fact, which is spiritual? And that means we employ to induce this revelation are those very senses and faculties themselves? The human, visible, audible and intelligible media which artists (of all kinds) use, are not symbols not of other visible and audible things but of what lies beyond sense and knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

In a BBC broadcast, Vivian Ellis, a noted theatre composer, exposed his view on this argument: 'There is much light music that fulfils much more than its minimum requirements – that is the best light music – and there is much serious music that raises no sign of emotion but the yawn – and that's the worst type of serious music.'<sup>22</sup> For Charles Stanford, Arthur Sullivan's musical skills had become tarnished because of his career within the lighter field,

It would, however, be only natural to expect that, after so many years spent in lighter work, some diminution would be apparent in the power of creating and sustaining a masterpiece of the high standard which the composer had so long left untouched... The composer of *The Golden Legend* must now give posterity the chance of enjoying the fruits of his genius, and stay his hand from works which, however refined and musicianly, must of their very nature and surroundings be ephemeral, and pass away with the fashion which gave him birth. His powers as a creative musician and his position in the musical world alike demand his progression in the direction indicated by his latest production.<sup>23</sup>

Light music may on the surface appear to be frivolous, it nonetheless has the same ingredients as 'serious' music and it achieves exactly what it sets out to do, no more; yet with repeated listening yields far more that is commendatory than many would think possible. The succinctness of light music is its key, as this enables it to achieve its aims. A piece of music does not have to be of Wagnerian or even Mahlerian proportions to be

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<sup>21</sup> Vaughan Williams, Ralph. 'The Letter and the Spirit.' In *National Music and Other Essays*. 121-128, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, 122.

<sup>22</sup> Vivian Ellis in 'Desert Island Discs', broadcast 29/08/1951, BBC Light Programme. *GB-Rwac* S133/18/7 Special Collections Plomley, Roy "Desert Island Discs." Scripts 91-109.

<sup>23</sup> Stanford, Charles V. *Memories and Music*. London: Archibald, Constable and Company, 1908, 162-163.

regarded as a piece of high art; succinctness in itself is perhaps harder to achieve; it is often harder to write a piece of music with limitations of duration and instrumentation than it is to compose a work of the monumental scale of Richard Strauss or Arnold Schoenberg. Whilst light music never ascends to the intellectual height or eroticism of Mahler it can achieve a great deal of depth and emotion. In Roger Quilter's *A Children's Overture* (particularly in the episodes 'There was a Lady Loved a Swine' and 'Baa! Baa! Black Sheep'), a so-called piece of 'light music', an element of pathos is apparent that would not feel out of place in the slow movement of a 'high-art' symphony, Ex. 2.1.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system, marked 'a tempo', features a treble clef staff with parts for 1st Vln 8va and 2nd Vln, and a bass clef staff with parts for 1st Hn, 2nd Hn, and Cello/Bass. The second system continues with parts for 1st & 2nd Vlns loco, Fl, 2nd Hn, and Cello & 1st Hn. The third system includes parts for Obsolo & Hrp and Cello. Performance markings include 'a tempo', 'pochiss riten', and 'a tempo ma pui tranquillo'. The score concludes with a double bar line and a final chord.

Ex. 2.1 *A Children's Overture* (Roger Quilter), 'Ba! Ba! Black Sheep', letter S onwards.

The same is true in the opening of Coates' *Cinderella Phantasy*, where the Debussyesque opening lulls the listener into believing they are about to hear an exquisite symphonic poem; yet out of this comes a gem of a light music composition.

The opposite could well be said within the lighter elements of 'serious' music. Within Elgar's *Variations on an Original Theme*, 'Enigma', several of the variations, especially Dorabella (variation nine) and elements of variations two and twelve respectively are essentially light pieces of music contained within a serious work. If these variations were freestanding they would probably rank with Elgar's other lighter pieces; *Salut d'Amour*, *Chanson du Matin* and *Mina*, yet there are accepted very much as part of Elgar's serious oeuvre. The same is true of certain movements of Tchaikovsky's symphonies and four orchestral suites. How does one view the 'Theme and Variations' that close the Third Suite (once a great favourite of the concert hall)? One cannot in reality separate the 'light' and 'serious' style effectively, yet as Adorno remarked, they have come from the same seed, but yet are different in their outlook.

Evidently light and 'serious' musics are homogeneous, yet within the history of music, light music has been neglected. Many musical historians have always equated 'serious' music with great music and popular and treated light music with vulgarity and disdain and with such views have subsequently glossed over an essential and popular genre of music. Surveying the majority of the published literature on British music, light music is often omitted as in the study by Pirie,<sup>24</sup> and Demuth ignores the genre in his chapter on the 'English Panorama' in *Musical Trends in the Twentieth Century*.<sup>25</sup> However, a majority of the studies take the view of Frank Howes, that light music is only partially more tolerable than popular music because of the level of its craft.<sup>26</sup> There is little discussion of the genre in two of most recent extended histories of English music by

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<sup>24</sup> Pirie, Peter J. *The English Musical Renaissance*. London: Victor Gollanz, 1979.

<sup>25</sup> Demuth, Norman. *Musical Trends in the Twentieth Century*. London: Rockcliff, 1952, 106-127.

<sup>26</sup> Howes, Frank. *The English Musical Renaissance*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1966, 281.

John Caldwell and a volume edited by Stephen Banfield.<sup>27</sup> John Caldwell in his august study of English music accepts that there is a genre of light music, making no attempt to discuss or elaborate on the genre, but does mention several light composers.<sup>28</sup> *The Blackwell History of Music in England: Twentieth Century* has only fleeting references in Middleton's article on popular music;<sup>29</sup> Derek Scott also recognizes the significant financial rewards of light music.<sup>30</sup> Hughes and Merion hardly discuss light music in their study of English music. Nonetheless when they discuss the music of Ketèlbey one feels that are dismissing both the genre and Ketèlbey as ephemeral and as a point of archaic humour – 'beyond the pale'.<sup>31</sup> Where *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* is concerned Eric Coates has favoured better than his other 'light' contemporaries and was first accepted into this exalted sphere in the 1927 edition.<sup>32</sup> If when writing a musical history one wrote about music that was popular, equating popularity and success as the key criteria for inclusion, then the history of western music would be radically different, significantly featuring the work of light composers. However, popularity does not equate with longevity; a vast amount of music that was popular in 1930s England with its variety of orchestras has been forgotten – much of it deservedly. Thus, as Coates stated in the *Evening News*, music should be judged on the criteria of 'good' and 'bad'<sup>33</sup> rather than 'monumental' and 'succinct', or ultimately 'serious' and 'light.'

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<sup>27</sup> Caldwell, John. *The Oxford History of British Music. Volume Two*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999 & Banfield, Stephen (ed.). *The Blackwell History of Music in England – Volume 6, The Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995.

<sup>28</sup> Caldwell: 1999, 535.

<sup>29</sup> Middleton, Richard. 'The "Problem" of Popular Music.' In *The Blackwell History of Music in England – Volume 6, The Twentieth Century*, Stephen Banfield (ed.) 27-38. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995.

<sup>30</sup> Scott, Derek. 'The Jazz Age.' In *The Blackwell History of Music in England – Volume 6, The Twentieth Century*, Stephen Banfield (ed.) 57-78. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995, 70.

<sup>31</sup> Hughes, Meirion and Stradling, Robert. *The English Musical Renaissance 1840 – 1940*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, 239-240.

<sup>32</sup> Coles, H.C. 'Eric Coates.' In *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* H.C. Coles (ed.), i, 674. London: Macmillan, 1927. This article, which favours Coates' career as a viola player, formed the basis to Coates' entry to the 1940 and 1956 edition. Coates was sent the proof copy of the article for the 1956 edition. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186. Haydn Wood is the only other significant figure in light music to warrant an entry in the 1956 edition (he is not included in the 1927 edition); important figures such as Mayerl and Ketèlbey are omitted.

<sup>33</sup> 30/06/1939 *Evening News*. 'This Musical Snobbery'.

The composer Constant Lambert, who at times is grouped within the light music fold due to his popular jazz inspired piece *The Rio Grande* and his ballet scores, does not discuss light music *per se* in his celebrated book *Music Ho!* However, he makes a number of pertinent comments which could be applied to light music. Lambert believes that Emmanuel Chabrier was the first significant composer since Mozart ‘... to show that seriousness is not the same as solemnity, that profundity is not dependent upon length, that wit is not always the same as buffoonery, and that frivolity and beauty are not necessarily enemies.’<sup>34</sup> Until the time of Mozart and Haydn, lighter music had always slotted into their more serious works with ease; especially with the dance movements in their symphonies and concerti which were ultimately intended as a modicum of light relief within the surroundings of a more challenging nature. As the nineteenth century progressed, the replacement of these dance movements within the symphonic canon with scherzi rather than minuets and trios shows the segregation of the serious side of music from the more populist, lighter side. However, many nineteenth century composers were contented to place this light, jocund style within their ballet scores or incidental music: Bizet in his incidental music to Daudet’s 1872 play *L’Arlésienne*, Tchaikovsky in his ballet scores, Delibes, Offenbach and Massenet. Even when composers such as Brahms (in his *Hungarian Dances* and *Waltzes*) wrote lighter pieces they seem to come across with a seriousness that one would expect of such a ‘high-art’ composer.

Lambert’s discussions of the virtues of Chabrier’s gaiety and frivolity could equally be applied to light music; after all, many light works (such as Haydn Wood’s *Soliloquy*, Eric Coates’ interlude *The Unknown Singer* and certain movements of Ernest Tomlinson’s *Suites of English Folk Dances*) are succinct but can be profound; and there is much skilful wit in Coates’ *The Three Bears* Phantasy and *The Three Men* Suite as opposed

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<sup>34</sup> Lambert, Constant. *Music Ho!* London: Hogarth Press, 1985, 172.

to the buffoonery found in Malcolm Arnold's *Grand, Grand Overture*,<sup>35</sup> where one laughs not at jokes in the orchestration, but at the music itself.) There are certain times when one is never quite sure how to take wit and frivolity when juxtaposed within music of a predominately 'serious' tone. In Percy Grainger's *In a Nutshell Suite*, the hefty Delian third movement 'Pastoral' stands curiously at odds with the previous movement's depiction of London Music Hall life in 'Gay but Wistful' or the uproarious finale 'The Gum-Suckers March'. The same is true for certain works, including the *Divertissement*, by Ibert. This can be taken one stage further when the sudden change of mood happens within the same movement as in the final movement of Malcolm Arnold's Concerto for Two Pianos (Three Hands) when after a dense bitonal opening the piece suddenly launches into a rather raucous rumba at letter E, Ex. 2.2.

As Lambert argues, merriment and beauty are not enemies; however, they must be well crafted within their own limitations. Both the Arnold Concerto and Grainger's *In a Nutshell Suite* succeed because there is no change of compositional style or stance; there is no difference between their light and their serious works, all are of the identical, uniform standard.

The majority of light music composers were educated in the erudite institutions as 'serious' composers; they were not educated in a light way: Haydn Wood was a composition pupil of Charles Stanford at the RCM; Eric Coates and Montague Phillips were pupils of Fredrick Corder at the RAM (Corder produced a number of lighter composers); Ketèlbey was a product of Trinity College of Music, Billy Mayerl studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Ernest Tomlinson studied with Procter-Gregg at the University of Manchester and the Royal Manchester College of Music; all very much part

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<sup>35</sup> Arnold's Overture was written for the 1956 Hoffnung Music Festival and is scored for large orchestra (including organ, three vacuum cleaners (pitched in B-flat), floor-polisher (pitched in G) and four rifles – all of which are notated within the score!) Whilst being a 'fun' piece there are many fine melodies and a tremendous coda which sneers at those 'overtly long' dominant-tonic progressions which conclude a good deal of romantic repertoire.

Flc.  
Flute  
Obes.  
Cl.  
Bsns.

Musical score for woodwinds: Flute (Flc.), Flute (Flute), Oboe (Obes.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Bassoon (Bsns.). The score shows melodic lines with dynamics such as *pp*, *a.2*, and *f*.

1.2  
Horns  
3.4  
Tpt.  
3  
Tbn.  
Bass  
Tuba

Musical score for brass instruments: Horns (1.2, 3.4), Trumpets (Tpt., 3), Trombones (Tbn.), Bass, and Tuba. The score shows sustained notes with dynamics like *pp* and *f*.

Timp.  
1 Perc.  
2  
Harp

Musical score for percussion and harp: Timpani (Timp.), Percussion (1 Perc., 2), and Harp.

Piano I

Musical score for Piano I, featuring complex chordal textures.

Piano II

Musical score for Piano II, featuring complex chordal textures.

Vin. I  
Vin. II  
Vla.  
Vc.  
Db.

Musical score for strings: Violin I (Vin. I), Violin II (Vin. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.). The score includes the marking *lento, arco* and dynamics like *pp* and *f*.

**D**

Ric.  
Flutes  
Oboes  
Cl.  
Bassoon

1.2 Horns  
3-4  
1.2 Trumpets  
3  
1.2 Trombones  
Bass  
Tuba

1.2 Timpani  
1 Perc.  
2  
Harp

CHANGE E to F

**D**

Ric.  
Piano I  
Piano II

loco

**D**

Vln. I  
Vln. II  
Vla.  
Va.  
Db.

E

Picc.  
Flutes  
Oboes  
Cl.  
Bass.

1.2  
Horns  
3.4  
Tpts.  
3  
Tbns.  
1.2  
Sax.  
Tuba

Timp.  
1  
Pans.  
2  
Harp

TAMBOURINE  
SIDE DRUM  
Solo (1st time only)  
Rimshots

Piano I

Piano II

E

Vin. I  
Vin. II  
Via.  
Vc.  
Db.

div. pp  
arco pp  
arco pp  
pp  
(pizz.)  
p

1<sup>ST</sup> TIME | 2<sup>ND</sup> TIME

Flc.

Flutes

Oboes

Cl.

Bass.

1.2 Horns

3.4

1.2 Trpts

3

1.2 Trbns

3

Tuba

Timp.

1 Tambourine

2 Side Drum

Gong/Bell

Harp

Piano I

Piano II

1<sup>ST</sup> TIME | 2<sup>ND</sup> TIME

Vin. I

Vin. II

Vla.

Vcl.

Db.

f

Ex 2.2 'Concerto for Two Pianos (Three Hands) Op 104, Third Movement (Malcolm Arnold), Pages 34-37.

of the musical establishment of England. Also, their training is almost identical to that of serious composers, having spent their formative years studying harmony, counterpoint, fugue and orchestration in identical ways to ‘serious’ composers and the light composers utilize their training in the same way. Coates used passages of daring counterpoint in his marches and small-scale fugues within several pieces; in *The Three Bears Phantasy* he uses a short three-part fuguetta (albeit on a witty subject – itself a grotesquerie of the main motif ‘who’s been sitting in *my* chair?’ – to mark the entry of the Three Bears), Ex. 2.3.

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a solo instrument part and a bass line. The first system is for the Oboe (Ob. solo), the second for the Clarinet (Cl. solo), and the third for the Bassoon (Bassn solo). Each system shows a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes and a bass line with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' and the time signature is 3/8. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Ex. 2.3 *The Three Bears Phantasy*, bars 178-189.

Great Britain has constantly had a long lineage and a great volume of light composers, almost to the point that with certain key exceptions light music is a British peculiarity. America and Europe have had their share of light music composers, such as Leroy Anderson, David Rose, Sousa and Franz Lehár and Paul Linke respectively, but their composers of light music have tended to be more ‘serious’ composers who have

written lighter works; they do not seem to have a dynasty of light music composers like England. Perhaps it says more about the tastes of the British public than of the musical institutions of the land? Within mainstream British music of the twentieth century, one occasionally catches a glimpse of a lighter style, some may call it lyricism, in the music of: E.J. Moeran (*Serenade in G, Sinfonietta*); George Dyson (*Children's Suite, Concerto di Camera*); Henry Balfour Gardiner (*Shepherd Fennel's Dance*); Arthur Bliss (*Checkmate, Adam Zero*); Gerald Finzi (*Five Bagatelles* for clarinet and piano); William Lloyd Webber; Arnold Bax (*Overture to a Picaresque Comedy* and *Rogue's Comedy Overture*); and Ralph Vaughan Williams (*English Folk Song Suite, Incidental Music to The Wasps*) yet these composers are most definitely 'serious' in their outlook, however, there is at times a degree of lightness behind the surface. This lighter edge can still be seen today in composers such as Bryan Kelly, Patric Standford and David Lyon; not principally mainstream composers, but still part of what seems to be a twentieth-, and now twenty-first-century, British tradition of composing music with a lighter edge.

The frequently changing nature of light music over the years and also its attraction for a large majority of the population has caused it to be tarnished with an assured level of disdain by many and an attitude of snobbery has frequently been attached towards light music, often unnecessarily, because light music is perceived to be tuneful, ebullient and nothing else. Constant Lambert recalled:

I remember some years ago hearing a really superb performance of Chabrier's 'España' under Sir Thomas Beecham at Queen's Hall. I not unnaturally expected others to share my delight, but gazing round at the faces of my colleagues (I was then, alas, a critic) I saw there nothing but amused condescension, mingled with embarrassment felt by all when at some end-of-term 'rag' the headmaster or local clergyman relaxes into a humorous recitation. They did not seem to think they were listening to perhaps the best orchestrated piece of the whole nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Constant Lambert in 11/08/1944 *Radio Times*. 'Your Tastes in Light Music.'

What are Stanford's immensely *Songs of the Sea* and *Songs of the Fleet* if not high-class ballads? The same attitudes of snobbery pervaded the world of the ballad, another stalwart of light music, a stance which ballad librettist Weatherly was eager to dispel:

Are such songs to be called "inartistic," "shop ballads" and so on, because they are popular? To call them so seems to me a form of intellectual pride. Such songs are popular because people love them. The heart of the people is still simple and healthy and sound. Why should a popular song by Sanderson or Kennedy Russell or Hermann Löhr or Coningsby Clarke or Eric Coates be called a "shop ballad" as a term of contempt? John Ireland and Vaughan Williams are distinguished composers of what I believe are called "art songs." But when their songs are published by the same houses where popular ballads are published and their composers deal with them as matters of commerce and no doubt enjoy the commercial success when it comes.<sup>37</sup>

A composer such as Victor Hely-Hutchinson has had his reputation as a 'highbrow' composer shattered by his *Carol Symphony*, a work which is always regarded as a light music favourite. The Symphony effervesces with such a high level of contrapuntal ingenuity, like his *Three Fugal Fancies for Strings* and the *Variations, Intermezzo, Scherzo and Final*,<sup>38</sup> both of which place high emphasis on counterpoint, that these works have always overshadowed the remainder of his neglected compositional oeuvre. On this issue, Haydn Wood felt duty bound to write:

I once composed a piece I called "Variations on a [Once] Popular Humorous Song." Actually, it was the popular song, "If you want to know the time ask a policeman," but I dressed it up in so many different and varying forms that it became quite an ingenious and amusing essay in musical resourcefulness.

In the course of time I tried to get it included in the programme of a Very Important Concert, but managed to do so only on condition that I conducted myself!

The regular conductor apparently feared – with some reason – that his position might be jeopardised in the eyes of the higher critical circles if he led his orchestra through the mazes of such a *very* plebeian tune!<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Weatherly, Fred E. *Piano and Gown*. London: G.P. Putnam, 1926, 142

<sup>38</sup> Published in 1927 by Stainer and Bell in conjunction with the Carnegie Trust.

<sup>39</sup> 20/06/1939 *Evening News*. 'Fame Can Be a Handicap by Haydn Wood'

Eric Coates was constantly against musical snobbery of any form, though he did not always move with the times, especially as the BBC changed its programme policy during the World War II and beyond, remaining true to his rather conservative views on music and musical snobbery by the 'establishment.' On this subject, a veritable *bête noir* for him, he wrote:

...the writers of symphonies can write a dance and it will be played at a Symphony Concert and acclaimed as "great fun", but woe betide the "Light" writers nowadays [1939] if they write a work for full orchestra and aspire to even a Promenade programme. An incredible outlook exists in England and we have taken it upon ourselves to docket music into the two categories "Light" and "Serious" and the two must never meet on the same programme. When one considers much of the badly constructed twaddle that is written under the name "Serious" and much of the well constructed and delightful writing that comes under the name "Light", surely it is about time we dropped this snobbery and realized that music needs no such classification – it is either "Good" or "Bad".<sup>40</sup>

In the 1930s there was much snobbery attached to light music within the recording world. On a majority of Coates' 1930s recordings the name of the orchestra (often the financially stricken LPO) was disguised as 'Light Orchestra' or 'Symphony Orchestra'.<sup>41</sup> Walter Goehr, when conducting light music, would go under the name of G. Walter.<sup>42</sup> However, in the concert hall, there was little difference between the personnel of 'light' and 'serious' orchestras – most musicians were happy to earn a living playing in whatever ensembles they could. Several of the twentieth century's most respected British conductors, Charles Groves and Charles Mackerras started their careers in light music; the latter even had his own orchestra on the BBC's 'Music While You Work';<sup>43</sup> even Eugene Goossens played in a 'light' hotel orchestral whilst a student.<sup>44</sup> The violinist Alfredo Campoli, who had made his living in the 1930s performing light music

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<sup>40</sup> 30/06/1939 *Evening News*. 'This Musical Snobbery by Eric Coates'. This article was in response to Haydn Wood's on 20/06/1939.

<sup>41</sup> March 1935 'Review of Eric Coates: *The Three Men Suite* (HMV C2722-7223) *Gramophone Magazine* 391, complains of this so-called snobbery.

<sup>42</sup> Tunley, David. *The Bel Canto Violin*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 39.

<sup>43</sup> 14/09/2002 The Music Factory *Music While You Work*. BBC Radio 4.

<sup>44</sup> Goossens, Eugene. *Overture and Beginners*. London: Meuthen and Co, 1951, 83. He was dismissed for trying out one his compositions which was deemed by the management for not being 'light enough'. (Ibid).

with his various orchestras, was still tarred with the brush of snobbery when after the War he devoted his performing career solely to 'serious music'. After a performance of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto at the Proms in 1945 the *Daily Mail* commented, 'the music gave every opportunity to show off Mr Campoli's clean and dazzling technique and mellow tone'; all a BBC memorandum could comment was, 'he nearly brought off the Tchaikovsky, but there is still the feeling of the café player all the time.'<sup>45</sup>

Whilst the composition of the orchestras for both light and serious music-making was not dissimilar, the disparity in the two styles came largely from the social context of performance of light music. The education of a composer is usually the foundation of their technique, yet as professional composers, their output is often governed by what they are commissioned to write; that is, the social and environmental context of their music. Light music is very much defined by its context of performance; so-called 'serious' music is designed to be heard in the context of a concert hall, or more commonly today, on a compact disc – and it will be. When a light music composer, such as Eric Coates, composed a work, he knew in reality that the work would be rarely heard in the original scoring; often being performed instead by undersized light orchestras often with the conductor at the piano filling in the missing parts or in heavily rearranged versions for ensembles and bands. Coates' 1925 phantasy *The Selfish Giant* was 'scored down' from its original orchestration when it was published, and consequently may have only been heard in its initial orchestration at its premiere.<sup>46</sup> Before broadcasting, music was everywhere; it was played in parks, hotels, restaurants and tea shops, notably the famous Lyon's Corner Houses to great effect. The majority of London restaurants employed an orchestra of

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<sup>45</sup> Both quoted in Tunley: 1999, 71: 04/09/1945 *Daily Mail* & 12/10/1945 Julian Herbage to Adrian Boult. Campoli had several battles with the BBC over their 'patrician' attitudes toward his playing.

<sup>46</sup> The work was published by Boosey & Co. in 1925 in a reduced scoring by Sydney Baynes cutting down Coates' use of woodwind and percussion, making it more playable by orchestras. Coates possibly accepted this as he had struggled to get the work into print in the first place; his regular publishers Chappell were alarmed at the levels of syncopation. This does seem improbable as they had published the earlier *Two Light Syncopated Pieces* albeit in a less syncopated manner, though these are technically not as difficult.

sorts to perform light music to accompany dinners at lunch, afternoon tea and a more substantial programme over the evening meal, a tradition that was still in existence in the 1930s.<sup>47</sup> Most establishments had an ensemble of sorts which would play a wide variety of music, from rearranged classics to the latest 'hot tune,' but most frequently these would play light music. Eugene Goossens remembered his hotel orchestra were expected to play anything from Liszt to Lehár at a moment's notice.<sup>48</sup> To judge light music effectively, it is necessary to view the social context of light music during this period. In England during the first-half of the twentieth century, light music was often written for coastal music festivals, ballad concerts, broadcasting or 'fillers' for concerts to appeal to all. When most light music was published it was often printed with a piano-conductor score (it is exceptionally rare to find a printed full score for any piece of British light music), to enable the conductor to fill in the missing parts; the first violin part usually had general cues to enable direction from the leader in the case of small orchestras. A good deal of light music was published in versions for small, and occasionally for salon orchestras (orchestras with reduced woodwind and brass combinations, an ensemble largely brought about by the cinema), in addition to the standard orchestral edition. Coates' orchestral work was often issued in standard orchestral format, version for small orchestra and military band (always arranged by a specialist arranger, such as Dan Godfrey for his earlier works and also William Duthoit) and piano. These differing arrangements enabled him (and many other composers of this type of music) to have their music available in the differing social contexts afforded by the different versions produced by the various 'in-house' arrangers of the leading music publishers. Therefore, light music is very much a unique genre, often written for by specialist composers. In the second-half of the twentieth century, the avenues open to light music changed, and it largely became relegated to mood music and signature tunes for television and radio

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<sup>47</sup> Tunley: 1999, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Goossens: 1951, 83.

programmes. Yet the composers of the light school have always wanted to be accepted into the legitimate sphere of music-making, rather than being relegated to ‘second-best’, as their music often tends to be escapist and branded ‘peter-pan’ despite its consistently high levels of craftsmanship and orchestration. Very few light music composers ever have their serious works acclaimed and played in the concert hall, yet many serious composers can have their lighter works played and acclaimed in such exalted surroundings.

Constant Lambert was a strong believer in the values of music, unless music ‘...provides one with some vital experience which no other art can convey it is not only useless but a nuisance... Unless the composer has some definite reason for putting pen to paper, he had far better play patience or do a little gardening.’<sup>49</sup> Light music is in itself a veritable stopgap as not only does it fill the gap between ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ music but light music certainly achieves an uplifting and heart-warming effect within a short space of time that few other art forms (perhaps with exception of gastronomy) can match. The light music genre is a valuable and independent genre of music, worthy of academic study; the light composers are professional composers and as such, earn their living through the PRS (often tending to be amongst the highest earners of the Society). The genre, whilst often the domain of a specialist composer, also includes works by ‘serious’ composers too, but above all it is well-constructed and effective music; the music is of value to both those listening and to those composing.

Within England during the nineteenth century, Adorno’s schism between light and ‘serious’ music certainly occurred, though in England the crossover between the two genres is less clear than in mainland Europe. Most English composers at the *fin de siècle* had a lighter edge in their works. How does one explicate: Alexander Mackenzie (Overture to *The Cricket on the Hearth* and the suite *London Day by Day*); Fredric Cowen

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<sup>49</sup> Lambert: 1985, 215.

(*The Butterfly's Ball*); Hamish McCunn (*Land of the Mountain and the Flood Overture*); Hubert Parry (the suites for strings); Charles Stanford (his Suite of *Ancient Dances* and *Four Irish Dances* and not forgetting certain elements in his *Irish Rhapsodies*); Elgar (*Dream Children* and the *Wand of Youth Suites*); Coleridge-Taylor and many more *ad infinitum*? Works of such lightness by these composers were frequently performed in orchestral concerts around the country, often in Promenade concerts and were popular with a wide range of people. A work like Alexander Mackenzie's Overture *Britannia* was played all over England, featuring in Henry Wood's Promenade concert programmes annually without failure, as well as at festivals and pageants aplenty during the years leading up to the Second World War. *Britannia* is no piece of light writing: based on a sonata-form structure, with two hornpipes and Arne's 'Rule Britannia', the latter cleverly disguised so that in the opening only the rhythm is present and it is not until the development section where the tune is heard in full (though snippets have appeared beforehand) accompanied by a third hornpipe theme as a countermelody.<sup>50</sup> This 'lighter school' has always been closely linked to the serious genre, often with many composers who cross the boundaries and is difficult to place in a single genre. The so-called 'Frankfurt Gang' (Henry Balfour Gardiner, Percy Grainger (if one counts Grainger as British), Norman O'Neill, Roger Quilter and Cyril Scott) – Britain's equivalent to France's *Les Six* – displayed this 'light within serious' musical gift too, though they received a thorough training at the hands of Ivan Knorr in Frankfurt. Whilst perhaps Scott and Balfour Gardiner did produce a great deal of serious music, how does one interpret the latter's *Shepherd Fennel's Dance* and *Overture to a Comedy*? Roger Quilter occupies a similar position; if one looks at his art songs, he is a 'serious' composer, yet if one contemplates his theatre and orchestral music he is clearly within the 'light' camp. Nonetheless, the 'Frankfurt Gang' were still first-rate

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<sup>50</sup> Barker, Duncan. *The Music of Alexander Campbell Mackenzie (1847-1935): A Critical Study*. PhD Dissertation, University of Durham, 1999, 244.

‘serious’ composers (especially Cyril Scott) yet were a curiosity and as such have never received their true accolade within British, or even Western Art Music.

Light music in England has a long and distinguished past, and from Arthur Sullivan a clear ‘school’ of light music composition has evolved and grown. In many ways, Arthur Sullivan seems a more natural *musical* starting point for the English Musical Renaissance rather than Frank Howes’ more usual starting point of Parry’s *Scenes from Prometheus Unbound* (1880).<sup>51</sup> However, in most other respects, particularly in respect of Parry’s contribution to academic scholarship and the development of ideas, Parry is the zenith of creation of such a dynasty; he really was one of the first native composers to have a following (not only in his compositions, but in his work and legacy with the National Training School). Furthermore, Sullivan’s music, not just his operettas with W.S. Gilbert, but his ‘serious’ music his overtures, concerti and ‘Irish’ Symphony (albeit at times undigested Mendelssohn) was immensely popular all over the country. Light music can undoubtedly be traced back to Sullivan’s *Overture Di Ballo* written for, and first performed at the 1870 Birmingham Festival. The overture has great melodic charm, inventiveness and accessibility, as much of Sullivan’s *œuvre* has; one has to look at the opening Polonaise melody to see this, Ex. 2.4.



Ex. 2.4 *Overture di Ballo* (Arthur Sullivan), bars 19-27.

<sup>51</sup> Howes: 1966, 129-131. A summary of the arguments are found in: Hughes and Stradling: 2001, 32 and 219-22.

However, its notable significance to the genre of light music must be due to its use of lighter elements, especially of celebrated and fashionable dances of the period; Polonaise, Waltz (in sonata form) and Galop and it was these functional dance forms, along with influences from ballet and entr'actes that lead towards a 'school of light music' and remained a standard favourite of the light music repertoire for many years. Moreover, in Sullivan's Savoy operettas with W.S. Gilbert, their simple and vivid style, proved highly popular exceptionally quickly and they are now forever wedded to the English musical scene, as well as proving to be another good foundation from which light music evolved. The effective musical simplicity of Sullivan, along with his subtle word paintings and elements of 'old English pastiche' (a style much favoured by Edward German in his 'Merrie England' vein, which was to prove influential for the next generation of light music composers). The overtures of these operettas (though few were penned by Sullivan himself) and their links with the opera overtures of Rossini are also a worthy starting point for light music; at times they are little more than a potpourri of melodies from the operetta, but their melodic wittiness is in effect a blueprint for the type of melodies that would predominate light music in the twentieth century. Several of the overtures also have overtones of solemnity; the brooding opening of the overture to *Iolanthe* (composed by Sullivan) does at times feel at odds with the rest of the overture. However, Sullivan's genius in the lighter world did not always meet approval from the composer and the musical intelligentsia of Britain. Stanford reviewing the first performance of Sullivan's *Golden Legend* stated:

After winning his spurs with ease by the production of these cantatas [*Tempest* and *Kenilworth*], Sir Arthur Sullivan turned his attention principally to a class of composition which, if always showing an unmistakeable hand, was of a standard of art distinctly below the level of his abilities. If the world of music has to thank him for a purification of the operetta stage – no mean service in itself – it may be permitted to regret that this much-needed reform was not carried out by a brain of smaller calibre and a hand less capable of higher work... *The Golden Legend* is produced and raises Sullivan's reputation at a stroke to the point which it might reasonably have been

expected to have reached, if the intervening years had been spent upon the most earnest and serious development of the promise of his earlier work. It restores him to his legitimate position as one of the leaders of the English school, and, inasmuch as the genuine success of his last composition will have made a return to less elevated forms of the art a matter of difficulty, if not of impossibility, the musical world may be led to hope for a series of lasting treasures from his genius.<sup>52</sup>

Arthur Sullivan's mantle, predominately in the genre of operetta, has often been credited to have been inherited by Edward German, (he completed Sullivan's final unfinished operetta collaboration with Basil Hood, *The Emerald Isle*); German not only wrote operetta (namely *Merrie England* and *Tom Jones*) but incidental music for the theatre; which is also in the mould of Sullivan. It is within German's orchestral music that Sullivan's lightness of touch within a 'serious' style is continued, also mirroring him in the desire to succeed as a serious composer coupled with the constant realisation that he would probably never manage it. One only has to look at the *Welsh Rhapsody* (a great favourite of Henry Wood and the Promenade audiences for years, but now long since forgotten) or *The Leeds Suite* to see this in action. German in his time was a hugely popular composer (especially with the dances from his incidental music to *Nell Gwyn* and *Henry VIII*), and his regular, fashionable concerts with the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra (almost exclusively of German's music, usually conducted by himself) were always popular and normally sold out. Not for nothing was he included in the now famous photograph of England's leading composers at the Bournemouth Centenary Concert on 8 July 1910, Figure 2.1.

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<sup>52</sup> Stanford: 1908, 161-163.

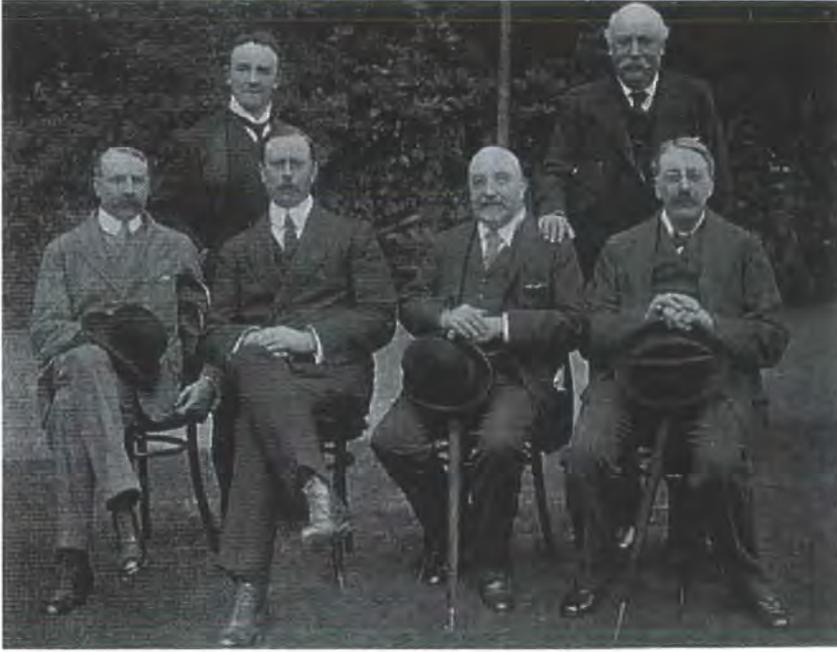


Figure 2.1 Bournemouth Centenary Concert on 8 July 1910.<sup>53</sup>

Despite this great popularity, his more intellectually challenging music, especially his symphonies, suffered; his Second Symphony ‘Norwich’ written in 1893 for that year’s Norwich Festival was only published in 1931 with German contributing the full production costs for engraving the orchestral score and instrumental parts.<sup>54</sup> Yet his style, like Arthur Sullivan’s, was easily absorbed and straightforwardly imitated by composers of the time and became the foundations of light music; much of the early orchestral music by Coates displays a propinquity to German’s pastoral vein with its frequent use of pedals and 6/8 time signatures. German was initially taken aback at Coates’ level of imitation of his compositional style, writing to his sister in 1925, he noted: ‘Yes, I agree with you that Eric Coates is very, very naughty. I heard (wireless) the other night a Suite of his called *From the Countryside* – well, well, well! I’ll say no more – simply *naughty boy!*’<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Left to right: Elgar, German, Godfrey, Mackenzie, Parry and Stanford. The photograph has been oft-reproduced. Mackenzie’s widow gave Coates a copy of this photograph after her husband’s death. *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>54</sup> Rees, Brian. *A Musical Peacemaker*. Abottsbrook, Bourne End: Kensal Press, 1986, 234.

<sup>55</sup> 18/01/1925 Edward German to Rachel German quoted in Rees: 1986, 204.

However, his music did fall out of favour during the 1930s, when the 'Merrie England' idiom ceased to be popular with audiences. Coates recalls German in his final years, due to the dominance of the wireless and the rise of 'intellectual music', saying, 'I'm afraid to write any more, they would only laugh.'<sup>56</sup> Coates made numerous attempts throughout the latter part of his career, both in his spoken broadcasts and behind the scenes, calling for more performances of German's music to re-establish him back in the repertoire, but alas the music was and still remains largely forgotten.<sup>57</sup> German was very much the foundation of light music and from him came a whole dynasty of composers, intent to earn their living solely from composing light music.

The waltzes of Archibald Joyce (Joyce was known as the 'English Waldteufel' due to his fondness for the waltz formula), composed around the turn of the twentieth century, were some of the earliest examples of true light music; however, what marks them out is that they were primarily intended for dancing to and, perhaps more crucially, were very formula orientated. This element of formula would creep into the music of Coates, Ketèlbey and many other light music composers, until it would become almost a standard ploy. Joyce's pieces, such as *Dreaming*, became so popular that they became great favourites not only when they were written (the Royal Family were notable admirers of both Joyce's music and his Band), but also, later within the dance band repertoire (albeit 'jazzed up'). Joyce never moved into writing so-called legitimate concert works of light music (though there are other works beside waltzes) as Ketèlbey, Haydn Wood and Coates all would do.

In many respects Albert Ketèlbey, alongside Eric Coates, became one of England's first true light music composers; composers content to earn their living solely by writing, conducting, arranging and recording *light* music. In Ketèlbey's case, his music

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<sup>56</sup> Coates: 1953, 208.

<sup>57</sup> When Ernest Tomlinson was assembling the Marco Polo CD of German's music for the series of British Light Composers (8.223419) Tomlinson was worried about the lack of popular pieces still in the repertoire; in the end he arranged *Tom Jones Waltz* for the disc.

was very effective at conjuring up moods and pictures, albeit in miniature, and within a brief period of time became highly popular, a few years before Coates' music, in the 1910s and early 1920s. This was predominately due to the meteoric rise of the cinema, where the cinema's resident orchestras required quick and effective music to illustrate the film (Ketèlbey also composed 'mood music' especially for use in the cinema, under titles such as *Love's Awakening*, *Mysterious* and *Processional March*). Within a few bars, *In a Monastery Garden* and *In a Persian Market* instantly conjure up their title in the listener's mind, despite the excessive and overt sentimentality of frequent diminished chords and chromatic progressions along with the ubiquitous augmented second to represent 'the East' in the latter, Ex. 2.5.

Whilst he is best remembered for his characteristic intermezzi, Ketèlbey also had a very lyrical romantic style, at times on a par with Haydn Wood's more 'symphonic style' as demonstrated in a number of largely forgotten in works such as the overture *Chal Romano*. His music contains several humorous pieces including a *Musical Jigsaw* (an amalgamation of fifty-three well known tunes) and *Fiddle Fun* (a novelty piece for violin and piano full of virtuosic 'comical' effects) and *Mind the Slide*. With Ketèlbey, one never feels his music has sprung out of the legitimate 'serious' work, but was designed to be executed as a miniature form of composition within their own right. He became so popular that in 1929 the PRS, on the basis of his PRS income, voted him 'Britain's greatest living composer'<sup>58</sup> – perhaps difficult to believe or justify over seventy-five years later. During this period his PRS fees for a year were averaging £1,500.<sup>59</sup> Ketèlbey was also occupied in the 1910s and 1920s with the recording industry, making recordings of not only his compositions, but also arranging the music of other composers for the

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<sup>58</sup> October 1929 *Performing Right Gazette*, quoted in McCanna, Tom. 'Albert Ketèlbey.' In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004: [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34306](http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34306).

<sup>59</sup> Ehrlich, Cyril. *Harmonious Alliance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1989, 38. A summary of Ketèlbey's PRS earnings, along with those of Frank Bridge, Montague Ewing and Gustav Holst is found in Table 4, *Ibid*, 164.

2 **ANDANTE**  
*ESPR.*

Flutes  
 2ND TIME ONLY →

Oboe

Clarinets  
 1  
 2

Bassoon

Horns  
 1  
 2

Trumpets  
 1  
 2

Trombones  
 1 NEW PART  
 2

Percussion  
 1ST TIME  
 2ND TIME ONLY  
 TAMP  
 2nd time only  
 WHISTLE W  
 W

PIANO

MEN'S CHORUS

*Andante espressivo* (♩ = 76)

Violin I

Viola II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

Handwritten musical score for "In a Monastery Garden" by Albert Ketèlbey. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts from top to bottom:

- Flutes
- Oboe
- Clarinets
- Bassoon
- Horns
- Trumpets
- Trombones
- Percussion
- Harp
- Violin I
- Violin II
- Viola
- Violoncello
- Double Bass

Key features of the score include:

- Tempo markings: *poco rit.* (poco ritardando) appearing multiple times.
- Dynamic markings: *f* (forte) and *p* (piano).
- Handwritten annotations: "10" and "20" above the Violin I staff, and a circled "3" at the end of the Flute part.
- Complex rhythmic patterns in the woodwinds and strings.

Ex. 2.5 *In a Monastery Garden* (Albert Ketèlbey), full score, pages 2-3.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> This copy of the full score was prepared from the published parts by Ernest Tomlinson.

peculiarities of the acoustic medium of recording for the Columbia Gramophone Company.<sup>61</sup> He shared this link to the world of recording with Coates, as both appreciated the value of (Coates progressed to the gramophone in the early 1920s and all but two discs of his orchestral music (conducted by himself) are made in the superlative ‘electronic’ recording method).

Eric Coates is often paired with Haydn Wood, very much like Parry and Stanford or Ravel and Debussy, but their styles and attitudes to light music were, to a certain extent, different, though they both held old-fashioned views on the function of light music. Like Coates, Wood started off composing ballads and, with the changing tastes during the 1920s, subsequently gravitated towards orchestral music, in which he was significantly more prolific than Coates. Wood probably moved into light music composition through his wife, Dorothy Court, for whom he wrote ballads.<sup>62</sup> This is largely where the similarities between the two ended. From a musical point of view his music is probably finer than Coates; though Coates’ music is more melodically satisfying. The light music of Haydn Wood often tends to have a symphonic dimension; works such as *Mannin Veen*, ‘St. James’ Park in Spring’ (*London Cameos Suite*) and the *Apollo Overture* have a greater affinity with the lighter works of English composers of the late nineteenth century, than those of a twentieth-century light music composer. One feels that such works lie on the crossover between ‘light’ and ‘serious’ and just as happily fit into in the ‘serious camp’; Ex. 2.6a shows Wood’s symphonic vein in the lyrical *Soliloquy* and Ex. 2.6b show the conflicts in Wood’s style in the exuberant ending of *Mannin Veen* where he recapitulates the ‘Manx Fisherman’s Evening Hymn’ in a full choral finale.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Naxos have released four CDs dedicated to Ketèlbey’s early acoustic and electrical recordings (8.110174, 8.110848, 8.110869 and 8.110870).

<sup>62</sup> Tomlinson, Ernest. “Haydn Wood” In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38582](http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38582).

<sup>63</sup> Ex. 2.6b is taken from a poor photocopy of Haydn Wood’s autograph held in *GB-Pms*.

4

1 a tempo

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Hns.

Tpt.

Trum.

Perc.

Hp.

VI.I

VI.II

Vla.

C.

B.

39172

Chappell

This musical score page, numbered 5, features a variety of instruments. The woodwind section includes Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), and Horns (Hrn.). The brass section includes Trumpets (Tpt.) and Trombones (Trom.). The string section includes Harp (Hp.), Violin I (VI.I), Violin II (VI.II), Viola (Via.), Cello (C.), and Bass (B.). Percussion (Perc.) is also indicated. The score is written in a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. Dynamics such as *mf* and *p* are used throughout. Performance markings include *div.* (divisi) and *unis.* (unison). The music consists of multiple staves with complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.



Metro  $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$

15

Fl  
Ob  
Cl  
Bsn  
Hn  
Tpt  
Tbn  
Tym  
Perc

CHORUS

15

V1  
V2  
Va  
Vc  
Cb



16

*rall*

This system contains a complex musical score with multiple staves. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. A prominent marking is *colt* (col legno), indicating a specific performance technique. The score is written in a cursive, handwritten style.

This section consists of several empty musical staves, likely representing a break in the music or a section that has been removed or is yet to be written.

16

*rall*

This system continues the musical score with multiple staves. It features dense notation, including many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and various performance markings. The *colt* marking is repeated here. The handwriting is consistent with the first system.

*Andante moderato (Optional choral entry)*

Flutes  
 Oboes  
 Clarinet  
 Bassoon  
 Horns  
 Trumpets  
 Trombones  
 Tuba  
 Snare  
 Bass Drum  
 Cymbals  
 Organ  
 Piano  
 Harp

Violin I  
 Violin II  
 Viola  
 Cello  
 Bass

Soprano  
 Alto  
 Tenor  
 Bass

*Sostenuto*

Hear us, O Lord! from thy heav'nly home a-bove.  
 Hear us, O Lord! from thy heav'nly home a-bove.  
 Hear us, O Lord! from thy heav'nly home a-bove.  
 Hear us, O Lord! from thy heav'nly home a-bove.

*Andante moderato*

Flute  
 Oboe  
 Viola  
 Cello  
 Bass



\* Words by the composer.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for the piece "Mannin Veen" by Haydn Wood. The score is arranged in a full score format, showing vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The top section consists of several staves of music, including a vocal line with a long melisma and piano accompaniment. The lyrics, written in a cursive hand, are: "Though fierce the storm pro-lect us with thy love". This line is repeated four times, with the second and third instances including the word "du" under "love". The bottom section of the score features a complex piano accompaniment with dense sixteenth-note passages in the right hand and a more rhythmic bass line in the left hand.

Ex. 2.6b *Mannin Veen* (Haydn Wood), autograph full score, pages 39-42.

However, on the occasions when Wood branched out into the more popular style of Coates as in the march, 'The Horseguards: Whitehall' from his *London Landmarks Suite* (one of his most fashionable suites, published in 1946) which has echoes of Coates' brass writing from the *London Suite* (published in 1933), but the end result is not as satisfying as the *London Suite*. With Wood's compositions, one occasionally feels that it is the music of a 'failed serious composer,' which to a certain extent he was; he had started with promise; his *Phantasie for String Quartet* won second prize in the first Cobbett award,<sup>64</sup> and his Piano Concerto was performed at a Patron's fund concert under Charles Stanford on 14 July 1909. Throughout his life there were undercurrents, as in the career of Arthur Sullivan, of a desire to be accepted into 'the fold' as a composer of 'high-art' music. As late as 1939, the BBC commissioned Wood's *Philharmonic Variations* for violoncello and orchestra proving that someone had a belief in Wood's *métier* as a 'serious' composer, not just as an exclusive composer of light music or tone poems based on Manx themes.<sup>65</sup>

It was into this curious musical world that Eric Coates emerged as a composer; part of a growing army of light music composers and part of the old tradition of lighter music. It was however, his desire to write *solely* light music that marked a new development in light music, and with it one could tentatively state that the true 'school of light music composition' was born. Even in his RAM days, he was adamant that he wanted to write light music,

Corder was impressed with my song-cycle [*Three Songs for Mezzo-Soprano and Orchestra*], but said he would like to see me try my hand at something more ambitious and suggested my making a sketch of the first movement of a symphony for my next lesson. On my assuring him that I wanted to specialise in the lighter type of writing, he immediately began a discourse on Arthur Sullivan, which led him on to Edward German and Goring-Thomas, both of whom had been his pupils. He talked delightfully and when he was interested in his subject he waxed quite eloquent and his unusual face would light up with enthusiasm. Then he would smile his kindly smile

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<sup>64</sup> Wood re-scored the work in 1949 as *Fantasy-Concerto* for String Orchestra. I am grateful to Marjorie Cullerne for providing biographical data on Wood.

<sup>65</sup> Given its first performance by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, with W.H. Squire (violoncello) and conducted by the composer, in a studio broadcast 21/12/1939 on the Home Service.

and suggest our reading some score or other together, and out would come the published full-score of Sullivan's Overture to 'The Mikado', which we would prop up somehow or other on the piano and, he taking the treble instruments and I the bass, we would plod along contentedly until the arrival of his next pupil, at which moment he would drop his hands on to his knees, heave a deep sigh, shrug his shoulders and with a rueful expression close the music.<sup>66</sup>

Coates was a composer who, post-1923, earned his living solely from composing *light* music, he never was obliged to arrange other composers' music (apart from his *Symphonic Rhapsody after Richard Rodgers*, which was in essence an entirely new work) nor ever had a desire to write high 'art music' as many of his colleagues in the field did: Ketèlbey wrote 'serious' pieces for the piano, Wood wrote his Violin Concerto and *Philharmonic Variations*. Neither did he have any desire to arrange music as Wood had orchestrated Geoffrey Henman's suite, *High Street* (published in 1935) and arranged Henman's *Angel's Whisper*; Ketèlbey had spent many years arranging music for acoustic recording and orchestrated works by Brian Hope such as *Bygone Days* and *Contemplation*. Coates initially began as a composer of ballads (he had largely composed songs – which today would probably be called ballads – and chamber music whilst a student under Corder at the RAM), but in a musical enclave that was fast changing and becoming more orchestrally orientated. By the early 1920s, ballads were becoming old fashioned and light orchestral music was the way forward. This largely suited him, as he was determined to become an orchestral composer and had only written ballads as a method of earning money and gaining experience of publishing. By October 1923, Chappell disbanded their Ballad Concerts in favour of Popular Orchestral Concerts,<sup>67</sup> for which he was happy to write orchestral works though several of his most notable ballad successes originated after this date, namely 'Sea Rapture' (1924) and 'Bird Songs at Eventide' (1926). This predilection was furthermore aided by the foundation and subsequent growth of the PRS, which

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<sup>66</sup> Coates: 1953, 62.

<sup>67</sup> Anon In the *Musical Times* 64 (1923), 713.

enabled a composer (especially a light one) to earn a living through the composition of orchestral music, hitherto a labour of love.

He made his mark as a light music composer through producing a series of well-written and enjoyable works, commencing in 1911 with *Miniature Suite*, *Wood Nymphs* and *Summer Days Suites* and later with a greater use of syncopation and dance band elements in *The Three Bears Phantasy* and *The Four Ways Suite*, which included 'Rhythm'. The popularity of Coates' music during the late 1920s and 1930s was vast. Alick Maclean once remarked about the audience after Coates had conducted at Scarborough, 'Well, there you are Eric; you've done it again one-third sitting, two-thirds standing.'<sup>68</sup> He built on a legacy of ballet, operetta, incidental music and the melodic facility of Sullivan and German, by giving the language a popular twist with the music of the dance band. Along with Billy Mayerl (who was influenced more by ragtime, than by the dance bands that were Eric Coates' fillip), he defined a brand of popular music that had a tremendous popular following at the time, but never really survived through into the post-Second World War world, Coates still had several successes in the austere 1950s, most notably with *The Dam Busters March* (1954) and certain other pieces stayed in the repertoire.

Billy Mayerl came to prominence at roughly the same time as Coates, yet, in many respects, they were a complete antithesis in their musical style. Coates wrote predominately for orchestra, Mayerl almost exclusively for piano; most of his orchestral pieces were often orchestrated by another composer or arranger. He created a unique 'English jazz', based more on ragtime and Gershwin, favouring a bold melody, usually in fourths, accompanied with spread chords of a tenth, or another such interval, marked with characteristic jumps as demonstrated in his best known piece, the syncopated impression, *Marigold*, Ex. 2.7.

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<sup>68</sup> 12/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. GB-Lb/ British Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA 0397.

Ex. 2.7 *Marigold* (Billy Mayerl), bars 4-12.

Like Coates, Mayerl favoured ‘colourful titles’ – Mayerl had a love of flowers and a number of his compositions have floral titles. Coates reproduced Mayerl’s style in his middle movement of *The Three Men Suite*, ‘The-Man-About-Town.’ Above all, Coates’ music was for people to listen too, while Mayerl’s was for pianists to learn and to emulate his effortless style. Vast numbers of pianists subscribed to his syncopated piano school (a course largely taught via correspondence); he created a vogue for ‘that style of music’ – finely wrought syncopated miniatures as too did his ‘rival,’ Charlie Kunz.

In the 1940s and 1950s the world of light music was changing as the citizens of England readjusted their social values after the horrors of the War and, with the arrival of

'pop music' and rock 'n' roll and Broadway musicals, light music was becoming outdated; the avenues available and requests for its performance were unexpectedly receding. While the foundation of mood music libraries by Chappell (1941), Boosey and Hawkes, Francis, Day and Hunter and Paxton amongst other publishers, caused a major upheaval for many of the new generation of light music composers.<sup>69</sup> Charles Williams, Sidney Torch, Clive Richardson, Ernest Tomlinson (though he was late in turning to 'mood music,' writing under the pseudonym of Alan Perry in the 1960s) and the prolific Trevor Duncan turned out a succession of pieces for these libraries. The older composers such as Coates, Haydn Wood and Ketèlbey composed very much in their pre-war styles and forms. However, some of their music was recorded for these new mood libraries, as, to a certain extent, it fitted the requirements for background use. The mood music libraries were essentially for background music for radio, cinema and post-war television. Today, several composers who wrote for such libraries, Ernest Tomlinson amongst them, dislike the term 'mood music' as they feel it is derogatory and not true to the music they have written; they prefer the term 'library music'<sup>70</sup> or 'production music'.

Away from the growing outlet for 'library music', live light music was still flourishing during these austere years, most of London's numerous publishers had a light music section (Boosey and Hawkes was headed by the notable light composer Fredric Curzon) and would promote the music, ensuring it would be performed, especially through their 'pluggers' (people employed to promote a publisher's wares – the forerunner of today's marketing executives) during the 1950s and 1960s, as BBC was still committed to live music, having vast schedules to fill with orchestral music. There were also frequent commissions for new works, especially for the BBC's new Light Music Festivals, which, from 1949, gave many neglected light composers an opening or, at the

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<sup>69</sup> Though the De Wolf Recorded Music Library was founded in 1927 to provide background music for the cinema.

<sup>70</sup> 16/09/2004 *Brian Kay's Light Programme*. A Celebration of Ernest Tomlinson's Eightieth Birthday. BBC Radio 3.

very least, a good excuse to produce, a new work. Furthermore, the BBC still commissioned much music to be used as signature tunes and incidental music for its radio and television broadcasts; there was also vast amounts of music required, the majority needed to be written in an ‘accessible, lighter’ style, for the thriving British film industry. Whilst, after the War, the music of Coates, Haydn Wood and Ketèlbey seemed out of date, the ‘newer’ composers (such as Sidney Torch and Charles Williams)<sup>71</sup> had made new advances in light music and were duly reaping the benefits. Several composers, notably Farnon and Angela Morley<sup>72</sup> tried to reinvigorate light music; their music is often in a characteristic ‘big-band-style’ scoring, where the brass and woodwind instruments are scored in a close harmony, moving together, coupled with high, soaring violin parts, which was to prove the primary influence on post-war British light music. Their work in this field took them into arranging for popular singers of the day, Farnon, in particular, worked with Frank Sinatra, Gracie Fields and Tony Bennett. Composers like America’s David Rose brought elements of pop music into his light orchestral music and Malcolm Arnold attempted to do the same in his symphonic canon in the ‘Scherzo’ of his Fifth and ‘Lento’ of his Sixth Symphonies.

This, however, was not enough to keep light music where it had been since the 1920s and the many jobs associated with light music, particularly in publishing, arranging, orchestrating and copying, began to evanesce. During the 1970s and 1980s, light music was in the doldrums; it was seen as outdated and irrelevant. However, styles and tastes change and by the 1990s, light music was on the upsurge, helped by the Marco Polo Company sponsoring new recordings of key light music composers (initially Eric Coates and Haydn Wood, but they later extended it to lesser known ‘establishment’ figures such

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<sup>71</sup> It is rumoured that Williams was offered an honorary doctorate by the University of Oxford in the 1960s – he, needless to say, turned down the offer.

<sup>72</sup> Initially known as Wally Stott, whose career as a composer and conductor began with BBC radio with ‘The Goon Show’ and ‘Hancock’s Half Hour’, but after a sex-change operation he has become more widely known as Angela Morley.

as Farnon, Duncan, Torch and Tomlinson – the latter acting as consultant for the project). Yet, for many, light music is still tarred with the brush of snobbery with attitudes of ‘it’s only light music’ or ‘light music is easy to play’. With the current resurgence of interest, light music is attracting a whole new audience, though the nostalgia aspect does play a large part within its popularity; it is beginning to be regarded and accepted as a uniquely British genre.

The views of many composers of twentieth-century British light music are often difficult to trace, but it is possible to put together the views of Coates. As a leading composer of light music, he held distinctive views on music and predominately on light music; he always referred to the genre as a proper noun, Light Music, implying its independence as an entity. For him, melody was the key ingredient in any piece of music. From 1927 until 1933, he acted as an examiner for the RCM’s Patron’s Fund in which he adjudicated new compositions by Britain’s young composers.<sup>73</sup> He often criticised these composers for their lack of melody and his views often were at odds with the other examiners.<sup>74</sup> In the 1927-1928 sitting of the Patron’s Fund, he rejected seven of the pieces with acerbic comments such as: ‘Fearfully dull. No wonder it took 9 months to write. Seventy-one pages and not a single bar of inspiration<sup>75</sup>’; two were regarded as possibilities and only one was recommended to be suitable for a trial rehearsal: ‘A well scored work, with a tune (Thank Heaven!)<sup>76</sup>’ He always strove to promote the cause of light music wherever and whenever he could, even if it was whilst he was examining for

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<sup>73</sup> The Patron’s Fund was established in 1903 by Ernest Palmer to offer native composers and executive artists the chance to hear their chamber or orchestral works in either concerts or in ‘open rehearsal’. (Coles, H.C and John Cruft. *The Royal College of Music*. London: Royal College of Music and Prince Consort Foundation, 1982, 38-39).

<sup>74</sup> In 1927-28 he examined with S.P. Waddington; 1928-29 with S.P. Waddington and Armstrong Gibbs; 1929-30 with S.P. Waddington; 1930-31 with Armstrong Gibbs; 1932 and 1933 with S. P. Waddington. I am indebted to Peter Horton for providing information regarding Eric Coates’ involvement with the RCM’s Patron’s Fund.

<sup>75</sup> 13/10/1928 RCM Patron’s Fund, Examiner’s Report. *GB-Lcm*. Coates’ comments on *Symphonic Impression*.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*. Coates’ comments on *The Optimist*. Out of the eight works submitted in 1930-1931, Coates rejected seven of them and only ‘possibly’ recommended one work (which even then it was only the ‘Scherzo’ from a Symphony; the entire symphony had been submitted).

the RCM's Patron's Fund. During his time as a Board Member for the PRS – the governing body had always lured a strong light music contingent, including Haydn Wood, Torch, Binge, and Tomlinson – he tried his best to encourage young composers and to further the cause of light music, but above all, he strove to be of service to his fellow musicians. Towards the end of his life in 1956, he accepted the Presidency of the newly formed Light Music Society (the brainchild of Harry Dexter) to help the beleaguered world of light music; however, his death in 1957 robbed him of the opportunity to safeguard the cause of light music in Britain.

Coates had distinctive views on what light music should be and what it should encompass. His *Report on Light Music* written at the request of the BBC in 1943 gives perhaps the best account of these views.<sup>77</sup> For Coates, light music lay between 'serious' music and jazz; both had a cult following, but the two groups of listeners rarely hearkened to each others' programmes – light music was the middle ground where their interests should have found an equality.<sup>78</sup> He also believed that if a composer wrote a light work for full orchestra that is how it should be played: by a full orchestra, not a light orchestra, nor should it be played any differently too any other work in the programme, 'light' or 'serious'; this meant a full compliment of strings, for '... inadequate strings are the major handicap of Light Music<sup>79</sup>'; he was excluding the 'orchestras' of Campoli and Sammons from the genre. He was concerned that the size of an orchestra should be at least, if not greater than forty-five players, to be able to tackle light music effectively.<sup>80</sup> He understood that '...as every musician knows, [light music] is far more difficult to render well than the heavy type of music.'<sup>81</sup> He always believed that to create a light work there was a characteristic talent, which, albeit akin to, was nonetheless different, from that

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<sup>77</sup> Coates, Eric. *Report on Light Music*. Presented to the BBC 22/05/1943. *GB-Rwac* Music General Light Music file, 1939-43 and *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 4. Throughout the *Report*, Coates criticises the absence of strings, cf. 7, 12, 13.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

required to create a 'serious' work; after all it is very difficult to compose an epigrammatic work which sounds exhilarating and effortless in its execution. He believed, perhaps rightly, that a composer should write and orchestrate all their music themselves (clearly he had never been involved in the production of a film score).<sup>82</sup> One of his favourite pieces of advice to composers and musicians, a belief he held to be true, was that: 'sincerity is the key-note of existence, and without it nothing is of value.'<sup>83</sup>

This concept of 'sincerity' (with its links to the education Coates had at the RAM and the influence of Parry's seminal *Evolution of the Art of Music*) led him to have high expectations for music. During the War period, Coates had little belief for the future of British music in general. Writing to Stanford Robinson in 1942 he stated: 'One usually shrinks from the thought of having to listen to a broadcast of entirely British music for usually the items are of the dullest but after yesterday it shows what we really can do.'<sup>84</sup> He had dismissed British music earlier in 1939 in his article in the *Evening News*.<sup>85</sup> His negative undercurrent towards the reception of light music was further echoed in his presidential foreword to the first newsletter of the Light Music Society, although this closed with a note of optimism:

The inauguration of the Society is undoubtedly a landmark in the history of Light Music and should do much to put this form of musical expression in a place it deserves.

Those of the older generation (myself included) are only too aware of the difficulties and lack of encouragement composers of Light Music, and especially of Light Orchestral Music, have suffered in the past in this country. However, signs of improvement in the last few years have been apparent and with the advent of this new Society it may well be better times lie ahead for the writers of the Light School.

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<sup>82</sup> Coates only ever composed a march (in the case of *The Dam Busters* and *High Flight*) or a song, or alternatively a piece of his music was used within the film (as in *The Nine Men*) which was incorporated into a film score by another composer.

<sup>83</sup> 20/07/1952 John Culshaw to Eric Coates, attached is a script of a broadcast that Culshaw gave on the BBC's Overseas' Service, 9 and 11. Also, Undated, notes to Miss Segal (Black Star Pictures). *GB-Lcm* box 186.

<sup>84</sup> 19/01/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>85</sup> 30/06/1939 *Evening News*. 'This Musical Snobbery.'

Let us hope the Light Music Society will prove to be an inspiration to composers and, as a result, that the world may be further be enriched by their melodies.<sup>86</sup>

Whilst he had established views on the questions surrounding light music, he was not afraid to speak out in defence of light music in interviews with the Press. As early as 1935, he had begun to attack the 'highbrow element' in music taking away the joy and importance of light music and how these attitudes needed to be changed; these concerns remained throughout the rest of his life and he often talked about this issue in press statements and also personal correspondence. Quoted in an interview entitled 'The Highbrow is Running Music' with the *Daily Mail* he stated:

There is nothing degrading in writing for the public. The composition of popular music is no easier than the writing of symphonic works.

But the fact remains that so soon as any music becomes popular, the intellectuals will ban it. Why is it necessary to stuff programmes with great masterpieces? There are so often three or four in an evening. No wonder concert-goers suffer from aural indigestion; and I venture to suggest that the introduction of well-made "entertainment" music would not only aid the digestion but would make concerts more genial affairs

Unfortunately, geniality is exactly what the intellectuals are determined to avoid at all costs!<sup>87</sup>

Coates always seemed to have a chip on his shoulder about 'the intellectuals,' whoever they were, and to a certain extent he judged music, and especially contemporary music, on his own rather conservative views which were gleaned from his experiences playing in a concert of Bernard van Dieren's music in 1917,<sup>88</sup> or his comments on the pieces for the Patron's Fund; his standpoint was usually flavoured with a light music stance. He always seemed to shy away from avant-garde music and the majority of 'serious modern music', though he appears to have enjoyed the music of Debussy and early Stravinsky. He also detested the work of certain composers (he had a complete antipathy to Beethoven, a

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<sup>86</sup> September 1957 *Light Music Society Magazine*, 'Foreword by Our President', 7.

<sup>87</sup> 14/05/1935 *Daily Mail*. 'The Highbrow is Running Music'.

<sup>88</sup> See Coates: 1953, 126-128.

dislike he shared with Percy Grainger).<sup>89</sup> These were values on light music that were important to him as a composer of music and values he tried to express within his music. He never thought of himself as a light-weight composer, but as a composer of light music. In much the same way that Edward German did not want to be viewed as a ‘good *light* composer’, but as a composer of ‘light *good* music’.<sup>90</sup>

In the twenty-first century, the two semi-circles of ‘light’ and ‘serious’ have separated even further as, for example, it is rare that pieces of light music make it into a programme of ‘serious’ music (except for such ‘popular’ pieces as Coates’ march *The Dam Busters*); though there are occasional concerts solely comprised of light music played by Britain’s leading orchestras. Light music needs to be performed within the context of the whole circle of true ‘art’ music: it should not be discriminated against or treated as an entirely separate entity – after all it uses exactly the same integral components. The attitude of Arthur Bliss in 1943, writing on the bottom of an internal memorandum about the inclusion of Coates’ *Four Centuries* Suite into the Promenade Concerts wrote: ‘I am absolutely against the decision of a Coates suite in the Proms – a retrogression to the Bad Old Days<sup>91</sup>’ has been characteristic of those with jurisdiction in the musical world for many years. Surely such blatant discrimination should not prevail in the twenty-first century?

With no standard definition of light music, and most of the definitions lacking in some way, exactly what constitutes light music will always be subject to each person’s interpretation, perhaps in a way that most other categories of music do not suffer from. Yet light music, it must be remembered, is very much a branch of the ‘symphonic school’, part of the school of orchestral music, albeit tarred with the brush of musical

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<sup>89</sup> Coates, Eric *Suite in Four Movements*, Autograph, 141-142 and 297, *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box M127.

<sup>90</sup> Edward German quoted by David Russell Hulme in sleeve notes to *Edward German Orchestral Works, Volume 2*. National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, conducted by Andrew Penny. Naxos: 8.223726, 1995.

<sup>91</sup> 01/02/1943 Kenneth Wright to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948. Arthur Bliss’s comments are written at the bottom of the memorandum.

snobbery. To understand Eric Coates and how his music achieved its 'supreme position' within the sphere of light music, it is essential to see him in the context of British music (where many composers, light or serious, professional or amateur held him in high esteem and were envious of his melodic facility and ability to enthuse audiences)<sup>92</sup> especially that of light music of the period and to understand how and where a 'school of light music' sprung from. He evolved from the music of Arthur Sullivan and Edward German, giving it his own personal slant, whilst still remaining true to the past; he produced the right music at the right time and duly reaped the benefits. From the 1930s Coates grew in popularity and to a large extent he has never lost his popularity (certainly in the recording studio).<sup>93</sup> Other composers of light music today, such as Ketèlbey, do sound dated due to his sickly chromatic and diminished harmony in a number of his pieces; Billy Mayerl, due to his use of ragtime syncopation, though his music is nonetheless making a welcome resurgence. Nevertheless, the nostalgia element of light music – music that conjures up one's past, either early musical memories or radio programmes of a bygone era – is perhaps the most important factor in its recent renaissance.

As Coates commented in 1945, 'I was lucky... my position was assured before the rot set in. But I may say in all seriousness that any young composer of light music, however talented, has an excessively uphill task to get his works performed and published here today.'<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> John Culshaw said of Coates: 'I know of no living composer, no professional musician, who is more deeply respected by all those with whom he has come into contact during day-to-day life of making and presenting music. His modesty and sincerity is unforgettable and I believe that those things are, in some indefinable way, the secret attributes to his music.' 20/07/1952 John Culshaw to Eric Coates, attached is a script of a broadcast that Culshaw gave on the BBC's Overseas' Service, 9. *GB-Lcm* Eric Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>93</sup> Almost all of his orchestral works have been recorded, including several unpublished ones, and the majority of the suites have been recorded by several orchestras, all in addition to Coates' own recordings of his music.

<sup>94</sup> Eric Coates quoted in May 1945 *Everybody's* 'A Peoples Composer.'

Coates' music is very much the cornerstone of light music; he is the one name of light music that is still well-known within the concert hall. This is possibly thanks to his unique position in the field of light music; his rise as a serious composer of *solely light music*; the adaptation of the dance band syncopated style and scoring into his work; but above all, for his great melodic gift. This unique dexterity enabled him to attain a status second to none in light music and perhaps, more significantly, he still retains this position nearly fifty years after his death; there is still no one light music composer that can boast the success and universality of Eric Coates.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> The world of light music has changed markedly during the 1990s and now into the twenty-first century with many new people embracing this neglected field, not as Caldwell suggested: 'Light orchestral music is hardly composed at all nowadays except as incidental music in films and television; and even then is the preferred idiom in only a minority of cases. The undemanding but decently crafted music of the middle classes...' (Caldwell: 1997, 535). New recordings and reissues of early recordings (not affected by mechanical copyright laws) are plentiful and easily available. There are also many releases of new recordings of previously neglected light music composers.



## Part II

### Extra-Musical Elements

#### Chapter 3 BBC I: History, Policy and Symbiosis

*I am unhappy at the impression that may have been left in your mind after our meeting. I hasten to write to say that it is not true in any way, that we do not consider you a composer serious in intention. We should not have that impertinence, but as programme planners, we have to view the Promenade Season, rightly or wrongly, as specialised in character...*

*...Please do not think that we have no interest in the kind of music of which you are a master. In the Autumn, I want to start a series of lighter musical programmes, played by the Symphony Orchestra, and for these, we cannot draw on anybody better than yourself.<sup>1</sup>*

Perhaps of all the avenues open to Eric Coates, none perchance was more important to him than the BBC; quickly and quietly the BBC became the cultural agent for the Nation.<sup>2</sup> The Corporation had immense resources at its disposal and its potential for propagation of the cultural icons of music and drama across the country was staggering. It quickly established itself as the Nation's primary source of entertainment; by 1939, less than twenty years after its formation, three-quarters of households owned a wireless, a mind-numbing statistic in the age before mass consumerism.<sup>3</sup>

To fill their schedules it was essential that the BBC adopt and perform the music of Eric Coates; it was well-written music that held the maximum potential. The BBC always held a high view of his music, but also realised its full capacity within broadcasting. Writing to Stanford Robinson in 1944, Kenneth Wright believed, 'Eric

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<sup>1</sup> 08/05/1943 Arthur Bliss to Eric Coates. *GB-Rvac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948 & *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>2</sup> Scannell, Paddy and Cardiff, David. *A Social History of British Broadcasting, Volume One 1922-1939*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991, 278.

<sup>3</sup> Scannell and Cardiff: 1991, 362.

Coates is in such a position that we do not look at his music to see whether it is worth broadcasting but to determine the most effective way of dealing with it.<sup>4</sup>

The formation of the British Broadcasting Company in 1922 is undeniably one of the defining cultural moments in twentieth-century Britain. For the first time, the democratic concept of literature and music as cultural icons could, in *reality*, be brought to a large percentage of the population, though the question remained whether the populace was ready and willing to embrace these concepts. The ‘wireless,’ as it became known, not only entertained those fortunate enough to own a set, but, most importantly, educated and enlightened them. John Reith (the BBC’s first General Manager and subsequently Director-General) had six main aims for the BBC including that the BBC was to be ‘the servant of culture’ and that there would be no concessions to the ‘vulgar’.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of a variety of early experiments, the British Broadcasting Company was formed by the six leading radio manufacturers on 18 October 1922 and its first broadcast occurred a month later, on 14 November. From its origins, the BBC was not just an ordinary company; how could it be with its potential influence over the country and also with the proximity of its relationship with the Government?

Initially, many of the leading purveyors of entertainment and music refused to have anything to do with the Company owing chiefly to a conflict of interests. William Boosey (of Chappell, the lessees of Queen’s Hall) would not allow the BBC to broadcast any concerts from Queen’s Hall, London’s premier concert hall, or by artists under his control, such as Henry Wood, for several years.<sup>6</sup> News agencies initially refused to supply the BBC with news, as the Corporation could broadcast the news that broke during the day could be broadcast in the evening, rendering the following morning’s newspaper obsolete. It soon became apparent that the BBC, due to its commercial nature, would

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<sup>4</sup> 29/09/1944 Kenneth Wright to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>5</sup> Briggs, Asa. *The BBC: The First Fifty Years*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, 54-56.

<sup>6</sup> Jacobs, Arthur. *Henry J. Wood*. London: Methuen, 1994, 208-209.

soon become a dominant force within the country and that these arguments needed resolving amicably.

By the conclusion of 1925, the BBC had twenty-five broadcasting stations, over one million receiving licences and a staff of 465.<sup>7</sup> Over the course 1920s, no-one within the Company knew how broadcasting was going to develop nor, perhaps ironically, knew a great deal about broadcasting and what should be transmitted. The first few years of the BBC was a learning curve for all.

Initially, the BBC had no method of broadcasting to the whole nation, so broadcasting was focused in regional stations, such as those at London (2LO), Manchester (2ZY), and Birmingham (5IT). By 1924 simultaneous broadcasting using telephone wires to send the programme to the various regional transmitters, enabled the regional stations to broadcast the same programmes. The opening of the Daventry long-wave transmitter (5XX) in July 1925 ensured that ninety-five percent of the population could enjoy a good reception of the National Programme.<sup>8</sup> The BBC's full potential was first understood during the General Strike as it continued unabated whilst newspapers ground to a halt. Shortly after the Strike, in 1927, the BBC was reconstructed into a Corporation from the Company, which gave it greater standing and independence from the Government whilst establishing a unique contiguity to this body. As a result, there was no advertising, and, perhaps most importantly, there was established a monopoly on all forms of broadcasting which was to last until 1955; the BBC would be funded entirely from license fees. The monopoly enabled Reith to have a secure hold over the BBC and also had no need to heed public pressure, especially on calls for more entertainment.

From 1927, the Corporation continued to grow and expand, especially in the 1930s, with the formation of the Empire Service, as well as of several foreign language

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<sup>7</sup> Miall, Leonard. 'BBC Milestones.' In *The BBC: The First Fifty Years*. Asa Briggs, 363-401. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1985, 366.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 367.

services, all transmitted from Bush House. There were also experiments with television throughout the early 1930s, culminating in the BBC becoming the first broadcasting company to transmit regular, high-definition television from London's Alexandra Palace in 1936, though the reception was largely restricted to the London area.

By the onset of the Second World War, it was well-known how valuable the BBC was and would become to the nation. It was during the war that the BBC gained its reputation, a reputation Briggs states, it has never lost.<sup>9</sup> The Corporation continued to broadcast throughout the War, though all regional stations, the Empire Service and the Television Service closed and the BBC recast all its broadcasting efforts as follows: the Home Service (supplanting the National and Regional programmes) and the Forces Programme (succeeding the Empire Service, and became the foundation of the post-war Light Programme), the latter commencing in February 1940.<sup>10</sup> On the declaration of war, the majority of the BBC's departments left London to settle in sporadic locations to prevent the destruction of the BBC and remove its staff from jeopardy should a bomb fall on Broadcasting House. With its frequent news broadcasts (now ten a day rather than the pre-war five),<sup>11</sup> entertainment and war-broadcasts such as 'Music While You Work', the Corporation welded the Nation together and provided the country with information in addition to boosting morale.

The post-war BBC was never able to continue broadcasting at the levels it had during the war, nor could it return to its pre-war services. For home transmissions, it was therefore decided to keep the Home Service (the forerunner of today's Radio 4 though with more music) and to bring into existence a Light Programme for which many had been clamouring since the mid-1930s. The Light Programme opted for the superlative and 'popular' elements from the Overseas Service (which itself was redeveloped as the

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<sup>9</sup> Briggs, Asa. *The War of Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 96.

General Overseas Service, the forerunner of today's World Service). The BBC also began a new station for culture, the Third Programme (commencing in 1946) – a bastion for 'high art' in Britain. All three home stations would feature news, music and talks; plays would feature on all stations, though the types would vary depending on the listening audience. The distribution of listeners between the three stations was hardly balanced: in 1946, 40 percent of all BBC audiences listened to the Home Service, 50 percent to the Light Programme and only 6 percent to the Third;<sup>12</sup> by 1950 this percentage had diminished to only 0.15 percent.<sup>13</sup> The Television service also recommenced in 1946 and the post-war BBC saw the rise of this new service, though the Corporation, under William Haley (Director-General 1944-1952), always placed its emphasis firmly on sound broadcasting.<sup>14</sup> However, during Ian Jacob's Director-Generalship (1952-1959) the BBC became firmly television-orientated. With Jacob's tenure, the BBC lost its broadcasting monopoly with the formation of the Independent Television Commission in 1955, under Kenneth Clark; however, the BBC still maintained its music monopoly until the advent of commercial radio and even then, they still held the monopoly on 'classical music' which, with its patronage of orchestras, it still in essence retains to this day. Table 3.1 shows the social changes of post-War Britain with the initial rise and subsequent decline of radio and the relatively rapid rise of television.

Immediately from the BBC's foundation it always placed great significance on music, especially live music (the first broadcast symphony concert was 23 December 1922, less than a month after the BBC's first broadcast),<sup>15</sup> as shown in Table 3.2.

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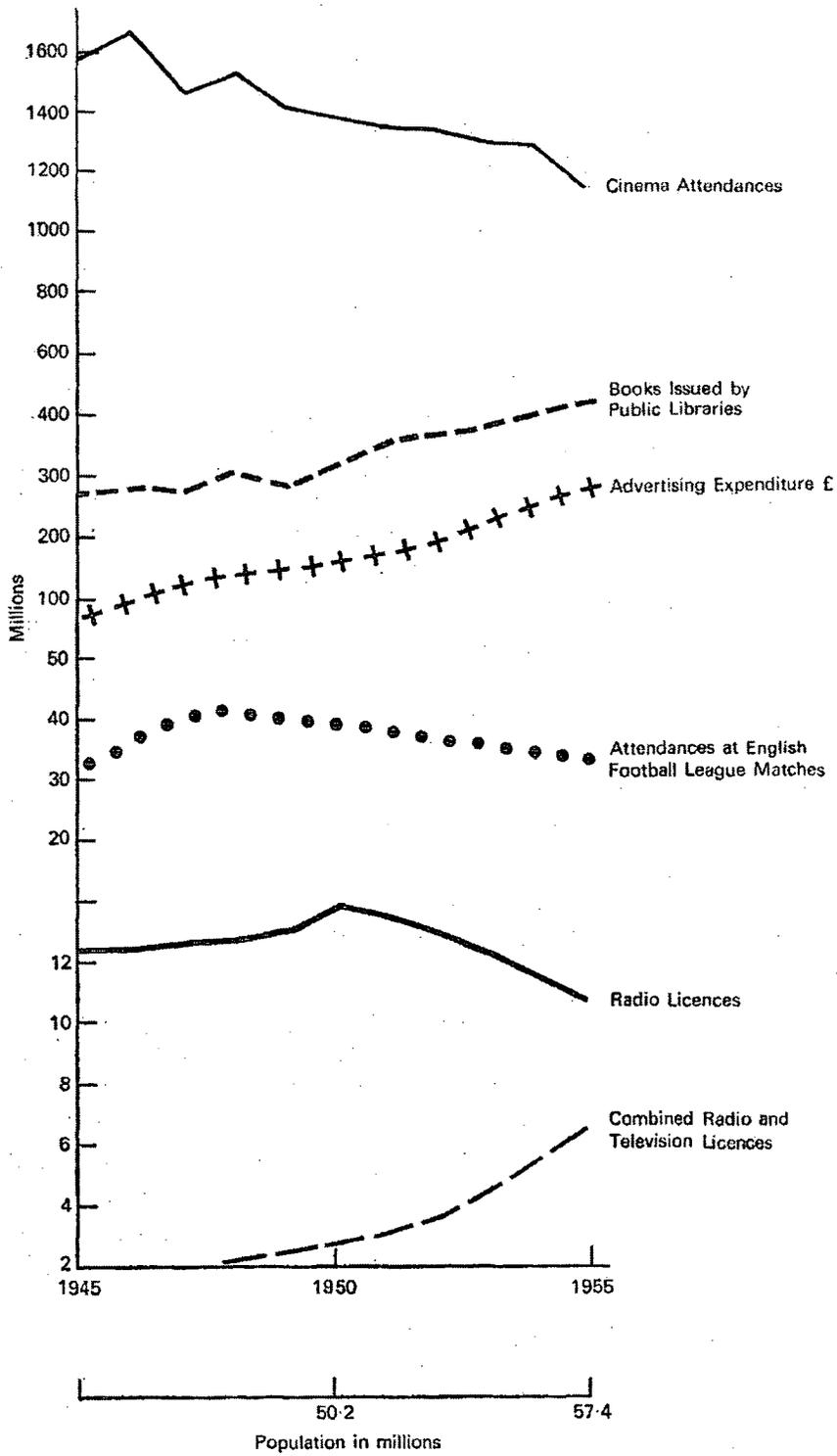
<sup>12</sup> Carpenter, Humphrey. *The Envy of the World*. London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1996, 48.

<sup>13</sup> Kenyon, Nicholas. *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1981, 232.

<sup>14</sup> Briggs, Asa. *Sound and Vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Briggs: 1985, 41.

Table 3.1 Social Trends in Britain, 1945-1955.<sup>16</sup>



<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 15

**Table 3.2 Average Broadcast Hours per day by 2LO, 1923 and 1926.**<sup>17</sup>

Year	Music Programmes	Other Programmes
1923	3h 35m	2h 05m
1926	4h 40m	2h 20m

Music also flourished in the various regional centres, some of which had their own orchestras, or instrumental combinations, though many regional orchestras were downscaled during the 1920s.

The BBC's attitudes towards music often met with resistance from the critics. Writing in *Music Ho!*, Constant Lambert, who was frequently called on by the BBC to conduct contemporary music, lampooned the BBC for its 'music everywhere' policy:

It would not matter so much were the music bad music, but, as the BBC can boast with some satisfaction, most of it is good. We board buses to the strains of Beethoven and drink beer to the accompaniment of Bach. And yet we pride ourselves on the popular appreciation of these masters... Instead of the admirable distinction between classical and popular which used to hold good – classics for the concert hall or home, popular for the street and café – classical music is vulgarised and diffused through every highway and byway, and both highbrow and lowbrow are the losers.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, despite the animadversion showered upon the Corporation's approach towards music, the BBC soon shook off these castigations and took its responsibilities towards music seriously.

The establishment of the Music Department under Percy Pitt (whom Coates must surely have known during their days with the Queen's Hall Orchestra) was a highly important step for the Corporation; Pitt was initially appointed as the BBC's Music Advisor in May 1923, and designated Director of Music in 1924 and thus enjoyed a large role in programme building. From Pitt's appointment, the Department and its small staff of programme planners (Kenneth Wright, Edward Clark and Julian Herbage, who like

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Lambert, Constant. *Music Ho!* London: Hogarth Press, 1985, 201-202.

Pitt, had had an unconventional musical training) planned the majority of the BBC's musical output. These are not names of well-known musicians, though Pitt and Wright were published composers, but these men had an enormous influence on British musical life, which is today perhaps forgotten. Their work for the Music Department was crucial. The range of music available to the listener was vast; many more could afford to listen to music than could have afforded the expensive phonographs and shellac discs.

The ramifications of the BBC for the commercial nature of music were especially drastic for the publishers, who complained about plummeting sheet music sales as the traditional 'musical evening' was dwindling, and subsequently vanishing, in favour of listening to the wireless. William Boosey believed that with the formation of the BBC, Chappell should cease promoting concerts as it could not compete.<sup>19</sup> Conjoined with the revolution in the musical world brought about by the formation of the PRS, which enabled composers to earn a living and reap the benefits of their orchestral music, the BBC started a considerable change in England's musical life. After initial disputes with the PRS over whether, and how much, the BBC should pay to the Society in performing fees, an annual fee to be paid by the Corporation was soon settled on. By 1930, the PRS was earning thirty-five percent (£60,000) of its total income from the BBC; by 1940 this had risen to fifty-four percent (£337,000).<sup>20</sup>

Besides the technical and cultural aspects of music, the BBC's Music Department was responsible for the broadcasts of symphonic and chamber music, opera, and contemporary music. Scannell and Cardiff commented on the Department that it: '...also administered, but with little enthusiasm the ambiguous category of 'light music.'<sup>21</sup> Whilst the Music Department had responsibility for 'high' and 'middle' art, the Variety Department (though it had initially been the Outside Broadcast Department until 1933)

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<sup>19</sup> Boosey, William. *Fifty Years of Music*. London: Ernest Benn, 1931, 179.

<sup>20</sup> Scannell and Cardiff: 1991, 238.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 182.

controlled the 'low art' of dance bands, cinema organs, operetta and musical reviews.<sup>22</sup> The Music Department had an abundance of transmission time to utilize and subsequently became the BBC's most substantial Department with a staff of fifty-four in 1937.<sup>23</sup> The emphasis of the Music Department was to create good, general programmes to appeal to all; however, the Corporation were not afraid to programme contemporary European works of the Second Viennese School (being one of the few organisations of the period actively to support these composers)<sup>24</sup> and, post 1927, broadcast these works regularly in addition to contemporary British music. As late as the mid-1930s, Herbage and Clark largely had a free hand with regard to programme planning; however, their programme policy often fell within two major aspects: the pursuit of standards in excellence and authentic performances of great music and increasing the public's taste and appreciation for new music.<sup>25</sup>

To achieve their aims, the BBC retained a core of conductors and staff musicians including John Ansell (a published light composer), Stanford Robinson, Joseph Lewis, Clarence Raybould and Victor Hely-Hutchinson. The Corporation invested heavily in sheet music (for their burgeoning variety of ensembles) and gramophone recordings, often trying to locate and purchase both music and records produced before its formation.

The BBC's relative financial affluence empowered the Corporation to broadcast large-scale works (often their first British performance) such as Mahler's Eighth Symphony<sup>26</sup> and Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*.<sup>27</sup> When the BBC took over the Promenade

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>24</sup> Doctor, Jennifer. *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music 1922-1936*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 197. Edward Clark was a pupil of Schoenberg and responsible for numerous visits of contemporary composers to conduct their own works, including Webern, Stravinsky and Bartók.

<sup>25</sup> Scannell and Cardiff: 1991, 194.

<sup>26</sup> 15/04/1930 at London's Queen's Hall. Wood had wished to perform the work since 1928 and had sent the BBC a request for a chorus of 250 singers and 100 boys for the boys' chorus. Despite the BBC's relative wealth, Wood's proposals were too expensive even for the Corporation, and subsequently the resources were scaled-down. (Jacobs: 1994, 225-228).

Concerts from Chappell in 1927, the Corporation's financial patronage enabled the Promenades to be largely free from financial constraints and gave Henry Wood the freedom to programme whatever works he saw fit, especially in the light of regular daily rehearsals.<sup>28</sup>

However, the BBC's attitude to contemporary music often met with resistance from the Music Advisory Committee, under Hugh Allen, who tried with some persistence to interfere with the Music Department's output, often with negative effect. Due to the Committee's conservative, and ultimately outdated, musical views, there was much resistance to the Music Department's desire to promote contemporary music – a situation which finally resulted in the establishment of the smaller Music Advisory Board in 1933 (featuring Boult's protégé Arthur Bliss).<sup>29</sup> Boult may not have been an advocate of contemporary music, but he could see its value and was not averse to conducting it in his programmes with the BBC Symphony Orchestra.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the perceived shortfalls of the BBC's Music Department by the Music Advisory Committee, the BBC worked to promote musical education with broadcasts by Walford Davies, Hely-Hutchinson and later George Dyson. The Music Department worked hard to form a fine staff orchestra to broadcast music. The inception of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1930 was the BBC's greatest pre-war musical development as emphasis was placed on creating the finest ensemble available (the Corporation came under fire from many orchestras as they 'poached' a number of the country's finest orchestral players) under their Chief Conductor and Pitt's successor as Director of Music, Adrian Boult. By late 1933, the BBC was putting on an average of 450 orchestral

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<sup>27</sup> The latter, first performed in Britain in January 1928, attracted a good deal of Press coverage as the concert was reputed to have cost £2,000 – for that sum, twelve British works could have been performed instead; the BBC considered it one of its greatest achievements of the year. (Doctor: 1999, 117).

<sup>28</sup> Cox, David. *The Henry Wood Proms*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1980, 88.

<sup>29</sup> Doctor: 1999, 238-239. Boult often recommended Bliss for various posts within the BBC during the 1930s.

<sup>30</sup> Doctor: 1999, 197. Boult conducted an extremely costly first British performance of Berg's *Wozzeck* from Queen's Hall in March 1934; the work was not staged in Britain until 1952. (Ibid. 270 & 280).

concerts a year.<sup>31</sup> This was achieved since the Symphony Orchestra of 114 players (soon to be expanded to 119) was ingeniously designed for broadcasting as it could be slimmed down into five contrasting ‘orchestras,’ sections A to E and designed to play varying types of music. Table 3.3 shows the possibilities.<sup>32</sup>

**Table 3.3 BBC Symphony Orchestra Divisions.**

Section	Type of Orchestra	Number of Players	Repertoire	1931 Titles
A	Symphony Orchestra	114	Full-size orchestral works.	BBC Symphony Orchestra
B	Symphony Orchestra	78	Smaller symphonic works.	BBC Studio Symphony Orchestra
C	Theatre Orchestra	36	Dramatic programme, musical comedy etc.	BBC Light Orchestra
D	Light Orchestra	67	Light music, lighter symphonic music.	BBC Studio Symphony Orchestra
E	Popular Orchestra	47	Miscellaneous requirements.	BBC Light Orchestra

The astute aspect of this division was that the total players could be used *in toto*, divided into Sections B and C or D and E simultaneously, which enabled greater broadcasting flexibility. There were also sundry BBC orchestras, including the BBC Dance Band (formed in 1926, under Jack Payne and later Henry Hall), BBC Theatre Orchestra (formed in 1931), BBC Revue Orchestra and choirs such as the Wireless Singers and the BBC Chorus; the BBC became the country’s largest employer of musicians. Table 3.4 shows the numbers of musicians employed by the BBC throughout the country in 1935.<sup>33</sup>

The numbers of London musicians rose in 1939 to 226 costing the BBC a total of £200,000 a year – the Symphony Orchestra running costs alone were £80,000 and the remainder of the BBC’s ensembles cost £120,000 a year.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Kenyon: 1981, 242.

<sup>32</sup> Assembled from data in BBC Yearbook 1931: 159-162 and Kenyon: 1981 35-36 & 70.

<sup>33</sup> BBC Annual 1935, 54-55.

<sup>34</sup> Scannell and Cardiff: 1991, 235.

**Table 3.4 Musicians Employed by the BBC in 1935.**

Ensemble	Number of Musicians
BBC Symphony Orchestra	119
BBC Theatre Orchestra	27
BBC Variety Orchestra	16
BBC Wireless Military Band	36
BBC Empire Band	16
BBC Dance Orchestra	14
BBC Chorus	250
BBC Wireless Singers	40
BBC Manchester	35
BBC Birmingham	35
BBC Belfast	32

Outside London, the BBC employed several regional orchestras, which frequently broadcast on their own local station, or, occasionally on the National Programme. Table 3.5 shows the strengths of these ensembles in 1939.

**Table 3.5 BBC Regional Orchestra Personnel, February 1939.<sup>35</sup>**

Instrument	BBC Midland Orchestra	BBC Welsh Orchestra	BBC Northern Orchestra	BBC Northern Ireland Orchestra	BBC Scottish Orchestra
First Violin	6	3	6	5	6
Second Violin	4	2	4	4	4
Viola	2	1	2	2	2
'Cello	2	1	2	2	2
Double Bass	2	1	2	2	2
Flute	2*	1	2*	2*	2*
Oboe	2†	1	2†	2†	2†
Clarinet	2**	2	2‡	2‡	2
Bassoon	2	1	2	2	2
Horn	4	2	4	4	4
Trumpet	2	2	2	2	2
Trombone	3	1	3	3	3
Percussion	1	1	1	2	1
Harp	1	Piano	1	1	1
Total	35	20	35	35	35

\* = 2nd Flute doubles Piccolo

† = 2nd Oboe doubles Cor Anglais

\*\* = 2nd Clarinet doubles Bass Clarinet and Saxophone

‡ = 2nd Clarinet doubles Bass Clarinet

<sup>35</sup> 03/02/1939 Radio Times, 21.

The advent of the Second World War drastically affected the Music Department, as the Department was evacuated to Evesham (under Reginald Thatcher, the Deputy Director of Music), while the BBC Symphony Orchestra was sent to Bristol (though they eventually rejoined the Music Department in 1941 at Bedford). Boult was still, in effect, the *de jure* Head of the Department, though the general quotidian operation fell on the shoulders of Thatcher who was, in essence, the *de facto* head of the Department. Arthur Bliss was drafted in to the Music Department in 1941 and gradually took the entire administrative burden away from Boult, who continued solely as Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra in 1942, when Bliss became Director of Music. However, in these difficult circumstances, the Department provided an abundance of music and despite the perennial reductions in personnel, due to conscription, the orchestras, albeit heavily depleted, continued.

In the wake of the War, the Music Department, as indeed the whole Corporation, was in paramount need of reconstruction, especially with the broadening of post-war cultural horizons of the nation by such media as popular music, jazz, big band and American musicals. After the successive headships of Hely-Hutchinson (who died prematurely in 1947) and Herbert Murrill (who died unexpectedly in 1952), the Department, which had always been within the Entertainment Division, was radically restructured and became a Division in its own right under Richard Howgill in 1952. Perhaps from here the character and repertoire of the Music Department changed; light music was translated from a high to a low broadcast item, though there were still continual transmission time allotted to it; there was a greater emphasis on contemporary continental music, which reached its zenith on the arrival of William Glock as Controller of Music in 1959. Boult was forced to retire in 1949 due to the compulsory retirement age of the Corporation, and the running of the Orchestra passed to Malcolm Sargent who was reluctant to devote his time to the ensemble and certainly not to their rigorous

broadcasting schedules. The Music Division had changed markedly from its origins in the 1920s, though so had the nation's tastes which the BBC had worked hard to develop through its policy of musical edification. Nevertheless, when, in the 1940s, sophisticated audience research examined the musical tastes of the British public, it was found that only a tiny minority of the middle and upper classes enjoyed the music which the Music Department had been heavily subsidising since its foundation, a fact borne out by the listening figures for the newly instituted Third Programme.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout Coates' life, light music occupied a curious position within the Corporation's output; for many years it had obtained the largest percentage of musical broadcast time, yet it never really fell under the total jurisdiction of the Music Department. Many of the light combinations and ensembles, being popular, came under Eric Maschwitz and the Variety Department – the BBC Theatre Orchestra, which performed a good deal of light music, was funded by the Variety Department, as too was the Music Production Unit under Stanford Robinson. Also controlled by the Variety Department were the dance bands (dance music broadcast by the Savoy bands from the Savoy Hotel in London had been a popular feature on the BBC in the 1920s). Yet the profusion of leading light music composers, including Coates and Haydn Wood, were dealt with by the Music Department, which had the ultimate responsibility for, and jurisdiction over light music. However, within the BBC no-one was quite sure what was meant by the ambiguous term light music. Presumably for the BBC, light music was a genre of popular music of the 1920s and 1930s enshrined in the musical rhetoric of the nineteenth century. Light music was essentially a genre for a small combination of instruments and so was more economical than the standard-sized orchestras. The economy and flexibility of these ensembles helped to saturate the broadcasting timetable with ease and it appealed to the average housewife, and this music was therefore usually

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<sup>36</sup> LeMahieu, D.L. *A Culture for Democracy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, 187.

programmed in afternoons and early evenings. In a poll of its readers by the *Daily Mail* in 1927, the three most popular categories broadcast by the BBC were, ‘variety and concert parties’, ‘light orchestral music’ and ‘military bands’.<sup>37</sup> Overall, light music was much more cost-effective per hour than serious music and occupied a greater share of broadcast time; though ‘serious music’ was by far the cardinal form of music, as shown in Table 3.6.

**Table 3.6 Percentage of Broadcast Time of Light and Serious Music.**<sup>38</sup>

Year	Station	Light music broadcast. Percentage of total output.	Percentage expenditure (Cost per hour)	Serious music broadcast. Percentage of total output.	Percentage expenditure (Cost per hour)
1928-1929	5XX	23.77%	n/a	16.77%	n/a
1928-1929	5GB	31.43%	n/a	20.36%	n/a
1934	All Stations	28.01%	£37.7	16.19%	£134.6
1937	All Stations	26.13%	£46.4	38.86%	£107.3

During the 1930s, the BBC was not the only station to broadcast in Britain, as Radios Normandie, Luxembourg and Poste Parisien all transmitted to Britain, featuring a significant proportion of light music.<sup>39</sup> As such, the BBC was forced to lighten their Sunday programmes, particularly as regards to music.<sup>40</sup>

This issue of popularity was still a bone of contention in the 1950s. As Hubert Clifford argued, ‘Grand Hotel’, a programme featuring a large proportion of light music attracted a regular audience between 8 and 10 million; this attracted half as much music again as the next popular light music programme, ‘Nights of Gladness’, and most dance-band programmes; the audience for this was six to seven times greater than that listening

<sup>37</sup> 28/02/1927 *Daily Mail* quoted in Ibid, 285.

<sup>38</sup> Compiled from information contained in: BBC Yearbook 1930, 56 and Scannell and Cardiff: 1991, 240.

<sup>39</sup> Nott, James. *Music for the People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 75 (Table 5).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 84.

to a Promenade Concert; and thirteen or fourteen times that of the 'Sunday Symphony Concert.'<sup>41</sup>

In the months leading up to the outbreak of the war in 1939, the BBC, conscious of their responsibility, saw light music as a way of raising the morale of the nation. The BBC founded the BBC Salon Orchestra, under Leslie Bridgewater, in mid-1939 to deal with the extra demand for light music.<sup>42</sup> The BBC also issued various decrees on what music could be played in wartime and it was agreed that from July 1940 no copyright music by enemy composers should be performed unless it was of an 'individual characteristic.'<sup>43</sup> Haydn Wood had been vocal against performances of music by enemy composers.<sup>43</sup> This caused a significant reduction on the light music repertoire and variety in broadcasts.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, by mid-1941 the BBC's policy was becoming much more flexible.<sup>45</sup>

In mid-1942, the BBC employed Fred Hartley (a popular broadcaster) to be the BBC's Light Music Supervisor; this was the BBC's first attempt to seriously address the issue of light music. In 1942, the BBC's Board of Directors had defined the genre as:

Light Music is music predominately of a cheerful, fast-moving, melodious character, suitably presented; familiarity in general is an important point; suitable classics not excluded if attractively presented; solo governed by the above rules, but not frequent and chiefly justified as a break for the orchestra in a long programme.

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<sup>41</sup> Clifford, Hubert. 'Some Problems of Broadcast Musical Entertainment.' In *BBC Quarterly* VIII (1953-1954) 158-163, 159.

<sup>42</sup> Tunley, David. *The Life and Times of Alfredo Campoli 1906-1991*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, 37.

<sup>43</sup> 15/11/1940 *Radio Times*. 'Enemy Composers', letter by Haydn Wood. His views were well known in the press and public by this stage.

<sup>44</sup> Kenneth Wright wrote to Haydn Wood shortly after the BBC's decision, 'One department of light music strongly hit by this ruling, and one of the few in fact in which we are genuinely embarrassed by it, is the gipsy music. Consequently, I am hoping that some British composers will jump in at the opportunity, backed by publishers, and turn out some good gipsy numbers, which if they make a hit could go on indefinitely after the war. Remembering your own excellent essay in music of this type in "Budapest", may I suggest that you concentrate on a few gipsy tunes varied in type which might go into the repertoire forthwith... I suggest you sketch them out in short score, and we can then indicate the best orchestration for immediate use here by the Caravan Players, etc.' (28/08/1940 Kenneth Wright to Haydn Wood. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 2.)

<sup>45</sup> Tunley: 1999, 42.

### Suitable Presentation

- (i) “Radio Times”: attractive titles and billing at all times.
- (ii) Details of items to be omitted and disguised under a sub-title if they would act as a deterrent through unfamiliarity or highbrow appearance.
- (iii) In the studio conductors and orchestras on their toes – no waits.
- (iv) Brisk announcing; cheerful voice; minimum detail; few breaks in the programme; items often announced in blocks and after the performance specially with classical sounding titles; no opus numbers etc.<sup>46</sup>

This memorandum summed up the BBC’s attitude to light music; fundamentally, the Corporation believed light music required a more relaxed approach to the genre. A light music broadcast needed to be paced differently, but above all needed to be familiar and cheerful – a significant difference from the BBC’s ‘serious music’ broadcasts.

Still perplexed by the whole ‘question’ of light music, the BBC commissioned Eric Coates to listen to the Corporation’s output for three months in which he analysed 168 programmes.<sup>47</sup> By 1946, there was the possibility of renaming the BBC Theatre Orchestra as the BBC Light Orchestra, though Richard Howgill (Acting Controller of Entertainment) thought that ‘Concert Orchestra’ was more applicable; the orchestra eventually adopted this name in 1952.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, the Music Department was still puzzled by the whole issue of light music. Writing to Hely-Hutchinson on his appointment as Director of Music, Kenneth Wright believed that the whole question of how and what constituted light music needed addressing.<sup>49</sup> In the past, Wright argued, Boult (and surely by implication, Bliss, who had been overall Head of the Music Department since 1942) were not interested in the question of light music and thus the whole dilemma surrounding this area required to be finally solved.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> 07/01/1942 Basil Nichols to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Music General, Light Music file 1, 1939-1943.

<sup>47</sup> 27/05/1943 Arthur Bliss to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948 and *GB-STHprivate*. See Appendix 2 for Coates’ findings.

<sup>48</sup> 09/07/1946 Extract from Registry PA Co-ordinating Committee Meeting and 27/07/1946 Richard Howgill to Victor Hely-Hutchinson. *GB-Rwac* Music General, Light Music file 2, 1944-1946.

<sup>49</sup> 26/05/1944 Kenneth Wright to Victor Hely-Hutchinson. *GB-Rwac* Music General, Light Music file 2, 1944-1946.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

The post-war Music Department was contemplating light music far more seriously than it had before the War, believing its future was better served as a purely orchestral genre and not exclusively a genre for small combinations. Throughout the Conflict, in order to quench the thirst for light music and also to help reduce costs, it had extensively broadcast gramophone records of light music and the post-war BBC needed to redress this issue.<sup>51</sup> This desire to raise the status of light music was furthered in 1948 with a suggestion from the Head of the Light Programme that, if the Light Programme did not render itself bankrupt with its Christmas programmes, they would be able to sponsor a festival of British Light Music using the BBC Theatre Orchestra in addition to the LSO.<sup>52</sup> Why the BBC wished to use the LSO rather than its own Symphony Orchestra for such a Festival is in itself testament of the levels of snobbery against light music within the BBC; from 1954, the Festivals utilized the BBC Concert Orchestra. This Festival went ahead in 1949, the BBC's first Light Programme Festival of Music, which became universally known as 'Light Music Festival' and was subsequently renamed as such. For the first Festival, several composers were commissioned for new light work; Haydn Wood produced his *Festival March*, though Coates turned down an offer to produce a new work.<sup>53</sup> The Festivals ran until 1960 and brought much attention to the younger generation of light composers (namely Tomlinson, Binge and Farnon) and offered them the chance to write works which they may not otherwise have been able to compose; Binge composed his *Saxophone Concerto* for the 1956 Festival; Tomlinson wrote his *Rhapsody and Rondo* for the celebrated horn-player Denis Brain – probably the last piece composed for Brain before his death in 1957. In a 1958 publication *Music for Millions*, published for the 1958 Festival, the BBC were keen to stress the new openings

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<sup>51</sup> Scannell and Cardiff: 1991, 203.

<sup>52</sup> 04/11/1948 Internal Memo from T.W. Chambers. *GB-Rwac* Music General, Light Music file 3a, 1947-1948.

<sup>53</sup> 06/01/1949 Eric Coates to Herbert Murrill. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957. Kenneth Wright also produced his *Tobacco Suite* for the 1949 Festival.

they had created for light music, due to the variety of commissions.<sup>54</sup> In this pamphlet, the Corporation was keen to stress the importance of the BBC Concert Orchestra, which they claimed was formed solely to perform light music, though this task had been filled for years by the BBC Theatre Orchestra and sections C, D and E of the BBC Orchestra.<sup>55</sup>

On the establishment side, the BBC instituted a Light Music Department under the Australian composer Hubert Clifford during the early 1950s, to deal with the growing burden of administration that light music was attracting. There was also a change in direction with light music becoming more inclusive, marked by the start of 'Friday Night is Music Night' in 1953 and styled, 'music for everybody'.<sup>56</sup> Clifford wrote to the Controller of Music in 1953 that,

Without wishing to attempt to define to best in light music, I would attempt to suggest the following characteristics desirable: 1) The music is of proven popularity for a mass audience and 2) In the opinion of the programme officials involved it is likely to have an immediate appeal to such an audience.<sup>57</sup>

Aside from their work on 'Friday Night is Music Night', the Department formed a Reading Panel for light compositions during September 1953, to offer opinions on the profusion of scores that the Corporation was receiving from light composers all over the country. The Panel included Coates, Montague Phillips, Charles Williams, Fredrick Curzon (who worked in the Light Music Department at Boosey and Hawkes and was a notable light music composer) and Haydn Wood; both Wood and Phillips later resigned from the Committee as they did not agree with their 'censoring' other composer's works.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Anon. *Music for Millions*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1958, 3. See Chapter 10.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> 08/10/2005 *Music for Everybody*. BBC Four.

<sup>57</sup> 30/01/1953 Hubert Clifford to Richard Howgill, quoted in 08/10/2005 *Music for Everyone*. BBC Four.

<sup>58</sup> See 09/12/1953 Haydn Wood to Hubert Clifford & 13/02/1954 Montague Phillips to Hubert Clifford. *GB-Rwac* Light Music Reading Panel, 1953-1954.

Despite the frequent exposure of Coates' music and the value attached to it by the BBC, there were often awkward policy decisions that they were required to make. These decisions were often made or implemented by Kenneth Wright of the BBC's Music Department. Wright often appeared to be hypocritical in his dealings with Coates and would appear to promote Coates' music in letters to him, but in internal memoranda would often be negative about it and occasionally veto performances of it. Wright's attitudes and those of Bliss are symptomatic of the views towards light music that had pervaded the English musical establishment during the twentieth century. Bliss certainly changed his views towards light music later in his life, presumably to gain performances of his music, going onto conduct at the BBC Light Music Festivals and became the President of the Light Music Society. There was no attempt made to deracinate light music and transplant it into the same compartment as 'highbrow music'; light music was not able to achieve those levels of exposure, merit and eminence. This attitude is typical of the BBC's change of direction, as once their policy, shortly after its foundation, had been to promote light music, but by the 1940s and 1950s, it was to remove it, or at the very least scale down the openings to the genre. As such, it was realistic that, by the 1940s, the BBC should begin to take stock of its policy concerning light music. The BBC's change in attitude toward light music was not only resented by Coates, but further changes made by the BBC in the 1960s and 1970s led Robert Farnon to comment, 'It wasn't that light music was dead, just the BBC were in the process of burying it alive!<sup>59</sup>' This change in attitude can be seen in Coates' battle with the Director-General, W.J. Haley in 1944, over his repeated non-inclusion in the BBC's Promenade Concerts since the BBC took over the concerts.

While Wright was acting as the BBC's official spokesman on issues of policy concerning light music, Coates tried to influence Wright on his stance on light music and

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<sup>59</sup> Robert Farnon quoted by John Wilson in, 08/10/2005 *Music for Everybody*. BBC Four.

especially on the BBC's policy towards it. Writing to congratulate him on his short-lived appointment as Overseas Music Director, Coates launched into a tirade about the BBC's attitude on light music and its ramifications for the ways in which British music was perceived on the continent.<sup>60</sup> Wright clearly recognised it was the 'standard' Coates fulmination on the state and attitudes of the BBC towards light music, and as such, placed several flippant comments in the margin of the letter. However, the letter clearly shows the differences in their respective ideologies concerning the field of light music.<sup>61</sup>

Now, my dear Ken, when you start your activities [as Overseas Music Director] I do beg of you to let our foreign friends know that we are not a dull nation musically. I believe that you will only be able to convince them of this if you include in your bag compositions by those composers who write the kind of thing which it has been the BBC's policy to exclude from certain orchestras and concerts ever since it came into being. How long shall we have to put up with the BBC forcing in the public compositions by intellectual experimentalists? It is this that gives us such poor name both home and at abroad, and it is an acute form of snobbery. The whole thing boils down to this – is it music, or is it not? [*Wright notes: Eric's world of music stops at Delius & and the less "involved works["] of say, Bliss?*] If it is the latter – then cut it out. Time and again have I heard programmes of so-called representative British music from here and abroad, and no wonder we are dubbed as dull. [*Wright notes: But we are no longer in circles of thinking people! He doesn't know!*]

You probably do know that years ago, before the BBC came into existence, all types of British music were represented at most of our big festivals. This created an incentive for the composer of the lighter school. Do you realize that today the BBC is literally killing the incentive of a composer who writes melody? For instance, if a composer, such as myself writes a work for a large orchestra it is useless for him to expect the BBC to play it more than once in its original form, and he must look to foreign countries for his performances.<sup>62</sup> [*Wright notes: Interesting point.*] As far as the BBC is concerned, if he wants the work to be performed he is almost forced to boil it down to suit the medium of a sextet. What incentive is there for our young composers of the lighter school to bother and master the art of orchestration? I realize that if I were a young man starting my career now I should never have attained such a position I hold today – the BBC's policy would have prevented it. [*Wright notes: I persuaded BBC to include "The Three Bears" in a Prom in a Christmas season – unfortunately it was rather a flop both with the public & the BBC management. The new audience didn't expect or want for that sort of thing.*] Mercifully I have made my name before the advent of this institution and had

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<sup>60</sup> 08/09/1940 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. GB-Rwac Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>61</sup> Wright's marginalia have been incorporated into the body of the text in italics as close as possible to where it was written.

<sup>62</sup> Surely Coates is referring to the first performance of his ballet *The Enchanted Garden* which the BBC Orchestra (Section D) gave and subsequently took the piece on tour to Scandinavia. However, with his next suite, *The Four Centuries*, the BBC performed it numerous times with the BBC Theatre Orchestra; he was still receiving many performances within England.

the good fortune for many years to have my works included in representative concerts of British music, where I found myself appearing on the same platform as Edward Elgar, Granville Bantock, Hamilton Harty, Gustav Holst and Edward German. In those days those in authority were only too pleased to include lighter British works in their programmes, providing that they were written by composers who understand the medium of the orchestra: but today, all this is changed because of the attitudes taken up by the BBC towards light music – others, unfortunately, follow the BBC's lead. Conspicuous absence can be very damning. I am not suggesting that lighter orchestral works be performed at the bigger symphony concerts, but they should be at least represented at concerts such as the Promenades, lighter symphony concerts and such-like. Why must the BBC place composers in categories? [*Wright notes: Because nature often puts them there. Even his own 'Saxo-Rhapsody' is really light music & where he gets "heavier" is seldom better.*] Cannot they understand that the art of programme building is to give variety – not to give whole programmes of the same fare – which causes a form of musical indigestion to the sensitive? Perfect programmes include the sweets and deserts along with the joint and entrée.

Now, my dear Ken, please do not think that I am writing all this to you because I want you to do anything for me personally – I have long ago become reconciled to the BBC's attitude towards my work. Fortunately for me my music is becoming increasingly played on the larger orchestras throughout the world, and it seems only in England that this prejudice towards light music exists. No, the reason for this letter is that I want to see those young composers who follow after me receiving some encouragement, this cannot happen until this unwarrantable snobbery has been put an end to once and for all. I fully expect Dr. Arne, [*Wright notes: He wrote for a much more practical orchestra!*] who has given us so much of our national music, were he alive today, he would be handed over body-and-soul to the tender mercies of Fred Hartley (this is no aspersion of Fred Hartley's work, which is excellent of it's kind). Nor do I wish it to be thought that people should be encouraged to have their music played on a large orchestra unless they orchestrate their own works. NO COMPOSER IS WORTHY OF THE NAME UNLESS HE IS A MASTER OF THE ART OF ORCHESTRATION. It will be up to you, in a large measure to see that the composers who know their jobs [*Wright notes: I agree there – always did*] get a square deal.

My good wishes with your new job and – I ask you to bear in mind what I have said in this letter. I hope that my views may perhaps influence you in your new mission and that you will be an ambassador for British music in the TRUE [*Wright notes: Sorry if I was the wrong sort before??!*] sense of the word.<sup>63</sup>

Coates' comments to Wright are certainly quite pertinent, but do express the difficulties he was encountering within the field of music. Certainly the BBC had done its best to educate the audiences of the Promenade Concerts, as well as the average listener. It had to make certain nonpareil artistic decisions despite their unpopularity with Coates or indeed anybody else. Artistic judgements were required to be made and because of their

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<sup>63</sup> 08/09/1940 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. GB-Rwac Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

very nature tended to inflame and upset some more than others. Coates had failed to grasp that the attitudes of concert audiences were changing and the days when he, and less so, Edward German (who was in a different category) could appear with the likes of Elgar, Smyth, Harty etc. was rapidly vanishing. Certainly the BBC did not like Coates' 'popular approach' in a number of his pieces, probably best demonstrated in the finale of his next suite *The Four Centuries*. Yet what he had to say was strangely prophetic of the many difficulties that many light composers would encounter in the 1960s and beyond.

Wright's at times flippant comments in his 1940 letter show his inability to take Coates' music seriously. However, when dealing with Coates he was always most courteous and accommodating, though usually captious. This is best shown in an internal memorandum which he wrote to Arthur Bliss in December 1941 in reply to a letter by Coates. Coates' letter,<sup>64</sup> sadly now lost from the BBC's archives, was presumably along similar lines to his letter to Wright in September 1940, attacking the BBC's policy toward light music:

...I would like you please to read this letter again, as while there is a good deal of sense in it, it is not as straightforward as Eric believes. He is thought of so highly in the profession and in the committees of the P.R.S., where the B.B.C. and its policies are widely discussed, that you could do something to help, if the conversation turns in this direction.

I am not at all sure that the B.B.C.'s attitude towards his own music has been a wrong one. We know what happened when the "Three Bears" went into a Promenade Concert. I had banked on this, but it was a flop I think because we had by then led the audience to expect something more solid – and there is no doubt that when Eric lets loose on a fast foxtrot with a concert orchestra, it sounds extraordinarily cheap and lets the earlier part of the music down, which is often first class of its kind.<sup>65</sup>

At any rate, his music has proved the very thing for the jobs it now performs in "In Town Tonight", "Music While You Work", and we hope the Overseas Children's programmes. When I took him to Sweden for a programme with their Wireless Orchestra, which was followed by a tour of three Scandinavian countries, all with a concert orchestra, I think it showed that one had not failed to recognise a master of his own medium.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> 04/12/1941 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. Lost.

<sup>65</sup> Was Wright thinking of the foxtrots in *The Three Bears* (bars 320-348), or *Saxo-Rhapsody* (figures 29-34)?

<sup>66</sup> Undated, December 1941? Kenneth Wright to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

Wright seemed anxious to stop Coates' views spreading within the 'music profession', because of his reputation. Arthur Bliss noted on the bottom of Wright's memorandum:

I agree with you. He will do his music more harm than good if it goes into a programme of solid music – I have suggested to the A.D.M. [Assistant Director of Music] the 1st performance of his new Suite 'Four Centuries' in a future Friday Lunchtime Concert, but more as a test than anything else. When I see him and I have not yet, I will certainly bring this matter tactfully up.<sup>67</sup>

Towards the close of the 1930s, Coates became discontented with the opportunities available to light-music composers in Britain, especially over the repeated absence of the light works from the Promenade Concerts. In 1939 he lambasted the BBC's non-inclusion of Edward German in the Concerts:

It seems to me that we are growing very careless about our composers. Edward German was a writer who portrayed the English characteristics as no one else has done – not only was he an inspired musician, but his orchestration was flawless. Why is it that his works are not performed each season at the Promenade Concerts? Surely these programmes should include at least one work of such a fine English writer? Or is it the old bugbear of the classification of "Light" that prevents the inclusion of his art?<sup>68</sup>

His insistence on this matter coincided with Wright's change in opinions regarding Coates' music: championing his music to his face, but often criticising it within BBC channels, though he had little inkling of Wright's contumelious comments. Throughout the 1930s, Kenneth Wright had always been of great assistance, but by the 1940s he was more negative and critical, especially of Coates' views and opinions of light music and its future.

In 1944, Coates became embroiled in an argument with William Haley over the non-inclusion of light music in the Promenade Concerts, though he never made an outcry over the issue, it remained a sore point with the Corporation for a number of years. The roots of the dilemma stemmed from the representation of him in the 1944

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. Arthur Bliss had dedicated his brass band Suite *Kenilworth* to Wright.

<sup>68</sup> 30/06/1939 *Evening News*. 'This Musical Snobbery.'

Season with several of his early *Four Old English Songs*; he saw himself foremost as an orchestral composer. Coates' *Songs* were often regarded as his most 'serious' works, presumably because of their texts by Shakespeare, and this featured in several prestigious concerts, including the first concert celebrating the centenary of the RAM in 1922.<sup>69</sup> The roots of his arguments had been in the BBC's obstruction of the inclusion of his new *Four Centuries* Suite in the 1943 season. Writing to Arthur Bliss in 1943, Wright acted as messenger:

Eric Coates, who is still laid up with Bronchitis, has phoned me and said that he recently met Sir Henry Wood, who said in his affable manner: "Have you a new work for the Proms this year?" to which Coates replied: "Yes, there is my new Suite." [*The Four Centuries*] ... I promised him, therefore, that I would pass this note through to you as an official request for you to consider the work for the coming season.<sup>70</sup>

Five days later, Wright again wrote to Bliss, showing his bipolar approach, in presenting Coates' music in a slightly negative vein within the BBC,

There is some lovely writing in the first two movements. It seems to me that the Suite gets progressively cheaper as the composer progresses down the centuries. That the last movement seems 'vieux jeu' is probably the fault of Jazz rather than Coates, and I doubt whether the Promenade Orchestra could tackle all that tricky stuff even if you wanted it to... I threw out the hint to Coates that in view of the rehearsal difficulties etc. someone might suggest the first three movements of the Suite only, but he said as I quite expected that for the first performance of a work on which he had built so much, and which had just been issued by B&H in a full engraved score, it would be unfair not to play it complete.<sup>71</sup>

Bliss agreed whole-heartedly with Wright and commented on the memorandum, 'I am absolutely against the decision of a Coates suite in the Proms – retrogression to the Bad Old Days.'<sup>72</sup> In May, Coates and Bliss had what appears to have been a stormy meeting over the light music at the Promenades and Bliss felt obliged to write to him to appease

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<sup>69</sup> Henry Wood also had a weakness for the *Songs*, possibly because his first wife Olga had performed them numerous times. The *Songs* also featured in several of the Promenade Concerts during the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>70</sup> 28/01/1943 Kenneth Wright to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>71</sup> 01/02/1943 Kenneth Wright to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>72</sup> Note by Arthur Bliss, *Ibid.*

him; the tone of Bliss's letter leaves little doubt that the BBC were deliberately not including light works into the Promenades.<sup>73</sup> Both Wright's and Bliss's antipathy to jazz within the Suite (though Coates' affectionate tribute is not as jazzy as passages in Walton's *Façade* or *Belshazzar's Feast* or indeed pieces of Stravinsky) perhaps says more about the Music Department's attitudes to popular music of the period rather than about the *Four Centuries* Suite.

It was not just the snobbish attitudes of Wright and Bliss that the *Four Centuries* Suite had to contend with, but also the staff of the BBC's Promenade planning office. Henry Wood wrote to Julian Herbage (who was largely responsible for the programming of the Promenade Concerts), extolling the virtues of the Suite:

When we met here some weeks ago over the programme policy, Mr Bliss expressed a wish to include a work by ERIC COATES, if only we could decide which. Actually, I have seen a suite of his early this year, when he came to ask me several questions with regard to the way in which Boosey & Hawkes were proposing to print it, and then, in its unfinished state, it appeared to be surely his best, and most serious work. It is now ready, and I should very much like to find a place for it – 23 minutes.<sup>74</sup>

Herbage replied to Wood's letter stating the BBC's elite policy regarding the entry of light music into the Promenade Concerts:

...with regard to the Eric Coates Suite, I had the impression that when we discussed the matter with Mr. Bliss he felt that if Eric Coates were to be included, it would open the door to other light music composers, and that this would not be desirable if we are to maintain the present character of the Promenade programmes. Mr. Thompson confirms this impression, but I am not able at the moment to get confirmation from Mr. Bliss as he is still away on sick leave.<sup>75</sup>

Wood was still dogmatic in his desire to include the work and later that month he again wrote to Herbage,

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<sup>73</sup> 08/05/1943 Arthur Bliss to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948 & *GB-STHprivate*. Quoted in the introduction to the Chapter.

<sup>74</sup> 29/03/1943 Henry Wood to Julian Herbage. *GB-Rwac* Henry Wood Personal file 6, July 1938-1944.

<sup>75</sup> 01/04/1943 Julian Herbage to Henry Wood. *GB-Rwac* Henry Wood Personal file 6, July 1938-1944.

I find it difficult to agree that I have a mistaken idea of that conversation that day, but I am equally certain that Mr. Bliss would be the last to exclude any work that I decided it worth while to include – I think this should be included – in a Saturday programme.<sup>76</sup>

In the end, the BBC, knowing of Wood's policy to not include novelties which had already received their premiere, managed to dissuade him from including *Four Centuries* in the forthcoming series. Certainly the extended duration of twenty-five minutes was a handicap for the work in BBC circles, not to mention the difficult writing in the final two movements, which would have put an added strain on the already overburdened Promenade orchestras. Coates, feeling suitably disgruntled at Wood's decision, took the matter up privately with him (though the letters were probably penned by Lady Jessie Wood due to Sir Henry's infirmity). Writing to Wood in June, Coates stated:

I do not think the argument that my work had already received two broadcasts a year ago holds water when I find that in this season's Proms. there are several works by British composers which have already been heard over the air nevertheless. I cannot help feel that if you had thought to put in a word with the BBC to include my work that this would have carried weight and a place would consequently have been found for it. For a composer of Light Orchestral works to be admitted to the Promenade Concerts is like entering the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>77</sup>

Ironically, Wood had been planning to include the premiere of Arnold Bax's Seventh Symphony in the 1943 season, but when he found out that it had already received its premiere elsewhere, Wood lost the desire to perform the work.<sup>78</sup> As a consolation, he automatically included his favourite Bax symphony, the Third, even though Bax wanted his Fifth or Sixth Symphonies to be played if the Seventh could not be performed.<sup>79</sup> Quite why Wood did not include another of Coates' works in the season as a consolation, as he had done for Bax, is unclear.<sup>80</sup> In Wood's defence, he had tried his

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<sup>76</sup> 07/04/1943 Henry Wood to Julian Herbage. *GB-Rwac* Henry Wood Personal file 6, July 1938-1944.

<sup>77</sup> 16/06/1943 Eric Coates to Henry Wood. *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>78</sup> 15/05/1943 Henry Wood to W.W. Thompson. *GB-Rwac* Henry Wood Artists file 2a, 1942-June 1943.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

best for *Four Centuries*, but had been overruled by the BBC's attitude to light works in their Promenade Concerts. Whilst Wood was chief conductor of the series, he was also, in effect, a BBC employee and as such fell under the jurisdiction of the Music Department. Ironically, Wood collapsed on the second night of the 1943 Season and the rest of the concerts were conducted by Boult and Cameron.<sup>81</sup> The 1943 season also broke most of the outstanding records for the Promenades' concerts.<sup>82</sup>

By 1944, Coates felt sufficiently irate to write to the BBC's Director-General, William Haley, to try and clarify the BBC's policy on the inclusion of works by light composers in the Promenades.<sup>83</sup> Judging by the number of drafts of the letter that survive he did not find it easy; in addition he also sought advice from Chappell.<sup>84</sup> His initial letter contained stark warnings over the future of the light music:

If the BBC persists in this attitude towards our Light Orchestral Music the death-knell of the School has already sounded, and I would ask you whether this is the considered policy of our great British Broadcasting Corporation which, by virtue of its name alone, should be the first to encourage by public performance all that is the best of its type in British Music.<sup>85</sup>

He received a reply from Haley setting out the BBC's official stance on their policy (such as they could hastily assemble by discussing the issues with various members of staff)<sup>86</sup> and he felt sufficiently indignant to send another letter on the subject, as he felt Haley's arguments '...did not hold water' or in fact answer the basic question he had raised in his previous letter.<sup>87</sup> He concluded:

I still repeat that I think (and many musicians agree with me) that the BBC is absolutely wrong in its attitude towards the best in Light Music, for it is fostering an

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<sup>81</sup> Jacobs: 1994, 379.

<sup>82</sup> Briggs: 1970, 584.

<sup>83</sup> 21/05/1944 Eric Coates to William Haley. *GB-STHprivate* & *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948. He had raised the non-inclusion of light composers in the Promenade Concerts in his *Report* submitted the following year (Coates: 1943, 17).

<sup>84</sup> 19/05/1944 Edwin Goodman to Eric Coates. *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> 06/06/1944 William Haley to Eric Coates *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948 & *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>87</sup> 12/06/1944 Eric Coates to William Haley. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948 & *GB-STHprivate*.

insidious form of musical snobbery among listeners, teaching them to despise melody. Perhaps one day I may have the pleasure of meeting you when I think I could convince you of the injustices in refusing proper performance to certain works.<sup>88</sup>

It fell to his friend, Kenneth Wright, to draft comments which formed the basis of Haley's reply to the second of Coates' letters;<sup>89</sup> Wright, on these rare occasions, acted as a conciliator between Coates and the BBC; though he had to remain loyal to his employer, he tried to be fair towards the valid points that Coates had raised:

I have drafted the basis of a reply for your consideration please. I fear it is long, but I know Eric Coates so well that I feel that this old and rankling grouse needs a straight answer. Whether he will agree or understand is another matter. The more general question of the BBC's attitude to light music I have mentioned because as far as I know, although Coates made a great deal of it in his report a year ago and we discussed it very thoroughly, nothing has ever been officially said or written to Coates about it.<sup>90</sup>

Despite his grievances, the BBC stayed loyal and frequently transmitted his music on the airwaves; he fared far better than other British composers. In 1936-1937, Thomas Dunhill became sufficiently disgruntled by the lack of broadcast performances of his works to refer to the BBC's programme planners as 'those young men in pink shirts.'<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, Coates unashamedly received preferential treatment from the Corporation because of his standing in the field of light music. Haydn Wood, who felt that he and Coates were equal in the sphere of light music, was often jealous of the BBC's preferential treatment of Coates. In 1933, Stanford Robinson believed of Wood's music, 'He surely does not come into the first class of light music composers, along with Sullivan, German and Coates... It is true that he aims high, witness his recent Violin Concerto, but this attainment seems to me to be comparatively low and rather heavy

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Undated [June 1944?] Kenneth Wright to Basil Nichol. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>90</sup> 01/07/1944 Kenneth Wright to Basil Nichols. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas Dunhill quoted in Dunhill, David. *Thomas Dunhill*. London: Thames, 1997, 97.

handed.<sup>92</sup> The BBC's preference for Coates may well have been occasionally Wood's methods of dealing with the BBC, as he repeatedly pestered the Corporation until they adopted his ideas. A case in point was thus: from 1944, he continually beleaguered the BBC to broadcast a programme of his Manx music (conducted by the composer) to celebrate Tynwald Day – the BBC eventually capitulated in 1952.<sup>93</sup> Coates, however, was more relaxed and took what the BBC offered and submitted proposals and talked through ideas informally. By 1939, Wood felt sufficiently disgruntled at the BBC's lack of exposure of his music on the airwaves compared to that of Coates, that he requested Ralph Hawkes (of his publishers, Boosey and Hawkes) to write to the BBC about the issue.<sup>94</sup> An internal BBC memorandum in discussion of Hawkes' letter states the BBC's policy towards Wood and Coates:

In the first place, we do not believe there is so much difference between the number of works broadcast in the case of these two composers. If there is any difference, it is not the result of any policy of ours. Actually Eric Coates is in a class by himself as a composer of light orchestral music, but we cannot very well say that to Mr. Hawkes.<sup>95</sup>

The following year, Wood wrote privately to Kenneth Wright over the subject, still maintaining that Coates and several other light composers received more broadcasts of their material than he did or than he felt he deserved:

There are other composers with smaller catalogues than I have getting more performances than I do... As you know, I depend on principally on my broadcasting for my income these days and I feel I must protest against this neglect of my work. Most of the items I have had broadcast for some considerable time have been songs. Why this is so I don't know when I think I can claim to having a very varied orchestral catalogue.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> 20/09/1933 Stanford Robinson to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 1.

<sup>93</sup> 22/05/2006 Gilles Gouset to Michael Payne (e-mail).

<sup>94</sup> 04/04/1939 Ralph Hawkes to Jardine Brown. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 1.

<sup>95</sup> 12/04/1939 R. Burns to Adrian Boulton. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 1.

<sup>96</sup> 07/03/1940 Haydn Wood to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 2.

Attached to the letter, Wood had made a comparison of broadcasts of their music (assembled from the *Radio Times*) of three weeks' worth of programmes. His comparisons make for interesting reading, as they show the exposure that Coates was receiving at the time from a wide variety of performers, Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7 Haydn Wood's Comparisons Between Broadcasts of his Music and Eric Coates'.<sup>97</sup>**

Week Commencing	Haydn Wood	Eric Coates
25/02/1940	'When the Home-Bells Ring Again' (song) <i>Supplication</i> Entr'acte	<i>London Bridge</i> March <i>From Meadow to Mayfair</i> Suite (complete) 'Bird Songs at Eventide' (song)
03/03/1940	'Roses of Picardy' (cut out of broadcast)	<i>By the Sleepy Lagoon</i> Valse Serenade <i>Footlights</i> Valse <i>Last Love</i> (twice) Romance
10/03/1940	<i>Life and Love</i> Overture 'A Brown Bird Singing' (song) 'Love's Garden of Roses' (song)	<i>Footlights</i> Valse 'Knightsbridge' March ( <i>London Suite</i> ) <i>Seven Seas</i> March <i>Last Love</i> Romance 'Westwards' ( <i>Four Ways</i> Suite) <i>Springtime</i> Suite (complete) 'Oxford Street' March ( <i>London Again</i> Suite) <i>Symphonic Rhapsody on 'I Pitch My Lonely Caravan'</i> 'Valse' ( <i>Summer Days</i> Suite) <i>I Sing to You</i> Souvenir <i>London Suite</i> (complete) 'An Elizabethan Lullaby' (song) <i>Springtime</i> Suite (complete)

It fell to Kenneth Wright to appease him, as the BBC was no doubt receiving letters like his on a regular basis. Certainly, Wood had picked an atypical period as Coates was conducting on the Forces Programme during the third week, but even without this, Coates still had more performances. Wright wrote back to Wood: 'You will realise from looking through the remainder of items this week that they are suggested by all sorts and

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

kinds of people, and this alone should indicate that they are generally proposals based on the universality of Eric's appeal and the variety in which these popular pieces can offer.<sup>98</sup>

Haydn Wood still felt aggrieved at the BBC's preference of Coates music, and, in 1944, wrote to protest over Coates' inclusion in a 'Music for All' programme on Christmas Eve.<sup>99</sup> Wood had been trying to have his *Phantasy for String Orchestra* included in the programmes for a number of years. Hely-Hutchinson succinctly summed up Wood's dilemma as '... as a popular composer, he's too light + as a serious composer (when he tries) he's not popular enough. There were special circumstances about the Eric Coates work coming into Music for All...'<sup>100</sup>

Coates certainly fared far better in his exposure on the BBC's wavelengths than Haydn Wood though this was predominately because of his universal popularity, something Wood never achieved. Though Wood may have had plenty to complain about the BBC's imperious attitudes towards light music (music had to be of the highest art form and the two antipodes of 'light' and 'serious' music could not be placed within the same concert despite the universality of their musical language), because of the BBC's symbiotic relationship with Coates, a certain level of appeasement was required.

The BBC's superciliousness and lack of condescension to the vulgar and its inability to supervene light music led to several difficulties in the performance of Coates' lesser known pieces. When the BBC invited him to write a piece for the Silver Jubilee of George V in 1935, he responded with a devotional work, *A Song of Loyalty* for orchestra, soloist and audience, *ad libitum*, a work that was different from anything he had composed before and which never attempted again; the Press were also surprised as the work was not in his usual 'light and cheerful' style, but devotional in character.<sup>101</sup> The

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<sup>98</sup> 12/03/1940 Kenneth Wright to Haydn Wood. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 2.

<sup>99</sup> 08/12/1944 Haydn Wood to Julian Herbage. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 2.

<sup>100</sup> 28/12/1944 Julian Herbage to Victor Hely-Hutchinson. Note by Hely-Hutchinson. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 3a. See Chapter 4.

<sup>101</sup> Various press cuttings in Coates Scrapbook 2, *GB-STHprivate*.

song was overtly sentimental in both its text (by Phyl) and music, though it does stand up better without the tenor soloist as in Coates' own 1948 recording, Ex 3.1.

Within our hearts  
 We ask that joy may ever find you,  
 May you never lose the light that shines to guide and mind you.  
 Within our hearts  
 We ask that love may ever bless you.  
 May peace and love enfold you  
 Is the prayer within our hearts.<sup>102</sup>

Ex. 3.1 *Song of Loyalty*, bars 7-14.

After composing the work, he was keen to try and establish it as 'a song of national expression' in times of grief and patriotism, very much along the lines of Elgar's 'Land of Hope and Glory' and Parry's 'Jerusalem.'<sup>103</sup> Shortly after the work's first performance in

<sup>102</sup> Coates, Phyllis. *A Song of Loyalty*. London: Chappell & Co., 1935.

<sup>103</sup> Haydn Wood also tried a similar idea in *Coronation Year* (1953), when he composed a patriotic song, 'Elizabeth of England' which was available in versions for piano, military band and orchestra and like Coates' *Song of Loyalty* it is a lamentable effort in both words and music, though in both cases the music is more serviceable without the words.

May 1935, he sent a set of orchestral parts to Robinson to ensure further broadcasts.<sup>104</sup>

Not long after the outbreak of the War, Coates wrote to Walford Davies, care of Broadcasting House, to try to persuade him, in his official capacity as Master of the King's Musick, to adopt the *Song* as a piece of 'national' music, its message apt but not patriotic:

Being suitable for any occasion, whether of sorrow or rejoicing or in time of stress, I am writing to ask you whether you think you might be able to make use of it at this time when our country is passing through such a very difficult phase. "Song of Loyalty" has been played several times at the Palace by request and was frequently featured at the time of King George's death.<sup>105</sup>

The following month, Coates also tried to re-establish the piece in the minds of the BBC officials, sending a copy of the work to Kenneth Wright. The work had proved popular with seaside audiences, though the BBC was not keen to assimilate the work, as Wright informed Boult:

I should like the D[irector of]M[usic] to see the D[irector of]V[ariety]'s copies and confirm that Mr Robinson and I are not mistaken in feeling that the "Song of Loyalty" is the composers' poorest piece, entirely lacking in the qualities that such an idea demands for adequate expression. At the same time it is true that it appeals to the cinema type of audience and is immensely popular in the seaside concerts where the sentimental clichés of "God walked in my Garden" etc. are esteemed above the grand cadences of Handel and Elgar.<sup>106</sup>

The Corporation did little to establish the work in the nation's repertoire of patriotic songs, though Coates still had an appetency for this. After a performance of the work with the BBC Theatre Orchestra and Theatre Chorus in 1946, he wrote to Gwen Williams at the BBC to say:

Everyone seems to have liked the programme [06/08/46] and I have received many letters, messages and 'phone calls telling me how much they have enjoyed the

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<sup>104</sup> 26/05/1935 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson & 27/05/1935 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>105</sup> 25/09/1939 Eric Coates to Walford Davies. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1933-1939.

<sup>106</sup> 14/10/1939 Kenneth Wright to Adrian Boult. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1933-1939.

proceedings and saying how beautifully the whole thing was arranged. Our dear old gardener down here (I am writing at Selsey) informed me that he felt very much better after having listened to my music and then went on to tell me one of his old cronies was moved to tears while we were doing “Song of Loyalty” and using his own words: “it was like being in Heaven!!!!!![?] It is a strange thing the way in which this last piece seems to “get” some people. Alick MacLean, at Scarborough, told me it was the most effective piece I had ever written and Bertie Lodge, among others, said that the performing of “Song of Loyalty” with chorus always the signal for the old ladies in the audience to produce pocket handkerchiefs. Well, well!!<sup>107</sup>

Again he tried to impose the work on the BBC using the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 as an appropriate pretext. This time, he asked Teddy Holmes, a director of his publishers, Chappell, to send a copy of the *Song of Loyalty* to Hubert Clifford at the BBC to try to establish the work.<sup>108</sup> Clifford passed the work onto Gilbert Vinter (conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra) but thereafter the *Song* was promptly forgotten and since then never become popular.<sup>109</sup> Coates had realised how important the BBC was, especially in their ability to promote certain pieces through their broadcasts.

Coates was rarely timorous when it came to self-promotion, on occasions he would avoid it and ask Chappell to involve themselves in a dispute he was having with the BBC. In 1943, Edwin Goodman (presumably acting on Coates’ instructions) wrote to Arthur Bliss over the lack of performances by the BBC of Coates’ song ‘Star of God’, published in 1940.

It is with regard to the song we published recently entitled “STAR OF GOD” words by Fred Weatherly and music by Eric Coates. I do not suggest that this is a classic, but of its style I think it is quite well written in the popular vein and I enclose a copy herewith for you to look at. The song is a great favourite with many singers and is having a good sale everywhere both in this country and in America and Australia. I agree that the song is much in the style of the popular songs by the late Stephen Adams, but the point I want to mention is that I know, for some reason, this song has been practically banned by various BBC people. Several well known singers have included the song in their programme, but it has been deleted on each occasion.

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<sup>107</sup> 11/10/1946 Eric Coates to Gwen Williams. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>108</sup> 20/01/1953 Teddy Holmes to Hubert Clifford. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>109</sup> 21/01/1953 Hubert Clifford to Teddy Holmes. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

I do not understand the reason for this and I cannot imagine there is any feeling of animosity towards the composer. What can be done to remedy this difficulty?<sup>110</sup>

Bliss duly responded in his official capacity as Director of Music and attempted to pacify Coates', though his blunt strategy was to 'stonewall' claiming that the song would possibly have to be cleared with the Director of Religious Broadcasting because of its references to God,<sup>111</sup> though at the same time he was categorically denying that there was a ban on the song.<sup>112</sup> Bliss concluded his letter, 'Yet the song is too serious in import to be adopted irresponsibly on most light music programmes.'<sup>113</sup> The whole situation was symptomatic of Coates' aggression at the perceived absence of his music on the BBC's 'airwaves'.

Whilst Coates' self-promotion with the BBC paid handsome dividends in obtaining performances of his music, the BBC occasionally, when they felt that a piece was not up to the 'right' standard, or not in their interests, would occasionally desist its promotion. A case in point was the discussion over the *Salute the Soldier* March, expressing the BBC's viewpoint in an internal memorandum, Kenneth Wright stated, 'I think we feel that this [*Salute the Soldier*] is worse than it probably is because it is so far behind Eric Coates's best Marches. As everyone agrees about it I don't think it likely that any dance band will wish to press it once the "Salute the Soldier" campaign has passed.'<sup>114</sup>

The BBC gave his music an unprecedented level of exposure, on occasions a peculiar level, despite the Corporation's, at times, discernable and repugnance towards to light music. Yet fundamental to their relationship was a symbiosis – the BBC required

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<sup>110</sup> 22/10/1943 Edwin Goodman to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>111</sup> Though, Bliss mentions, the Director of Religious Broadcasting confines himself '... to more definitely ecclesiastical music...' (26/10/1943 Arthur Bliss to Edwin Goodman. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948).

<sup>112</sup> 26/10/1943 Arthur Bliss to Edwin Goodman. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> 07/04/1944 Kenneth Wright to Assistant Director of Music (Programmes). *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

Coates and his music and in turn, he craved the exposure the BBC could offer him. Coates and his music were an attractive package for the Music Department; his music was ideal for broadcasting, not only because of its quality but also because of its short duration, useful for filling any gaps between programmes; during the War, his music was frequently used on the Forces Programmes in this way. In 1946, one press article on him in 1946 speculated that, on average, the BBC played his music fifty times a week.<sup>115</sup> In short, his music was essential for the Corporation – especially his new works either specifically or not specifically written for the BBC – to form part of the regular broadcasting schedules. Coates' music slotted with ease into the BBC's schedules of live concerts, studio concerts, record recitals (a staple of the BBC stations) and as 'fillers' in the broadcasting schedule.

Such was the importance of Coates that in July 1937 he was invited to conduct the BBC Television Orchestra on the infant Television Service.<sup>116</sup> Whilst the Television Service had only a limited range around London, the prestige was probably a major factor in Coates' acceptance of the engagement – he was never invited to conduct a broadcast on television again, though he occasionally appeared on post-war television.

The BBC was also loyal to him and his music even if it was not in their best interests. In 1929, he had written to P.J. Tillet to ask if *Cinderella* could be included in the Christmas schedules.<sup>117</sup> Unfortunately, the Phantasy could not be slotted in and the BBC invited him to conduct the work on 28 January 1930 as a consolation.<sup>118</sup> On the 26 January he wrote to the Corporation to cancel the broadcast; *Cinderella* had been used in a film and the directors of the film company were anxious that music should not be heard until after the film's release, even though the phantasy's first performance had occurred

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<sup>115</sup> June 1946 *John Bull* 'The Private Views of Eric Coates'

<sup>116</sup> See Appendix 1 for details. Coates was not the only light composer to broadcast on BBC Television, Billy Mayerl took part in a programme on 12/02/1938.

<sup>117</sup> 17/12/1929 P.J. Tillet to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>118</sup> 14/01/1930 BBC Contract. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

the previous year and it was actively establishing itself within the repertoire.<sup>119</sup> Given this debacle, it is perhaps surprising that the BBC invited him to broadcast again after this confusion. The BBC's promotion of Coates' music, even when not necessarily in its interest, applied to certain pieces, most notably with *Salute the Soldier* March which the BBC agreed to help promote during the 'Salute the Soldier Campaign' of 1944 to boast the royalties which Coates could donate to the Campaign.

Above all, the BBC required Coates to broadcast his more popular compositions regularly with BBC ensembles. Shortly after the formation of the BBC Symphony Orchestra and its various subsections, an internal memorandum was circulated by Kenneth Wright to limit the number of guest conductors allowed to conduct the BBC Orchestra:

Our engagements for outside conductors are fewer this season on two grounds; one, the decision to keep the orchestra in fewer hands as far as possible; two, economy. I should like to have definite instructions to guide me in fixing programmes for the remainder of the working season...<sup>120</sup>

Subsequently Coates was one of the few guest conductors the BBC allowed to conduct its ensembles. The list included such distinguished luminaries as: Henry Wood, Constant Lambert, Geoffrey Toye, Landon Ronald and Julius Harrison; both Coates and Montague Phillips were allowed to conduct light works only.<sup>121</sup> This is testament not only of how much the BBC rated Coates' conducting, but also of the prestige and probable higher listening figures for a broadcast concert of his music conducted by the composer.

The exposure that the BBC gave to light music was also mirrored in the value that they attached to Coates' music. This was seen in a number of ways, predominately with the frequent exploitation of his works as signature tunes. Perhaps the most bizarre

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<sup>119</sup> 26/01/1930 Eric Coates to P.J. Tillet. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>120</sup> 20/11/1931 Kenneth Wright to Adrian Boult. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* The BBC seems only to have had faith in Phillips as a light music composer and wished to programme only Montague Phillips' lighter works; they seemed to believe he was only a light composer.

avenue that the BBC gave to him was to include his music in the 1952 Cheltenham Festival; a Festival which today is now equated with 'highbrow', contemporary music. The BBC decided to include a broadcast by the Midland Light Orchestra conducted by Coates, including the first performance of his *Unknown Singer*, the Hallé Orchestra under John Barbirolli also performed Coates' *The Three Elizabeths* Suite within the Festival. In addition, the BBC invited Coates to record a short advertisement feature for the General Overseas Programme.<sup>122</sup> The reaction to the BBC's inclusion of light music within the Festival was quite forceful and as a result, light music was never included in such a concentration again, if at all. He recalled that he '...roused the wrath of the critics by employing a tenor saxophone (I drew a veil over what they said about "The Three Elizabeths")'.<sup>123</sup>

Two years later, he was invited to conduct his *Saxo-Rhapsody* in the Diamond Jubilee Season of the Promenade Concerts, bringing a largely forgotten work to a new, young audience.<sup>124</sup> This was followed two years later by the belated Promenade premiere of his *Four Centuries* Suite<sup>125</sup> which in itself was quite bizarre, especially in light of the critical comments it had attracted in internal memoranda from Kenneth Wright and Arthur Bliss in 1941 and 1943.<sup>126</sup> Austin Coates remembered:

At the Promenade Concerts of 1956 (a few days before his seventieth birthday) he conducted his suite *Four Centuries*. The last movement marked 'Twentieth Century: Rhythm' is his last musical statement in syncopated idiom, the syncopation of the early '20s as he knew it and loved it. That night, he had an astonishing ovation, two in fact, because the movement had to be repeated. It was a Saturday night and the audience were mainly young. They were with him, as young audiences were with him when he himself was young. In the 1920s the newspapers used to call him 'the Peter Pan of Music' because he never seemed to grow older. When he was seventy you saw it was quite true; he was everlastingly young in character.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> 16/06/1952 Marjorie Pratt to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>123</sup> Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements*, 585. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box M127.

<sup>124</sup> See Appendices 1 and 3.

<sup>125</sup> 18/08/1956 BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Eric Coates.

<sup>126</sup> Undated, December 1941 Kenneth Wright to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942 & 01/02/1943 Kenneth Wright to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>127</sup> 26/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. *GB-Lbl* National Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA 0339. This account is slightly at odds with the account he related to Ian Lacey where Austin

He was no doubt pleased that this work received such prestigious exposure. This level of exposure by the BBC also applied to two of Coates' foreign tours after the War, when BBC officials arranged several concerts for him to conduct, first in Buenos Aires on his 1948 trip when he was acting as a plenipotentiary for the PRS at the International Congress of Composers and Authors and, second in 1955 in Copenhagen. Frank Wade, of the Light Music Department, was instrumental in arranging a large-scale concert of his Coates' music the Danish capital:

I hope I said the right things in Copenhagen. In the first place, Friday, October 7th is agreed. They would like 8.00 – 9.30 p.m. with a 15 minute interval in the middle leaving 75 minutes of actual playing time with a symphony orchestra of 96.

Those are their gestures to you but they are not giving way on the programme. In fact, they are making the bargain that, with the reduced timing, they would like all your own music, please, and particularly the Saxophone Rhapsody [*sic.*]. So, would you now kindly get in touch with Vagn Kappel – and I hope for all our sakes you feel like girding your loins!<sup>128</sup>

Coates was no doubt pleased that the BBC at arranging this extravaganza of his music for him, since he gained some international prestige from the performances.

Aside from the levels of exposure the BBC gave Coates' music, they were equally enthusiastic to promote his autobiography, *Suite in Four Movements*, which he had completed in August 1952. Hubert Clifford was only too pleased to assist in the production of a biographical programme to coincide with the launch of his book.<sup>129</sup> However, for the launch, the idea foundered and the book was duly published without any 'publicity' feature on the part of the BBC, Coates wrote to Clifford in November 1953:

I have just heard from Heinemann's that there is a possibility of the BBC giving four half-hour gramophone broadcasts of my music before Christmas under the title of

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Coates' remembers the orchestra giving a poor account of the finale the first time (Lace, Ian. 'Foreword.' In *Suite in Four Movements*, Eric Coates, iv-x. London: Thames, 1986, v-vi).

<sup>128</sup> 26/08/1955 Frank Wade to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>129</sup> 24/08/1953 Hubert Clifford to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN MUSIC. If this is so and the idea materialises I should be so glad if, nearer the time, you would get in touch with me as I think I might be helpful over the general layout. And speaking of autobiographies – I know you will be interested to hear that my SUITE IN FOUR MOVEMENTS has had wonderful press notices and that the First Edition was practically disposed of in three days.<sup>130</sup>

However, in December the BBC broadcast four programmes, presented by Stephen Williams and with spoken contributions by Coates, about his life and music corresponding to his autobiography.<sup>131</sup> Chappell also joined in the promotion of the book and the BBC programmes with a feature on him in the window of their Bond Street shop.<sup>132</sup>

The BBC were also keen to obtain first performances of his music whenever they could such as *The Enchanted Garden*, *Four Centuries* and *The Three Elizabeths* despite the difficulties and extra costs due to their respective needs. The Corporation also realised the popular value of Coates' music and were frequently keen to invite him to write new works such as: a suite based around the Robin Hood legend,<sup>133</sup> a piece based on familiar Christmas carols,<sup>134</sup> a rhapsody for piano and orchestra,<sup>135</sup> an overture,<sup>136</sup> or a test piece for brass band.<sup>137</sup> None of these was composed, although any of these would have been a valuable addition to his slender oeuvre. The BBC also invited Coates to compose works especially for them. He never wished to be commissioned in the formal sense as he wished to retain the rights of the work himself (the BBC had initially been put off

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<sup>130</sup> 01/11/1953 Eric Coates to Hubert Clifford. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>131</sup> 21/12/1953 – 24/12/1953 'Eric Coates Remembers', BBC Light Programme. Each programme was half-an-hour, with a five-minute pre-recorded talk by Coates.

<sup>132</sup> Coates was impressed with Chappell's effort and took a photograph and placed it in Scrapbook 4. *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>133</sup> 18/04/1935 Foster Clark to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>134</sup> 14/10/1937 Kenneth Wright to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

<sup>135</sup> 03/04/1949 Herbert Murrill to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>136</sup> 17/12/1953 Eric Coates to Hubert Clifford. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957. Coates made several sketches for an overture, probably from this period, perhaps as a follow-up to his successful overture *The Merry-makers*. *GB-Lcm* Eric Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>137</sup> 26/09/1955 Eric Coates to Patrick Mahony. *GB-Lcm* Eric Coates Archive, box 186. He had conducted and adjudicated at a brass festival at Henley at the BBC's behest in 1955 (this was broadcast).

commissioning works).<sup>138</sup> Apart from *London Calling* and the *Television March*, where the BBC had specifically invited him to compose signature tunes, the Corporation were responsible for the invitation to compose numerous pieces including *The Three Men Suite*, *A Song of Loyalty* and *Eighth Army March*.

Besides inviting Coates to write works for them, the Corporation occasionally sought his advice to adapt his music for their own needs. In 1948, he wrote a brief fanfare based on themes from his *Television March* for the Corporation to use instead of the complete march to open the service.<sup>139</sup> In addition, John Lowe of the BBC's Midland Region asked Coates if he would be prepared to rewrite the opening introduction of 'At the Dance' from his *Summer Days Suite*, which was used by the Midland Television Service to introduce their Sunday Afternoon Concert.<sup>140</sup> Coates yielded to the request:

With regard to the eight bars you need as Introduction to AT THE DANCE from SUMMER DAYS I shall be sending you a suggestion which I hope will fit the bill. As a matter of fact it comes out at twelve bars and is taken from the last few bars of the movement itself. I cannot remember the orchestration, but I do know the Suite was written in the almost prehistoric days of Cornets in A!!! So I have substituted Trumpets in B flat as Cornets in A sounds so plebeian!<sup>141</sup>

Although the brief rewrite was not quite what the Midland Television Service required, they still adopted it rather than have someone else rearrange it.<sup>142</sup>

The BBC often tried to keep Coates content in addition to inviting him to compose pieces for them. In a broadcast with the BBC Midland Light Orchestra in 1950,

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<sup>138</sup> This had been due to various stumbling blocks with composers in 1926 and in 1930 with the rapid growth of Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* which started life as a BBC commission; 'the BBC's first commission from a British composer', for a 'small-scale' cantata). Initially, Walton, Lambert and Hely-Hutchinson were asked to write a cantata for broadcasting purposes – small chorus and orchestra of fifteen players. Walton's project grew and he was asked to provide another piece to fulfil the commission, but he never did. (Doctor: 1999, 157 & Kennedy, Michael. *A Portrait of Walton*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, 53-57).

<sup>139</sup> 15/01/1948 R.G. Walford to James Hartley. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates' Copyright file, December 1941-1962.

<sup>140</sup> 28/09/1956 John Lowe to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>141</sup> 10/10/1956 Eric Coates to John Lowe. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>142</sup> 10/10/1956 Eric Coates to John Lowe. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957. Pencil note by P.H. Craddy, producer of the series.

Coates was eager to include his *Saxo-Rhapsody* in the programme and asked for a soloist to be booked.<sup>143</sup> In addition he requested:

Regarding extras – could you let me have a 3rd and 4th horn and a 3rd trumpet and tuba (the two latter for Youth of Britain [*The Three Elizabeths Suite*] and Holborn [March]) and, if it would not cause a riot in the BBC and lead to possible bankruptcy, a few more strings would be most acceptable to compensate for the added weight of the horns and brass, unless the figures you have given me relate to desks and not to players!<sup>144</sup>

One genre that the BBC seemed keen to extract from Coates was a light opera for broadcasting purposes. Whilst he had attempted to write music for several productions in the 1920s (and there had been frequent speculation in the Press during the 1930s), nothing concrete had ever materialised.<sup>145</sup> In 1941, the suggestion for Coates to compose an opera came from the Controller of Programmes, Basil Nicholls.<sup>146</sup> The ever loyal Stanford Robinson was consulted and Reginald Thatcher replied to Nicholl's suggestion:

Coates has never written a light opera. He has had many tempting offers (Chappells many times, Drury Lane, etc.), but has always refused them. He has never seen a libretto that he was absolutely certain he could treat successfully, and until a book comes his way, there will be no attempt.

Stanford Robinson himself would welcome the idea of a commissioned opera by Coates, if the latter could be persuaded, and we would endorse this.<sup>147</sup>

The BBC also suggested Geoffrey Bridson who, then a member of BBC staff who had recently moved to London from Manchester, could provide a libretto to Coates' liking based on the former's play, *Aaron's Field*,<sup>148</sup> written in 1939 and published in 1943,

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<sup>143</sup> 20/08/1950 Eric Coates to John Lowe. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> 20/08/1937 *Radio Pictorial* 'His Melodies Never Die...' It is probable that Eric and Phyl were planning to write a musical around the 'Court Jester', which had been penned by Phyl, though it is undated, it was written at Chiltern Court which dates between 1930-1937. *GB-STHprivate*. No sketches appear to have survived for this production, if indeed it was ever started.

<sup>146</sup> 15/10/1941 Basil Nicholls to Reginald Thatcher. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>147</sup> 21/10/1941 Reginald Thatcher to Basil Nicholls. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>148</sup> 24/10/1941 Basil Nicholls to Reginald Thatcher. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

becoming a popular radio play during the 1940s.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, the BBC was prepared to pay Coates £150 to undertake the project with the BBC being allowed the first performance. The BBC would also pay a similar sum for a librettist if Bridson was not acceptable.<sup>150</sup> The project seems not to have come to fruition due to a prolonged bout of illness on Coates' part, though various memoranda kept the proposal alive until 1943, as Howgill noted:

This suggestion was revised recently and I have spoken to Eric Coates on the matter. He made it quite clear to me that he is not prepared to undertake a work of the magnitude of a light opera and the idea must therefore be abandoned. I have told Mr. Bridson, who was in mind for the provision of a libretto.<sup>151</sup>

Despite Coates' fastidiousness over a libretto there is no surviving evidence on his opinions of the venture. The BBC resurrected the proposal of a musical comedy in 1956 and invited him to join forces with R.C. Sherriff.<sup>152</sup> He was keen to get on with the proposal; however, his erratic health was again the major obstacle.<sup>153</sup> His views on the matter do not survive – he terminated a similar proposal with Eric Maschwitz in 1954 due to problems with his right hand, though, presumably the BBC was unaware of this.<sup>154</sup>

When he collaborated with his son Austin (who was to fashion the libretto) to write a musical comedy based around Lawrence Howard's *A Knight of Malta* in 1947-1948 the BBC was keen to obtain the rights to the first studio broadcast or outside broadcast of the musical from the theatre for the Home Service after reading about it in the *Sketch*

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<sup>149</sup> Miall, Leonard. '(Douglas) Geoffrey Bridson' In *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004: [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30851](http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30851).

<sup>150</sup> 05/12/1941 D.H. Clarke to Mr Burns. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942. If Coates chose to stay with Bridson, he would receive a £50 bonus in addition to his normal BBC salary.

<sup>151</sup> 13/05/1943 Richard Howgill to Copyright Director. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948. Eric Coates had had the idea for a musical based around Howard's 'Knight of Malta' for some years and was planning to collaborate with Lawrence Howard and Christopher Hassall, but alas the project foundered.

<sup>152</sup> 14/02/1956 Minutes of the Light Music Policy Committee. *GB-Rwac* Light Music Policy Meeting Minutes file 1, 1955-1957.

<sup>153</sup> 05/02/1956 & 12/02/1956. Minutes of the Light Music Policy Committee. *GB-Rwac* Light Music Policy Meeting Minutes file 1, 1955-1957.

<sup>154</sup> 24/02/1954 Eric Coates to Eric Maschwitz. *GB-Lcm* Coates' Archive, box 186. In addition to the Coates-Sherriff collaboration, Maschwitz was also invited to write an operetta with Ernest Tomlinson, though this too appears to have foundered. (12/02/1956. Minutes of the Light Music Policy Committee. *GB-Rwac* Light Music Policy Meeting Minutes file 1, 1955-1957.)

in 1947.<sup>155</sup> Later in 1948, the Corporation were still keen to obtain the broadcasting rights.<sup>156</sup> The BBC had, nevertheless, recognised that the work would probably have been a success with the public and would have been a great boast to their broadcasting schedules.

Aside from composition, the BBC required Coates in a more mundane fashion, for by the mid-1930s, he had, ostensibly, become the figurehead of British light music. The BBC valued his views and his prestige, though in the past they often disagreed with the former. In 1943, they invited him to write a report on the state of light music broadcasts, which he duly presented to the BBC on 22 May 1943;<sup>157</sup> at this time Spike Hughes wrote a report on dance music;<sup>158</sup> Rudolf Bing on studio opera;<sup>159</sup> and Herbert Howells on 'serious' music.<sup>160</sup> As Asa Briggs noted in his study of broadcasting, the BBC was keen to welcome criticism by an outside expert, but was always hesitant and pusillanimous when the time came to act upon external criticisms.<sup>161</sup> Coates' *Report* makes interesting reading as it is his artistic and aesthetic credo as a composer.<sup>162</sup> His major gripe was that light music was frequently preformed with inadequate numbers of strings or by small ensembles such as those run by Fred Hartley. He failed to grasp that many of these smaller ensembles were used in broadcasts for financial reasons.

After Coates's *Report on Light Music* had been submitted to the BBC's Board of Directors, the Directors believed that they needed a new light orchestra in addition to the Symphony Orchestra (which had now largely abandoned its divisions) and the Theatre

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<sup>155</sup> 02/01/1948 Mr. Perowne to Mr Goehr. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>156</sup> August 1948 Mr. Neben to Mr Perowne. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>157</sup> Coates, Eric. *Report on Light Music*. Presented to the BBC, 22/05/1943 *GB-Rwac* Music General Light Music file 1, 1939-1943 and *GB-STHprivate*. He was hoping to have the *Report* ready for the first week in May. (14/02/1943 Eric Coates to Richard Howgill. *GB-Rwac* Music General, Light Music file 1, 1939-1943).

<sup>158</sup> Briggs: 1970, 579. Hughes wrote his *Report* in the summer of 1943.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, 584.

<sup>160</sup> Briggs: 1979, 742.

<sup>161</sup> Briggs: 1970, 585.

<sup>162</sup> See Appendix 2.

Orchestra to complement its small light music combinations.<sup>163</sup> In his *Report* Coates had called for the BBC to fund two further light orchestras of forty-five players to prevent the BBC inviting outside orchestras to broadcast.<sup>164</sup> However, Bliss believed that the BBC could not afford another orchestra of forty-five players, especially during wartime.<sup>165</sup> Perhaps a result of his *Report* and the discussions about a new light music ensemble, the BBC Theatre Orchestra was augmented to fifty-seven players.

In his conclusions to the *Report*, Coates paints a very negative portrait of the BBC's reaction towards light music in that '...the public is being rapidly educated to believe that Light Music is of no value whatsoever.<sup>166</sup>' These views may have been clouded by the rather stormy meeting between Coates and Bliss early that month over his non-inclusion in the Promenade Concerts, after which Bliss felt duty bound to write to him and try to pacify him.<sup>167</sup> The Corporation did not take much heed of his stark warnings and it was not until later that decade that they began to take the genre of light music seriously. Coates had become depressed at the attitudes towards music on the outbreak of War, very much an extension and fortification of his views on musical snobbery which he frequently aired in the press during the mid-1930s. Writing to Kenneth Wright, he grumbled about these '...depressing times for an English composer,<sup>168</sup>' the negative entitled article in the *Radio Times* 'Is Light Music a Dying Art?'<sup>169</sup> and to the cellist Beatrice Harrison in 1942 he bemoaned the BBC's attitudes to both light music and his own work:

It is very difficult to these days to gain adequate performances of ones works on account of the BBC's policy of relegating the "lighter" types of music (how I detest the word light) to the tender mercies of a smaller orchestra. It does not matter how

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<sup>163</sup> 23/09/1943 Extract from Director's Board Meeting (16/09/1943). *GB-Rwac* Music General, Light Music file 1, 1939-1943.

<sup>164</sup> Coates: 1943, 7.

<sup>165</sup> 01/07/1943 Arthur Bliss to Basil Nichols. *GB-Rwac* Music General, Light Music file 1, 1939-1943.

<sup>166</sup> Coates: 1943, 15.

<sup>167</sup> 08/05/1943 Arthur Bliss to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948 & *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>168</sup> 20/10/1939 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

<sup>169</sup> c.1942 *Radio Times* 'Is Light Music a Dying Art?'

much time and thought is put into a work or how big the orchestration, if it is melodious it is practically always cut out of the programmes where it would receive really true presentation. So different to the old days before the BBC took over the “education” of the public and when one was invited to write works for the various Festivals about the country. I have to go abroad to-day to have my music played on the orchestra for which it was written. I remember before the war I was doing a tour of Scandinavia and Holland [November 1938] and practically always had an orchestra in the neighbourhood of from 75 to 80 players, and a rehearsal of from 6 to 9 hours for an hour’s broadcast, whereas here a forty-minute broadcast (if you are lucky in being given forty minutes, it is usually half-an-hour) gets anything from an hour to an hour-and-a-half’s rehearsal! The Vienna Symphony Orchestra and the Leipzig Symphony Orchestra (to mention two of many) frequently played my music before the war and only the other night I heard the Boston Symphony Orchestra give a magnificent performance of the “London Suite”!! Can you imagine the BBC Symphony Orchestra doing this at a Prom. or anywhere else? Please do not look on this letter in the nature of a “grouse” because I really have nothing to complain about – my music, I believe, is played more than anyone else’s to-day, and a tremendous amount of it is not “programmed”, being frequently used as filling-up between talks and for introducing various features.<sup>170</sup>

Quite why he had such a negative attitude towards the BBC’s policy on light music is unclear. He probably felt that the BBC were not taking light music seriously, which in essence they were not: light music was light music and should not be performed in the same programme as ‘serious’ music. During the War, ironically, he was receiving perhaps his greatest exposure and largest share of conducting engagements than he ever had from the Corporation. In addition, he had seen the adoption of a significant proportion of his works as signature tunes to the Corporation’s programmes. Nonetheless, during the period of 1936-1938, there had been a marked decline in the broadcasting time allotted to light music in spite of a wholesale increase in broadcast time by two-hundred hours.<sup>171</sup> By 1939, ‘serious’ music was accounting for twenty-six hours of broadcast time a week and light music for twenty-one.<sup>172</sup> Certainly Coates’ conclusions in his *Report* about the disappearance of the genuine composers of the school of light music were prophetic of

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<sup>170</sup> 17/08/1942 Eric Coates to Beatrice Harrison. *GB-Lcm* Eric Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>171</sup> Briggs, Asa. *The Golden Age of the Wireless*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965, 54 & Scannell and Cardiff: 1991, 240.

<sup>172</sup> Briggs: 1985, 183.

the decline in exposure of light music that was to pervade the 1960s and 1970s, though in defence of the Corporation, this was not solely as a result of their attitudes.<sup>173</sup>

Reactions within the Corporation were mixed; many welcomed the *Report on Light Music* and agreed with his pertinent comments on organists, military and brass bands. However, the BBC, in talking through Coates' *Report* at many levels, including Board-level, came to the conclusion that whilst there were many relevant and prudent points, it was flawed, due to his dismissal of small combinations. All who read the *Report* shied away from the strong conclusions of what he was later to call 'the death knell' sounding for light music.<sup>174</sup> Nevertheless, was it in the BBC's interests to re-establish the genre of light music? Was the genre becoming *démodé* by this stage, or did it ultimately serve the BBC's best interests in programme building and perhaps the *Report* by Coates was purely a front? After all, wartime was surely an atypical period to commission and, more importantly, to act upon such a *Report*? During the War, the BBC was drastically overspending on its budget while the Government kept the Corporation afloat by means of grants.<sup>175</sup> Despite this additional Government income, no-one within the BBC channelled any money into furthering the cause of light music. Coates was to raise the issue of the BBC's lack of emphasis on the true school of light music in his correspondence with the Director-General over the Promenade Concerts in 1944.<sup>176</sup>

Arthur Bliss concluded the *Report's* discussion most succinctly by dismissing what Coates believed light music to be and what the BBC considered it to be as two separate entities; furthermore, and perhaps more fundamentally to the argument, the root of the entire problem with light music was the lack of money.<sup>177</sup> With this, Coates' *Report* was shelved and, without due recognition of its author, forgotten. Wright, writing to Bliss in

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<sup>173</sup> Coates: 1943, 16.

<sup>174</sup> 21/05/1944 Eric Coates to William Haley. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948 and *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>175</sup> During 1940-1941, the BBC overspent by nearly two million pounds. (Briggs: 1970, 360).

<sup>176</sup> 21/05/1944 Eric Coates to William Haley & 12/06/1944 Eric Coates to William Haley. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948 and *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>177</sup> 01/07/1943 Arthur Bliss to Basil Nichols. *GB-Rwac* Music General, Light Music file 1, 1939-1943.

1944, admitted that Coates had never received a detailed written reply from the Corporation about his *Report*, adding: 'Not that he has a right to be told, but it seems a matter of courtesy to link it with this matter.'<sup>178</sup> For the BBC, the 'problems' of light music never dispersed, but remained just below the surface and Hubert Clifford was invited to write another report, *Industrial Report on the Light Music Output of the BBC January to June 1952*.<sup>179</sup> Although the BBC never fully took on board Coates' recommendations on light music, or acted on them (with the possible exception of permanently augmenting the BBC Theatre Orchestra, but this may well have been in hand before the submission of his *Report*), they ultimately desired his expertise within the field.

That BBC still valued Coates' status within the field of light music which was evident in 1953 when the Corporation were formulating a Reading Panel for light-music compositions submitted to the BBC. Coates was probably the first name on the list. Inviting him to join the panel in 1953, Clifford wrote,

We are proposing to institute a reading panel for light music compositions, and we are inviting half a dozen or so people of similar professional status and integrity to yourself, - to meet in groups of three for a maximum of two half days a month. The idea of having seven or eight members is to ensure we can always get three on any occasion. Naturally the names of those accepting would not be disclosed.

A nominal expenses fee of five guineas for a half day is payable, but the job will be very much a labour of love.

Knowing your interest in the future and welfare of light music generally I have no hesitation in approaching you and I would be very glad to hear if you are interested so that we can discuss the matter further.<sup>180</sup>

Though he was initially hesitant about joining such a panel, Coates nonetheless capitulated and went to several meetings.<sup>181</sup> Haydn Wood refused to serve on the Panel as he did not like the idea of turning down composer's work and Montague Phillips

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<sup>178</sup> 01/07/1944 Kenneth Wright to Basil Nichols. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>179</sup> *GB-Rwac* Music General, Light Music file 3b, 1949-1952.

<sup>180</sup> 05/11/1953 Hubert Clifford to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1953-1957.

<sup>181</sup> 08/11/1953 Eric Coates to Hubert Clifford & 13/11/1953 Hubert Clifford to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1953-1957.

resigned early in 1954 as he did not like the idea of censoring music.<sup>182</sup> The Panel seems to have been short-lived, lasting until 1955, at the latest, when all records concerning it disappear. However, it was yet another venture for which BBC required both Coates' endorsement and enthusiasm.

Aside from the mundane administrative tasks of light music, Coates was also regarded as a key figure for the BBC Light Music Festivals, either as a composer of a new work or (more frequently) as a guest conductor. It was important to the BBC that Coates approved of the concerts. Writing to Chambers after the 1949 Festival, Coates stated:

I am very pleased the Festival went off so well – it's a thing that has been wanted for a long time. You would be surprised if you could see the number of letters I receive every year from complete strangers asking me if I can do anything about getting the BBC to present the best in Light Music on the orchestras for which it was written – perhaps this is the beginning of things to come. Personally I should like to see our composers of genuine Light [*sic.*] Orchestral Music represented at such concerts as the Proms, and not being obliged to write a new work every time. There is plenty of good music in the Light Music repertoire, especially in this country. Well, we shall have to wait and see.<sup>183</sup>

Coates soon became an established figure at these Festivals. Writing to invite him to conduct at the 1955 Festival, Frank Wade stated: "This will be a grand occasion with, we hope, Princess Margaret present – only to be complete with you and your "London Suite".<sup>184</sup> In 1954, Coates tried to persuade John Barbirolli, with whom he had recently rekindled a friendship begun in the New Queen's Hall Orchestra in the 1910s, to conduct the opening concert of the 1954 Festival.

As you know I wrote to him [Barbirolli] on December 27th about a personal matter and mentioned the Light Programme Music Festival and the possibility of giving us his blessing by conducting the opening concert. It now seems that he is in touch with you regarding rehearsals so it looks as if before long his "blessing" will be a "fait accompli!" He had some very illuminating things to say about what he called "so-

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<sup>182</sup> 09/12/1953 Haydn Wood to Hubert Clifford & 13/02/1954 Montague Phillips to Hubert Clifford. *GB-Rwac* Light Music Reading Panel, 1953-1954.

<sup>183</sup> 11/04/49 Eric Coates to T.W. Chambers. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>184</sup> 18/03/1955 Frank Wade to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957. The following year, 1956, Coates wrote *Impressions of a Princess* dedicated to Princess Margaret for the Light Music Festival.

called light music and, worse of all, pretentious music” which showed what a good friend we have in him. So far, so good. We now keep our fingers crossed.<sup>185</sup>

However, the invitation came to nothing, though Coates, in his own way, had tried to raise the prestige of the event.

Whilst the BBC needed the services of Coates in the capacity of a light music composer and advocate, Coates required the BBC to promote his image and reputation as a composer of light music and kept his reputation alive within the country. The potential audiences that could listen to broadcasts of his music were enormous, as Table 3.8 demonstrates:

**Table 3.8 Licence Figures for the BBC 1926-1955.**<sup>186</sup>

Year	Radio Licences	Combined Licences	Percentage of Households with a Set
1926	2,178,573	n/a	Unknown
1930	4,330,735	n/a	64.4%
1939	9,022,666	n/a	73%
1950	11,819,190	343,882	Unknown
1955	9,414,224	4,503,766	Unknown

These figures alone are staggering, but if one takes into effect the number of people who were potentially able to listen to broadcasts at home (and there was much communal listening) the result is even more remarkable; the wireless was the first widespread domestic electric appliance.<sup>187</sup> Radio remained the dominant figure throughout Coates’ lifetime, though the abandonment of radio in favour of television had begun and the exposure he could achieve with a broadcast was quite phenomenal. Early in his BBC career, Coates had realised how important the BBC were to him; he was always a stickler

<sup>185</sup> 03/01/1954 Eric Coates to Hubert Clifford. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957. John Barbirolli and the Hallé had given the first performance of Coates’ *Rhodesia* March in Bulawayo in 1953 and the previous year had performed *The Three Elizabeths* at the Cheltenham Festival, much to the wrath of the critics.

<sup>186</sup> Assembled from Briggs: 1965, 257, Briggs: 1979, 240 & Briggs: 1985, 110. The post-war figures do not take into account radio licenses issued free of charge to those registered blind (62,506 in 1955). The combined television and radio licence commenced in 1947.

<sup>187</sup> Scannell and Cardiff: 1991, 362.

for a good performance of his pieces, often at a fast tempo – as borne out by his commercial recordings – and he gradually realised the superiority of the BBC Orchestras. Outside the BBC, he did conduct numerous municipal orchestras, but perhaps the consistently high standard of ensembles made him realise how important the BBC had become and by the 1930s they had become his preferred outlet for first performances of his work. The BBC orchestras also enabled him to try out his compositions before publication, as with *Lazy Night* in 1931, and make changes, he, or any member of the BBC staff, suggested.<sup>188</sup>

Outside London, Coates was especially eager to keep his reputation alive in his native Nottinghamshire. When he became a student at the RAM in 1906, he had ceased to live there and had adopted the city of London as his home; his 1931 suite *From Meadow to Mayfair* assimilated this transition.<sup>189</sup> However, his frequent broadcasts with the BBC Midland (Light) Orchestra, and their recurrent programming of his music, kept his reputation alive in his native region. He was pleased with the BBC's attention to his seventieth birthday, with a live concert broadcast from Nottingham's Albert Hall with the BBC Concert Orchestra. Writing to John Lowe after the concert Coates remarked:

...we all seemed to become cluttered-up with people, some of whom I had not seen for fifty years; one man in particular claimed to have travelled up and down in the train with me from Hucknall to Nottingham when I used it go into Nottingham for my music lessons fifty-eight years ago! Wasn't it dreadful?<sup>190</sup>

Coates knew that to obtain performances of his music he would have to send sets of performance material to the BBC rather than rely solely on the BBC's purchase of them. Early in Coates' career as a composer he had realised the value of such a venture

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<sup>188</sup> 15/07/1931 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>189</sup> Coates, Eric. *Suite in Four Movements*. London: Heinemann, 1953, 217.

<sup>190</sup> 10/10/1956 Eric Coates to John Lowe. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

and had given several of his youthful suites to the library of the LSO.<sup>191</sup> Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, he would often send, via Chappell, a complete set of his latest piece to the Corporation. It is not known whether he paid for the set, or if Chappell donated it as an act of promotion, but it was a method that ensured that the BBC had the wherewithal to perform all of his music. This had a ‘knock-on effect’, as orchestral leaders would hear his music, order copies and perform his work. The BBC Music Library, itself one of the largest collections of performing material in the world,<sup>192</sup> contains most of Coates’ orchestral works including his earliest miniatures from the 1910s.<sup>193</sup> Even in the 1950s, he occasionally sent the BBC sets of performing material, as with the slight hymn ‘In God’s Great Love Abiding’, published by Keith Prowse. The manager of Keith Prowse sent copies of the hymn to Wade at the BBC with the attached note: ‘I am enclosing the copies of the new hymn by Eric Coates. I am sending twenty-five copies for mixed voices and twenty-five for Unison with Descant. I am sure that from these two editions, the choir will be able to work out a really wonderful performance.’<sup>194</sup>

The BBC has made an enormous impact on music-making in Britain during the twentieth century; its ramifications for the composers of the twentieth century is phenomenal. For Eric Coates, the BBC, through consistent exposure on their airwaves, catapulted his music, and to a certain extent his own popular persona, to a new level that he would never otherwise have achieved. As symbiotic as their relationship was, though slightly tilted toward the BBC requiring Coates’ music, the BBC continually thwarted him on a number of issues surrounding the production of his music on the airwaves. Yet in many ways, particularly through his friendships with Stanford Robinson and Kenneth

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<sup>191</sup> Various programmes of the 1922 season of concerts by the LSO. The programmes list the donation of music by Coates (amongst others) to the LSO library. *GB-Lcm Performance Archive, Queen’s Hall 1922*.

<sup>192</sup> Glock, William. ‘Preface’ to *Song Catalogue, Volume I, Composers A-K*. BBC Sheet Music Library, vii. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1965.

<sup>193</sup> BBC Music Library. *Orchestral Music. Volume I Composers A-E*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1965, 367-371.

<sup>194</sup> 09/07/1956 P.A. Howgill (Keith Prowse Music Publishers) to Frank Wade. *GB-Rwac Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957*.

Wright in addition to the Corporation's continual thirst for performance of his music, either in live broadcasts, as gramophone records or signature tunes, the BBC was vital to Coates' supremacy in the sphere of light music.

## Chapter 4

### BBC II: Broadcasts, Relationships and Signature Tunes

*We'd like to put you in with the orchestra "C" or "E" at Christmas time with a nice, bright  
Ericcy programme, say 45 minutes' total time. How are you fixed? Would Christmas  
Day be out of the question, or December 27th, or the Sunday between?*

*It might include the ever welcome "Cinderella" or even "The Three Bears" too, [sic.] Have you  
got something even more Christmassy? Most composers have somewhere a sketch of  
a sort of Carols-and-Bells-Across-the-Snow overture, so where is yours?  
Being an original sort of fellow you may choose to call it Stocking  
Songs at Eventide or Snowballing Intermezzo  
from your bandit opera; whatever it is  
we hereby apply for the privilege of  
first performance.<sup>1</sup>*

Eric Coates' ascent to popularity as a composer of light music ran in tandem with the BBC's meteoric rise to prominence with the country. By 1934, the BBC had come to regard him 'as the leading exponent of light music.'<sup>2</sup> As such, he was able, in a very positive manner, to exploit the BBC in order to promote his music. He was able to do this not only because his music was of the highest calibre, but also because he had gained many friends within the Corporation who were prepared to assist him to obtain performances of his music, probably some of which he would not have been able to achieve otherwise. Coupled with this was a symbiotic requirement: the BBC had a crucial need for Coates' music and his status, and Coates for the support, exposure and support which the BBC was able to offer him. Probably the greatest assistance that the BBC could provide him with, excepting the advice from Stanford Robinson, was the adoption of his music as signature tunes and call-signs; from this his music was not only wedded to the BBC, but etched into the hearts of generations of British society. For many, even today, nearly fifty years after his death, his name is indelibly linked with the BBC of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

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<sup>1</sup> 14/10/1937 Kenneth Wright to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

<sup>2</sup> 28/02/1934 Kenneth Wright to W.W. Thompson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

Coates' music occupied a pivotal position within the BBC's output and was comprehensively performed by most of the BBC's orchestras in their broadcasts. It was also used to fill apertures between programmes when required, probably because of its brevity, though it was seldom credited in the *Radio Times*.<sup>3</sup> In a 1935 interview, he commented: 'I can't keep pace with the broadcasts of my own works ... as so many are played on the air. I often make a date with myself to stay in and listen, but I usually remember to tune in just as the last notes are coming through...'<sup>4</sup> Throughout his life he was a recurrent broadcaster for the BBC usually conducting, on average, at least two full programmes of his music with the BBC's London orchestras annually. He also made many broadcasts with the BBC Midland Orchestra, and after its formation, the BBC Midland Light Orchestra, perchance because he was a child of the Midlands. He rarely broadcast with regional ensembles (the only exceptions are BBC Northern Ireland Orchestra (1936) BBC Northern Orchestra (1941)), but made several broadcasts and recordings for the BBC Transcription Service with outside ensembles (such as Charles William's Orchestra and the London Light Orchestra). He also made several early appearances with the BBC Dance Orchestra in 1928, then a very popular ensemble. With all this frequent exposure on the airwaves, his music became widely known throughout the country relatively quickly. On several occasions, he shared programmes with other light music composer-conductors such as a joint broadcast with Haydn Wood in 1937 and in 1939 with a whole conglomerate of light composers.<sup>5</sup> However, the majority of his broadcasts were either full programmes conducted by himself or as the only guest-conductor in a broadcast (with the major exception of the BBC's Light Music Festivals). He broadcast on almost all of the BBC's national stations and frequently on the regional London station, though, in later life, he never conducted on the Third Programme.

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<sup>3</sup> 17/08/1942 Eric Coates to Beatrice Harrison. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>4</sup> 06/12/1935 *Radio Pictorial* 'When Stars Tune In.'

<sup>5</sup> 13/05/1937 & 11/02/1939. See Appendix 1 for more details.

However, today, signature tunes apart, if his music appears anywhere it is on the Third Programme's successor, Radio 3.

The earliest traced broadcast of Coates for the BBC as a conductor occurred on 26 February 1925 in a joint broadcast with Percy Fletcher,<sup>6</sup> though his music (in particular his songs) had featured in earlier programmes. He was probably one of the first composer-conductors – outside the BBC staff – to be invited to conduct a programme of their music 'on the air.' There is no clear reason why the BBC favoured 'Coates the conductor', apart from the fact that he was an excellent executant of his own music, as his recorded legacy testifies.<sup>7</sup> In 1931, the BBC laid down stringent guidelines concerning its policy regarding guest-conductors and its orchestras and Coates was one of the few guest-conductors allowed to conduct though only in his own music.<sup>8</sup>

Without exception, all of his broadcasts for the BBC were exclusively of his own work (he never seems to have conducted anyone else's music). His programmes were always mixtures of his new compositions, old favourites and several songs, usually, though not exclusively, with piano accompaniment; he always took great pains over his programme building and tried to include a balanced programme which included a healthy cross-section of his own canon. He often tried to include his less popular works or movements of his ostracized suites whenever he could; he frequently conducted the 'Eastern Dance' (*Four Ways Suite*) and 'Dance of the Orange Blossom' (*Jester at the Wedding*). Also, he conducted the *Saxo-Rhapsody* with several different soloists and was eager to programme it whenever he could. His frequent broadcasts often drew attention to the fact that *The Merry-makers* was his only overture, and as excellent as it is, another overture would have been of use to open his concerts, though he had other pieces that he often used.

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<sup>6</sup> The BBC's records of Eric Coates only began in 1928, he may well have made earlier broadcasts.

<sup>7</sup> Though Kenneth Wright maintained Haydn Wood to be a better conductor than Coates. (27/10/1943 Kenneth Wright to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 3a.)

<sup>8</sup> 20/11/1931 Kenneth Wright to Adrian Boult. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

By the start of the War, his programmes rarely featured his songs (particularly in his overseas transmissions). The BBC were often enthusiastic to place several songs within his broadcasts despite the fact that the ballad (which he was skilled at writing) was perceived by many to be *démodé*. The songs not only broke up the programme but also showed another facet of his talent to the listeners, many of whom may well have sung several of his songs whilst they were in vogue. In fact, he never regarded himself as a song-composer (he termed song-writing ‘as a limited form of expression’)<sup>9</sup> though he welcomed the exposure that the broadcasts of song brought. In his early broadcasts, he often accompanied the singer himself, which was probably one of the few times he played an instrument in public since his forced retirement from the New Queen’s Hall Orchestra in 1918. In 1929, 2LO broadcast an entire programme of songs and violin and piano pieces accompanied by the composer.<sup>10</sup> Whilst his piano-playing must have been of broadcasting standard, he never relished accompanying and, post-1931, either a staff accompanist or the orchestra accompanied the singer (though in 1933 the Corporation still encouraged him to accompany the singer himself,<sup>11</sup> and in 1942 the matter was again discussed).<sup>12</sup> In the 1930s the BBC premiered several of his valedictory attempts in the genre and gave them, perchance, a greater outlet than they would have otherwise had at this juncture in the history of the ballads. Appendix 1, section H gives the variety and breadth of broadcasts he made for the BBC.

It was not until 1931 that the BBC were allowed to premiere an orchestral work by Eric Coates – the valse romantique *Lazy Night*<sup>13</sup> – and from this date the BBC were repeatedly entrusted with many first performances, especially of the more noteworthy extended works including *London Suite*, *The Three Men Suite* and *The Enchanted Garden*. He

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<sup>9</sup> Coates, Eric. *Suite in Four Movements*. London: Heinemann, 1953, 183.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 1 for details.

<sup>11</sup> 21/08/1933 Leslie Woodgate to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>12</sup> 23/01/1942 Norman Fraser to Arthur Wynn. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>13</sup> Premiered on 10/08/1931, BBC Orchestra conducted by the composer.

surely endowed the BBC with these important premieres because he knew that they would be fine performances and likely to add ever-increasing credibility to his reputation as a composer and to be heard by an audience greater than in a concert hall. He was also glad for a successful first performance which he often conducted himself, either in complete programmes devoted to his music, such as *The Three Men Suite* or as a guest-conductor in a programme, as with *The Three Elizabeths* in a 'Music for All' broadcast. Nonetheless, he was happy for several BBC conductors (especially Stanford Robinson) to conduct first performances of his work. In 1942, he was keen to conduct the premiere of *The Four Centuries Suite* himself, but Robinson advised him otherwise: 'You know Eric... it's good for you to hear what your work sounds like over the radio in someone else's hands, and then you'll know how it goes!'<sup>14</sup> Coates duly remained at home and listened to the first performance over the radio, though he had invited a number of friends to the studio for the Suite's premiere.<sup>15</sup>

During the War, as the BBC Theatre Orchestra was evacuated to Evesham and the Music Department administration to Bedford, Coates frequently travelled about the country to conduct studio broadcasts of his music wherever the ensembles were stationed. Furthermore, he made numerous recordings and broadcasts on the Forces Programme and also for the BBC's Latin-American Service. This enabled his music to reach a new audience, as before the War he had broadcast exclusively on the home services and once from Belfast in 1936. In the post-war world, Coates' broadcasts with the BBC rarely changed; he still continued to give several studio broadcasts per year, despite prolonged bouts of ill health; his programmes still featured the same mixture of his old and new music including several of his popular pre-war songs.

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<sup>14</sup> Coates: 1953, 239.

<sup>15</sup> 22/07/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942. Coates may well have been unwell for the work's premiere.

From 1954, Coates was never invited to conduct a comprehensive transmission of his own music, nor did he try to solicit an invitation to conduct. Certainly his health was not in a robust state during the 1950s, though he would have no doubt enjoyed conducting a full programme of his music. Nevertheless, he was frequently invited to be a guest-conductor in many broadcasts throughout the 1950s, including the BBC's Light Music Festivals. The BBC did make quite an effort over his seventieth-birthday celebrations organising a special concert in Nottingham's Albert Hall with the BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Stanford Robinson; he was invited to conduct three items, though a month after the his birthday. Quite why the BBC phased out complete programmes of Coates' music conducted by the composer is unclear.

Whilst invitations for Coates to conduct programmes of his own music were declining, a new avenue was opening up to him – the interview. After the War, he was seen as the figurehead of light music, and, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, he contributed frequently to interviews on the radio; perhaps his most auspicious encounter was in 1951, his longest interview, as castaway number ninety-two on Roy Plomely's 'Desert Island Discs' (for which *By the Sleepy Lagoon* was used as the signature tune).<sup>16</sup> He never felt comfortable being interviewed on the radio, even when scripted, and always tried to avoid speaking in public wherever and whenever possible.<sup>17</sup> In concerts, if he spoke to the audience, he had a few notes prepared on a card in his jacket pocket.<sup>18</sup> In 1934 he was required to introduce his new *London Bridge* March on 'In Town Tonight' (which was simultaneously recorded by Pathe News) and he appears to have been petrified speaking a laconic introduction of fifteen seconds, but appears tranquil and

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<sup>16</sup> 20/06/1951 Eric Coates In 'Desert Island Discs,' broadcast, BBC Light Programme. *GB-Rwac* S133/18/7 Special Collections Plomley, Roy 'Desert Island Discs.' Scripts 91-109. Plomley introduced Coates, 'On our desert island this evening is a man whose music has been on the island since the beginning of the series.' (Ibid.).

<sup>17</sup> 09/07/1941 Eric Coates to Leslie Bailey. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>18</sup> A small card with notes on survives at *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

reassured conducting the orchestra in front of the cameras.<sup>19</sup> Usually, he refused any invitation to speak before the microphones. However, in 1936 he was invited, and accepted, to deliver a brief talk (scripted by the BBC, though Coates was free to add his own lines should he so wish) on his interest in ‘rhythmic’ music.<sup>20</sup> In 1941, the BBC made a large feature programme of his music and wished him to be involved. He initially agreed to appear, but later changed his mind as: ‘...talking “on the air” is not my “rayon” and always causes me much anxiety, and effort of preparing myself to the “ordeal” interferes too much with my work.’<sup>21</sup> From this juncture he ceased to have any input, the broadcast took place with Phyl in scripted conversation with Stephen Williams and Hyam Greenbaun taking Coates’ place conducting. He was pleased with the programme and wrote to Stanford Robinson after the broadcast: ‘Did you hear his allusion to my celebrated shawl? As a matter of fact the picture he drew was absolutely correct – we were in the drawing-room and I was wearing the shawl.’<sup>22</sup>

After the War, Coates seems to have become less inhibited, giving several extended interviews; he was interviewed alongside Sid Field and Kenneth Horne in 1948 for the one-hundredth edition of ‘Around and About’ and ‘Desert Island Discs’ with Roy Plomley in 1951.<sup>23</sup> By this juncture, he had largely been accepted into ‘the establishment’ of composers (particularly as he was still on the Board of Directors of the PRS and well-known to the music profession) and during the last decade of his life the BBC invited

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<sup>19</sup> 28/05/1934 A Camera Interview With Eric Coates – The Famous Composer and Conductor. [www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com).

<sup>20</sup> 31/03/1936 BBC Contract & 16/04/1936 Charles Brewer to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

<sup>21</sup> 09/07/1941 Eric Coates to Leslie Bailey. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>22</sup> 02/03/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942 & Coates: 1953, 241-242. Writing in 1952, Coates was still suitably impressed with the broadcast to warrant its inclusion in his autobiography, though he remembers he was stricken with a nasty bout of bronchitis. The celebrated shawl was known as his ‘life-preserver’ and he frequently seen sporting it during the winter of 1942-1943.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix 1 for details.

him to postulate on topics as diverse as the music of Edward German, Fred Weatherly and ‘my friends the composers’.<sup>24</sup>

Whilst audio interviews were never Coates’ *métier*, he appears to have enjoyed broadcasting with the BBC enormously and remembered fondly the BBC at Savoy Hill:

Dear old 2LO, Savoy Hill, 1922, in the days when you almost arranged your *own* appearances. It was quite a common occurrence to be asked by the director say at the close of a broadcast on Monday, whether you could come along and do another broadcast on the Thursday. It was all so delightfully informal and, now I come to think of it, was tremendous fun.<sup>25</sup>

On the occasions when infirmity thwarted his involvement he was often disgruntled. On being prevented by a serious bout of influenza in March 1940 from conducting the BBC Orchestra Section ‘C’ on the Forces Programme, he wrote to Kenneth Wright: ‘I was fed-up about my broadcast. I suppose there is no chance of a repeat some time in the future?’<sup>26</sup> How he felt when illness forced him to forgo the pleasure of conducting the premiere of *The Enchanted Garden* in 1938 is unrecorded; though humorously, he remarked to the *Daily Sketch*: ‘Clarence Raybould gallantly stepped into the breach and was greeted at rehearsal by signs of relief from members of the orchestra. “Thank heavens it’s not Coates,” one of them said. “Now we shan’t have to play so blinkin’ quick.”’<sup>27</sup>

Coates must have relished having whole programmes devoted to his music and conducting them himself. There seems to have been only two occasions when he was displeased with his broadcasts: the first in 1936, when he was upset at the behaviour of the brass section at rehearsals,<sup>28</sup> and the second, was the first broadcast performance of

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix 1 for details.

<sup>25</sup> Coates: 1953, 214.

<sup>26</sup> 09/04/1940 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942. Coates was supposed to conduct the premiere of *I Sing to You*.

<sup>27</sup> 02/12/1938 *Daily Sketch*.

<sup>28</sup> 12/02/1934 Music Executive to Assistant Music Director. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

Coates' march *Rhodesia* in an outside broadcast; he was mightily disappointed by the poor acoustic of the venue and retired, depressed, to the Savoy Hotel 'to try and forget it.'<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the pleasure he must surely have derived from his exposure with the Corporation, he reaped the slim financial benefits; not only would he receive a fee for conducting, but would also receive PRS fees from the programme. From 1928 until 1949, Coates appears to have been paid a standard fee of 15 guineas to conduct a studio broadcast of his music, though it was considerably reduced if he was to conduct a single work, as in a 1937 broadcast of the *Saxo-Rhapsody*.<sup>30</sup> During the war, he usually received travelling expenses down to Evesham or Bedford (this was to cover second-class train fare, though Coates, who disliked rail travel, preferred to drive). By 1949, his 'standard fee' had been raised to 20 guineas, and post-1953 he received the same fee for conducting a part-broadcast.

The emolument that he received seemed to be standard regardless of the network he broadcast on. During the 1920s, Coates broadcast exclusively on 2LO, the BBC's London station. In the late-1930s, with the BBC's continued development, he largely broadcast on the two stations: London Regional (the successor to 2LO) and the National. For him, there was never any dissimulation between the two stations, despite the fact that the National embraced the entire country, and, as such, Coates would have a more substantial audience and greater propagation of his music. Important premieres, such as *The Three Men Suite*, *Footlights* and *Song of Loyalty* were all given on the London Regional programme; *Dancing Nights* and *Lazy Night* were first performed in his London National broadcasts. Furthermore, he gave numerous broadcasts on the BBC Midland Programme, and also one from Belfast in March 1936. During the 1930s, his music,

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<sup>29</sup> 11/09/1953 Hubert Clifford to Eric Coates & 12/09/1953 Eric Coates to Hubert Clifford. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957. Though he had the broadcast recorded and subsequently agreed that the broadcast sounded better than it did in the studio.

<sup>30</sup> 26/11/1936 Arthur Wynn to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939. Coates received 8 guineas for the engagement. Initially he was invited to a full programme, but this was an error. (Ibid.)

through the variety of BBC networks, was achieving a wide dissemination; this was to increase in the years of the Second World War. With regular programmes on the worldwide Forces Programme, in addition to his broadcasts on the Home Service, his music was reaching a new worldwide audience, particularly aided by his broadcasts on the foreign language services. Augmented with this exposure was the establishment and growth of the BBC's Transcription Service. The Transcription Service made numerous recordings, usually of home broadcasts for either broadcasting overseas or to promote British music and British broadcasts abroad through the diplomatic channel. Coates usually received an additional fee if any of his concerts were recorded by the Transcription Service; occasionally he made recordings exclusively for the Service. Latterly, the Transcription Service is being seen as an important documenter of the BBC's legacy, as, prior to the 1960s, no significant attempts were made to preserve the BBC's output, though scripts were retained. His music was perceived on the 'continent' to be very British at this time (also helped by the patriotic *Eighth Army* March, written for the victory of Montgomery and the Eighth Army in 1942) especially due to the exposure given by the BBC. In a BBC interview in 1948, Coates remarked that his music was used as a code by the underground resistance movement and that the German propaganda machine frequently used his music to simulate British broadcasts.<sup>31</sup>

After the cessation of hostilities, he returned to broadcasting on the home services again, though the Transcription Service did make recordings of his broadcasts. This gave his music a wide, international dissemination, which it had not had before the War. He received frequent letters from soldiers on overseas postings praising his music which they had heard on the BBC's services and saying it kept their spirits buoyant.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Eric Coates in 26/08/1948 *Around and About*. BBC Midland Home Service. GB-Lbl National Sound Archive MT12048.

<sup>32</sup> 16/11/1943 Private E.J. Bird to Eric Coates & 08/08/1945 S.A. Churchill to Eric Coates. GB-L:m Coates Archive, box 186.

Only a minute proportion of Coates' performances with BBC orchestras survive in the BBC's archives (one survives only because of the Transcription Service) and it is almost impossible to judge the musical quality of performance that he received with orchestras in his broadcasts. Only a short studio broadcast and one outside broadcast, in which Coates' conducts the band of the Scots Guards in his new *Salute the Soldier* March from London's Trafalgar Square in 1944, survive.<sup>33</sup> Of his audio interviews, only a brief five-minute interview for the BBC Midland Home Service and a short, two-minute interview from the five-hundredth edition of 'In Town Tonight' are existent. The most substantial recording to remain is of a studio broadcast made with the BBC Theatre Orchestra in 1943, with whom he frequently broadcast, transmitted on the BBC's Overseas Service.<sup>34</sup> This was probably recorded onto Watt's Discs.<sup>35</sup>

His 1943 recording with the BBC Theatre Orchestra has frequent breaks, presumably corresponding to changes in Watt's disc. Therefore, it is quite unique that a complete studio broadcast of his music, conducted by the composer, has survived from this period, especially as there was a shortage of both the materials for, and maintenance of, the machines.<sup>36</sup> The importance of this record lies not only in hearing his interaction with his 'own' orchestra, but it is also documentary evidence to see if he altered his performance for broadcasting. It is unclear when this 1943 recording was 'aired' on the

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<sup>33</sup> 25/03/1944. *Eric Coates Conducts Salute the Soldier*. GB-Lb/National Sound Archive, 8257.

<sup>34</sup> The Broadcast was recorded on 26/08/1943 and survives in the BBC Archives. GB-Lb/National Sound Archive, CDA 6277 and T6277.

<sup>35</sup> Watt's Discs which were first used by the Corporation in 1933, as a method of recording radio broadcasts (the BBC's other recording devices were the Blattnerphone (Marconi-Stille) and Philips-Miller systems which were discontinued due to difficulties in supply); this was quite a cumbersome method (as most recording procedures developed by radio (and television) stations usually were) (Briggs: 1985, 260). The broadcast was recorded onto aluminium discs covered with a cellulose-nitrate lacquer; these discs could be used for instant playback up to twenty times after recording (Street, Sean. 'Recording Technologies and Strategies for British Radio Transmission Before the Second World War' in *Sound Journal*. [www.kent.ac.uk/sdfva/sound-journal/street002.txt](http://www.kent.ac.uk/sdfva/sound-journal/street002.txt), undated.); later, the discs were able to be edited (Briggs, Asa. *The Golden Age of the Wireless*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965, 100). There were two sizes of disc: a twelve-inch giving 4m30s of playback and thirteen-inch giving five-minutes (Street: Undated, 6). Before the War, only 200 Watt's discs were used a week, by 1943 this had risen to 5000 and post D-Day was at 7000 per week (Briggs, Asa. *The War of Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, 52).

<sup>36</sup> Briggs: 1970, 326.

BBC's network, but the total time is thirty-three minutes in which he conducts his *London Calling March*, *Footlights Valse* and the complete *Jester at the Wedding* – the only surviving recording of his interpretation of the unabridged ballet.<sup>37</sup> On the whole, the playing of the orchestra is of a high-quality, though it is not possible to gauge whether the standard of playing was indicative of the level of performance in his other transmissions.

Despite the small size of the orchestra (presumably the standard thirty-one players unless augmented for the broadcast)<sup>38</sup> there is never a feeling of a shortage of power, as in the opening fanfares between woodwind (and strings) against brass in the opening movement 'March: The Princess Arrives' (*The Jester at the Wedding*) demonstrates; perhaps this is a testament to the sound engineer. The strings play together enigmatically, especially in several awkward figurations in *The Jester at the Wedding*. The brass-playing is, on the whole, excellent, especially their articulation of their accompaniment at figure ten in *London Calling March* – which surely would have pleased the composer who was stickler for clear brass articulation. Overall, Coates holds the ensemble together successfully, and they pace his music competently; the change of tempo from figure 30 into the *allegro molto* coda at figure 31 in the *Footlights Valse* is more intoxicating than his 1940 commercial recording.<sup>39</sup> In 'Humoresque: The Jester', he ignores his marked *accelerando* at bar 7, choosing to *accelerando* from letter A to the marked *allargando* at bar 24 creating a different effect to that written. There is only one substandard passage in the broadcast – in the finale of *The Jester at the Wedding*. Four bars after E, the brass are not together in their cumbrous fanfare (a repeat of the opening, though this time with the addition of the first horn high in its tessitura). However, the orchestra continue undeterred and the final result is a fine musical performance.

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<sup>37</sup> It is perhaps a travesty that Coates only recorded the first and fourth movements in 1933, 1934 and the fourth (again) in 1948.

<sup>38</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/orchestras/co/about/history/shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/orchestras/co/about/history/shtml) In October 1943 it was decided that the Theatre Orchestra would be permanently augmented to 57 players.

<sup>39</sup> Columbia, DX 966 (CAX 8715-2).

Coates makes no concessions with the broadcast; he has chosen a thirty-three minute programme and as such fills the available time, without the need to make changes, cuts or rewrites in the music (as was so often the case in his commercial recordings). However, there is one idiosyncrasy which he adopted within his commercial recordings which passed over into his broadcasts. He commences the *Footlights* valse at figure 3, which makes for an abrupt start (he does exactly the same in his 1940 recording and in other vales, notably 'Mayfair' (*London Again Suite*)). This cut, rather than being a concession to reduce time, must have been the effect he desired, rather than his extended introduction. He was, especially towards the end of his life, paranoid about his music being too long, and would often cut pieces down, at times quite crudely. Overall, his performances on this broadcast (compared with pieces he recorded commercially) are slightly slower (by no more than between five and ten seconds) compared with his commercial performances, with the exception of *London Calling*, which is a few seconds faster.

The sole surviving recording demonstrates his propinquity to the BBC's orchestras. Since its formation in 1931, he had largely treated the BBC Theatre Orchestra as his own private ensemble; they had given many performances of his works under him and also under their permanent conductor, Stanford Robinson, in addition to premieres and workshops on his new pieces before publication. Coates' close friendship with Robinson (known to all as 'Robbie') was possibly the most musically rewarding and significant of all his friendships with BBC personnel and was perhaps his most important musical friendship. There was also a great number of BBC staff whom he befriended (particularly Kenneth Wright) and this was to prove of significant assistance not only to enable him to broadcast, but to place his music frequently in the public's hearing.

Coates' association with Stanford Robinson (1904-1984) was a long-lasting and enduring musical friendship. He held Robinson's conducting in high esteem: 'I've never

heard you give an inferior performance of anything!<sup>40</sup> After a performance of *The Three Bears* phantasy in 1940, Coates felt compelled to write to Robinson, ‘what a magnificent performance you gave of *The Three Bears* last Saturday. I have never heard anything like it. I have had ever so many people writing to me about it. It was absolutely “note-perfect”. How I wish one could always have ones music played so beautifully.’<sup>41</sup> After Coates’ death in 1957, Robinson was quoted in several obituaries believing:

Eric Coates will go down in musical history as one of the greatest composers of light music, in the company of Johan Strauss, Offenbach, Sullivan and Sir Edward German. He set a standard of musical invention which created an entirely new school of composing and invention.

With his distinctive marches he rivals Sousa and Sir Edward Elgar. His waltzes have an individual style which is unmistakeable. His imaginative pieces – such as the “*Three Bears*” – are supreme in this vein of music.<sup>42</sup>

Robbie not only ensured that Coates frequently broadcast, but offered him the chance to try out his latest compositions as well as being a useful vehicle for first performances with the Theatre Orchestra. In addition, he frequently offered advice on scoring and also later, in the production of Coates’ published full scores. For Coates, Robbie was of the greatest practical assistance, as he would perform a great deal of his music, usually highly effectively, in countless broadcasts.

Stanford Robinson joined the BBC very early in its history in 1924, conducting the Wireless Choir which formed the nucleus of what would become the numerous BBC choirs; he also acted as chorus master for the first British performance of Mahler’s Eighth Symphony, conducted by Henry Wood.<sup>43</sup> However, he soon became known as an orchestral conductor and as such would put the same effort into conducting a symphonic work as he would a musical comedy. He became conductor of the BBC Theatre

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<sup>40</sup> 09/10/1955 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>41</sup> 14/07/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>42</sup> 21/12/1957 *Nottingham Evening News*.

<sup>43</sup> 15/04/1930 at London’s Queen’s Hall.

Orchestra in 1932, and worked hard to increase the standard of performances of light music, including the unheard-of procedure of rehearsing light music.<sup>44</sup> In 1936, Robinson became Director of Music Productions; in 1946, he was in charge of Studio Opera and achieved many notable successes in that genre (the BBC Theatre Orchestra between 1949 and 1952 was designated the BBC Opera Orchestra).<sup>45</sup> In the 1950s, he was still employed on the BBC staff as ‘Conductor’ often assisting with the BBC Symphony Orchestra; numerous light-music composers have been grateful to him for performances of their work. It is for his work with the Theatre Orchestra and later the Concert Orchestra that Robinson is best remembered today.<sup>46</sup> Away from the BBC, Robinson, as a conductor, made countless commercial recordings and was also active as a composer and arranger.

It was, presumably, through the BBC that Coates and Robinson first met, though their first existing correspondence dates from 1932, over the possibility of Coates rescoring his ballet *Snowdrop* (written for a theatre ‘pit’ orchestra) for full orchestra.<sup>47</sup> Robinson had given at least three performances of the score since its composition in 1930 (other BBC staff conductors had also performed the work). These performances are a testament to Robinson’s early devotion to Coates’ music since the work was not published and the peculiarities of its scoring must have been an inconvenience in performance.<sup>48</sup> Robbie relentlessly pushed Coates to rescore the work for full orchestra, but the latter often procrastinated, complaining that he found it difficult to find the time or inclination to rescore the work even if there was a potential for performances of it.<sup>49</sup>

Coates eventually rewrote *Snowdrop* as *The Enchanted Garden* (he felt duty bound to find a

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<sup>44</sup> Brook, Donald. *Conductors’ Gallery*. London: Rockcliffe, 1945, 124.

<sup>45</sup> Briggs, Asa. *Sound and Vision*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, 740.

<sup>46</sup> Robinson’s brother Eric is also fondly remembered for his many appearances conducting and interviewing on television in the 1950s and 1960s.

<sup>47</sup> 07/10/1932 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>48</sup> As early as 1933, Robbie had ranked Coates’ work well above the light music of Haydn Wood, in his own separate category. (20/09/1933 Stanford Robinson to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 1.)

<sup>49</sup> 09/10/1932 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson & 10/04/1934 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

new 'scenario' for the ballet due to the release of Walt Disney's epic film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, released in December 1937, though Disney had started the animation process in 1934) probably only due to the persistence of Robbie (who unfortunately was not given the opportunity of the first performance).<sup>50</sup> He later believed that:

I remember it was Robbie who said it was entirely my own fault for not having done it sooner [Turning *Snowdrop* into *The Enchanted Garden*], although I am certain that this was a blessing in disguise, for the phenomenal success of Disney's portrayal of the delightful Fairy story would have been bound to have put my work in the shade.<sup>51</sup>

Stanford Robinson frequently raised the profile of Coates within the BBC, either in the production of new works or in furthering those already composed. In 1934, Robinson made an effort to persuade the BBC to include Coates in the 1934 season of the Promenade Concerts. Coates had written to the BBC to ask to be included, both Robinson and Wright, in addition, also fought to try and get a piece of Coates in the season. Robinson made quite an impassioned plea to Boult (Director of Music) for Coates to be involved,

I would like to suggest to you that, as the premier light music composer of the day, he might be similarly invited to conduct one of his works this year. There is no-one in the same class as Coates, and his inclusion need not be made as an excuse for anybody else.<sup>52</sup>

As such, Coates was duly invited to conduct *The Three Bears* phantasy on 8 September 1934 – his second appearance at the concerts since the work's premiere at the festival in 1926.

The BBC Theatre Orchestra almost became Coates' personal orchestra and from time to time he would use them to try out new works before their premiere. These open

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<sup>50</sup> Robinson, however, conducted probably the first recording of the work (Coates had plans to record the work but alas they came to nothing: *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 192) in a *Tribute to Eric Coates*. Pro Arte Orchestra, Stanford Robinson. Pye LP: CMP33004, 1958.

<sup>51</sup> Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements*: 456-457. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box M127

<sup>52</sup> 31/05/1934 Stanford Robinson to Adrian Boult. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

rehearsals enabled Coates to discuss elements of his orchestration with Robbie and try to make his works more practical to the orchestras; he always valued Robinson's recommendations on orchestration.<sup>53</sup> In March 1936, he used them to try out his *London Again* Suite which he had completed in the middle of February. After the play-through he wrote to Robinson to thank him for the Suite's rehearsal and for Robbie's suggestions on instrumentation: 'I have taken your advice and added the 'cellos in the middle portion of the second movement so I hope that it will come through all right now.'<sup>54</sup> They often discussed elements of detail, and Robbie offered him a great deal of practical advice. Writing to Coates after he had conducted a performance of *The Three Men* in 1935 – unequivocally from the manuscript parts – Robinson warned him that when the parts went to be engraved he must ensure that the cues should not be lost, because when the piece was performed by smaller ensembles, an abundance of detail would be lost.<sup>55</sup>

The run-thoroughs and broadcasts did not always bring good news, as Robinson wrote to Phyl (whilst Eric was ill):

I wanted him very much to re-score for our broadcast on February the 28th the accompaniment to his song "I Pitch My Lonely Caravan". He will remember we destroyed it after the last broadcast because it was so bad. Do you think there is any hope he will be well enough to have the parts copied?<sup>56</sup>

All these try-outs and nuggets of advice which emanated from these sessions were fundamental to ensure that his music was not only tuneful but practical for all ensembles.

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<sup>53</sup> This was not the only ensemble he did this with: 'And yet I can remember sitting by the conductor's desk (out of sight of the audience) in the orchestra pit of the Alhambra in Leicester Square (now the Odeon Cinema) while my friend John Ansell, at that time Musical Director, played over for me on the Alhambra Orchestra my latest M/SS during an afternoon performance.' (Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements*, 453, GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box M127).

<sup>54</sup> 26/03/1936 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. GB-Rwac Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939. Presumably Coates was referring to figure 6, where the 'Knightsbridge' theme is brought in the celli and clarinets (Ex. 4.2).

<sup>55</sup> 08/03/1935 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. GB-Rwac Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>56</sup> 07/02/1942 Stanford Robinson to Phyllis Coates. GB-Rwac Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942. Coates sent the score to Robbie thirteen days later: 'I hope you like the orchestration of the song, it was rather a difficult process for me as I could only do a page a day on the account of weakness and the awkward key made matters worse. I hope it will not sound too "growly"!!' (20/02/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson GB-Rwac Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.)

Robinson's greatest assistance to Coates' music was in the saga surrounding *The Four Centuries Suite*. The narrative surrounding its premiere is worth relating in full as it not only illustrates the *modus operandi* of the BBC (especially of Robinson) with regard to Coates in the production and promotion of his music, but also the potential power that the BBC powerfully wielded over his music during this period.

*The Four Centuries Suite* was composed whilst London was experiencing heavy air-raids, and the incessant noise of the relentless bombing triggered off the formulation of a suite which began to ferment in his brain. Writing in 1952, Coates remembered:

I remember the lovely summer morning in September 1940 when we returned to London, after having been away for a couple of days, to find the building in which we lived surrounded by police and ARP workers (six hundred or so residents had been turned out over night on account of four time bombs having fallen in the surrounding streets) and we were admitted through the cordon only on condition that we took ten minutes in which to collect the things which we required. On climbing 135 stairs to the top floor (the lifts had been put out of action) we found the flat bathed in sunshine, and this and the peace of my writing-room, added to the knowledge that there were four time-bombs outside in the road likely to go off at any moment, set up such a vibration in my head... that it was only with the greatest difficulty I was able to resist temptation to sit down at the piano and relieve the congestion. However, the presence of a burly policeman outside the main entrance who had permitted us ten minutes to collect our belongings put a brake on my composing outburst, and we reluctantly descended the 135 stairs. Phyl complete with some cherished undergarments under her arm and myself, empty-handed, cursing at having to leave behind the only two things I wanted to take away with me, the piano and the radiogram.<sup>57</sup>

Subsequently, the work was largely composed and orchestrated in a temporary house, in Amersham, where the milieu of the garden compelled him to complete the Suite,<sup>58</sup> and finished in November 1941, in his next temporary house in Hampstead. *The Four Centuries Suite* depicts the styles of dancing in each of the four centuries it portrays, starting with the seventeenth century and finishing up with a pastiche of the fugacious dance bands of the early twentieth century, then receding in favour of Big Bands. He was sufficiently pleased with the idea to write to Robbie in July 1941,

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<sup>57</sup> Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements*, 516-517, GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box M127

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 517.

...you may be interested to hear that I have started on a new work for orchestra which, if I can put it over satisfactorily, I hope may prove to be rather original. It wants very careful treatment. I will tell you more about this when it is properly on the way.<sup>59</sup>

Though the work was composed *in extremis*, the subject matter of the Suite is a complete antithesis to the turbulent times in which it was conceived. In January 1942, he sent the work to the BBC for their opinion regarding the first performance of the piece.<sup>60</sup> The BBC kept the work, whilst perusing it, for over two months causing problems with the work's publication by Boosey and Hawkes. The BBC eventually decided to give the Suite its first performance, with one of its orchestras, but immutably lingered over the date of the premiere from May 1942 until 21 July 1942 when it was deemed the correct time to perform the work.<sup>61</sup> The first performance was broadcast by the BBC Theatre Orchestra under Stanford Robinson on the Home Service. Coates was exceptionally pleased with Robbie's performance and wrote to him afterwards: 'Do you think that there would be a chance of you recording the Suite with the Gramophone Comp. with the orchestra you had yesterday?'<sup>62</sup> though no prospect of recording the work came to fruition.

After its premiere, Robinson offered a few thoughts about the string-writing within the second movement 'Pavane and Tambourin' which Coates gratefully accepted.<sup>63</sup> However, Robinson was particularly worried about the percussion-writing in the final movement – the dance band pastiche – and the results if played by an ordinary orchestral percussionist, especially one without any dance band experience. Writing after the second performance of the work in August 1942, Robinson stated:

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<sup>59</sup> 23/07/1941 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>60</sup> 07/01/1942 Eric Coates to Reginald Thatcher. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>61</sup> 04/03/1942 Eric Coates to Reginald Thatcher & 06/03/1942 Reginald Thatcher to Eric Coates & 22/05/1942 Stanford Robinson to Assistant Director of Music & 26/05/1942 Julian Herbage to Director of Programme Policy. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>62</sup> 22/07/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>63</sup> 22/08/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

Here is the drum part of the fourth movement of your new Suite as worked out by my drummer, Mr. Leslie Lewis, much as he played it last Thursday. It will present no difficulty to any experienced dance band drummer or even the average music-hall one, but it would probably be quite beyond the capacity of the ordinary "straight" drummer and even if he made a shot at it, it would be dangerously "corny". I suggest that you might have it printed as an extra part and put a note at the top that it should only be used with orchestras who have a drummer experienced in dance style. On the other hand, it could hardly be played at the same time as your original S.D. parts, though it could be played in conjunction with your original tympani, triangles and so on. What about adopting this new percussion part as it stands and composing a new tympani, plus triangle and vibraphone to go with it? This would be practical.

I throw out all the above suggestions for your consideration, and they are not by any means my last thoughts on the matter. I will gladly discuss it with you further. There are one or two other points I should like to raise in connection with the printing of the Suite. I think you will be well advised to print the bass clarinet part both in the full score and in the part, in the treble clef a ninth higher than it is to sound. I believe even the most expert bass clarinet players prefer the single clef, and many of the less experienced ones cannot read the bass clef and have to re-copy the part themselves. It was Wagner who started this bass clef nonsense, but it has never caught on.

I also respectfully suggest that you print all directions regarding tempo above the first violin part instead of under the double bass part, where it would be unnoticed by nine conductors out of ten. You only need to pick out a dozen full scores at random from the B.B.C. Music Library to see that whenever the printer has not put tempo marks above the first violin part, one or more conductors have inserted blue pencil. Many conductors, you may be shocked to hear, look at the first violin part most of the time they are conducting, and even those of us who do not, find that the tempo marks catch the eye there more readily than anywhere else. The same goes for rehearsal figures. May I suggest also that there should be a break in the bar lines between the bassoons and the horns, the bass trombones and saxes, the saxes and percussion, the percussion and the harp, and the harp and the strings. It makes a tremendous difference to the ease of reading. I only mention this because you do not do it in your manuscript scores, and engravers tend to copy rather too literally in matters of this sort.<sup>64</sup>

On the production of the full score in 1943 (the completion of the work was hampered due to production problems; sixty-four plates had to be discarded)<sup>65</sup> all of Robbie's advice had been followed and was subsequently adopted in the production of all of Coates' other full scores by Chappell in the 1940s and 1950s. However, the impasse of the percussion part to the final movement still remained a quandary, so Coates and

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<sup>64</sup> 07/09/1942 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942. Robinson's handwritten marginalia have been incorporated into the text.

<sup>65</sup> 28/01/1943 Kenneth Wright to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

messers Robinson and Lewis met for lunch to discuss the problems further.<sup>66</sup> The outcome of this meeting is unrecorded and it is not known whether Coates adopted any of the criticisms of his percussion part of the Suite as the manuscript score of the work is lost and no further correspondence survives. In the published score, the percussion parts are laid out well on two staves, though three percussionists are essential. There are several complex rhythms in the side drum and suspended small cymbal parts, both used to create the effect of a drum kit. It is my belief that Coates capitulated to Robinson's suggestions as they were the most practical option open to him and subsequently rewrote the parts along the lines of the part that Robbie and Lewis had sent to him. The whole conundrum was symptomatic of the advice and assistance which he received throughout his alliance with the BBC, enabling many subsequent performances of this work. *The Four Centuries Suite* was also scheduled for a performance in the following season of Promenade Concerts, but was later cancelled, leaving Coates feeling very bitter towards the Corporation and which led to a vitriolic and acrimonious assault to the Director-General over the Promenade Concerts in 1944.<sup>67</sup>

Aside from Stanford Robinson's assistance with the 'nuts and bolts' of his music he was a useful ally for Coates since, through his role as chief-conductor of the BBC Theatre Orchestra, Robbie could offer him encouragement and last-minute opportunities to present his new works. This informality is seen with the premiere of *Last Love* in 1939. Writing to Robinson, Coates asked if he would like the first performance of the short romance *Last Love* whenever he had any superfluous time in his schedules; the band parts had only just gone to be engraved and work was so small that it hardly warranted 'first performance treatment' in the *Radio Times*.<sup>68</sup> In the end Robinson invited the composer

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<sup>66</sup> 09/09/1942 Stanford Robinson's Secretary to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>67</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>68</sup> 28/11/1939 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

to conduct the work's premiere (for no fee),<sup>69</sup> however, Coates was unavailable to conduct due to an essential visit to the doctors.<sup>70</sup> Such was the level of trust between the two that Robinson duly gave the first performance without any input or instruction from Coates. After Coates had written his march, *Calling All Workers* in 1940, he decided that Robinson was the first, and only, person he would ask to conduct the premiere of what was to become a march *celebré*; he petitioned Robinson to keep the title a secret until the work had been published as he feared that the title would be usurped.<sup>71</sup> Robbie replied that, due to the BBC Theatre Orchestra holidays, the March could be premiered in a month's time: 'can you hold it up as long as that? If so, it is as good as in.'<sup>72</sup>

Robinson's frequent broadcasts with the BBC Theatre Orchestra required him to be on a constant lookout for new light music to broadcast with the orchestra. As a consequence of this, a good deal of Coates predominately 'forgotten' works were brought back from the doldrums and exposed to a new audience. The impetus to perform these 'forgotten' works came from a mutual need. In 1932, Robbie asked Coates to send him a worklist, so that he could perform a number of Coates' overlooked pieces.<sup>73</sup> Writing to Robinson in 1940, Coates tried to cajole him into playing two of his earliest suites: *Miniature* and *Summer Days*:

I think that an old favourite like this [*Summer Days* Suite] might be suitable for a "Music While You Work" Programme, especially the last movement! When I conducted the first performance of this during the last war, in 1918 [actually 1919], at a Promenade Concert (!) we had to repeat the Valse. (A Promenade Concert! How times have changed!) Also the Miniature Suite. Henry Wood conducted the first performance of this at another Promenade as long ago as 1911! and the "Scene de bal" movement held up proceedings for quite a long time and eventually had to be played again. Both of these Suites were literally "played to death" some years ago, and as they are not played very much to-day I think that they might be a "welcome revival."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> 05/12/1939 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

<sup>70</sup> 07/12/1939 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

<sup>71</sup> 30/07/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>72</sup> 01/08/1940 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>73</sup> 07/10/1932 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>74</sup> 05/07/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

A week later, Coates was equally unreserved in recommending his shunned 1925 phantasy, *The Selfish Giant* to Robbie:

Now after what you say about your spoiling me [in a 'magnificent performance' of *The Three Bears* the previous week] I hardly dare to say anymore. But I think I'll chance it! Have you ever come across "The Selfish Giant"? I wrote this many years ago for one of the Eastbourne Festivals. It is written around Oscar Wilde's story of that name. I think you may like it.

Well, my dear Robbie, thank you once more for championing my work as you do...<sup>75</sup>

He was always pleased with the exposure Robinson gave his music in the latter's programmes for the BBC. In November 1933, Robbie programmed 'Covent Garden' (*London Suite*) in a broadcast to America to '...see how it manages over the Atlantic.'<sup>76</sup> This was an important attempt to try to establish the reputation of Coates abroad, and particularly in America, where, from the 1940s, Coates' music became popular.

Coates repeatedly wrote to Robinson to say how much he had enjoyed performances of his music with the BBC Theatre Orchestra. On several rare occasions he was not afraid to speak his mind and criticize Robinson's performance, especially if he thought the tempi were sluggish. After hearing a performance of 'Rhythm' (*Four Ways Suite*) in 1942, he wrote: 'The only criticism I had, if you can call it a criticism is that if you open with "Rhythm" from "Four Ways" it ought to be a good deal quicker in order to waken listeners up. I think I have heard you do it faster before.'<sup>77</sup>

Coates' cordial alliance with Robinson was mirrored in his state of approbation for the BBC Theatre Orchestra. They gave frequent premieres of his music (though the BBC Orchestra Section C – the smaller light music section gave nearly as many first performances). The BBC Theatre Orchestra was initially created in 1931 as 'an auxiliary

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<sup>75</sup> 14/07/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>76</sup> 15/11/1933 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>77</sup> 14/03/1942. Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942. Robbie replied, in defence, that he had deliberately taken the movement at a foxtrot tempo as he believed the movement to work best at that tempo, rather than any quicker. (25/03/1942 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.)

to dramatic productions' initially with 24 players, later raised to 31 and then to 57.<sup>78</sup> The ensemble was then re-branded as the BBC Opera Orchestra and subsequently augmented to 63 players from the 57 of its previous incarnation. It was Robinson who insisted on the title of BBC Opera Orchestra, as this reduced the amount of light music the orchestra could perform, though there was a major need for a BBC Light Orchestra.<sup>79</sup> The ensemble became the BBC Concert Orchestra, reduced to 45 players and created in 1952 to be a 'light music orchestra in the highest sense of the term'.<sup>80</sup> Robinson joined the orchestra as conductor in 1932, a post he combined with the Head of Music Productions and maintained a relationship with the ensemble until the termination of his BBC career.

The BBC thought that Coates' music was ideally suited to the BBC Theatre Orchestra (despite the fact the orchestra was ostensibly the musical vehicle of the Variety Department).<sup>81</sup> In spite of their small number of players, the orchestra was versatile and gave full justice to Coates' music. He was so pleased with their performances and their dedication to his music that, after they gave the first performance of his *The Three Men* Suite in front of an invited audience in the Concert Hall of Broadcasting House, he subsequently added the dedication, 'To Stanford Robinson and the BBC Theatre Orchestra' – his only work dedicated to the Orchestra.<sup>82</sup>

Coates' response to a broadcast which Robbie made of his music in 1942 is typical of his respect and informality with orchestra: 'I must say that you and the Theatre Orchestra are a shining example of the few who do something and do it damn well. It is always a joy to listen to you and I think that everyone thinks exactly as I do.'<sup>83</sup> He

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<sup>78</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/orchestras/co/about/history.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/orchestras/co/about/history.shtml)

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> 27/05/1941 Assistant Director of Music to Clifton Heliwell. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1941.

<sup>82</sup> 29/01/1935 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935. The dedication in the autograph full score is in a different colour of ink and has clearly been added after the rest of the suite has been composed (*GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, no box.)

<sup>83</sup> 02/03/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

concluded the letter: ‘Please tell the orchestra how pleased I was with the way that they played my music and thank your 1st trumpet for the little harmon-mute-solo in “I pitch my lonely Caravan”. He certainly is a “wizard” on his instrument.’<sup>84</sup>

In his *Report on Light Music*, Coates’ natural admiration for the Theatre Orchestra shone through. He praised the orchestra most highly, but criticised the lack of string tone and called for an augmentation of the ensemble to thirty-four strings, four horns, five or six brass, three percussionists and harp to obviate ‘... the sometimes noticeable “conjuring” to which the balancer has to resort with his orchestra its present size.’<sup>85</sup> This was certainly a view he shared with Robinson, who favoured a sizeable, lush complement of strings in light music.<sup>86</sup> A deficiency of strings was a throwback to the early days of recording when a cluster of strings could not broadcast effectively, and the woodwind were placed too far from the microphone to be efficacious.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps as a result of the *Report*, the BBC Theatre Orchestra was permanently augmented to fifty-seven players; Robbie planned to disperse the players, identical to Coates’ proposals in his *Report*, as: 3 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, harp, 3 percussionists, and 10 first violins, 8 second violins, 6 violas, 6 ‘celli and 4 double basses.<sup>88</sup> Robinson believed that ‘...your listening & reporting was not a waste of time after all. I’m sure it was a great help in convincing the powers that be. We must have a drink to our mutual satisfaction.’<sup>89</sup> Coates was definitely pleased with the results on the first occasion he conducted the Orchestra,

I felt I must write to you to tell how tremendously I enjoyed conducting the BBC Theatre Orchestra last week. It certainly is an experience to have one’s music played by such a responsive body of artists such as yours and I am sure that their high

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Coates, Eric. *Report on Light Music*. Presented to the BBC, 22/05/1943, 13 *GB-Rwac* Music General Light Music file, 1939-1943 and *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>86</sup> Brook: 1945, 127.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> 03/10/1943 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

standard of playing is entirely due to your tireless training. I do not think that the balance of tone brought about by the augmentation leaves nothing to be desired and with your good self and Freddie Pocock at the “knobs” there does not seem anything which you cannot do. I left Bedford on Thursday afternoon with a picture of a crowd of friendly faces in front of me and with the feeling that they had “done me proud”. Thank you for the opportunity of letting me hear “in the flesh” the full glory of the 57 Varieties.<sup>90</sup>

When Robinson and the BBC Theatre Orchestra made the transition into studio opera in 1949, Coates’ close relationship with the ensemble began to wane and the ensemble gradually became marginally ephemeral to the broadcasts of his music. When the Theatre Orchestra finally metamorphosed into the BBC Concert Orchestra in 1952, his music was becoming outdated, as the nation had changed its tastes and there was never to the same degree of propinquity that had existed during the 1930s and 1940s. Coates and the BBC Concert Orchestra did give several studio broadcasts together in the early 1950s including the first performance of the *Holborn* March. This was also abetted by the replacement of Robinson as conductor (though he frequently made regular ‘guest appearances’ with the orchestra) by Gilbert Vinter, a noted light music composer. Coates did build a friendship with Vilem Tausky (a successor to Vinter) but it never had the opportunity to flourish due to the formers’ death. Nonetheless, Coates gave several concerts and performances of his music with the ensemble, both as studio broadcasts and at public concerts. Robbie’s replacement at the helm of this popular orchestra largely marked the termination of a unique rapport that Coates had both and with Robinson, and with ‘his’ ensemble.

Within the BBC’s establishment, Coates built up a strong working friendship with Kenneth Wright of the Music Department. Wright was initially prepared to fight against ‘the establishment’ for him, and include his music in the Promenade Concerts during the 1930s. He would also try to have Coates’ music included in the broadcasting schedules

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<sup>90</sup> 22/04/1945 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

whenever possible. In addition, Wright was often the pacifier in Coates' disputes with the BBC, particularly over the composer's non-inclusion in the 1943 Promenade Concerts. However, he was often critical of Coates' views on light music as well as of his music despite their obvious friendship and at times he seemed perfidious. Coates often tried to use Wright as a sounding board to explicate his own ideas on light music, especially those he would like the BBC to adopt, or at the very least take heed of. Whilst his friendship with Wright was not as mutually satisfying as that with Stanford Robinson, it was, nonetheless a significant relationship within the Corporation.

Kenneth Wright (1889-1975), like Stanford Robinson, joined the BBC in its earliest days. He had initially worked for the BBC in Manchester, but, upon his marriage in 1924, moved to the London station where he worked in Programme Planning in the Music Department. Throughout the 1930s, he held numerous positions, though he was largely second in command to Adrian Boult until Reginald Thatcher's arrival as Deputy Director of Music in 1937. He was appointed Overseas Music Director in 1941, but found this a daunting and challenging prospect and soon returned to the fold of the 'home' Music Department. In 1951, Wright became Head of Television Music until his retirement from the BBC;<sup>91</sup> outside the Corporation he was an active composer of light orchestral music.

Kenneth Wright initial appointments with the BBC placed him in the unique position of being able to programme those works he thought deserved to be broadcast. He was, at times, able to assist Coates, as too was Robinson, in obtaining performances that he would otherwise not have been able to achieve. Coates first wrote to the BBC to ask if he could be invited to conduct *The Three Bears* at the 1929 season of Promenade Concerts;<sup>92</sup> he tried again in 1930 to conduct *Cinderella*.<sup>93</sup> Throughout the 1930s, he had

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<sup>91</sup> Doctor, Jennifer. *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 409-410.

<sup>92</sup> 19/05/1929 Eric Coates to Percy Pitt. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

repeatedly tried to obtain an invitation to conduct at the Promenade Concerts (since 1927 under the BBC's financial patronage) which was, for him, the veritable apogee of British musical life. Wright decided to facilitate his aspiration in much the same way as Robinson had tried. Wright wrote to W.W. Thompson in 1934, trying to push for Coates' inclusion, 'I think we are agreed that he holds the leading place in British light music... I think we will not be ashamed to put him in some such position with one of his best pieces.'<sup>94</sup> As a result, Coates was invited to conduct *The Three Bears* in the 1934 season.<sup>95</sup> However, this did not pacify him and he felt he deserved inclusion the following year having been invited to conduct at the concerts almost annually from 1914 until 1926. He again wrote to Wright to ask to be included.<sup>96</sup> Wright fought to include the work at a Christmas Promenade Concert; however, a significant majority of staff at the BBC thought that the work foundered with the audience.<sup>97</sup>

Aside from his assistance over Coates' entry to the Promenade Concerts, Wright proved useful in securing broadcasts of Coates' lesser known works. In 1930, Wright advocated the suitability of Coates' ballet score *Snowdrop* to Adrian Boult which resulted in several broadcasts of the ballet in its original, unorthodox orchestration for a theatre pit orchestra. After Coates had rewritten the work as *The Enchanted Garden* in 1938, Wright was instrumental in obtaining its premiere with the BBC Orchestra Section D rather than a smaller ensemble (such as Section C), where much cueing would be required.<sup>98</sup> Whilst Wright may well have been acting from the BBC's perspective of securing performances of good, new light music, the friendship between Coates and

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<sup>93</sup> 13/06/1930 Eric Coates to Adrian Boult. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>94</sup> 28/02/1934 Kenneth Wright to W.W. Thompson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>95</sup> 10/06/1934 W.W. Thompson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>96</sup> 07/07/1935 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>97</sup> 08/09/1940 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright & Undated [June 1941] Kenneth Wright Memo. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>98</sup> 31/08/1938 Kenneth Wright to Reginald Thatcher. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

Wright must have enabled the former to achieve much more through the BBC than he would have been able to gain without this significant friendship.

Coates had always been fascinated by fairy stories, as he told the *Radio Times* in 1935.<sup>99</sup> With Kenneth Wright he tried to put together a broadcast of 'fairy stories in music' in 1933,<sup>100</sup> but, alas, the project was consigned to oblivion.<sup>101</sup> He again raised the idea with Wright in 1939,<sup>102</sup> and subsequently broadcast his 'fairy stories in music' on Boxing Day 1939.<sup>103</sup> In addition to Wright's aid with the performance of Coates' orchestral music on the Corporation's wavelengths he also assisted in several invitations for other new works by Coates though the composer had his own pedantic ideas about commissioning and first performances. Writing to R.G. Walford in the BBC's Copyright Department in 1954, he explained his logic:

...I never accept anything in the shape of a fee for the right to perform a work of mine for the first time so the question of a token fee of £25 does not enter into it. However, I am perfectly willing to give the BBC the right to make two copies of my original full-score for the library but I wish to retain all my other rights.<sup>104</sup>

On Kenneth Wright's ascendancy to the headship of the Department of Overseas Music, Wright subsequently beseeched Coates to compose a signature tune for the Overseas Children's service.<sup>105</sup> What Wright asked for, and what was composed, were quite radically different. Wright invited him: 'What we would like is a short bright piece of music which could be recorded by, say, the Theatre Orchestra introducing some well-known airs of our four countries, and possible (I suggest) "Boys and girls come out to

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<sup>99</sup> 03/05/1935 The *Radio Times* 'He Composed "Knightsbridge".' In the Coates' household, whilst Austin was a child, much esteem was attached to Phyl's rendering of the stories to Austin; Eric would even leave his writing-room to listen. (12/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. GB-Lbl National Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA 0337.)

<sup>100</sup> 28/02/1933 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>101</sup> 27/05/1933 Kenneth Wright to Eric Coates & 31/05/1933 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>102</sup> 16/10/1939 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

<sup>103</sup> 22/11/1939 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

<sup>104</sup> 10/01/1954 Eric Coates to R.G. Walford. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates Copyright file, December 1941-1962.

<sup>105</sup> 14/11/1941 Kenneth Wright to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

play” thrown in.<sup>106</sup> The proposal had changed when Miss Waters of the BBC’s Copyright Department wrote to him, though by this stage he had practically finished the composition,

We are told this will be 16-20 bars in length and we suggest a fee of 5 guineas, this to cover the composition of the work and first performance; the right to use the tune as and when required in our programme without payment of any further direct fee to you, and the right to record for this purpose. You would of course receive performing fees whenever the tune is used through the Performing Right Society. The score would remain the property of the Corporation and remain in our Music Library.<sup>107</sup>

What resulted was a new march, entitled *London Calling*, based entirely on original material. Nonetheless, Wright was sufficiently satisfied with the result to use the work, despite its radical deviation from the original proposal, to recommend that Coates be invited to compose a piece for the reopening of BBC Television in 1946.<sup>108</sup>

Outside the BBC, their friendship proved to be considerably beneficial for Coates. Coates remembered that, in 1936, Wright had invited Adolf Wiklund of Svensk Radioj nst of Sweden to conduct a concert for the BBC and, as part of Wiklund’s return journey to Sweden, Coates should accompany him back and conduct a concert of his music in the Swedish capital.<sup>109</sup> However, behind the scenes, Wright had been organising a trip of the BBC Orchestra to Sweden and tried to engineer an invitation for him to be invited as a guest-conductor. Writing to Nathaniel Broman, of Svensk Radioj nst, in December 1936, Wright extolled Coates’ virtues,

Knowing of your interest in his music we feel it is the best kind of English light music. I wonder if you care to engage him to conduct while he is in Stockholm. He conducts well and is engaged to conduct all over England in this way and frequently by the BBC. He could offer some new music including the New Suite [*London Again*] as well as old favourites, and if you wish Hislop to take part I know the latter sings many of his songs.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> 04/12/1941 Miss Water to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates Copyright file, 1941-1962. Coates completed the piece on 11 December 1941.

<sup>108</sup> 30/04/1946 Kenneth Wright to Cecil Madden. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>109</sup> Coates: 1953, 228.

He would accept whatever fee you feel it fair to offer as he knows conditions in Sweden are quite different from England.

Forgive me mentioning this but he is an old friend of mine and a delightful fellow, and I feel sure you and your staff would like to see him.<sup>110</sup>

Although Coates valued his friendship with Wright it was not on the same level of creativeness as that with Robinson. Wright was not afraid to criticise Coates' music (often justifiably) from a BBC standpoint, though he often behaved hypocritically, but the impact of Wright on the production of Coates' music both compositionally and its programming in the Corporation's services was enormous and should not be underestimated.<sup>111</sup>

Coates also befriended other members of the BBC's Music Department, especially in the 1920s and 1930s: predominately the Corporation's staff conductors. During this time he truly valued the BBC's performances of his music and often wrote to any conductor who had directed his music to thank him for his performance. He frequently wrote to B. Walton O'Donnell, conductor of the BBC Military Band, whom he had known since their days at the RAM, to draw O'Donnell's attention to the military band arrangements of his music, which Coates was eager to hear. These were usually arranged by Chappell with minimal input from the composer. In the case of *The Three Men*, he wrote to O'Donnell immediately after the suite's military band publication to ask if O'Donnell would care to perform the work.<sup>112</sup> O'Donnell duly included *The Three Men* in a forthcoming programme for the following month without any commotion.<sup>113</sup>

Coates' relationship with Victor Hely-Hutchinson (who joined the BBC in 1926, departed to succeed Granville Bantock as Professor of Music at the University of

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<sup>110</sup> 06/04/1936 Kenneth Wright to Nathaniel Broman. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

<sup>111</sup> See Chapter 3 for details.

<sup>112</sup> 29/09/1935 Eric Coates to B. Walton O'Donnell *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>113</sup> 01/10/1935 B. Walton O'Donnell to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935. O'Donnell put *The Three Men* Suite down for a performance on 05/11/1935 because of Coates' recommendation.

Birmingham in 1933 and returned as Head of Department in 1944)<sup>114</sup> commenced with letters of appreciation of Hely-Hutchinson's interpretations, such as after a rendition of *From Meadow to Mayfair* in 1932.<sup>115</sup> Hely-Hutchinson seems to have enjoyed Coates' music and in a reply to Coates' letter stated: 'I hope you were pleased with "From Meadow to Mayfair" last night if you had an opportunity of hearing it. I enjoyed doing it very much indeed and the orchestra enjoyed playing it.'<sup>116</sup> After Hely-Hutchinson's departure from the Corporation and his consequent recrudescence as Head of Music at the beginning of September 1944, Coates managed to extract a fine performance of his newly composed Suite, *The Three Elizabeths* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in December that year. Hely-Hutchinson was happy to see the work's first performance with BBC forces (probably the augmented BBC Theatre Orchestra),<sup>117</sup> though Coates suggested the BBC Symphony Orchestra.<sup>118</sup> Coates held his new work in a lofty esteem as he informed Hely-Hutchinson:

Since receiving your letter I have heard from Buckingham Palace the Queen, who has already expressed an interest in my new work, has now permitted me to dedicate "The Three Elizabeths" to her.

I think it is important that my Suite receives a good send-off as soon as possible and I am therefore wondering whether you could find time to look through the score if I send it round to you by hand within the next day or two. I should like twenty-four hours notice so that I could get the work back from my copyist...

...Regarding the presentation, my tentative suggestion is that you give me, say, a forty-five minute broadcast with an orchestra of not less than between sixty and seventy players (perhaps the occasion calls for the BBC Symphony Orchestra, but I leave this to you), with Stuart Hibberd announcing (this was Ken's [Wright] suggestion) and I would propose commencing with a one-movement work such as "The Enchanted Garden" and concluding with "The Three Elizabeths" which would lend contrast to the broadcast (the former playing approximately 19 minutes and the latter 20, thus leaving ample time for the announcer to tell the audience the story. This

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<sup>114</sup> Doctor: 1999, 402.

<sup>115</sup> 04/03/1932 Eric Coates to Victor Hely-Hutchinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>116</sup> 07/03/1932 Victor Hely-Hutchinson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>117</sup> 28/09/1944 Kenneth Wright to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948. The Corporation believed that this was the best representation they could offer the Suite.

<sup>118</sup> 15/10/1944 Eric Coates to Victor Hely-Hutchinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

is only a suggestion and perhaps you may have other ideas. At any rate, I shall be glad to hear from you soon.<sup>119</sup>

Perhaps as a consequence of his early acquaintance with Coates, Hely-Hutchinson was prepared to fight for a large-scale presentation of the former's new Suite.<sup>120</sup> Writing to the Music Productions Unit, Hely-Hutchinson extolled the virtues of the Suite, which '...is dedicated to the Queen, and partly in view of this and partly also in view of Eric Coates' standing as a composer of light music, it is desirable that we should include the programme fairly soon and at a really good listening time.'<sup>121</sup> Hely-Hutchinson finally agreed to an usual premiere:

Unless you can think of a "better 'ole" it had better go into "Music for All". I realise that it does not fit in with your conception of these progs. but I am confident that it won't hurt the appeal & function of the series as a whole.... I am most anxious that it should get in somewhere soon + in a good place.<sup>122</sup>

Hely-Hutchinson also yielded to Coates' suggestion that the work should be given its premiere by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 'Music for All', though even in October (two months before its premiere) the Corporation wished to programme the Suite with the BBC Theatre Orchestra.<sup>123</sup> The last-minute inclusion of the Suite into a 'Music for All', caused a rumpus between Clarence Raybould, who was to conduct the whole broadcast, and Hely-Hutchinson. Raybould felt duty bound to send a vehement assault about the issue and also on Coates' music to the Music Department.<sup>124</sup> Raybould's attack certainly reflects the changes in attitudes of the BBC towards Coates' music:

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid. In the end, Coates was invited to conduct just his Suite with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the rest of the broadcast conducted by Clarence Raybould.

<sup>120</sup> Julian Herbage wryly noted to Hely-Hutchinson, 'I was afraid that, once we included a work by Eric Coates in "Music for All", we would have an outburst from Haydn Wood, and here it is!' (28/12/1944 Julian Herbage to Victor Hely-Hutchinson. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood file 2).

<sup>121</sup> 21/10/1944 Victor Hely-Hutchinson to Music Productions Unit. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>122</sup> 27/10/1944 Victor Hely-Hutchinson to Julian Herbage. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>123</sup> 20/10/1944 Julian Herbage to Victor Hely-Hutchinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>124</sup> 16/11/1944 Clarence Raybould to Julian Herbage. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

When I learned that I was to do this concert [‘Music for All’, 24/12/1944] I made up my mind to approach you, as I have done before, on the details of the programme, and in particular I intended expressing my feelings that Mr. Coates has had quite enough representation from the Corporation without the Symphony Orchestra, these days, being made the medium of performing any more of his now sadly out-moded, and stale, old tricks, coupling with the feeling of my own personal disinclination to participate in such an affair.

Now this morning I hear over the telephone that all arrangements have been made whereby Mr. Coates has been invited to come and conduct the work on the above date.

You know perfectly well that I am no musical snob, but I really must protest at the way in which the work is pitch-forked into the programme, and particularly at the discourteous procedure of inviting Mr. Coates to conduct it without any reference to myself, and I would like to ask whether you are prepared to re-arrange the programme if you still wish me to conduct it.<sup>125</sup>

Hely-Hutchinson felt duty bound to send an *apologia* to Raybould to explain his position and why it was necessary to programme the Suite at such short notice,<sup>126</sup> despite the BBC offering to premiere the work in September.<sup>127</sup> Undoubtedly the quality and popularity of Coates’ music enabled him to secure a first performance of *The Three Elizabeths* by the BBC, but it was perhaps his acquaintance with Hely-Hutchinson from the 1920s and 1930s that enabled Coates to achieve such a performance by such an ensemble.

Post-war, as the BBC expanded in size and stature, it became more difficult for Coates to establish a rapport with the members of staff. Towards the close of the 1940s, a majority of his alliances with key members of the Music Department had receded, though he did establish several new friendships with the two key members of the BBC’s new Light Music section, namely Hubert Clifford and Frank Wade. His affinity with Clifford enabled continued performances of his music when it had lost some of its zeal and zenith within the country and certainly within the Corporation, though his reputation

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> 23/11/1944 Victor Hely-Hutchinson to Clarence Raybould. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1942-1948. ‘The position is this: that Coates has written this little Suite “The Three Elizabeths” and has obtained permission to dedicate it to the Queen. It is quite nice light music; not particularly distinguished in invention, but having some good tunes, and well scored as Coates’ work always is.’ (Ibid.)

<sup>127</sup> 19/09/1944 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright & 28/09/1944 Kenneth Wright to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1942-1948.

at the helm of light music was left untarnished. However, the two often discussed the paradoxical question of ‘what is light music?’ perhaps resulting in a mention of Coates in Clifford’s article ‘Some Problems on Broadcast Musical Entertainment’ for the *BBC Quarterly*.<sup>128</sup>

His relationship with Frank Wade had more of a posthumous legacy. It was Wade who was responsible for the BBC’s tribute programme to Coates after his death, with contributions from the leading figures of British music, which achieved an exceptionally high appreciation index of seventy-seven and a listening figure of eighty-one;<sup>129</sup> it was decided to use the tribute programme to Coates as the template for other obituary programmes of significant light music figures.<sup>130</sup> Wade, in addition, worked hard to establish the Eric Coates’ Memorial Prize at the RAM with Phyllis Coates, Chappell and the RAM; Wade acted as joint adjudicator (with Vilem Tausky conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra) for the first competition in 1961. Though the BBC had no financial input, Wade made the most of his position and the resources of the BBC to form suitable and lasting memorial to the composer.<sup>131</sup>

Despite Coates’ propinquity with the staff of the BBC’s Music Department, his greatest popular exposure as a result of the Corporation was the relatively new phenomenon of the signature tune, which grew with the rise of radio in the 1920s. Radio features required a piece of music to ‘sandwich’ the spoken core of the programme. Most pieces of classical music are too long or too complex or too dour for a short introduction and therefore the brevity, ebullient and jocund nature of light music made it eminently

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<sup>128</sup> Clifford, Hubert. ‘Some Problems of Broadcast Musical Entertainment.’ In *BBC Quarterly* VIII (1953-1954), 158-162, 158.

<sup>129</sup> 04/02/1958 Minutes of the Light Music Policy Committee. *GB-Rwac* Light Music Policy Meeting Minutes file 3, 1958-1961.

<sup>130</sup> 28/01/1958 Minutes of the Light Music Policy Committee. *GB-Rwac* Light Music Policy Meeting Minutes file 3, 1958-1961.

<sup>131</sup> 03/02/1960 Frank Wade to M.E. Rickets. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates (Music General) file II, 1947. Phyllis Coates was very grateful to Wade: ‘It was a wonderful idea of yours Frank, to suggest the inauguration of this Prize, and I am so grateful to you for this and for your great help in organizing it.’ (01/05/1960 Phyllis Coates to Frank Wade. *GB-Rwac* Coates, Eric Coates (Music General) file II, 1947).

suitable for use as signature tunes and call-signs. The constant repetition of signature tunes enables that piece of music to have extra associations within listeners' minds, even if the piece chosen is substandard and the programme popular, the piece can become well-known and importantly well-liked. These allusions can make the signature tune a very powerful and profitable piece of music, if handled in the correct way. In 1949, Sidney Torch bemoaned the damage inflicted on light music by radio signature tunes, and, to a lesser extent, film music:

Light music, like so many other forms of popular entertainment, is greatly influenced by the mood of the moment. It constantly changes to meet the changing tempos of our modern world. In these rather hectic times there is a growing desire to have one's entertainment in capsule form, and whereas in the past the composer of light music would have devoted his ideas and inspiration to a work in the form of a suite playing for ten minutes or more, you will find that today's light-music successes rarely run for more than three or four minutes. Just as films provide a setting for many pieces of incidental music which have gained additional popularity through their broadcast and concert programmes, so radio itself has lent a hand in bringing popularity to many pieces of descriptive music. The signature tunes of many dramatic and feature programmes introduce such music: perhaps you have wondered about the titles and composers, of such items as Robert Farnon's 'Jumping Bean,' which was the signature tune of *Send for Shiner*, the inevitable 'Devil's Galop' by Charles Williams which is always associated with the Dick Barton programmes; 'Melody on the Move,' that catchy little tune by Clive Richardson, used by the Majestic Orchestra in their series the *Rainbow Room*, and 'Coronation Scot' by Vivian Ellis, signature tune of Paul Temple's most recent adventures.

The only pity is that the BBC, which has done so much to popularise these pieces modern light music, has been inclined neglect its possibilities in recent months. Light music is very much alive, and with the opportunity and encouragement that only the BBC can give there will be no lack of worthy successors to Eric Coates and Haydn Wood.<sup>132</sup>

Coates recognised the power of the radio signature tune as a means of establishing his music within the ears of the denizens of the nation, though 'Knightsbridge's' adoption by 'In Town Tonight' in November 1933, happened entirely by accident. The music in which Coates specialised was ideally suited to opening or closing radio programmes. It was either fast-moving, bright, and effervescent, or was relaxed, picturesque and warm;

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<sup>132</sup> 25/03/1949 *Radio Times* 'Sidney Torch Ventures an Opinion or Two.' In 'The Spotlight Turns on Light Music by Douglas Lawrence.'

however, above all, either type had a memorable melody which was important for establishing the signature tune in the minds of the listening public. It was also the musical rhetoric of the nineteenth century within the twentieth century that made his music especially suitable for the process as it was not modern, but aurally pleasurable. One only has to look at the opening of his *Television March* to see how the arresting opening immediately galvanises the listener's attention, and the impact it creates, Ex. 4.1.

Quick March Time

Brass *f*

Strgs. *f*

Strgs. W.W. *fp cresc. molto.*

Cym

*ff*

*p cresc. molto*

Cym. roll

*ff*

Ex. 4.1 *Television March*, bars 1-15.

Or think how ideally suited *By the Sleepy Lagoon* is for setting the scene of a deserted, serene mythical island for the castaway in 'Desert Island Discs'.<sup>133</sup> With the exception of *Calling All Workers*, *London Calling* and the *Television* marches Coates never actually composed signature tunes *per se* but his music was seen by the BBC as utterly apposite for that purpose.

<sup>133</sup> Whilst the piece has these allusions, its inspiration was the distant pink glow of Bognor Regis Gas Works as viewed from his Selsey home.

Coates' experience of signature tunes began simply in November 1933 when he suddenly heard his recent 'Knightsbridge March' used as the signature tune of a new BBC feature programme – 'In Town Tonight'. Eric Maschwitz, the show's creator and producer, had sent for all the 'London' titles from the BBC's Gramophone Library and the *London Suite* was chosen because of its rousing march 'Knightsbridge'. Coates knew nothing about the whole saga until its first broadcast, which he nearly missed.<sup>134</sup> However, he was very quick to reap the rewards of 'Knightsbridge' as the popularity of the piece caused massive sales of both the sheet music, predominately for piano, and of the gramophone record, recorded by the composer and the LPO. He recalled that in the two weeks following the show's first airing, the BBC received twenty-thousand requests asking for particulars of the show's signature tune – the BBC had special cards with details of the music printed.<sup>135</sup> It is not possible to verify his claims, as no details survive in either the BBC's Coates' files or 'In Town Tonight' files; the popularity of the signature tune remained until the show finally finished in 1960, after 1,006 editions.<sup>136</sup> In subsequent reprinting of the Suite, the march was subtitled 'In Town To-Night (March)'; he also adjusted the autograph score. The March soon became bound up in the 'national music' bracket; in July 1934 'Knightsbridge' was performed at the closing scene of the Pageant of Parliament.<sup>137</sup> Such was the impact of 'Knightsbridge' that in the composition of his suite, *London Again*, he re-used the theme in 'Langham Place'. This movement pays homage to the BBC, whose home, Broadcasting House was in Langham Place, depicted with the notes B-flat–B-flat–C, whilst illustrating an evening's entertainment, replete with

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<sup>134</sup> 19/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. GB-Lbl National Sound Archive, PLN 622/86 ZA 0397. See Chapter 1.

<sup>135</sup> Coates: 1953, 220. Though none survive at GB-Rwac, GB-Lcm or GB-STHprivate.

<sup>136</sup> 05/08/1960 *The Times* "In Town Tonight" To End Next Month.' The BBC recast the programme as 'In Town Today' keeping 'Knightsbridge' as the signature tune.

<sup>137</sup> Performed by Callender's Band. The whole closing scene was broadcast by the BBC, 02/07/1934 23:00-00:00 on the London National Station. Roger Quilter's *Non Nobis Domine* was premiered at the event.

a broadcast of 'In Town Tonight' and the chimes of 'Big Ben' drawing the evening's entertainment to a close, Ex. 4.2.

The musical score for 'Langham Place' (London Again Suite), figure 6, is presented in two systems. The first system includes staves for 1st Vln B, Hn, Brass, and String trem. The second system includes staves for Cello, clts, and a grand staff (treble and bass clef). The score is in G major and 2/4 time. Key features include the 'Knightsbridge fanfare' in the brass, the 'Knightsbridge melody' in the strings, and a 'cresc poco a poco' marking. Dynamic markings include 'p' and 'smile'. There are also some performance instructions like '3' and 'p>'.

Ex. 4.2 'Langham Place' (*London Again Suite*), figure 6.

The inclusion of 'Knightsbridge' is almost unique, as he rarely quotes his music within his work (the other notable exception is a brief extract from the *Song of Loyalty* at figure 35 in the *Saxo-Rhapsody*, composed the following year). The popularity of 'Knightsbridge' was such that it carved his niche in the history of popular music of Britain until his death. In a 1949 interview for the magazine *New Outlook on Motoring*, he was still branded as the '...composer of "Knightsbridge March" and one of Britain's most popular tune makers'.<sup>138</sup> The March was frequently located in unexpected locations as Coates often recounted to the media and finally his autobiography, such as the composer correcting a Bishop incorrectly whistling the tune, or the story of the passenger who forgot the name

<sup>138</sup> August 1949 *New Outlook on Motoring* '20 Questions On Motoring: Eric Coates.'

of the place he was travelling to and sung a few bars and was duly issued with a ticket to Knightsbridge.<sup>139</sup> In 1946, one Sunday newspaper speculated that each time 'Knightsbridge' was broadcast as part of 'In Town Tonight', the composer received three shillings and sixpence in royalties.<sup>140</sup>

Today, the signature tune Coates is most closely associated with is *By the Sleepy Lagoon* which has been used since 1942 to introduce and close Roy Plomley's 'Desert Island Discs'. Again, the signature tune was chosen with no input from Coates. Plomley initially wanted sounds of the surf-breaking and seagulls, but the show's producer thought this lacked definition, and picked three possibilities: *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, *Summer Afternoon Idyll*, both by Coates, and Norman O'Neill's incidental music to 'Mary Rose'.<sup>141</sup> In the end they chose *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, which Coates composed in 1930; though it was never overtly popular, until the popular song 'Sleepy Lagoon' appeared in America in 1940. However, the *Idyll Summer Afternoon* would have fitted just as well, with its portrayal of a heady summer's afternoon, languishing in a garden on the sea-front. The version of *By the Sleepy Lagoon* the BBC initially used for a number of years was Coates' own 1935 recording for Columbia, though latterly the Corporation used its own special recording, complete with seagulls imposed over the top of the music.<sup>142</sup> Whilst never as popular in his lifetime as a signature tune – it was more fashionable as a popular song – it has become a national favourite, known through its associations with the BBC programme rather than its original title, in much the same vein as 'Knightsbridge' had been synonymous with 'In Town Tonight'.

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<sup>139</sup> Coates: 1953, 221. These stories actually appeared in print several times in different newspapers during the 1930s.

<sup>140</sup> 25/05/1946 *Sunday Despatch*.

<sup>141</sup> Plomley, Roy. *Desert Island Discs*. London: William Kimber, 1975, 14.

<sup>142</sup> *GB-Rwac* S133/18/7 Special Collections Plomley, Roy 'Desert Island Discs.' Scripts 91-109. In the preamble to each script, it notes the use of Columbia DX 712 (Coates' 1935 recording of the *Valse Serenade*).

Perhaps the adoption of *Calling All Workers* as the signature tune to 'Music While You Work' in October 1940 (though the show had commenced on 23 June that year) marked his fate as a purveyor of signature tunes.<sup>143</sup> At the time it was debatable, as it is today, if *Calling All Workers* was more popular than 'Knightsbridge'? 'Music While You Work' was a programme set up with assistance of the Government to increase production in factories. The BBC employed a wide diversity of orchestras from light orchestras, BBC Orchestras, dance bands and accordion bands to military bands, cinema organists to Troise and his Mandolins to provide a fast, lively, steady stream of music to aid production of vital materials for the war effort and the programme gradually became one of the stalwarts of the war years, with twenty-one programmes a week during those years; even in 1950 there were still eleven editions a week.<sup>144</sup> The programme proved to be a staggering popular success; it is believed that in the first twenty years (though the show eventually ran until September 1967) of 'Music While You Work' there were 13,600 programmes broadcast, each playing the trio at the introduction and at the close of each broadcast;<sup>145</sup> overall there were 16,781 editions of the radio show (excluding the later revivals in the 1980s).<sup>146</sup> The BBC liked each ensemble to close with at least thirty-seconds of the trio.<sup>147</sup> These figures must place *Calling All Workers* very high in the list as one of the most-played radio signature tunes, of which Robert Farnon's *Jumping Bean* is believed to be the most-played.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> 'Music While You Work' caused a major problem for the PRS over the royalties regarding broadcasting music in factories resulting in several court cases. In the end, the Ministry of Production agreed to pay £25,000 a year during the War so all premises could broadcast 'Music While You Work.' (Ehrlich, Cyril. *Harmonious Alliance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, 92-98).

<sup>144</sup> Reynolds, Brian. *Music While You Work*. Lewes: Book Guild, 2006, 6 & 15.

<sup>145</sup> 14/09/2002 *The Music Factory*. *Music While You Work*. BBC Radio 4.

<sup>146</sup> Reynolds: 2006, 45. This is approximate as during the War the programmes were often cancelled at short notice. The March was retained for revivals of the programme from 1982, notably the year-long return of the weekday programme throughout the majority of 1983 (Ibid, 72-73).

<sup>147</sup> Reynolds: 2006, 34. However, if the programme overran, then the trio would not be broadcast, while, if the transmission under-ran, then the ensemble would continuously play the trio until the broadcast was faded out.

<sup>148</sup> 05/06/2005 *The Guv'vor: A Tribute to Robert Farnon*. BBC Radio 2. Though Farnon's *Jumping Bean* has been used as the signature tune for a variety of programmes worldwide, *Calling All Workers* was almost exclusively used for 'Music While You Work.'

*Calling All Workers* was written in response to the War, as Coates informed

Robinson:

I have been pestered for months by all kinds of people to write something patriotic, but waving Union Jacks not being in my line I could not get up any enthusiasm; then my wife said, "Why not write a Workers march? We are all workers in our own way, from Cabinet Ministers to road-sweepers," and so I sat down and wrote the March, which I have called "CALLING ALL WORKERS".<sup>149</sup>

What marks out *Calling All Workers* is that Coates wrote the march to be used specifically as a signature tune.<sup>150</sup> Writing to Robbie, he stated, 'I am hoping that the latter march [*Calling All Workers*] may be used as a signature to all Workers programmes. I seem to feel that this feature has come to stay and it will be continued long after the war is over and forgotten.'<sup>151</sup> When writing in September 1940, Coates may well have had 'Music While You Work' in mind when he was suggesting 'workers programmes'; after all, the programme had only just started in June 1940 and did not have a signature tune. Robbie was responsible for recommending that the March be adopted as the signature tune for 'Music While You Work'.<sup>152</sup> However, the BBC was not keen when discussing this possibility; G.D. Adams when conversing about the idea with Robbie stated: 'I personally should be against it [adoption as signature tune] unless it proves to be particularly apt for the purpose'.<sup>153</sup> Just like the adoption of 'Knightsbridge', Coates knew nothing about its use for 'Music While You Work'. Writing to Robbie: 'Do I have to thank you for this? and do you know whether they will be using my recording of the March? (this was issued last week).'<sup>154</sup> In spite of Coates' request that 'Music While You Work' would use his own

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<sup>149</sup> 30/07/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>150</sup> 05/08/1940 Stanford Robinson to G.D. Adams. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>151</sup> 30/07/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>152</sup> 05/10/1940 Harman Grisewood to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>153</sup> 07/08/1940 G.D. Adams to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>154</sup> 14/10/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

recent recording of the march, each ensemble would perform it live in the studio in their own instrumentation.<sup>155</sup>

The March is well suited to its purpose as a signature tune with its arresting opening and fast moving 'A' section and a broad, easily sung, 'B' section, though only the 'B' section was used for 'Music While you Work'. Coates' was thrilled with Robinson's first performance and its immediate popularity:

You will be interested to know that I have already had a number of 'phone calls about your [first] performance last night. My housekeeper tells me she heard several working-men talking about it in the bus this morning. It shows that they the "man-in-the-street" listen to you and the Theatre Orchestra.<sup>156</sup>

To which Robbie replied 'I started humming it dozens of times on Monday and in the end had to fine myself 6d. each time to stop it'<sup>157</sup> proving its easily assimilated nature. Consequently, *Calling All Workers* has become indelibly linked with the Second World War and has attracted a great nostalgia element; it has been included in several episodes of the BBC's wartime situation comedy, *Dad's Army*.<sup>158</sup> Not only was Coates' music used as the signature tune but was frequently performed by the various ensembles in their broadcasts.

The invitation to compose the *Television March*, which must rank as Coates' most hastily composed piece, went out in mid-May 1946 and the March had to be completed and recorded for the reopening of the Television Service on 7 June. He recalled, 'I went for a long walk through the London streets, jotted down a few notes in my musical shorthand, and completed the work in eight days at my Sussex cottage.'<sup>159</sup> As was Coates' usual practice, he refused payment for the March in the knowledge of several years' worth of PRS fees. He was keen to remark before he wrote the March, that prior to the

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<sup>155</sup> Columbia DB 1945.

<sup>156</sup> 02/09/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>157</sup> 05/09/1940 Stanford Robinson to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>158</sup> 24/11/1972 *Dad's Army: All is Safely Gathered In*. BBC One.

<sup>159</sup> 01/06/1946 Eric Coates quoted in *Manchester Evening News*.

War, the Television Service had been considering 'Oxford Street' (*London Again Suite*) as a suitable signature tune for the Television service.<sup>160</sup> Again, the *Television March* established itself in its role and became a feature of BBC Television for a number of years and was even included in an episode of the radio series, 'Hancock's Half Hour';<sup>161</sup> and for 'Here's Television' in 1950 in which messers Muir, Norden and Colin set it to humorous words; Coates was asked to give permission.<sup>162</sup> Initially, he seemed to be keen to rely on the PRS fees generated by the constant broadcast of such a piece, and informed the *Daily Mail* that he intended not having the March published, but he soon revoked the decision and it was published in 1946.<sup>163</sup>

Besides the pieces that he composed specifically as signature tunes, a good deal of his music was used by the BBC for this purpose, including 'Oxford Street' (*London Again Suite*) for the Overseas Forces Programme, *Eighth Army* for 'Salute to the Fighting Forces' and various military band concerts during the War, 'At the Dance' (*Summer Days Suite*), 'Home to Music' as well as 'Sunday Afternoon Concert Hour' (on BBC Midland Television) amongst others. Outside the BBC, Coates also wrote marches that were used as signature tunes, such as *Music Everywhere* for Rediffusion and their commercial radio service, *Sound and Vision* for the opening of ATV in September 1955 and *South Wales and West* (which was the new title for his earlier *Seven Seas March*) for the ATV's regional company of the same name. Such was his popularity and associations with the BBC's *Television March*, that he was probably first choice for the new ATV Company to write a piece to open their television programmes, (his friends John Barbirolli and Jack Hylton were Music Advisor and Light Entertainment Advisor respectively with the Company and may well have recommended him for the commission).

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<sup>160</sup> 14/05/1946 Kenneth Wright to Cecil Madden. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>161</sup> 14/07/1955 *Hancock's Half Hour: The Television Set*. BBC Light Programme. When Hancock's television set has been built (by the boy next door) and is first switched on, out comes Coates' *Television March*, albeit in the background.

<sup>162</sup> 21/11/1950 R.G. Walford to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates Copyright file, December 1941-1962.

<sup>163</sup> 06/06/1946 *Daily Mail*.

On occasions, the slightly unorthodox nature of the BBC not owning the copyright on a signature tune caused sporadic problems. In 1941 several complications arose regarding *Calling All Workers*. Miss Candler wrote to Harold Lowe 'I cannot find that we have in this office any dealings with Eric Coates in connection with this tune. Could you please let me know exactly what arrangements were and what rights, if any, we possess as I should like to have my records complete'.<sup>164</sup> To which Lowe replied:

This is as far as I know all the correspondence [attached to the memorandum] that passed between Stanford Robinson and Eric Coates on the subject, and I cannot find anything in that suggests "Calling All Workers" has been "presented to the BBC for their exclusive use as the signature for "Music While You Work" programmes", unless the matter was taken up with Eric Coates by anyone else subsequently.<sup>165</sup>

Coates had long since become aware of the value of his PRS earnings if he retained his rights as a composer, which he always did. However, any such copyright problems were usually sorted out leaving him with the appropriate fees and exposure on the BBC's programmes.

When introducing Coates on his 'Desert Island Discs' in 1951, Roy Plomley (creator and presenter) remarked 'In fact, he seems to have made a corner in signature tunes for radio programmes: "In Town Tonight", of course – "Music While You Work" – "Television Newsreel" – and I'm sure there are more.'<sup>166</sup> Today, when nostalgia plays such a vital roll in sustaining light music, it is tempting, as Plomley did, to categorise Coates' music as solely 'signature music', a definition which he would have thoroughly condemned and abhorred. Coates was highly fortunate, from a pecuniary perspective, that his music had been adopted for such programmes as 'Music While You Work' and 'In Town Tonight', but it was part and parcel of his relationship with the BBC and also the immersing post-war independent broadcasters. Not only were the financial

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<sup>164</sup> 02/01/1941 Miss Candler to Harold Lowe. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates Copyright file, 1941-1962.

<sup>165</sup> 20/01/1941 Harold Lowe to Miss Candler. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates Copyright file, 1941-1962.

<sup>166</sup> 20/06/1951 Desert Island Discs: Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* S133/18/7 Special Collections Plomley, Roy 'Desert Island Discs.' Scripts 91-109.

implications important for him and for his music, but also the widespread and lasting exposure that such an outlet had, and continues to have.

Unlike Holst, Rachmaninov and Percy Grainger who were continually associated with *The Planets*, *Prelude in C-Sharp Minor*, *Second Piano Concerto* and *Country Gardens* respectively and came to despise their associations with these pieces, Coates was happy to be associated with his popular successes; he realised the value of public acclaim and association. Writing an article entitled 'This Musical Snobbery' in the *Evening News* he justified his stance on popularity;

... Nor do I think that any composer, if he is honest, has regrets for the tune that has caught the popular fancy and swept a continent.

I know that I shall always be grateful for the popularity my music has achieved, and particularly for the success of my "Knightsbridge" March; I should be a poorer person in several ways had it not caught on.

I certainly would not like to forgo the success of "Knightsbridge" – but then, perhaps my attitude is understandable as I come under the category of "Light."<sup>167</sup>

The symbiotic relationship of Eric Coates with the BBC was a unique partnership. He was involved with the BBC's fiefdom from its very foundations until his death in 1957. Throughout that time the Corporation had given his music an immense promulgation, which until that time had been impossible for any 'serious' composer to achieve. Besides all this, he received much helpful advice from his *fidus Achates*, Stanford Robinson, which enabled his orchestral compositions to be consummately scored. Furthermore, with the frequent high-standards of broadcasts by Robinson and the BBC Theatre Orchestra, a striking proportion of his music was kept in the minds of the listening public. It is impossible to estimate the effects of the adoption of the 'Knightsbridge' March and *Calling All Workers* by the BBC on his career. Perhaps without

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<sup>167</sup> 20/06/1936 *Evening News*. 'This Musical Snobbery.'

'In Town Tonight', Eric Coates may have only remained a moderately successful composer of light music.

## Chapter 5 Commercial Recordings.<sup>1</sup>

*I see the Columbia people occasionally on the occasions when I go along to Abbey Road to make some recordings with the London Symphony Orchestra. Joe Batten is still there although Oscar Preuss usually looks after my sessions for me. Their recordings have made a great advance since the old days and are still improving. What a joy the gramophone is to us and I am sure it must be specially for you.<sup>2</sup>*

Along with the likes of Edward Elgar, Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Rachmaninoff and Albert Ketèlbey, Eric Coates is one of the first composers to have left a significant recorded legacy. Coates' first recording as a conductor of his own music dates from March 1923, though he may well have recorded acoustic gramophone records as a viola player in the 1910s. He continued to perpetuate gramophone records until his death in 1957; his final HMV recordings, made four months before his death, were issued posthumously. His ascent to popularity as a composer ran concurrently with the surge of interest with the gramophone, in particular due to the wholesale adaptation of electrical recording in 1925 by the majority of recording companies, and, subsequently, the two were of mutual benefit to one another. Coates' recorded legacy is considerable, making allowance for the fact that he was, above all, a miniaturist, amounting to almost seven-hours and encompassing the majority of his orchestral music; several pieces composed in the 1930s and early 1940s have been recorded twice. As a gramophone artist, he was highly regarded during his lifetime by both orchestral players and critics, even if they did not applaud his music. *The Gramophone* frequently reviewed the majority of his recordings and he featured in a collage of photographs in '1888-1935 – The Gramophone Scrapbook'<sup>3</sup> and by 1937 had an article devoted to him.<sup>4</sup> Although his

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the recordings used in this chapter have been taken from the many compact disc re-releases of Coates' music, though several have been taken from LP releases and a proportion direct from the 78rpm discs. As such, they have been digitally cleaned and possibly enhanced to make the playback quality closer to that of modern studio recordings. It is, therefore, possible that data collected from these remastered recordings may well be anomalous to that gained from studying the music direct from the record itself.

<sup>2</sup> 10/01/1947 Eric Coates to Hubert Eisdell. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>3</sup> May 1935 *The Gramophone*, 476-477.

<sup>4</sup> Meadmore, W.S. 'Eric Coates.' In *The Gramophone* 15 (1936-1937) 235-237.

gramophone recordings were successful with the gramophone, he was forced to make concessions to his music to enable it to be recorded adequately, this is most notably seen in the drastic cuts made to the music to enable it to fit onto 78rpm discs. In several instances, Coates rewrote passages to fit onto a record and rescored passages to make them more effective for the medium.

Virtually no documentary evidence relating to Coates' views and opinions on the gramophone survives in any collection of his personal papers; very few letters are existent which expound his views on the subject of recording, and a subject which he hardly broaches in his autobiography. EMI and Decca have nothing in their archives relating to his recordings, yet, along with his relationship with the BBC, Coates' gramophone recordings have proved to one of the most enduring factors both in establishing and, more significantly, maintaining his position in the sphere of twentieth century British music. Nearly fifty years after his death, a sizeable proportion of his discography is still commercially available through re-releases on CD.

In England, the gramophone was initially viewed with some unease, but was expeditiously accepted by many. Not only did a significant proportion of the great conductors such as Mengelberg and Nikisch record, but also many composer-conductors. Stravinsky wrote his Piano Sonata in 1924 especially for recording, each movement being bound by the time constraints inherent in such a venture. Such was the faith of the Gramophone Company that Elgar was invited to return to the studio to re-record the majority of his 'acoustic' records in the new electrical method, including complete performances of both his symphonies. The gramophone record was not merely the preserve of 'classical' music: many dance bands of the 1920s and 1930s recorded with the leading gramophone companies. Jack Hylton caused a rumpus in the popular press by moving from HMV to Decca in autumn 1931, where his contract gave him 40,000

ordinary shares in the company; his first recording for Decca sold 300,000 copies.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, light and popular music were staples of the gramophone repertoire: Albert Ketèlbey not only worked for the Gramophone Company as an arranger, but also had a profusion of his early 'light' compositions recorded; Haydn Wood, made a reputation as a conductor as well as recording several of his youthful compositions.<sup>6</sup> Eric Coates made his first sortie into the recording studio as a conductor in 1923 at the tail end of acoustic recordings: all but two of his recordings were made in the superior electrical method.

Like any other composer-conductor, the questions 'are composers the best conductors of their own music' and 'is that what the composer intended in their music?' are always raised. For Coates, unlike Vaughan Williams and Holst, the answers are obvious and unequivocal; he was an excellent executant of his own music. As for any composer-conductor who made recordings in the first-half of the twentieth century there are elements in his records which would not be authentic in a 'live' concert scenario and were made because of the primitive nature of recording. His gramophone recordings may not have been favoured with notoriety or academic discussion as Elgar's, indeed some have been largely forgotten, but due to the extent and quality of his recorded legacy, his gramophone recordings are worthy to be held within the exalted canon of 'the composer conducts'.

Coates was one of the first British composers to take the gramophone seriously and utilize it as an effective musical tool. He was also one of the first composers whose popular appeal and success was cemented by his gramophone records, though other light composers fared well in the sphere of recordings. The record companies took his music seriously, provided him with first-rate orchestras and worked hard to market his recordings, occasionally providing advertisements of his latest releases complete with a

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<sup>5</sup> Nott, James. *Music for the People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Haydn Wood conducted the first commercially available recording of one of Elgar's last pieces, *Mina*, in January 1935. Light Symphony Orchestra, Haydn Wood. HMV, B8282.

photograph of the composer as in *The Times* and *The Gramophone*.<sup>7</sup> For Coates first recording of *The Three Elizabeths* Suite Decca sponsored a full-page advertisement in *The Gramophone*, figure 5.1.

January, 1945

The GRAMOPHONE



*The Three Elizabeths*



suite by E R I C C O A T E S

dedicated by permission to *Her Majesty the Queen*

K 1109/1110 The National Symphony Orchestra: conductor Eric Coates  
(Complete work including purchase tax 13.3d)

1 *Halcyon Days* (Elizabeth Tudor). A lively Overture suggesting the pageantry, gaiety and romance of the Elizabethan times.

2 *Spring in Forfarshire* (Elizabeth of Glamis). Pastoral in character, giving a picture of the peace surrounding the Queen's Scottish home—a shepherd plays his pipe in the fields and a cuckoo's note is heard. The middle flowing section is a fleeting portrait of the Queen herself.

3 *Youth of Britain* (The Princess Elizabeth). A stirring march descriptive of our Princess as leader of the Youth of Britain, with a triumphal conclusion giving a glimpse of a glorious future.

The composer has employed a leit-motif which is heard throughout the Suite, linking together the three described in the music.



on **Decca** records

Figure 5.1 Decca Advertisement of Coates' 1944 Recording of *The Three Elizabeths* Suite.

<sup>7</sup> 15/11/1945 *The Times* Advertisement by Columbia with a photograph of Coates conducting & January 1945 XXII (1944-1945), 1.

As Nott has argued, the gramophone became one of the most fashionable forms of entertainment for an increasing number of people during the interwar period, though less accepted than the cinema or the radio. Though essentially a private domestic item, the gramophone was soon used outside the home, for outings, social situations, at clubs, private dances and at parties; in short the gramophone brought music to many.<sup>8</sup>

The history of 'classical music' recording dates back to 1887, when the pianist Josef Hofmann made probably the first recording in this genre.<sup>9</sup> It was not until 1894 that the first commercial gramophone discs went on sale,<sup>10</sup> until then, the music had been recorded on wax cylinders.<sup>11</sup> It was only with the foundation of the Columbia Gramophone Company in 1902 (and of its English branch in 1909) that the true history of commercial recording was established.<sup>12</sup> Until 1925, all recordings were manufactured via the 'acoustic' method, whereby the vibrations of sound were recorded onto a permanent medium (usually a wax cylinder from which the discs were cut) and were subsequently issued on shellac discs (shellac being made from the excreta of Indian tree insects) to the public.<sup>13</sup> The recording quality of acoustic recordings was not outstanding, the frequency range being limited to only 168-2,000 cycles per second which in effect gave a range of the E below c<sup>1</sup>, to c<sup>4</sup>; the human ear has a range of between 20-20,000Hz.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the aforementioned handicaps of acoustic recordings, orchestras did not record favourably, it was found that fewer strings were more effective. Augustus Stroh devised a violin specifically for acoustic recordings. Due to the poor recording quality of an orchestra, only a modicum of extended 'symphonic' music was recorded in this medium, though composers such as Elgar, and the established orchestras

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<sup>8</sup> Nott: 2002, 13 & 19.

<sup>9</sup> Day, Timothy. *A Century of Recorded Music*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Weber, Jerome. 'History of Recording, I 2-5.' In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie: xv, 8-11. London: Macmillan, 2001, 8. Wax cylinders were issued until the 1910s, though Edison continued issuing cylinders until 1929.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Day: 2000, 9.

were enticed into the studio to record their music, albeit in a heavily reduced, recomposed and rescored format.

The upheaval caused by the new 'electric' method of recording commenced in the spring of 1925, though there had been much experimentation and recordings made before this date. This was a revelation, especially in the fidelity of recordings. The application of valve amplifiers and microphones, which had a far greater recording frequency, was nothing short of a revolution. The frequency range of the new medium was vastly increased to 130-5,000Hz, and, by 1934, the upper limits were raised to 8,000Hz.<sup>15</sup> Initially, the new 'electric' recordings were issued discretely so as not to render the 'back-catalogue' of acoustic records obsolete.

From the mid-1920s, Brobdingnagian proportions of standard orchestral repertoire could at last be convincingly placed on record, though the frequent changes of side were to remain a handicap until the advent of the LP after World War Two. Timothy Day has stated that, by the mid-1930s, much of the standard repertoire was available on disc.<sup>16</sup> The encumbrance of the brevity of the 78rpm discs had led to the emergence, in the 1920s, of a system known as 'auto change' where the record player automatically changed the side of the record. This was further expanded as 'auto coupling' where sides were arranged to enable the record player to play the sides continuously: in a three-disc set, sides one and six would be on disc one, sides two and five on disc two and sides three and four on disc three; Coates' 1948 recordings of the *London* and *London Again* Suites were issued in this format.<sup>17</sup> Even with the advent of the LP era, the 25 minute limit was still a problem for opera and for works such as Stockhausen's *Mantra*. Post-war, the Decca Company produced a new technique known as 'ffrr' (full frequency-range recording) which raised the upper recording frequency limit

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>17</sup> Decca AK 2072-2074.

to 14,000Hz, close to the ear's upper limit.<sup>18</sup> The noted record producer John Culshaw said of 'ffrr': 'Coates's transparent scoring was particularly effective in demonstrating what the new recording technique could provide.'<sup>19</sup> Without doubt, Coates 1949 and 1953 recordings for Decca were an advance in fidelity than his previous recordings from the 1930s; for the first time the recording technology matched and faithfully reproduced Coates' nuances of orchestration efficaciously.

Post-war, the 78rpm disc was being superseded by the vinyl 33 1/3 rpm developed by Columbia; RCA Victor had simultaneously developed a system of producing 45rpm vinyl records. Many of the recorded music libraries continued to produce 78rpm discs until the 1960s (albeit on vinyl rather than shellac to reduce surface noise). The 1950s was the period of establishment of the new vinyl technology in the record industry and for the public. The mid-1950s also marked the arrival of stereo – two channels of sound rather than one. EMI had begun to record in stereo and mono tapes in 1955, but few recordings were issued in stereo.<sup>20</sup>

The playback of 78rpm discs was achieved by means of a steel needle and the signal was amplified (initially by a horn, but an internal speaker proved to be more effective). The discs were rotated at a speed of 78rpm, though initially the speed had varied between 74 and 82rpm.<sup>21</sup> The shellac discs were available in two different sizes: twelve-inch, which afforded 4m30s of playback, though with certain discs this could be nearly 5m30s; and a smaller ten-inch disc which allowed 2m45s of playback, though up to 3m30s was latterly possible.<sup>22</sup> There was a difference in quality of the individual pressings of the record which could result in differences of playback. The 78rpm shellac discs did, however, have a finite life as continual abrasion between the steel needle and

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<sup>18</sup> Day: 2000, 19.

<sup>19</sup> Culshaw, John. *Putting the Record Straight*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1981, 52.

<sup>20</sup> Weber: 2002, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Borwick, John. 'History of Recording, II, 6.' In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, xv, 19-22. London: Macmillan. 2001, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Day: 2000, 6.

shellac caused the record to wear, affecting the quality of playback, and eventually making the record unplayable. In addition to these problems, there was surface noise as a result of friction between the steel stylus and the shellac disc which created the characteristic '78 sound'.

Making a 78rpm record was a precarious and fickle business and there was no guarantee when the disc was cut, that it could, or would, be issued. To record most of the standard repertoire electrically in the 1920-1940s, very few microphones were used; even for the majority of the largest-scale recordings only a maximum of four microphones was the norm (very few recordings exceeded this).<sup>23</sup> The orthodox method for recording an orchestra was to use two moving coil microphones mounted on stands eight feet in front of the centre of the left and right of the strings, and a third microphone (if required) would be placed in front of the woodwind.<sup>24</sup> The sound was recorded onto a wax disc (around one and a quarter inches thick, chocolate brown in colour and one-inch larger than the circumference of the finished disc) which required to be kept warm in a thermostatically controlled cupboard; when the wax was required, it had to be handled with extreme care.<sup>25</sup> The temperature of the wax disc both in the cupboard and on the cutting machine was crucial; the wax needed to be used quickly or else it would cool resulting in a high pitched whine on playback, known as 'cold-wax chattering', usually apparent in the last sixteenth of an inch of the disc.<sup>26</sup> There was also the added possibility that the wax could break during the recording session. The cutting machine, which etched the recording onto the wax, was usually driven by gravity and a weight would have to be wound up to the ceiling before each recording.<sup>27</sup> Once the conductor was ready to

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<sup>23</sup> Griffith, Neville. 'The 78 Era.' In *The Elgar Edition, Volume 3*. EMI: CDS 7 54568 2, 1993, 17.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>27</sup> Columbia, before its amalgamation with the Gramophone Company in 1931, used an electric motor which resulted in a gradual drop in pitch during the playback of the disc, not a problem in itself, but if the work spanned more than one side it resulted in a drastic change in pitch between sides. (*Ibid*, 21).

start recording, the brake was taken off the weight and the cutting arm lowered into place. A vacuum tube removed the swarf (a fine thread of wax created by the cutting arm); care had to be taken by the engineer so that the swarf did not end up under the cutting arm, which would result in excessive surface noise on the final record (the engineer usually achieved this by blowing the swarf in the opposite direction). The cutting machine needed to be contiguous to the studio and at times the temperature required to keep the waxes malleable could be quite unbearable for the performers.

Repeat recording sessions were always discouraged as this doubled costs for the record companies and to prevent the need for this, often more than one cutting machine would be employed simultaneously (as was the case with HMV's recordings with Elgar);<sup>28</sup> the final issues of a set could be created from the matrixes from either cutting machine.<sup>29</sup> When the matrix had been made from the wax disc, (the life-expectancy for matrixes was extremely low due to their fickle nature), the test pressing made from the matrix was usually exposed to a 'wear-test' in which the record was subjected to a repeated number of listenings and had to show no signs of wear. If it did, the matrix was rejected. The bulk of Elgar's electrical recordings of *The Dream of Gerontius* was spurned in this way and only survives in test pressings given to Elgar. In many respects, the quality of 'electric' 78rpm recording was superlative, considering the haphazard and rudimentary methods used to create the record.

78rpm records were expensive, though during the 1930s Decca started reducing the price of records with their budget range; Woolworth's and Marks and Spencer sold records from only sixpence.<sup>30</sup> The average price for a set of two twelve-inch records of Coates' own performances in the 1930s was eight shillings, and for a single ten-inch record, two shillings and sixpence. However, these were not in the most expensive

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<sup>28</sup> Due to the survival of the two different recordings from the same session, it is possible to create a primitive stereo effect.

<sup>29</sup> Griffith: 1993, 22.

<sup>30</sup> Nott: 2002, 3.

stratum of discs. Considering this price gave at most 18 minutes of music in the former case, and 6 in the latter, the records contained little music for the pronounced financial outlay, in comparison with the later LPs and CDs. Coates' HMV records were not released on their premium 'red label' (featuring such artists as Elgar and Kreisler) but on the 'plum label' which was slightly cheaper and an important fact in increasing sales of his recordings, though he was not on the lower price 'magenta label' reserved for light music.<sup>31</sup>

However, gramophone recordings, whilst providing a certain level of income for the composers involved, hardly provided enough to compensate for the falling sales of sheet music. In a Gramophone Record Enquiry held by the Board of Trade in 1928, Haydn Wood informed the meeting in April that he received as much from the sale of one copy of sheet music as he did for the sale of seventeen records.<sup>32</sup>

Quite how and why Coates became associated with the commercial recording industry is unclear. Whether he was invited by Columbia and HMV to make recordings or if he wrote to Columbia to ask if they could record his music is not known. Presumably by 1923, the date of his first gramophone recording, he had become suitably pre-eminent as a composer and conductor of his own music to warrant a gramophone company to undertake the necessary financial outlay to record his music. Surely, when he became involved in the gramophone industry he must have known how important the gramophone was and would become. He also chose, or was selected, by the premium gramophone companies, as before the War, Columbia and the Gramophone Company held over half the total sales of gramophone records.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> When the Temple Church Choir and Ernest Lough recorded Mendelssohn's *Hear My Prayer* in 1926, the organist, George Thalben-Ball pushed for the record to be released on the 'plum label' rather than the 'red label' which HMV wanted to release the disc on, as a result of Thalben-Ball's persistence, the disc became a best seller because of its price.

<sup>32</sup> 04/04/1928 *The Times* 'Less Sheet Music Sold'.

<sup>33</sup> Nott: 2002, 28-29.

The earliest surviving documentary evidence of Coates' involvement in recording his own music is from 1936 over the production of a disc of the *Saxo-Rhapsody*, a work which he was none too keen to compose in the first place.<sup>34</sup> The *Saxo-Rhapsody* appears to have been recorded on the impetus of the works' dedicatee, the saxophonist Sigurd Rascher, though Coates was left to make the arrangements with HMV.<sup>35</sup> Rascher was keen to re-record the work with the composer in 1954, but, alas, the proposal was never realised, probably because the work had never established itself in the slender repertoire of saxophone concerti.<sup>36</sup>

It was not always easy for Coates to have his works recorded, he struggled to get a recording of his *London Suite* in 1933 and it was only through his persistence that the Suite was recorded after the *Two Symphonic Rhapsodies*.<sup>37</sup> After the nail-biting recording session and adoption as the signature tune to 'In Town Tonight', Columbia had to work overtime to press enough records to keep up with demand.<sup>38</sup>

Despite his popularity and burgeoning reputation as a composer by 1942, certain difficulties arose in the recording of several of Coates' newer pieces. After the first performance of his *Four Centuries Suite* in 1942, by the BBC Theatre Orchestra, he tried to entice the Gramophone Company to record the work with the BBC forces.<sup>39</sup> After much contention, he had to admit defeat when he wrote to Stanford Robinson the following month.

The Gramophone Company have got themselves into a fearful mess, as you know, through not being long-sighted enough as to lay in a stock of recording material when they saw the war was inevitable. They have always run their business like a lot of amateurs and thought that cheap fox-trot stuff would carry them through any crisis and I very much doubt whether even a war will teach them sense. I'm afraid that they

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<sup>34</sup> Coates, Eric. *Suite in Four Movements*. London: Heinemann, 1953, 229.

<sup>35</sup> 18/11/1936 Sigurd Rascher to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm* Coates archive, box 186.

<sup>36</sup> 28/04/1954 Eric Coates to Sigurd Rascher. *GB-STHprivate*. Several concerti by light composer have failed to establish themselves in the repertoire, including: Ronald Binge *Concerto for E-flat Alto Saxophone* and Ernest Tomlinson *Concerto for 5* for a quintet of saxophones and orchestra.

<sup>37</sup> Coates: 1953, 218.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 220.

<sup>39</sup> 22/07/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

are hopeless. The difficulty is producing the records in any sense of numbers but personally I think it would be well worth while to get a recording done [of *The Four Centuries Suite*] even if we were limited to, say, a hundred pressings just for broadcasting purposes. We are now waiting to see what can be done to get a recording at all and I will get in touch with you as soon as I have any news.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, he struggled to get the Gramophone Company to release his 1944 recordings of *Salute the Soldier* and *The Eighth Army Marches* after he had recorded them with the LSO. Writing to Lord Kindersley of the National Savings Committee, who had been responsible for him composing *Salute the Soldier* March in 1944, he lamented:

My only regret is that the Gramophone Company are not sufficiently interested in the National Effort to see fit to issue for sale my recording with the London Symphony Orchestra. I had hoped to be able to hand over a substantial sum from the sale of this recording as well as from my sheet music sales to the Army Benevolent Funds but the Gramophone Company seem to be more interested in importing matrices of “swing-music” from the States to stamp over here in this country than using their resources for the National ends...

...All my efforts to get the Gramophone Company to release this record to the general public have failed and I understand that Sir Harold Mackintosh’s efforts have been equally unsuccessful.<sup>41</sup>

Eventually, both the marches were released as a ‘special issue’.<sup>42</sup> These setbacks probably enticed him to record with Decca from 1944 until 1953, with only occasional flirtations with Columbia.

Even when he had been able to persuade a record company to produce a record of his latest compositions, he occasionally encountered difficulties with the orchestra. Austin Coates remembers one of his father’s gramophone sessions being vexatious, but with the composer always in control:

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<sup>40</sup> 17/08/1942 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>41</sup> 30/04/1944 Eric Coates to Lord Kindersley. *GB-Lcm* Coates archive, box 186.

<sup>42</sup> He was further embarrassed by the amount of money (£105.6.9) from royalties he received, he was able to donate to the Army Benevolent Fund, which he attributed to the reluctance for the Gramophone Company to issue his recording of *Salute the Soldier*. (05/12/1944 Eric Coates to Lord Kindersley. *GB-STHprivate*.)

Recording sessions were the worst, because of the time factor[;] I remember one in 1937 sitting with one of the directors of Chappell's, the music publisher, the two of us perspiring with anxiety, watching the clock and listening to my father dealing with a desperately stolid brass section. "Why don't you take your coat off?" I whispered to my companion. "Don't be silly" he whispered back; "I'm sopping wet".<sup>43</sup>

The recording of 'Rhythm' (*Four Centuries Suite*) in 1944 for Decca was one of the few occasions that Coates mentions a recording session in his autobiography.

Where jazz is concerned, the tendency over here, on the part of some members of a Symphony Orchestra, is to sit back and smile at something which they think is beneath their notice and needs no rehearsal – so for the first few minutes of the session I had the gravest doubts as to whether I should achieve a recording, for some players showed only too openly their desire to fool about. However, after explaining at some length that the movement was intended to be as a joke and that the effect of a good story was spoilt if you laughed in the telling, they entered into the spirit of the thing and gave me a performance with which I do not think Whiteman could have found much fault.<sup>44</sup>

Whatever his experiences with the orchestra, he usually managed to coax a fine performance from them, despite their own personal antipathy towards his music.

Coates' career as a recording artist spanned from 1923 until 1957, his relationship with the gramophone runs in tandem with his relationship and career with the BBC. His recorded output spans acoustic recordings, early electrical recordings to the post-war Decca 'ffrr' recordings and, in the 1950s, LPs (with his 1953 recording of the *Three Elizabeths and Four Centuries Suite*), the ten-inch 33 1/3 rpm recordings of both the *London* suites, and his final recordings issued on both a single 45rpm disc and two 78rpm discs. After his experiences with acoustic recording in 1923 and 1924, Coates must have realised the potential of the gramophone record, especially with the increased quality of electrical recording, which burst onto the market the following year. His gramophone career began in March 1923 with both the Columbia and Vocalion companies, though he remained with Columbia, though making several sides for HMV until 1944 when he cut

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<sup>43</sup> 27/03/1991 Austin Coates to John Itter [Lyrita Records]. *GB-ILMprivate*.

<sup>44</sup> Coates: 1953, 239-240.

his first sides for Decca. However, he still recorded for Columbia and Decca; the latter followed the former's example of issuing overseas recordings of his music in the 1940s. The 1950s saw him record for a variety of new companies including Parlophone and Pye, though for his final sessions he returned to HMV. One of the most popular recordings made during this period was not one he made, but a recording of *The Dam Busters March* by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force<sup>45</sup> which sold over 200,000 copies;<sup>46</sup> the March was in the 'Hit-Parade' for over thirty-six consecutive weeks.<sup>47</sup>

In Coates' gramophone legacy, he recorded a preponderance of his own compositions, several more than once. There are, however, certain key omissions in his recorded legacy which, in themselves, are curious anomalies. He did not record such cardinal extended youthful works as: *Miniature Suite*, *From the Countryside Suite*, *Two Light Syncopated Pieces*; or the mature extended pieces *The Selfish Giant Phantasy*, *The Four Ways Suite*, *The Jester at the Wedding* (in its entirety),<sup>48</sup> *The Enchanted Garden* and *Sweet Seventeen* concert walse. Among the concise entr'actes and marches that he did not commit to disc were: *Entr'acte à la Gavotte*, *The Mermaid*, *Idyll*, *Mirage*, *Under the Stars*, and *Lazy Night*, along with the marches *Over to You*, *Holborn* and *Rhodesia*; or the military band march, *Men of Trent*.<sup>49</sup> In addition, he made no endeavour to record any of his unpublished compositions such as the early *Ballad for String Orchestra*, *Coquette* or the ballet *Snowdrop*. Certainly Coates did not hold any affection or enthusiasm for his unpublished works. Writing to Stanford Robinson, he dismissed pieces thus: 'I don't think I have anything in manuscript which is worth playing.'<sup>50</sup> Within his recorded legacy as a whole, there are certain pieces which he, justifiably, had to record more than once such as *By the Sleepy*

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<sup>45</sup> Central Band of the RAF, A.E. Sims HMV, B10877.

<sup>46</sup> Martland, Peter. *Since Records Began*. London: B.T. Batsford, 1997, 230. Martland erroneously cites Coates as the conductor of this record.

<sup>47</sup> 16/06/1955 *Record Master*.

<sup>48</sup> Though a 1943 BBC broadcast of the complete ballet survives. *GB-Lbl*/National Sound Archive, CDA 6277 and T6277.

<sup>49</sup> See Appendix 1 for complete list.

<sup>50</sup> 09/10/1932 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

*Lagoon*, 'Knightsbridge' (though three out his five recordings of the March are complete renderings of the *London Suite*; the two single recordings were for American export), yet he only recorded such seminal marches as *Calling All Workers* and *The Dam Busters* once, in 1940 and 1955 respectively. There were several pieces for which Coates had a special fondness and thus recorded frequently during his career. A case in point was the valsette *Wood Nymphs* which he had composed in 1917 and which was a work he always held in high esteem since it had been one of his first popular successes. He recorded it in 1926, 1935, 1948 and 1957. Looking back, in 1952, he wrote of the piece:

This valsette never failed to obtain an encore. Whenever we played it, a second play-through was looked upon as a forgone conclusion, and one occasion we [New Queen's Hall Light Orchestra] had to repeat it three times, making it four performances in all. So often was this piece asked for that Maclean [Conductor of the Orchestra] said to me he really thought the orchestra could play it blindfolded.<sup>51</sup>

His interpretation of all four recorded performances of *Wood Nymphs* hardly vary despite the differing time constraints. *The Three Men Suite* had its initial recording in 1935, but Coates and Decca saw the value in a new recording, exploiting Decca's 'ffrr' technology, in 1949. Furthermore, it is certainly intriguing that his more ambitious suites *The Four Centuries* and *The Three Elizabeths* both obtained two complete performances on record, especially when interest in Coates' music was beginning to wane.

One work which he appears to have contemplated recording was *The Enchanted Garden*, though it is impossible to date when he was going to record the work as the project foundered. Even so, he made a written plan as to where to place the side changes and what would need to be omitted to make an effective and musical two disc, twelve-inch set:<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Coates: 1953, 188.

<sup>52</sup> Undated. GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box 192.

### The Enchanted Garden

1st record	from beginning to 18	4.10
2nd record	from 18 to 43, with cut from 23 to 26.	4:05
3rd record	from 43 to 75 with cut from 58 to 60.	4.05
4th record	from 75 to the finish	4.00
		<u>16.20</u>

[All of the above is crossed out]

1st record	from beginning to 18	4.10 [pencil 4.20]
2nd record	from 18 to 23, cut to 26, finish at 43 [43 amended to 42 by pencil]	4.05 [pencil 4.20]
3rd record	from 43 [pencil 42] to 58, cut to 60, finish at 75 [pencil 71]	4.05 [pencil 4.10]
4th record	from 75 [pencil 71] to the end	4.00
		<u>16.20</u>

Unfortunately, Coates never recorded the ballet and its first recording was, probably, by Stanford Robinson and the Pro Arte Orchestra in 1957.<sup>53</sup> This plan is significant not only for the data it yields on *The Enchanted Garden* but that he worked out such details before the recording sessions; that is, he knew what alterations had to be made before he recorded a piece in the studio and he planned these in detail, in advance.

There were numerous works that had to wait a number of years before Coates recorded them. *The Three Bears* phantasy, which was composed in 1926, was compelled to tarry until 1945 before it was recorded under the composer's direction on the Columbia label; the phantasy was subsequently recorded three years later by Decca. Quite why the phantasy had to wait so long is unclear; the work had been one of his most piquant and voguish works and surely Coates must have been piqued by the absence of the

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<sup>53</sup> *Tribute to Eric Coates*. The Pro Arte Orchestra, Stanford Robinson. Pye LP: CMP33004, 1958.

'composer conducts' in the catalogue. The work may not have been initially recorded for technical reasons, but when he recorded *Cinderella* in 1935 it would surely have been a favourable time to remedy this. In all probability, the availability of Jack Hylton's recording of *The Three Bears*,<sup>54</sup> (made on 30 December 1926, shortly after the completion of the work)<sup>55</sup> or Basil Cameron's with the Hastings Municipal Orchestra<sup>56</sup> (Cameron always maintained that *he* conducted the work far better than the composer),<sup>57</sup> there was perhaps no market for a version of the phantasy conducted by the composer. Certainly the majority of the gramophone companies must have realised the commercial success that Eric Coates and his music would elicit for them. Why else would Decca sponsor new recordings of the *London*, *London Again* and *The Three Men* suites (all three very much part of the 1930s era) with the New Symphony Orchestra in 1948-1949 or issue a three-disc set for exclusive export to the United States earlier in 1948? This was further borne out by the Decca Company sponsoring a recording of *The Three Bears* in 1949, only three years after Columbia, and the further financing of brand new recordings of *The Three Elizabeths* and *The Four Centuries* suites in 1953, as part of Decca's celebration of British music for Coronation year.<sup>58</sup> Surely by 1953, Coates' music was suffering from a downturn in popularity and such a recording of two of his lesser known works was a substantial gesture of confidence on Decca's part.

Not only did Coates record a large proportion of his music more than once, but a myriad of orchestras and conductors also recorded his work, a sure sign that it was an unequivocally popular success. No doubt, to underwrite the significant costs incurred by producing the premiere recording of Vaughan Williams' London Symphony in 1936 (on

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<sup>54</sup> Jack Hylton and his Orchestra. HMV, C1309.

<sup>55</sup> Rust, Brian & Walker, Edward. *British Dance Bands 1912-1939*. London: Storyville Publications, 1973, 164.

<sup>56</sup> Hastings Municipal Orchestra, Basil Cameron. Decca, K 515.

<sup>57</sup> Coates: 1953, 144.

<sup>58</sup> 1953 Decca Catalogue of British Music. *GB-STHprivate*.

ten sides of 78rpm discs),<sup>59</sup> Henry Wood and the New Queen's Hall Orchestra recorded a two-disc set of music of Coates' music for Decca.<sup>60</sup> The recording of the *London Suite* and *London Bridge* march on a two-disc set must rank as one of the finest performances of the Suite on record, especially of 'Covent Garden'.<sup>61</sup> Not only had Wood been a champion of Coates' youthful works in the concert hall, but he also made the first recording of any of his music, *Four Old English Songs*. Wood recorded these four songs, as piano accompanist, with his first wife, Olga, who herself had a special affection for them, in June 1909, shortly before their Promenade Concert premiere on 16 September.<sup>62</sup> Austin Coates remembers, perhaps fallaciously, the impact of the gramophone within the Coates' family:

It ['Stonecracker John', though Austin Coates is surely referring to the Wood's recording of *Four Old English Songs*] also went onto that still wonderful novelty (the year was 1909) of the gramophone record. Dr Coates in Hucknall, still really rather worried about his son, was telephoned by an excited neighbour. "Don't say anything Dr Coates," he shouted, "just listen." The neighbour then put his telephone speaker into the mouth of his gramophone, set the needle on the record and thus my grandfather heard his son's first indication of 'getting somewhere'.<sup>63</sup>

Coates' own recordings with orchestras usually tend to have a pattern to them; when he recorded a three-movement suite of his own (*The Four Ways*, *Jester at the Wedding* and *The Four Centuries* were the only suites he did not compose in three movements) he would record each movement on a separate side, leaving one spare side for a short entr'acte or other such morsel. The only exceptions to this were his 1933 recording of the *London Suite* and 1937 recording of *Summer Days Suite*; both were recorded on two sides; the first two movements curtailed to fit on the first-side and the third movement

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<sup>59</sup> Ralph Vaughan Williams. *London Symphony*. Queen's Hall Orchestra, Henry Wood. Decca, X114-118.

<sup>60</sup> Jacobs, Arthur, *Henry J. Wood: Maker of the Proms*. London: Methuen, 1994, 285.

<sup>61</sup> *London Suite* and *London Bridge* March. Queen's Hall Orchestra, Henry Wood. Decca, K 8000-8001.

<sup>62</sup> Mrs Henry J. Wood (soprano), Henry J. Wood (piano), 'Orpheus and his Lute' and 'Under the Greenwood Tree'. Gramophone and Typewriter Company, GC 3835 & 'Who is Sylvia?' and 'It was a Lover and his Lass' Gramophone and Typewriter Company 03162. These songs were issued on single-sided discs.

<sup>63</sup> 05/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. GB-Lbl/National Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA 0396.

given in full on the reverse. This method of recording his suites also fitted in with his long-standing contract with Chappell to produce one extended work and two smaller works each year.<sup>64</sup> In addition to these sets of records, Coates also produced several discs of his extended single-movement works, such as *Saxo-Rhapsody* or *The Three Bears Phantasy*, which usually occupied two sides of a record. In the case of his 1935 recording of the *Cinderella Phantasy*, he recorded the phantasy on a two disc set and had to break the piece into three convenient sections; the fourth side was filled with *By the Sleepy Lagoon*. Occasionally, he produced a disc devoted to two of his shorter pieces such as his 1936 recording of *A Song of Loyalty* and 'Song by the Way' (*From Meadow to Mayfair Suite*).

Such was the importance of the gramophone that numerous works received their first performance in the recording studio. Works such as *The Three Elizabeths* and *Calling All Workers* were performed and recorded before their official public premiere on BBC radio; the premiere and recording session of *London Bridge* were recorded on film for posterity by Pathe.<sup>65</sup> This enabled listeners to purchase the recordings shortly after the work's first performance. During the 1930s and early 1940s, most pieces that Coates composed were recorded within two years of their composition. Several pieces from the beginning of his career as a composer were also recorded at this juncture. A notable exception to this rule was the concert valse, *Dancing Nights*, composed in 1931, which was held in abeyance until 1945 before it received a recording under the composer. In a letter to Stanford Robinson in April 1945, after Robbie had included the valse in a broadcast, and shortly before the composer recorded the valse, he lamented, 'I was glad "Dancing Nights" was included in your programmes – it has not had many performances up to date (perhaps the sky-scraping in the 'cellos frightens them!!!)'.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> 12/10/1938 Chappells Contract. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186. This is the only contract to have survived and appears, by the works that Coates produced, to have been in effect for some years.

<sup>65</sup> 28/05/1934 *A Camera Interview with Eric Coates – The Famous Composer and Conductor*. 1096.24. [www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com).

<sup>66</sup> 22/04/1945 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

Despite the difficulties in getting certain pieces recorded, the 1930s was an illustrious and fulgent decade for him, cutting many superb discs. This was not only due to his performances, but in the advances of technology of the period, where the clarity and fidelity of the recordings increased dramatically, as his sole recordings of the *Cinderella* phantasy and *Saxo-Rhapsody* (with Sigurd Rascher) testify. He recalled in 1937 the recording session for the latter,

For its recording Sigurd Rascher and the London Symphony Orchestra were engaged – the first time a saxophone work has ever been recorded with a symphony orchestra. When it was being played in the studio the whole staff turned up in their white coats, their faces a study, to hear what all the noise was about.<sup>67</sup>

In 1944 he recorded his two most complex suites to date, *The Four Centuries* and *The Three Elizabeths*. Coates believed that the recording session of ‘Rhythm’ from *The Four Centuries*,

...was the first time that a recognised Symphony Orchestra [National Symphony Orchestra] in this country had departed from the ‘straight’ and gone over to the ‘dance’, but it was remarkable (after half an hour’s rehearsing to become acquainted with the unfamiliar medium) how quickly the musicians picked up the style.<sup>68</sup>

Thanks to the success of the song ‘Sleepy Lagoon’ in America, Columbia decided to release, for export only, a recording of the *London Bridge* and ‘Knightsbridge’ marches for overseas sales; the session took place with the LSO on the same day as the recording of the *London Calling* and *Television* marches, which were themselves issued for both home and abroad audiences. Two years later, London (the export branch of Decca) invited Coates to record three ten-inch 78rpm discs for sale in America. His choice of programme represents his standpoint on programming, featuring early as well as recently composed pieces, and including the perennial favourites ‘Knightsbridge’, *Wood Nymphs* and *By the Sleepy Lagoon* (quite a contrast to his previous recordings from 1935 and 1940) with *A Song of Loyalty* in its purely orchestral guise (a work he may still have been trying

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<sup>67</sup> Meadmore, W.S. ‘Eric Coates.’ In *The Gramophone* 15 (1936-1937) 235-237, 237.

<sup>68</sup> Coates: 1953, 240.

to establish in the repertoire) and 'Bird Songs at Eventide', curiously not the *Second Symphonic Rhapsody* but an orchestral transcription of the song by H.M. Higgs; the song was popular in the USA, although it was never going to be another 'Sleepy Lagoon'. The releases of his music to the USA were up to the usual high standards of execution of the British releases.

By 1950, because of the Decca 'ffrr' and the revolutions of the vinyl LP, his music could be recorded perfectly and the limitations of 4m30s vanquished. However, in his final sessions in 1955 and August 1957, most pieces contain hasty reductions of the musical text. It seems surprising that at a period when technology was at its peak that he harks back to the whilom traditions of the 1930s.

All of the recording companies that Coates worked with ensured that he had a first-rate orchestra. Only one review in *The Gramophone* criticised the orchestral performance, and this was over his only recording for Vocalion; the intonation of the woodwind and strings was questioned.<sup>69</sup> During the 1920s and 1930s, many of the leading orchestras, particularly the LSO and LPO, were impecunious and were frequently in the recording studio because of the remuneration it brought.<sup>70</sup> When recording light music, these orchestras often disguised their identities on the record sleeve as 'Symphony Orchestra' or 'Light Symphony Orchestra' to disassociate themselves from the genre of light music. The orchestras were happy to be associated with 'high art' but when it came to the 'lower art' of light music they were pleased to accept the money it brought, but wanted to be disassociated from the finished article. In a review of Coates' own recording of *Cinderella* of 1935, Roger Wimbush wrote in *The Gramophone*: "The playing is so fine that I may be pardoned for suggesting that the band is none other than the L.P.O., which I understand must hide its identity when playing light music in deference

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<sup>69</sup> May 1924 *The Gramophone*. 'Review of *Joyous Youth Suite* and 'At the Dance'.'

<sup>70</sup> Morrison, Richard. *Orchestra. The LSO: A Century of Triumph and Turbulence*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004, 81. During the 1930s, the standard of the LSO was in decline and the LPO, with whom Coates made the majority of his records in the 1930s, were very much the premier ensemble. (Ibid.)

to that peculiarly English snobbery...<sup>71</sup> Often it is only possible to tell by the true identity of the orchestras on Coates' records by looking through the recording sheets; the American arm of Columbia was often less inhibited and would occasionally reveal the true identity of the ensemble of session players, as in the case of the 1933 recordings of *Two Symphonic Rhapsodies* and the *London Suite*.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the identity of these orchestras was often revealed in *The Gramophone*. In his review of Coates' own 1935 recording of *The Three Men Suite*, with the Light Symphony Orchestra (actually the LPO), Wimbush commented:

There is nothing "light" about this orchestra, and a tipster would probably bet a considerable sum that it is none other than the London Philharmonic led by Paul Beard. If this is correct, here is a glaring instance of musical snobbery. Some time ago, Sir Thomas Beecham shocked a sedate "Phil" audience with *William Tell*, and it would do everybody good if this were followed by Mr. Coates' *Knightsbridge March*, also recorded by our greatest orchestra.<sup>73</sup> All Mr. Coates' work is thoroughly musicianly and there is no better orchestrator in England. *The Three Men* took some two months to score, and these records are magnificent.<sup>74</sup>

Coates definitely fared much better than his colleagues in the field of light music, and as Wimbush argued in *The Gramophone*, 'It is a strange paradox that the country which has produced so much excellent music in this vein should be incapable of appreciating it or granting it the playing it deserves. Mr. Coates is lucky to have a competent orchestra at his disposal...<sup>75</sup> In a review of a recording of Sullivan's *Iolanthe* Overture by the BBC Theatre Orchestra,<sup>76</sup> the reviewer commented: 'this is a significant recording. With the exception of Mr Eric Coates, the composers of good light music have seldom had their works recorded in their original instrumentation. For this way, Sullivan is an unknown

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<sup>71</sup> December 1935 *The Gramophone*, 278. [Review by Roger Wimbush]

<sup>72</sup> LPO Discography, 21. *GB-L/po*

<sup>73</sup> Ironically, the LPO had been responsible for the premiere recording of the *London Suite* in 1933.

<sup>74</sup> March 1935 *The Gramophone*, 391. [Review by Roger Wimbush].

<sup>75</sup> December 1935 *The Gramophone*, 278. [Review by Roger Wimbush].

<sup>76</sup> Overture to *Iolanthe*, BBC Theatre Orchestra, Stanford Robinson, Decca K 825.

composer.<sup>77</sup> Coates was indeed fortunate always to have a reasonable sized orchestra available to him at his recording sessions (so to was Haydn Wood on his rare ventures into the recording studio); though for Coates' 1952 Parlophone recording of the *London Suites* he was given a sub-section of forty-six players drawn from the LPO;<sup>78</sup> even for his final recording session, an *ad hoc* orchestra, titled 'Eric Coates and his Orchestra' was a competent ensemble able to do full justice to his music despite the bowdlerisations to the music. Certainly when it came to the recordings of light music, Coates had nothing to cavil about as all of his performances were peerless. There are very few examples of wrong notes, (considering the limited ability to retake pieces, or sections and no editing facilities), though these do occur, cf. four bars after L in the 1933 recording of *Cinderella* by the trumpets and a split note by the horns in the third bar of his 1934 recording of the march *London Bridge*.

By the 1930s, Coates had reached his apogee as a composer, especially with the fame afforded him by 'In Town Tonight'. There was significant lucrative value in making commercial recordings of his music for the record companies and during this period there would be a race, usually between Columbia and HMV, to be the first company to issue any new piece to the general public. Coates usually, though not exclusively, recorded for Columbia, and Joseph Lewis for HMV and the two vied for greater sales. In 1936, the *London Again Suite* received its first performance under Stanford Robinson on 26 April. Coates recorded the work four days later for Columbia. Columbia's rival company, HMV, rushed out a performance (of only the first two movements) with the Palladium Orchestra conducted by Richard Crean,<sup>79</sup> rather than the usual ensemble under

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<sup>77</sup> September 1936 *The Gramophone*, 'Review of Overture to *Iolanthe*', 199.

<sup>78</sup> LPO Discography, 93. *GB-Lpo*

<sup>79</sup> *London Again* ('Oxford Street' and 'Langham Place'). Palladium Orchestra, Richard Crean. HMV, C2841.

Lewis. The two recordings were reviewed in the June edition of *The Gramophone* together.<sup>80</sup>

### The New Eric Coates Suite

Here we have Mr. Coates's new Suite. *Oxford Street* is the successor to the inspiring *In Town To-night*: not quite so fresh, perhaps but so happy a stroke is rarely brought off twice. The composer's conducting (Col.) makes this slightly crisper than Mr. Crean's which, however, is in good theatre style... I think his recording [Coates'] gets more juice out of the music than H.M.V.'s. [Crean's]

The Columbia records have two additional pieces sweetly, slickly recorded ['Mayfair' to complete the suite and *By the Tamarisk*]. The waltz ['Mayfair'] shows how the English composers of light music fit into the great succession. *The Tamarisk* is of a popular, intermezzo type.<sup>81</sup>

Coates' gramophone records often paid handsome dividends with the BBC. Whilst the BBC placed its emphasis firmly on live music, it periodically programmed recitals of gramophone records both on the national and regional stations. As such, Coates' own recordings of his music gained frequent exposure both on programmes devoted to it, or as last minute 'fillers' between programmes. The array and *omnium gatherum* nature of his own recordings also enabled the BBC frequently to programme his music for use as signature tunes to the Corporation's feature programmes. Had it not been for Coates' own recording of the *London Suite*, which Maschwitz sent for from the BBC Gramophone Library and used on 'In Town Tonight', that work would promptly have been forgotten.<sup>82</sup> The exposure that Coates received through the usage of his music as signature tunes on the BBC's networks probably led to increased sales of his gramophone recordings and increased recordings by a multitude of ensembles. When the BBC broadcast the recording session of the *London Bridge* March in 1934, Columbia seized immediately on the marketing potential of this and advertised the recording 'as the

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<sup>80</sup> June 1936 *The Gramophone*, 20. [Review by R.M.A.]

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Duncan, Peter. *In Town Tonight*. London: Werner Laurie, 1951, 9.

one listeners heard being recorded on 'In Town Tonight', the ultimate sales' ploy courtesy of the BBC.<sup>83</sup>

During the years of the mid-1930s, 1940s and 1950s, the BBC became one of Coates' most influential patrons, although the Columbia Record Company also acted as a significant benefactor for him when he was establishing himself as a composer of note in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Not only did Columbia sponsor his recordings in 1923 and 1926, but commissioned him in 1929-1930 to compose a *Symphonic Rhapsody* based on Richard Rodger's song 'With a Song in my Heart', which was his only arrangement of another composer's work. The song was fairly new, having been introduced in New York in March 1929 and imported into England in March the following year.<sup>84</sup> As part of the agreement Coates assigned the copyright to Columbia (the only time he ever relinquished his rights as an orchestral composer), which was perhaps why the work was never published, though it enjoyed numerous performances (ensembles borrowed the parts from Columbia).<sup>85</sup> Writing to Reginald Burston at the BBC after a rare performance of the *Symphonic Rhapsody* in 1939, Coates recalled that he made the transcription for an orchestra of 78 players.<sup>86</sup> After the favourable outcome of *Symphonic Rhapsody after Richard Rodgers*, Columbia invited Coates to apply similar treatment to three of his most popular songs, resulting in two additional rhapsodies, in 1933; the first on 'I Pitch My Lonely Caravan at Night' and the second, on both 'Bird Songs at Eventide' and 'I Heard You Singing'.<sup>87</sup> Compton Mackenzie writing in *The Gramophone* reviewed the rhapsodies thus:

Eric Coates treats his own tunes flippantly at times in these rhapsodies, so I may candidly say that they suggest an entertainer presenting Coates's popular songs "as Wagner might have written them." The suggestion is of a super-entertainer, for Coates's treatment is fully assured, stylish, effective, even masterly and well scored. The results will delight all who admire Coates's songs. But the whole record seems to

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<sup>83</sup> June 1934 *The Gramophone*, 12.

<sup>84</sup> Lea, Edward. *The Best of Rodgers and Hart*. London, Chappell, 1975, 7.

<sup>85</sup> January 1940 PRS Memorandum. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

<sup>86</sup> 20/12/1939 Eric Coates to Reginald Burston. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 2, 1936-1939.

<sup>87</sup> Coates: 1953, 218.

me characteristic of what is perhaps one of the chief decadent traits of to-day, a trait for which jazz and cinema are very largely responsible: the pretence that something hollow and/or worthless, even definitely bad is something very big and important.<sup>88</sup>

This was one of the few ‘negative’ reviews that Coates received in *The Gramophone*, and even with this review, the negative comment was not directed at his music, but at the cinema which had had its influences upon light music. It was what the *Symphonic Rhapsodies* represented and what they were a culmination of rather than their musicality, which was praised by Mackenzie. Certainly Mackenzie’s comments about the importance of the cinema on light music were subsequently echoed by Sidney Torch in 1949 when he blamed the cinema for the brevity and lack of exposure of light music.<sup>89</sup>

The initial reviews Coates attracted in *The Gramophone* were initially hostile to his music, but always praised the quality of the recordings and often the competence of the ensemble. In a review of Coates’ first recording of *Summer Days* in 1926, the reviewer commented:

The colours in the Coates Suite... are the chief thing to enjoy. The ideas follow a little too much on the lines of those in the best work of our chief composer of light music, to be quite exciting for their own sake. It is all gracefully done and that satisfies us, if we are not too exigent about the music of this calibre. The orchestra wears its well-known air of Saturday-afternoon gaiety, in which we faintly but clearly perceive the influence of the mind of the audience, dwelling lovingly on the thoughts of tea and crumpets in far Streatham, after the show. “If crumpets be the food of such, play on.”<sup>90</sup>

But in a review of the same work eleven years later, in a different performance, the reviewer believed:

Mr. Coates cheered me, writing just as Summer Time was coming in, and Spring rains coming down. Now that Edward German is dead, it is pleasant to know we still have composers able to do six-eighty tunes almost ingeniously – ingeniously as he did in his old six-eighties, and all his life. The recording seems to me to be entirely amiable and

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<sup>88</sup> May 1933 *The Gramophone*, 476. [Reviewed by Compton Mackenzie]

<sup>89</sup> 25/03/1949 *Radio Times* ‘Sidney Torch Ventures an Opinion or Two.’ In ‘The Spotlight Turns on Light Music by Douglas Lawrence.’

<sup>90</sup> February 1927 *The Gramophone*. ‘*Summer Days Suite*’, 374.

seemly – warm enough without losing vitality, a shade larger than life in solo work, but true tonal type. It is pleasant to muse, when hearing the excellent waltz, on manifold resources of this diversion, so dear to us, and now forlorn, among modern dances. The composer takes it briskly. I like my waltzes a trifle more spaciouly timed; but that just shows what an old-timer I am.<sup>91</sup>

The two reviews mark a significant change in stance on the musical views of his position within the field of light music and also the value attached to his music. The critic Roger Wimbush (who penned Coates' obituary tribute in the magazine) usually produced more enthusiastic reviews than the magazine's other critics. Nevertheless, Coates' pieces occasionally met with a negative review when they did not deserve to. A case in point was his recording of the *Saxo-Rhapsody* in 1937 which *The Gramophone* described as:

The beginning music here is mildly early-twentieth-century of a palish Debussyian brand: not as fresh as Mr. Coates can write... The *Allegro* sets Mr. Rascher swimming in the less oily seas of the mildly heroic, but this is trite pattern-music indeed. Mr. Coates has done this far better. The music, save for a hint of jazz monotony sounds like early stuff. The soloist does not get the best of chances. I wonder if this family of instruments was wise ever to leave its natural home, the military band, where it was born to serve, and in a measure to shine. We can admire Mr. Rasher's capital control and tone, without feeling he has much that is worth playing. It is certainly nice to hear how he seems to filter away the more vulgar part of the saxophone's glutinous quality.<sup>92</sup>

The review seems intent on negative criticism because of Coates' desire to write a concertante work for the saxophone. However, the playing of Rascher and accompaniment by the LSO is exquisite and must rank as one of Coates' finest gramophone records.

During the 1920s and 1930s Coates' music was recorded by many of the popular dance bands of the day: Jack Hylton performed and recorded Coates' *The Selfish Giant* and *The Three Bears* phantasies<sup>93</sup> (both arranged by Leighton Lucas) in addition to 'Rose of

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<sup>91</sup> May 1937 *The Gramophone*. 'Summer Days Suite', 518.

<sup>92</sup> March 1937 *The Gramophone*. 'Saxo-Rhapsody', 427.

<sup>93</sup> *Selfish Giant* Jack Hylton and his Orchestra, HMV, C1253 & *The Three Bears* Jack Hylton and his Kit-Kat Band, HMV C1309.

Samarkand' (*Two Light Syncopated Pieces*) and *By the Tamarisk*.<sup>94</sup> Rust and Walker suggest that the composer conducted Hylton's Orchestra in the recording of *The Selfish Giant*, which is entirely plausible.<sup>95</sup> Coates would no doubt have been present at the recording sessions and had conducted Hylton's Orchestra on several occasions, being friendly with Hylton.<sup>96</sup> However, in all subsequent releases of the recording, Hylton is credited with conducting. During the 1920s, both Henry Hall and Jack Payne recorded several of Coates' pieces with their bands. So too did numerous military bands, orchestras and other lighter orchestras such as the Regal Cinema Orchestra,<sup>97</sup> London Palladium Orchestra<sup>98</sup> and even theatre organists including Reginald Dixon<sup>99</sup> and Quentin Maclean,<sup>100</sup> though these records generally incurred the displeasure of the critics, if indeed they were reviewed at all. The wide diversity of the ensembles ensured that his music reached all those who purchased gramophone records despite their usual purchasing preferences. Due to the multi-faceted nature of the recording of Coates' music by ensembles from symphony orchestras to dance bands; his light music transcended musical categories and was, as he believed, was the 'public meeting-ground in all music.'<sup>101</sup>

The hallmarks of Coates' gramophone legacy, as a composer, are remarkable. In many respects his recordings of certain pieces has never been eclipsed. He was often aware of the most effective procedure to obtain the best from his orchestral players. John

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<sup>94</sup> 'Rose of Samarkand' Jack Hylton and his Orchestra, HMV B-5056 & *By the Tamarisk* Jack Hylton and his Orchestra, HMV B5132.

<sup>95</sup> Rust and Walker: 1973, 161.

<sup>96</sup> Coates was presented with a signed photograph of Hylton's Band. *GB-STHprivate*.

<sup>97</sup> *Four Ways* Suite. Regal Cinema Orchestra (Marble Arch), Emmanuel Starkey. Columbia, 9756-9757.

<sup>98</sup> *London Again*, London Palladium Orchestra, Richard Crean. HMV, C2841.

<sup>99</sup> 'Knightsbridge' and *London Bridge*. Reginald Dixon at the organ of the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool. Regal Zonophone, MR1309.

<sup>100</sup> *With Eric Coates Through London*. Quentin Maclean at the organ of Trocadero, Elephant and Castle. Columbia, DB 1457.

<sup>101</sup> Coates, Eric. *Report on Light Music*. Presented to the BBC, 22/05/1943, 13 *GB-Rwac* Music General Light Music file, 1939-1943 and *GB-STHprivate*, 2.

Culshaw, who produced several of his Decca sessions during the 1940s, remembered him:

He had no special qualities as a conductor, but in the early years he had been an orchestral player himself and therefore knew how to handle the players. They in turn respected him for the professionalism of his scoring; nothing was uncomfortable to play, and nothing was ever over-scored.<sup>102</sup>

Stanford Robinson remembers Coates' execution of his own music, 'He was always neat and immaculate and...did not bully the orchestra; but was always in control.'<sup>103</sup>

Coates' recordings are often superlative because of the tempi he adopts. He once remarked to Robinson '...you know that nothing is too fast for me.'<sup>104</sup> No other conductor has taken the opening of his 1931 *Merrymakers* Overture as quickly as the composer and, as such, has never obtained the ebullience or exuberance that the composer achieves. The same is partially true with articulation – he was a stickler for clear brass articulation; he usually wrote his brass fanfares with a rest contained to emphasize the articulation, as in Ex. 5.1.

No matter how superlative Coates' musical performances on record were, the omnipresent threat of time constraints was always lurking and had to be addressed. There were many circumstances that dictated that his music, despite its brevity, was required to be reduced yet further to fit onto a side of 78rpm record. In his *Report on Light Music* of 1943, Coates condemned cuts within light music but yet was willing to sanction such unmusical cuts in his own recordings:

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<sup>102</sup> Culshaw: 1981, 75.

<sup>103</sup> Stanford Robinson quoted in Lace, Ian. 'Foreword' In *Suite in Four Movements*. Eric Coates, iv-x. London, Thames, 1986, ix.

<sup>104</sup> 02/09/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

73

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

Hrn.

Trpta.

Tromb.

Perc.  
sf Cym. (with hard stick)

Harp

Vi. I

Vi. II

Vla.

Cello

Bass

34763

Chappell

Ex. 5.1 'Knightsbridge' (*London Suite*), 5 bars after D, page 73 (full score).

The arranging and pulling-about of music has not only brought about the most extraordinary and often exhibition of instrumentation, but it has led to the most haphazard and happy-go-lucky attitude as regards cuts; drastic cuts now being frequently made without any feeling for the shape of the work. I recently heard one of my more ambitious works played with seven cuts in it, the whole idea of the work therefore being destroyed.<sup>105</sup>

However, the cuts inflicted on his own music were not as drastic as those suffered by Elgar in the days of acoustic recording. For Elgar's 1916 recording of his Violin Concerto,<sup>106</sup> the work was reduced to about quarter of an hour – a third of the work's true duration (though the cadenza was recorded almost complete on the fourth side).<sup>107</sup> Elgar was also forced to write a harp part (even though there was no harp in the score) to replace the orchestral accompaniment when it became soft and light as it was impossible to record this orchestral effect.<sup>108</sup> These concessions to time are clearly borne out in Coates' 1948 three disc (ten-inch) set for export to the USA. The ten-inch disc, with its maximum playing time of 3m30s, forced him to make cuts in four of the pieces in his programme, Table 5.1:

Coates may well have condemned innumerable cuts of musical material as unmusical in his *BBC Report*, but some of the cuts he carried out in his recordings were highly unmusical, such as the cut in 'Rhythm' (*Four Centuries Suite*) from figure 12 to 20. But above all, later in life, he realised the necessity to truncate his music not just for the gramophone but also for the concert hall. In his 1944 recording of *The Four Centuries Suite* he curtails 'Prelude and Hornpipe' cutting from figure 8 to 15 in the 'Hornpipe', reducing the total playing time down from his estimated time of 6m30s to 4m20s. Yet, extended works like *Cinderella* and *The Three Bears* (both the 1945 Columbia and 1949 Decca recordings) are given in full with no cuts while the *Saxo-Rhapsody* escapes with only minor cuts.

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<sup>105</sup> Coates: 1943, 16.

<sup>106</sup> Marie Hall (violin), Orchestra, Edward Elgar. Gramophone Company, D79-80.

<sup>107</sup> Moore, Jerrold. *Elgar on Record*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974, 19.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

**Table 5.1 Cuts in the 1948 London (Decca) Recording, R10047-10049.**

Piece	Duration	Playing Time	Cuts
<i>Song of Loyalty</i>	5m00s	3m18s	Starts at bar 4 Cut from C to E No repeat of E and F Cut from bar 7 of F into bar 5 of G
<i>By the Sleepy Lagoon</i>	3m30s	3m15s	Starts at bar 4 Cut from upbeat of figure 5 to upbeat of figure 6
'Birdsongs at Eventide' (arr. H.M. Higgs)	n/a	3m08s	No cuts
<i>Television March</i>	3m25s	3m18s	No cuts
Wood Nymphs Valsette	3m30s	3m09s	No repeat of D (though repeat of B)
'Knightsbridge' March <sup>109</sup>	4m00s	2m55s	Starts at letter C Bar 8 of C to bar 5 of D

On occasions, the recording companies consented to release two recordings of Coates' suites on only two sides of a record rather than the usual and preferred practice of three sides of a suite and spare side for a short piece. As such, in his 1937 recording of *Summer Days* the first two movements are drastically reduced to fit onto one side of a twelve-inch disc (the central movement 'On the Edge of a Lake' loses its entire middle section, making little musical sense; he cuts from the bar before letter B until seven bars after D). The final valse, 'At the Dance' is given in full. The same was true for the landmark 1933 recording of the *London Suite*, which Columbia only consented to record if there was enough time left after recording the *Two Symphonic Rhapsodies*, and then only on two sides of 78rpm disc, though Coates was anxious to record the *London Suite*.<sup>110</sup> Austin Coates recollected that his father's '...publishers [Chappell] wanted 'Westminster' to be given in full, with the other two movements to be cut to fit on the other side. My father insisted that 'Knightsbridge' must be given in full and the other movements be

<sup>109</sup> Incidentally, Coates' recording of the March starts at the same position as Frankel's Special Concert Arrangement of the March, with the A minor fanfares, though Coates soon makes a cut.

<sup>110</sup> Coates: 1953, 218.

cut.<sup>111</sup> What resulted was one of Columbia's best selling records of the 1930s, after the adoption of the March by 'In Town Tonight'.

Whilst the cuts in the 1933 and 1937 recordings of *London* and *Summer Days* suites, enabling the suites to fit onto two-sides of a record were a necessity, there are far more drastic, peculiar cuts. These cuts are not primarily to abridge the playing time, but purposefully to curtail the duration and tighten up the musical structure of the work. Towards the end of his life, Coates seems to have become obsessed about the issue of his music being overly long. Writing to Gilbert Vinter, the conductor of the BBC Midland Light Orchestra in 1951, Coates stated:

Speaking once more of "Four Centuries" – I am afraid I find the first and the last movements a little too long anyhow and if I had written it now I would have cut them both down considerably to bring them into the five-minute limit. Well, as one gets older one becomes less long-winded – in the words of the Immortal Bard: "Brevity is the soul of wit" – and how right he is.<sup>112</sup>

Ernest Tomlinson recalled an aperçu Coates told him whilst the two composers were conducting the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in November 1956, 'The older I get, the more how I realise how important it is to keep things simple.'<sup>113</sup>

In both his recordings of 'Rhythm' (*The Four Centuries Suite*), Coates makes a drastic cut from figure 12 to 20 which is severe and bowdlerizes the beauty of the music, Ex. 5.2.

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<sup>111</sup> 19/08/1986. *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. GB-Lbl/National Sound Archive, PLN 622/86 ZN0397. By a bizarre twist of fate Chappells were not keen to publish the Suite in the first place as they were expecting a work in his 'pastoral' vein; they also pointed out that many of the amateur orchestras would struggle to play it. (Ibid.)

<sup>112</sup> 03/05/1951 Eric Coates to Gilbert Vinter. GB-Rwac Eric Coates: Midland Light Orchestra file 1, 1951.

<sup>113</sup> Eric Coates, quoted by Ernest Tomlinson, conversation, September 2005.

Flts. I & II

Oboes I & II  
a 2

Clts. I & II  
mf

Bass Clt.

Bsns. I & II  
p

I & II  
Hrs.

III & IV

I & II  
Tpts.  
(with straight mutes) con sord.  
mf marc. con sord.

III  
mf marc.

I & II  
Trombs.  
(with straight mute) con sord.  
mf marc.

III

Alto Sax.  
I & II

Ten. Sax.

Perc.  
Large Cym. (with soft stick) p  
Small Cym. (with soft stick) (sec.)  
Small Cym. Solo mf

Vln. I

Vln. II  
senza sordini

Vla.  
senza sordini

'Cello  
(div.)  
senza sordini

Bass  
senza sordini

12

Fits. I & II

Oboes I & II

Clts. I & II

Bass Clt.

Bsns. I & II

I & II  
Hns.

III & IV

I & II  
Tpts.

III

I & II  
Trombs.

III

Alto Sax.  
I & II

Ten. Sax.

Perc.

S.D. with sticks (without snares)

*mp* (sec.) (sec.) (sec.) (sec.) (sec.) (sec.) (sec.) *simile*

12

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Cello (div.)

Bass

(1944 and 1953 recordings cut to figure 20, rather than to figure 12 as written)

20 Molto più mosso  $\text{♩} = 120$

Flta. I & II  
 Oboes I & II  
 Clts. I & II  
 Bass Clt.  
 Bsns. I & II

I & II  
 Hns.  
 III & IV

I & II  
 Tpts.  
 III

I & II  
 Tromba.  
 III

Alto Sax.  
 I & II

Ten. Sax.

Perc.  
 Small Cym. (with soft stick)  
 Ten. Dr.

20 Molto più mosso  $\text{♩} = 120$

Vln. I  
 unis.  
*mf* *espress.*

Vln. II  
*f* *(sec.) simile*

Vla.  
 unis.  
*mf* *espress.*

'Cello (div.)  
 div. a 2  
*f* *(sec.) simile*

Bass  
 arco

Ex. 5.2 'Rhythm', pages 132, 133 and 149 (full score).

For the 1944 recording, this cut may well have been done for brevity, as it truncates the movement from 6m30s to 4m13s. Surely, as he repeats the gesture in his 1953 recording (made for LP) it must be to reduce the musical material and make the movement more succinct as Coates had suggested to Vinter in 1951.<sup>114</sup> He reduced the first movement in his 1944 recording surely on the grounds of time, but presented it in full in his 1953 recording, despite the removal of time constraints and his doubts of the length of the movement he that he had informed Vinter.<sup>115</sup>

During the 1950s, Coates wrote to various conductors at the BBC to inform them of certain cuts (especially in *The Four Centuries* and *The Three Elizabeths Suites*) that he often made whilst conducting then. Writing to Vilem Tausky, conductor of the BBC Concert Orchestra, he informed Tausky of the cuts he always made in 'Suite: THE THREE ELIZABETHS. Making a cut in the First Movement from No. 3 to No. 13 and another cut in the last movement from No. 11 to No. 13. This brings the time of performance of the whole suite down to 15 minutes...<sup>116</sup> The only other cut which he had previously advocated to BBC officials was in the 1930s over his ballet *Snowdrop* and then only to form a coherent 'suite' for concert, rather than ballet, use.<sup>117</sup>

The issue of cuts is most pertinent to Coates' only recording of *The Dam Busters* March which he made in 1955, the year of the film's release. He makes three cuts, which are tastefully and musically made, but seem trivial and pointless given the advances in recorded technology. The first cut, which is from figure 3 to 5, omitting the first statement of the B section melody in the subdominant, leaves the listener to hear the first statement of the 'B' melody disguised by the dashing violin countersubject; the second

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<sup>114</sup> 03/05/1951 Eric Coates to Gilbert Vinter. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates: Midland Light Orchestra file 1, 1951.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> 27/01/1957 Eric Coates to Vilem Tausky. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957. The total estimated playing time in the score is 19½ minutes.

<sup>117</sup> 03/12/1930 Eric Coates to Joseph Lewis. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

'*Snowdrop* the concert version begins at letter I and plays straight through until the finish except one small cut from W to AA (the fugue is in!).' (*Ibid.*).

cut is from the upbeat of figure 7 to the upbeat of figure 8 halving the recapitulation of the A section; finally, he expunges 8 bars from the coda, where he uses the opening cell (from bar 5) in the subdominant and flattened submediant (both over a subdominant pedal) before cadencing onto the tonic. With this final cut goes one of the most characteristic, and satisfying passages in the March.<sup>118</sup> The result is a travesty of what the March should be, but abridges the playing time down from an estimated 3m30s in the autograph score to 2m55s; overall 56 of the 222 bars are lost – a percentage of 25.23. Ex. 5.3 shows the piece, and the passages marked in red were omitted by the composer in his recording.

These cuts in *The Dam Busters* March may well have been due to his own idiosyncratic desire to curtail the duration of the march, probably to appeal to a new audience, though he had other foibles which appear throughout his recorded legacy. He routinely omitted the introductions to his waltzes. A case in point is 'Mayfair' (*London Again* Suite) where he omits the opening 48 bars introduction (mostly over a dominant pedal, introducing snippets of the first theme), commencing at the waltz proper. He dispenses with the introduction in all three of his recordings (1936, 1948 and 1952) of the waltz notwithstanding the fact that the interpretations span three different decades. In his only commercial recording of the *Footlights* concert waltz made in 1940, he commences the waltz at figure 3, again omitting the opening 40 bars. This may well have been to constrict the duration of the waltz, though as Coates opens the waltz at exactly the same place in the 1943 studio recording of the piece with the BBC Theatre Orchestra it seems to have been his intention to remove these introductions.<sup>119</sup> It would also have been intriguing to see his approach to the 1954 waltz *Sweet Seventeen* which begins in a similar manner to 'Mayfair' and *Footlights* but unfortunately he did not record the piece.

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<sup>118</sup> This ending is undoubtedly a hark back to his songs, where in the final bars he would often introduce a sequence which would radically move away from the tonic, before cadencing quickly back to the tonic.

<sup>119</sup> 26/08/1943 Eric Coates conducts the BBC Theatre Orchestra. *GB-Lb1* National Sound Archive CDA 6277 and T6277.

Piano-Conductor

# March: The Dam Busters

Eric Coates

Con spirito ♩ = 140

vla, cello, cl, bsn

musical score for measures 1-8. The score is in 2/4 time. The top staff is for the woodwinds (vln, cello, cl, bsn) and features a melody starting with a quarter note G4, followed by eighth notes. The middle staff is for the piano, with a dynamic marking of *mf* and the instruction *cresc molto*. The bottom staff is for the timpani, with a dynamic marking of *p* and a series of quarter notes.

musical score for measures 9-16. Measure 9 is marked with a box containing the number 9. The top staff has the instruction *add vln 1, fl.* and a dynamic marking of *ff*. The middle staff has the instruction *add trpts* and a dynamic marking of *ff*. The bottom staff has dynamic markings of *ff* and *cym*. There are also markings for *SD 3* and *SD 3* in the bottom staff.

musical score for measures 17-22. Measure 17 is marked with a box containing the number 17. The top staff has the instruction *vln 1, 2* and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The middle staff has the instruction *trpts* and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The bottom staff has the instruction *vln 1, WW* and a dynamic marking of *mf*. There are also markings for *cym* and *cello pizz*.

musical score for measures 23-30. Measure 23 is marked with a box containing the number 23. The score continues with various instrumental parts and dynamics.

30

37

*cresc*

*mf*

Cello  
Trom

*cresc*

44

*f*

*f*

4 Hns

51

3 Cantabile (poco meno mosso) ♩ = 120

*mp* Vln, cello

cym

hn

58

*poco cresc*

*poco cresc*

65

4

*mf*

*mf*

Hn, fl

72

*poco cresc*

*poco cresc*

79

Tempo I = 140

*f marc*

*f*

SD

85 5

Violin (vln) part and piano accompaniment for measures 85-90. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and chords in the right hand. Dynamic markings include *v* (forte) and *hns* (sostenuto).

91

Piano accompaniment for measures 91-96. The right hand has a melodic line with a trill (*tr*) in measure 94. The left hand continues the eighth-note accompaniment. Dynamic markings include *cym* (crescendo).

97

Piano accompaniment for measures 97-102. Measure 98 features a sustained double bar line (*SD*). Measure 100 has a dynamic marking of *6*. Measure 102 has a dynamic marking of *4 hns*. The piano part continues with eighth-note accompaniment.

103

Piano accompaniment for measures 103-108. Measure 104 features a sustained double bar line (*SD*). Measure 106 has a dynamic marking of *cym*. The piano part continues with eighth-note accompaniment.

109

SD

115

vln 1, ww  
mf  
mf  
cello pizz

121

127

8

133

Musical score for measures 133-138. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The piano accompaniment has a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. Dynamics include *cresc* and *mf*. Instrumentation includes *cello* and *trom*.

139

Musical score for measures 139-144. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line continues with a treble clef. The piano accompaniment has a grand staff. Dynamics include *f* and *sf*. A marking of *4 hns* is present.

9

145 vln, ob, clts

Musical score for measures 145-150. The system includes a woodwind line and a piano accompaniment. The woodwind line has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The piano accompaniment has a grand staff. Dynamics include *p cresc molto*. Instrumentation includes *trpts (stacc)* and *troms*.

10

151

Musical score for measures 151-156. The system includes a woodwind line, a piano accompaniment, and a brass line. The woodwind line has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The piano accompaniment has a grand staff. The brass line has a bass clef. Dynamics include *sfp*, *cresc molto*, *sf*, and *p cresc molto*. Instrumentation includes *vln 2, ob*, *vla, cello*, and *tutti brass*.

add vln 1, fl

157

Musical score for measures 157-162. The system includes a single staff for Violin 1 and Flute, and a grand staff for Piano. The Piano part features a complex texture with multiple layers of chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *ff* (fortissimo) and *cym* (cymbal). A snare drum (SD) is marked with a triplet of eighth notes. The Violin 1 and Flute part has a melodic line with various articulations.

163

Musical score for measures 163-168. The system includes a single staff for Violin 1 and 2, and a grand staff for Piano. The Piano part continues with complex textures, including a triplet of eighth notes marked SD. Dynamics include *rall molto* (rallentando molto) and *cym*. The Violin 1 and 2 part has a melodic line with various articulations.

11

169

Grandioso ♩ = 96

Musical score for measures 169-178. The system includes a single staff for Violin 1 and Woodwinds, and a grand staff for Piano. The Piano part features a complex texture with multiple layers of chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *cym*. A snare drum (SD) is marked. The Violin 1 and Woodwinds part has a melodic line with various articulations.

179

12

Musical score for measures 179-188. The system includes a single staff for Violin 1 and Woodwinds, and a grand staff for Piano. The Piano part features a complex texture with multiple layers of chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *cym* and *hns* (horns). A snare drum (SD) is marked. The Violin 1 and Woodwinds part has a melodic line with various articulations.

189

198

207

215

13

14 A Tempo ♩ = 96

*cym* *SD* *cym* *cresc* *ff* *rall* *str* *brass* *cym* *SD* *cym* *cym* *rall molto* *rall molto* *cym* *timp, cym* *cym* *cym roll*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for 'Dam Busters March' and covers measures 189 to 215. It is written for piano and percussion. The piano part consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The percussion part is on a single staff below the piano part. Measure 189 shows the start of a section with a piano melody and accompaniment. Measure 198 is marked with a large '13' and includes dynamics like *cresc*, *ff*, and *rall*. Measure 207 is marked with a large '14' and 'A Tempo ♩ = 96', indicating a change in tempo. This measure and the following ones (208-215) feature a complex percussion part with many notes marked in red, indicating cuts. The percussion part includes various instruments like cymbals (cym), snare drum (SD), and brass. The piano part continues with a melody and accompaniment, including dynamics like *cresc*, *ff*, *rall*, and *sf*. Performance instructions like *rall molto* are also present.

Ex. 5.3 *Dam Busters March* (Cuts marked in red).

The introduction to *Dancing Nights* radically differs from the inductions to 'Mayfair' and *Footlights* (both composed after *Dancing Nights*) and is kept *in toto* for his 1945 recording of the valse. However, the introductions of his marches (which act in an almost identical way to those of the valeses with their dominant pedals and foretastes of thematic material) are almost always kept *in toto*. The only two exceptions are his 1957 recording of *High Flight* where he begins at the upbeat to figure 2, and *South Wales and West* which starts at the upbeat to figure 1, both of which omit their introductions entirely.

The majority of the cuts Coates imposed on his music in the recording studio were surely in place to 'tighten up' his music; these omissions tended to be several bars, often of repeated material, to make the work flow with a greater clarity. In his marches he makes cuts to avoid over-repetition of themes; in his 1934 recording of *London Bridge* he makes the optional cut as marked in the published piano-conductor score, from 2 bars before letter B to 2 bars before letter E; in *The Seven Seas March* he cuts from the second beat 2 bars before figure 6, to the third bar of figure 7, reducing the recapitulation of the A section by 31 bars. In the opening introduction of his sole recording of his *Saxo-Rhapsody*, he moves from the upbeat of bar 5 to the upbeat of bar 14 which tightens the opening, especially as he derives a substantial proportion of the thematic material from these few bars, Ex. 5.4 (the passages shown in red are those omitted by him in his 1937 recording of the piece).

Moderato ♩ = 80  
 Glock. Harp  
 Str. W.W.  
 mf  
 3  
 3

Ex. 5.4 *Saxo-Rhapsody*, bars 1-17.

Coates makes use of an homogenous ploy in the final movement, ‘The Man from the Sea’ in his 1949 recording of *The Three Men Suite*, when, to curtail the structure, he cuts from 8 bars after figure 11 directly to figure 12 and then 8 bars before figure 14 directly into figure 14. He must surely have made these cuts to strengthen the work rather than to abbreviate the movement for the record, as ‘The Man from the Sea’ had been recorded *in toto* in his 1935 recording of the Suite.

Whilst Coates was composing his music, it is not known whether he purposefully composed it for the gramophone, that is, his pieces were governed by the limit of 4m30s (one twelve-inch side), or in segments of 4m30s duration. When composing his music, he probably had the gramophone at the back of his mind and presumably wrote passages that could be easily cut whilst in the recording studio. He may well have composed more suites than he perhaps would have otherwise accomplished as they fitted onto 78rpm gramophone discs so successfully. Whilst he was composing the later single-movement works, namely, *Cinderella*, *Saxo-Rhapsody* and *The Enchanted Garden* he must surely have had the issues of gramophone recording in his mind. Certainly *Cinderella* has several convenient breaks for side changes, such as: at the key change at letter F, almost 4m30s into the work; 17 bars after letter K, before the change in tempo to *vivace*; or before letter N; or the pause before letter P. Constant Lambert discussed the issues of duration and record length in *Music Ho!* believing that: 'Ellington's best works are written in what may be called ten-inch record form, and he is perhaps the only composer to raise this insignificant disc to the dignity of a definite genre.'<sup>120</sup>

The issue of the change of side was always a bane in the extended single-movement works. *Cinderella* and the *Saxo-Rhapsody* had convenient changes of section which facilitated the change in side of a record, but *The Three Bears* did not fare as well. The phantasy had been composed in 1926 largely before Coates' gramophone career had begun to develop. In his 1945 recording of the phantasy for Columbia, on a two-sided twelve-inch 78rpm disc, he was forced to make the side change midway through letter M in a passage marked 'the three bears stop for a moment to regain their breath', in a bars' rest, 15 bars after letter M, where after ejaculations by the full orchestra, the change is inconvenient in the extreme considering the work's highly sectional nature, Ex. 5.5.

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<sup>120</sup> Lambert, Constant. *Music Ho!* London: Hogarth Press, 1985, 188.

(The Three Bears stop for a moment to get their breath)

sf

ff

SIDE CHANGE

Trpts. W.W.

ff marc

ff

SIDE CHANGE

Ex. 5.5 *The Three Bears* Phantasy, 10 bars after letter M.

For his 1937 recording of the *Saxo-Rhapsody*, he was forced to rewrite one bar to enable the changeover of side at 4m30s, coming to a complete standstill rather than using the cadence as a means of altering the tempo, via an *accelerando* to the faster *allegro vivace* tempo at figure 17, Ex. 5.6a and Ex. 5.6b.

Saxophone (Eb)

Orchestral Reduction

pp

mf accel.

18  
8

Ex. 5.6a *Saxo-Rhapsody*, 2 bars before figure 17 (printed).

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Saxophone (Eb) and Orchestral Reduction. The Saxophone part is written on a single staff in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a melodic line. The Orchestral Reduction is written on two staves (treble and bass clefs) in 4/4 time, with a piano (pp) dynamic marking. The score shows two bars of music.

Ex. 5.6b *Saxo-Rhapsody*, 2 bars before figure 17 (aural transcription of 1937 recording).

Constant Lambert in his study of music, *Music Ho!* warned of the dangers of writing music specifically for the gramophone. Lambert, who himself made numerous gramophone recordings as a composer and reciter<sup>121</sup> had this aperçu of warning to the composer:

To write specially with a view to the deficiencies of recording technique is to upset the natural order of things. In the nineteenth century the tremendous improvement in the design and manufacture of wind instruments was directly due to the elaborate demands made on the player's skill by the composer; and the same is true of present-day recording whose advance is due to people demanding from the talking machine the complex subtleties of timbre that they hear in the concert hall. It is not for the composer to play handmaiden to the engineer.<sup>122</sup>

Besides removal of sections of his music in his recorded legacy and making modifications for changes in side, Eric Coates also made substantial and consequential alterations to the *musica recta* where he would deviate radically from the printed score and orchestration. The ambit of this could range from the addition of words to the *First Symphonic Rhapsody*, to re-writing an entire section as in the 1949 recording of *The Three Bears* phantasy or a completely altered ending, as in the recording of *By the Tamarisk* of 1936.

<sup>121</sup> Lambert, along with Edith Sitwell, were the reciters in the premiere recording of William Walton's *Façade* under the composer in 1929. Decca AK 991-992.

<sup>122</sup> Lambert: 1985, 220.

For Coates' only recording of his *Two Symphonic Rhapsodies* in 1933, based on three of his most popular songs of the 1920s, he included a part for a solo tenor in the *First Symphonic Rhapsody* 'I Pitch my Lonely Caravan at Night' not included in the score; the soloist sings the first verse of the song two bars after letter C, doubled by the oboe. After a short interlude, by the orchestra, the soloist sings the final line of the second verse 'sweet dreams of you' at letter J. Whether he was under pressure to include a soloist, or had written the rhapsody for a soloist, which was later dropped in the publication is unclear but in the published orchestral parts (the autograph score is lost, though the score to *Second Symphonic Rhapsody* survives),<sup>123</sup> there is no indication of a soloist. It is incongruous that in the *Second Symphonic Rhapsody* on 'Birdsongs at Eventide & I Heard You Singing' there is no vocal refrain; however, the *Rhapsody* is more episodic in its nature than its partner and does not feature a complete verse of either song.

One of Coates' most paradoxical changes to the *musica recta* was in his 1935 recording of *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, the companion fourth side to the three-side recording of *Cinderella*. The choice of *By the Sleepy Lagoon* is in itself peculiar as the record was a twelve-inch with a playing time of around 4m30s; the duration of *By the Sleepy Lagoon* is no greater than 3m30s. He therefore judiciously rewrote the piece – it is the only time that he had to lengthen one of his pieces for recording. The Valse Serenade appears to have already been reasonably well established in the repertoire, according to the review of the record in *The Gramophone*: 'The odd side is devoted to the well known *By the Sleepy Lagoon* which hardly stands up to such lush treatment.'<sup>124</sup> Surely *Under the Stars*, *Lazy Night* or a movement from *Four Ways* or *The Jester at the Wedding* (not yet released) warranted a recording and would have easily fitted onto the disc leaving *By the Sleepy Lagoon* to a later date when he was recording onto a ten-inch disc.

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<sup>123</sup> GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box 181.

<sup>124</sup> December 1935 *The Gramophone*, 278. [Review by Roger Wimbush]

In order to make *By the Sleepy Lagoon* fit, he recorded the work as written until figure 7, then inserted a passage, itself a reprise of figures 3 to 6 though scored as a duo for solo violin and harp, (this is taken literally from the piano-conductor score where the solo violin plays the melody line and the harp the two stave accompaniment with minor adjustments); the combination of the two produces a saccharine result, but is a simple yet effective interlude. The orchestra re-enter at figure 6 and play as written until the end. It is perhaps testament to Columbia's loyalty that they allowed him to record the *Valse Serenade* despite, even with its rewrite, a piece that was musically too short to fill the allotted time span successfully unless they purposefully wanted Coates to record the piece for them.

The most curious, but at the same time most effective adjustment to Coates' *musica recta* occurred in his 1949 Decca recording of *The Three Bears* phantasy. Coates had written this popular work with its frequent assimilation of jazz in 1926. Quite why such an accepted and admired work had to wait to 1945 for its first recording conducted by the composer (it had long been a favourite work of his when acting as a guest-conductor both in the concert hall and broadcasting studio) is unclear. For his recording of the work in 1949 with the New Symphony Orchestra, the brass accompaniment of the foxtrot (bars 327-352) is altered; bars 335 to 338 are drastically changed to a 'jazzier' accompaniment than written. This change may well have been a result of the brass section (who themselves could well have had dance band experience) who decided to 'jazz' up the foxtrot as a joke at the recording session; Coates, being a lover of dance bands may well have liked the effect and recorded it as such. The level of syncopation apparent in the rewritten accompaniment would not have been tolerated in 1926 (most orchestral brass-players probably would not have coped with it), and consequently one wonders if this was the effect that he initially had in mind for the passage. Coates may have rewritten the passage especially for the session. However, it seems more likely that

Robert Farnon, who was then fast establishing himself in the world of British light music, may well have rewritten the passage for the recording, to appeal more to the public. In a BBC interview, recorded in 2002, Farnon recalled:

I... met him [Eric Coates] many, many times [through their mutual publishers, Chappell] and on one occasion he had written a suite [*sic.*] called *The Three Bears Suite* which had a little jazz section. But he said, "I can't write jazz, would you mind rewriting this for me?" So I sat down one day and rewrote this little section.<sup>125</sup>

Presumably, Coates had decided to rewrite the foxtrot in a more 'up-tempo' style and had struggled, so invited Farnon, who was well-versed in the 'jazz idiom', to rewrite the passage. Nevertheless, Coates appears to have had little difficulty in composing in this idiom 'Rhythm' (*Four Ways Suite*), 'The-Man-About-Town' (*The Three Men Suite*) or 'Rhythm' (*Four Centuries Suite*). The levels of syncopation and dissonance in the 1949 recording of the foxtrot of *The Three Bears* are radically different from any other piece he composed, even in *The Four Centuries*, and it does bear a resemblance to the style of Farnon. Certainly, Farnon was un-credited on the record-sleeve and Coates never mentions Farnon's assistance; though Farnon recalled he kept it a secret for many years.<sup>126</sup> Surely this passage was aimed to appeal to the lovers of dance music and to a whole new audience coming to Coates' music. Ex. 5.7b shows the increased levels of syncopation and radical change in the harmony from the original, Ex. 5.7a.

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<sup>125</sup> 21/07/2002 *Brian Kay's Light Programme: A Celebration of Robert Farnon's Eighty-Fifth Birthday*. BBC Radio 3.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

Moderato (Very Rhythmic)

Melody

327 First Violin (div)

*p*

Trumpets (Bb)

con sord

*p*

Trombones

con sord l.

*p*

con sord

*p*

Mel

330

Tpt (Bb)

Tbn

Mel

334

Viola, Cello, Bsn

*mf*

*gliss*

Tpt (Bb)

*mf*

*mp*

*mf*

*mp*

Tbn

*mf*

*mp*

338 *gliss*

Mel

Tpt (Bb)

Tbn

Ex. 5.7a *The Three Bears* Phantasy, bars 327-342 (published brass parts).

Moderato (Very Rhythmic)

327 First Violin (div)

Melody

*p*

Trumpets (Bb)

*con sord*

*p*

Trombones

*con sord 1.*

*p*

*con sord*

*p*

330

Mel

Tpt (Bb)

Tbn

334 Viola, Cello, Bsn *gliss*

Mel *mf*

Tpt (Bb) *fp*

Tbn *mf* *fp* *div*

338 *gliss*

Mel

Tpt (Bb)

Tbn

Ex. 5.7b *The Three Bears Phantasy*, bars 327-342 (aural transcription of the brass parts).

Coates' most significant change in the *musica recta* came in his 1936 recording of the intermezzo *By the Tamarisk* (a work he had probably composed ten-years previously) which was to act as the companion fourth side to the two-disc, twelve-inch recording of the *London Again* Suite. He supplied no estimated playing time for the work, but it runs to approximately 5m15s, however, to fit onto a twelve-inch 78rpm disc, the work would need judicious pruning. Rather than remove any passages from the opening, itself quite

long, which might have benefited from pruning or even being omitted in its entirety, or shorten the recapitulation of the 'A' section at letter F, he opted to rewrite the coda (letter H), rather than use a section of it; he may have felt that the written coda too extended to extract a serviceable coda for the piece. The result is a short coda (11 bars, rather than the written 32) based on material from letters F and G – a simple ending rather than the published one (which is itself harmonically interesting as it mirrors the harmonic pull of the piece towards the flattened submediant; the ending is one of the closest times he came to assimilating the harmonic language of Billy Mayerl). Ex. 5.8a shows the printed ending, taken from the piano accompaniment score and Ex. 5.8b an aural transcription of the ending from the composers own 1936 Columbia recording.<sup>127</sup>

The image shows a musical score for the ending of a piece, labeled 'H Poco meno mosso'. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system is for Solo Vn. (Violin Solo), the second for Ob. Solo (Oboe Solo), and the third for Cello, Vn., and Bassn. (Cello, Violin, and Bass). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics like 'p' and 'mf poco accel.'

<sup>127</sup> Certain liberties were taken with the production of this score as it is very much a piano-accompaniment score rather than the more normal piano-conductor; certainly the final eight bars, whilst harmonically accurate, bear little relation of what is written in the instrumental parts. I have also taken the liberty to correct numerous mistakes of accidentals, clearly omissions by the publishers without indication for the sake of clarity.

I Animato

*mf* *cresc. molto*

*ff* Clts. Hns.

Trpt.

*rit.* Hns.

*allargando*

*f*

*p rit.*

The musical score consists of five systems. The first system shows the piano and orchestra parts with dynamics *mf* and *cresc. molto*. The second system features *ff* and the instruction 'Clts. Hns.'. The third system includes 'Trpt.', *rit.*, 'Hns.', and *allargando*. The fourth system has *f* and *p rit.*. The fifth system shows the piano and orchestra parts with various chordal textures.

Ex. 5.8a *By the Tamarisk*, printed ending.

rall

H Poco meno mosso

Ob.

The musical score consists of four systems. The first system is marked 'rall' and features piano and orchestra parts. The second system is marked 'H Poco meno mosso'. The third system includes 'Ob.'. The fourth system shows the piano and orchestra parts with various chordal textures.

Ex. 5.8b *By the Tamarisk*, aural transcription of the ending to Coates' 1936 recording.

Another significant change in instrumentation occurs in his sole recording of his *Second Symphonic Rhapsody 'Birdsongs at Eventide' and 'I Heard you Singing'*. For the recording session, the parts were presumably in manuscript, and, as such, the parts could well have been modified before publication by Chappell later that year. In the recording session, no tubular bell (F sharp) was used at all (four bars after letter C and two bars before G); the passages that were scored for the bell were played by the glockenspiel – perhaps tubular bells were not available at Abbey Road Studios for this recording? Certain passages for the percussion are omitted, there is no timpani roll four bars after F, no glockenspiel and tubular bell two bars before letter G, no glockenspiel bars 10 and 11 after G or 17-19 after G. It is possible that the percussionists failed to enter on time, and perhaps his pressing desire to record the *London Suite* at the same session, before lunch, may have spurred him not to retake the piece. However, this seems unlikely as the omissions are not missed entries, but deliberate oversights.

Not only did Coates make changes to the *musica recta* but he also made significant modifications to the orchestration of his music. In the both the 1940 and 1948 recordings of *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, Coates uses the performing edition 9003 which does

not have the characteristic brass interjections in bars 13-14, 16-17, 28-29 and 31-36. For the 1940 recording, the entire brass section is tacet until figure 3, as is the triangle part, which is omitted in its entirety as it only plays until figure 3. He also adds a brass interjection (not written) in bars 71-72. Quite why he chose this edition of the score, when the 30695 edition features the interjections and he had recorded that version in 1935, is unclear. Several of these modifications may well have been due to the availability or non-availability of certain instruments at the sessions, but others are undoubtedly mystifying. His early works tend to make sparing use of the woodwind, often with single oboe and bassoon, and little in the way of percussion instruments. Certainly in his later recordings of the 1940s and 1950s, he may well have taken the plunge to rescore passages which he felt were not successful in their original scoring, either for general performance, or, specifically for the recording studio. Over time, he may well have changed his philosophies regarding the subtle art of orchestration.

For the 1949 recording of 'Dance of the Orange Blossom' (*The Jester at the Wedding*), Coates does not use a piano at letter F as written. The piano part in this movement as it is duplicates the flutes and first clarinet; this section is not unlike letter D in *Wood Nymphs*, though in this valsette, he doubles the woodwind with a celesta. In addition, 'Dance of the Orange Blossom' was recorded at the same session as *The Three Men Suite*, which does not require a piano, so to employ a pianist for such a short passage was surely a waste of money.

In a multitude of the recordings of his shorter works, he often substituted a vibraphone instead of a glockenspiel; whether this was because the vibraphone recorded with greater clarity and fidelity than the glockenspiel is not known. During the period 1935-1944, he was fascinated by the vibraphone, and composed parts for it in almost all of his works. In the marches *Calling All Workers*, *Over to You* and *London Calling*, Coates unusually scores a vibraphone part (a most 'un-march like' instrument) instead of the

more 'traditional' glockenspiel (though *Eighth Army* and *Salute the Soldier*, composed in the same period (1935-1944), feature the more orthodox glockenspiel). In addition, Coates used the vibraphone in several pieces that were not scored for vibraphone such as in the 1934 recording of 'The Princess Arrives' (*The Jester at the Wedding*), the 1937 recording of 'Dance of the Twilight' (*Springtime Suite*) or the 1940 recording of *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, while *I Sing to You* has a greater use of vibraphone than marked in the score. His preference for the instrument may possibly be due to its links with jazz and popular music, though the effects the instrument creates can be both mesmeric and intoxicating, as in the opening of 'Fantasia (Variazioni senza tema)' in Vaughan Williams' Eighth Symphony, and quite saccharine and mawkish in Coates' own recording of *Last Love* in 1940. Nevertheless, the greater harmonic and textural qualities of the vibraphone (due to its sustaining power and the effect of the motor) were no doubt important factors.

In the 1940 recording of *I Sing to You*, he scores the glockenspiel, in the opening A section (the work being in ternary form) to play usually either two crotchets on beats four and one to intensify the cadence or to accentuate beats two to three. In his 1940 recording, he replaces the glockenspiel in bars 4-5, 6-7, 9, 10, 12-13, 16-17, 19-20 with the vibraphone and in several cases replaces the single notes with thirds on the vibraphone (with motor). In the middle section, the vibraphone plays the notes scored for the glockenspiel, then recreates its role in the reprise of the A section. Curiously, in the printed piano-conductor score, Coates scores a vibraphone to play only one second inversion chord at the end of the piece in bar 60.

In *By the Tamarisk*, Coates alters the orchestration, with the addition of vibraphone (notably as the final chord; a trait that would later become a favourite) to the percussion instruments (the Intermezzo is only scored for cymbals, timpani and triangle). He knew he would have a vibraphone available at the recording session, as one is scored in *London Again Suite* and he must have decided to utilize it in the intermezzo. Perhaps he

would have written a part for a vibraphone had he written the intermezzo ten years later (in 1936 rather than in 1926) when the instrument was more established in orchestral percussion sections.

In his 1940 recording of *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, Coates again replaces the glockenspiel with the vibraphone, though in the special concert arrangement by Walters published in 1934, Walters had rewritten the percussion part to feature vibraphone (or optional glockenspiel). The recording session for *By the Sleepy Lagoon* also featured *Calling All Workers*, the score of which requires a vibraphone, but not glockenspiel. So possibly for this reason, he rewrote the glockenspiel part for the valse serenade from figure 3 with the vibraphone playing chords, usually in thirds, though not exclusively where the glockenspiel plays them, as can be seen in Ex. 5.9.

39 **3** Poco animato Vln I  
 Melody Harp *mf*  
 Glockenspiel *mf*  
 Vibraphone

45 **4**  
 Mel *7*  
 Glock *7*  
 Vib *7*

5 Tempo I

Mel *mp*

Glock *mf* *mp*

Vib

Mel

Glock

Vib

Mel

Glock

Vib

Mel

Glock

Vib

Mel

Glock

Vib

6

*mf*

Mel *f*

Glock

Vib

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the piece 'By the Sleepy Lagoon'. Each system consists of three staves: Mel (Melody), Glock (Glockenspiel), and Vib (Vibraphone).  
 - The first system (measures 82-86) shows a melodic line with a 'Dim.' (diminuendo) marking and a 'p' (piano) dynamic. The Glockenspiel and Vibraphone parts are mostly rests.  
 - The second system (measures 87-91) is marked '7 Calando' and includes parts for Oboe and Harp. The Glockenspiel part has a 'mp' (mezzo-piano) dynamic. The Vibraphone part has some chords.  
 - The third system (measures 92-96) continues the melodic and harmonic parts.

Ex. 5.9 *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, Aural Transcription of Vibraphone Part of Coates' 1940 Recording.

He seems not to have been content with the percussion parts in this piece, as, in his 1948 recording, he significantly altered the glockenspiel part after figure 6 and rewrote the harp part for the last three bars with descending C major arpeggios rather than the written, plain C major chords.

Coates' recordings are often characterised by *rallentandi*, *tenuti*, and extended pauses. He usually holds pauses, *lunga pausa* as characterised in his 1934 recording of the Idyll, *Summer Afternoon* where he savours the pause on the fourth beat, 3 bars after figure 5, holding onto the chord of  $V^{13}$  for quite a length. In both the 1934 and 1949 recordings of 'Dance of the Orange Blossoms', he again relishes the marked *ritardando* over the melody of the A section, Ex. 5.10.

The musical score consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. It starts with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking. The second staff continues the melody with a 'rit.' marking. The third staff concludes with a 'B' section marking and a 'rit.' marking. The tempo is marked 'a tempo'.

Ex. 5.10 'Dance of the Orange Blossoms' (*The Jester at the Wedding*), figures A to B.

Apart from the occasional unmarked *ritardando*, as at figures 2, 16 and 18 in his 1937 recording of *For Your Delight* or the unmarked *accelerando* in the opening of his 1952 recording of 'Knightsbridge March' in which he accelerates during the opening introduction and settles on the march tempi at letter A, Coates tends to be orthodox in his conducting techniques and usually performs what is written in the score.

The issue of tempi in his recordings is an intriguing one as this may well have been governed by the duration of the record, to which he would be forced to make concessions. He had an infatuation with speed and preferred his music to be taken at an alacritous tempo. In an article entitled 'Mania for Speed' in the *Daily Sketch* of 1938, the writer of the article stated that Eric Coates '...told me that he did not mind how badly his "Knightsbridge" March... was played, so long as it was played fast.<sup>128</sup>' In his recordings, it appears that he was more inclined to cut out passages of his music rather than make any compromise or concession over the issue of tempo. Overall, his recordings of his own music are usually quicker than those of any other interpreter. A case in point is his only recording of the *Cinderella* Phantasy in which the composer's

<sup>128</sup> 02/12/1938 *Daily Sketch*. 'Mania for Speed'.

performance takes 12m56s whereas other conductors take over two minutes longer: Gamba 14m58s, Groves 15m17s, Leaper 15m47s and Wilson 16m38s.<sup>129</sup>

Through his legacy of recordings it is possible to ascertain if the metronome marks he places on the majority of his music are ones he adheres to or believes are the right tempi for his music. Typically, he performs his marches faster than his marked tempo, though this is often not greater than a few beats per minute.<sup>130</sup> The later recordings of marches tend to be faster than the earlier ones; *Calling All Workers* has a metronome marking of 120 crotchet beats per minute and he takes the speed closer to 140 beats per minute in his 1940 recording; the same is true with the 1944 recordings of *Eighth Army* and *Salute the Solider* which are much faster than marked, at 135 crotchet beats per minute rather than the written 120 beats.

With the vales, Coates takes the overall tempi slightly quicker than marked, as in *Dancing Nights* and 'At the Dance' (*Summer Days Suite*). He often marks passages in his vales *giocoso* or *scherzando* with no indication how great the increase in tempo is to be, though, in general, he tends to increase the tempo by 10 to 15 dotted minim beats per minute. Presumably he always gave metronome markings for his vales in dotted minim beats per minute to encourage conductors to take his music at fast tempi and think of the music as one-in-a-bar. In the case of his 1931 recording of 'Evening in Town' (*From Meadow to Mayfair Suite*), he begins the valse proper, after the introduction, at 76 dotted minim beats a minute (though the movement is marked only at 60), increasing to 88 beats for the middle *scherzando*, though there is no marked change in tempo, at figure 3, before returning to the opening tempo at figure 13. For the tender *Valse* from the Phantasy "The Three Bears" he takes the tempi much slower, in his 1949 recording, than

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<sup>129</sup> See Discography for the biographical data of these discs.

<sup>130</sup> Due to the nature of 78rpm records and their subsequent transfer onto compact disc, it is impossible to be totally accurate with metronome markings, as the speed of the playback may have been changed thus changing the metronome marks. However, the data yielded from metronome speeds is important as, if nothing else, it gives an indication of discrepancies between the printed texts and Coates' recorded performances.

those marked, at 37 minim beats a minute rather than the prescribed 48, ignoring the indicated speed change to *poco più mosso* at figure 3.

In his single-movement pieces, Coates generally takes the tempi slightly faster than marked though he largely effectuates the *Cinderella* phantasy a good deal faster than marked (he makes no concessions to the musical material); his recorded approach is 2 minutes less than the estimated duration for 15 minutes. In *Last Love* and *I Sing to You*, he executes the outer slower sections at a slightly faster than marked tempi and the middle section a great deal faster than prescribed. In *Last Love* the opening section is marked at *andante* with a crotchet speed of 70 (he takes this at 76) and for the middle *poco più mosso* (figure 3), marked at crotchet equals 90 he takes the section at 101, returning back to the opening tempo at figure 5.

His recorded approach to his suites is analogous to the solitary marches and waltzes, though the suites are at times little more than amalgamations of marches, waltzes and intermezzi. Important exceptions include the outer movements of *The Three Men Suite* and the first two movements of *Springtime Suite* which are a good deal slower than prescribed. In 'The Man from the Country' (*The Three Men*), he marks, in the autograph full score,<sup>131</sup> the main tempo (at figure 1) at 190 dotted crotchet beats per minute, with a *presto coda* (figure 9) marked at 240 dotted crotchet beats per minute. Evidently Coates realised with the publication of the suite that his metronome markings were too much of a tantivy. In his 1935 recording, he takes figure 1 at 170 and the *presto coda* in the region of 192 dotted crotchets; whereas for the 1949 recording is slower, as he takes figure 1 at 158, rising to 167 for the coda at figure 9.

With his compound time pieces, he tends to write a slightly higher metronome marking than they could be taken at comfortably in performance, especially by amateur forces. In his 1931 recording of *The Merry-makers Overture*, he takes the Overture at the

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<sup>131</sup> *The Three Men Suite*. GB-Lcm Coates archive, no box.

marked metronome speed of 100 dotted minims per minute and the effect is electrifying. This certainly requires the LSO to work sedulously and the Overture is just achievable at the tempi Coates chose to adopt.

In several of his recordings, there are quite significant anomalies with tempo. In the middle movement of his 1937 recording of *Springtime Suite*, ‘Noonday Song’, he prolongs the movement by 45 seconds over the prescribed duration of 3m30s estimated in the score. The differences in tempi are quite substantial in comparison to those Coates marked in the score, as Table 5.2 shows.

**Table 5.2 Tempo Changes in Coates’ 1937 Recording of ‘Noonday Song’ (*Springtime Suite*).**

Figure	Marked Tempo	Actual Tempo
Opening	Allegretto, ♩ = 96	♩ = 94
Figure 1	Moderato, ♩ = 80	♩ = 69
Figure 3	Tempo I, ♩ = 96	♩ = 88
Figure 5	Moderato, ♩ = 80	♩ = 76

The other prominent exception to his prescribed tempi is in his 1937 recording of *For You Delight* in which he performs 20 beats slower than marked, which equates to 10 seconds slower than the estimated duration of 4m10s.

As with many conductors, his approach to his music altered significantly over his years as a recording artist. Certainly as the restrictions of the gramophone were systematically eliminated his approach to his compositions would change, yet, as demonstrated in his 1953 recording of *The Four Centuries Suite*, his 1955 recording of *The Dam Busters March* he still harked back to the whilom traditions of the 1920s and 1930s.

Nevertheless, comparisons between different recordings of the same pieces yield interesting results. Despite the differences in performing edition and orchestration, a comparison of his 1935, 1940 and 1948 renderings of *By the Sleepy Lagoon* is fascinating and the efficacy is self-evident. Overall, he relaxes his tempi in each record. The 1935 recording may well have been quicker for him to use the passage for violin and harp. In his 1948 export recording of the valse serenade, he introduced a slight rubato to the opening four bars, as well as making the most of the tenuto at figure 4. Table 5.3 shows the tempi differences between his three recordings of the piece.

**Table 5.3 Comparison of 1935, 1940 and 1948 recordings of *By the Sleepy Lagoon*.**

Figure	Marked Tempo	1935	1940	1948
Opening	Tempo di valse lento, ♩ = 90	♩ = 99	♩ = 92	♩ = 82
Figure 3	Poco Animato	♩ = 108	♩ = 110	♩ = 100
Figure 5	Tempo I, ♩ = 90	♩ = 97	♩ = 91	♩ = 82
Figure 7	Calando	♩ = 99	♩ = 91	♩ = 82
Total Time	n/a [c.3m30s]	4m33s Played as written until 7, then repeat of 3-5 by violin and harp, orchestra recommence at 6 as written until the end.	3m22s	3m15s Starts bar 4, cuts upbeat of 5 to upbeat of 6

Coates' two contrasting interpretations of *The Four Centuries Suite* differ only slightly, though the 1944 recording was made on 78rpm discs and the 1953 on LP. Overall, the 1944 recording was slightly quicker, except for the valse which he executed slightly faster in 1953. It is perhaps peculiar that in both recordings of 'Valse' there are no cuts and in 'Rhythm' there is an identical cut from figure 12 to 20 to reduce the

playing time of the movement; for the 1944 recording the first two movements were cut to fit on the 78rpm, though in 1953 they were given in full, despite the composer's belief that the first movement was overly long.<sup>132</sup> Table 5.4 shows the differing tempi in the two approaches for the Suite.

**Table 5.4 Comparison of 1944 and 1953 recordings of *The Four Centuries Suite*.**

I Prelude and Hornpipe<sup>3</sup>.

Figure	Marked Tempo	1944	1953
Prelude	Andante, ♩ = 66	♩ = 66	♩ = 56
Hornpipe	Allegro vivace, ♩ = 120	♩ = 126	♩ = 127
Total Time	6m30s	4m20s Cuts Hornpipe 8-15	6m18s

II 'Pavane and Tambourin'.

Figure	Marked Tempo	1944	1953
Pavane	Andante moderato, ♩ = 80	♩ = 81	♩ = 79
Tambourin	Allegro molto, ♩ = 140	♩ = 146	♩ = 135
Figure 13	A Tempo I (Andante moderato, ♩ = 80)	♩ = 80	♩ = 83
Total Time	4m15s	4m46s Cuts 3-5, upbe- at of 15 to upbeat of last 2 bars	5m53s

<sup>132</sup> 03/05/1951 Eric Coates to Gilbert Vinter. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates: Midland Light Orchestra file 1, 1951.

### III 'Valse'.

Figure	Marked Tempo	1944	1953
Opening	Allegro, ♩. = 80	♩. = 82	♩. = 84
Figure 1	Animato, ♩. = 96	♩. = 82	♩. = 98
Page 71	Moderato, ♩. = 60	Unknown	Unknown
Page 73	Tempo di valse allegro, ♩. = 72	♩. = 74	♩. = 83
Figure 5	Scherzando, ♩. = 96	♩. = 105	♩. = 98
Figure 7	Cantabile	♩. = 84	♩. = 85
Figure 11	Animato	♩. = 96	♩. = 107
Page 96	Tempo di valse allegro, ♩. = 72	♩. = 78	♩. = 80
Figure 17	Poco scherzando, ♩. = 96	♩. = 102	♩. = 104
Total Time	4m15s	4m41s	4m37s

### IV 'Rhythm'.

Figure	Marked Tempo	1944	1953
Opening	Moderato, ♩ = 80	♩ = 103	♩ = 100
Page 125	Più mosso, ♩ = 96	♩ = 114	♩ = 109
Figure 11	Tempo I, ♩ = 80	♩ = 105	♩ = 103
Figure 20	Molto più mosso, ♩ = 120	♩ = 124	♩ = 126
Page 157	Animato	♩ = 132	♩ = 118
Figure 25	Molto pesante, ♩ = 120	♩ = 128	♩ = 137
Total Time	6m30s	4m13s Cuts 12-20	4m14s Cuts 12-20

Coates' recordings of the *London Suite* largely span his gramophone career from 1933 until 1952. For the 1933 recording, the first two movements of the suite were curtailed, but in his 1948 Decca recording, he chose to cut from letter H to J in 'Covent Garden' and in 'Knightsbridge' cut from bar 4 of C to bar 5 of D; these cuts reduce the playing time to 4m06s for 'Covent Garden' and 3m47s for 'Knightsbridge'. This is somewhat ironic as each movement of this record was a twelve-inch 78rpm capable of at least 4m30s and he felt, in 1948, that the suite was too extended. The 1952 disc is more placid and equanimous recording than his previous two, except for the middle movement 'Westminster' in which the 1948 recording is 26 seconds slower. Table 5.5 shows the comparison of tempi between the three different recordings.

**Table 5.5 Comparison of 1933, 1948 and 1952 recordings of *London Suite*.**

I 'Covent Garden.'

Figure	Marked Tempo	1933	1948	1952
Opening	Allegro Molto, ♩. = 190	♩. = 170	♩. = 169	♩. = 160
L	No tempo change marked	♩. = 184	n/a	n/a
P	Heavy, ♩. = 140	♩. = 134	♩. = 132	♩. = 125
Page 11	Presto, ♩. = 240	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Total Time	4m00s	2m14s Cuts C to L	4m06s Cuts H to J	4m40s

## II 'Westminster'.

Figure	Marked Tempo	1933	1948	1952
Opening	Andante, ♩ = 80	♩ = 72	♩ = 83	♩ = 73
C	Poco più mosso, ♩ = 96	n/s	♩ = 86 (rubato)	♩ = 101
D	No change in tempo marked	n/a	n/a	♩ = 89
Page 14	Tempo I, [♩ = 80]	n/a	♩ = 62	♩ = 74
Page 15	Poco meno mosso, ♩ = 60	n/a	♩ = 53	♩ = 52
G	(No change in tempo marked (Poco meno mosso, ♩ = 60))	♩ = 64	n/a	n/a
Total Time	4m30s	1m54s Starts at A, cuts C to L	4m52s	4m26s

## III 'Knightsbridge' March.

Figure	Marked Tempo	1933	1948	1952
Opening	Quick march tempo, ♩ = 120	♩ = 125	♩ = 126	♩ = 116 (accelerando)
A	No change in tempo	n/a	n/a	♩ = 125
N	Grandioso, ♩ = 96	♩ = 96	♩ = 103	♩ = 102
P	Lento, ♩ = 60	♩ = 77	♩ = 79	♩ = 86
Total Time	4m00s	4m00s	3m47s Cuts C, bar 4 to D bar 5	4m12s

The legacy of gramophone records that Eric Coates made has been significant in keeping his reputation as a composer of light music alive. Over the years his own recordings, particularly the later Decca recordings, have been reissued on LP and

subsequently on compact disc; a process that started in earnest in the 1970s with a reissue of the 1949 recording of *The Three Men, The Three Bears* and the 1953 recordings of *The Three Elizabeths* and *The Four Centuries* on a low price budget Decca Eclipse label.<sup>133</sup> In the 1980s, the Vintage Light Music Society tried in vain to encourage EMI to release all of his Columbia and HMV recordings, but alas the project foundered.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, in the 1990s, two double CDs of Coates' own performances and other contemporary performances were released on the now defunct Conifer label and culminated in two CDs of the composer's performances on the Naxos Historical label with its worldwide distribution (albeit it consists largely of duplications of the same repertoire and performances as those on the Conifer label).<sup>135</sup> In addition, there have been numerous new recordings of his music by conductors as diverse as: Adrian Boult, Stanford Robinson, Charles Mackerras, Charles Groves, Reginald Kilbey, Vernon Handley, Rumon Gamba and John Wilson; and notable orchestras such as: BBC Concert, BBC Philharmonic and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestras, most of which are currently available. For Coates' music, the gramophone has been an essential tool in establishing it in the hearts and minds of the ordinary listener, either through their purchase or one of his recordings or through a broadcast of the recorded material, particularly when so little of his music, except the perennial favourites, is performed in the concert hall.

The gramophone was of portentous importance in establishing Eric Coates' music within the hearts of the nation. An abundance of his music was commercially available, not just conducted by the composer, but also recorded by dance bands, theatre orchestras and dance bands; during the 1940s and 1950s there were frequent re-issues and releases to the USA and to the general public as well as broadcasting and use of his music by film companies. The gramophone, just like the BBC, gave Coates' music

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<sup>133</sup> *Eric Coates Conducts*. Decca Eclipse, ECS 2088.

<sup>134</sup> Upton, Stuart (compiled). *Eric Coates: A Biographical Discography*. West Wickham: Vintage Light Music Society, 1980, 21.

<sup>135</sup> See Discography for bibliographical data.

widespread exposure and enabled him to achieve a sense of unrivalled popularity. However, unlike his relationship with the BBC, a much more tangible legacy has survived, and through it one can realistically gauge his artistry and musicality.

Whilst he was forced to make concessions to the gramophone, (though nowhere as devastating as those Elgar was forced to make in his acoustic recordings of the 1910s) Coates' superlative performances of his own music transcend these limitations. He was fortunate to have his music recorded by the premier ensembles (albeit disguised) and by the foremost record companies, who effectively marketed Coates' recordings through advertisements in specialist magazines and in newspapers. The recordings that he made as a conductor helped to institute his music at the vanguard of light music in Britain and probably at the forefront of British music in the first half of the twentieth century. The gramophone was yet another device that enabled his music to become established in the hearts of the nation. One cannot over-evaluate the cruciality of gramophone recordings for his career, which still continues today. No other light music composer, with the possible exception of Robert Farnon, has so many complete CDs devoted solely to their music, and not just new recordings, but reissues of their own recordings as well.<sup>136</sup> With gramophone records, Coates' complete artistry as a composer and conductor comes to the fore and it is with this legacy easy to see why he became, and more significantly, remained, such a popular figure within British music.

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<sup>136</sup> A large percentage of Farnon's discography is filled with reissues of recordings of his arrangements conducted by him, rather than solely of his orchestral pieces.

### Part III

#### Musical Elements

##### Chapter 6 The Formula of the Music

*Mr. Coates has previously shown a leaning toward the light and delicate and 'popular,' but he has never indulged it more decisively and effectively than in this work [Miniature Suite]. The ideas and scoring were full of charm and originality was precluded by the adoption of an idiom that has been exhausted by Johan Strauss and Edward German. As restaurant and theatre entr'acte music, Mr. Coates's Suite is equal to the best.<sup>1</sup>*

**E**ric Coates had a well-honed and well-cultivated sense of commercial acumen and, consequently, knew exactly how to give his music the maximum exposure through broadcasting and the gramophone. Whilst these developments are fundamental to his triumph as a composer, underpinning this exploitation was his music. Had his music, particularly his orchestral music, not habitually been of such peerless quality, it is doubtful whether he would have achieved his supreme position in the field of British light music, a genre he practically defined. In his obituary for Arnold Bax, Coates recalled quizzing Bax: 'I remember asking him one day how he managed to think of his fascinating orchestral effects – to which he replied, with a 'What does it feel like to have written world-famous melodies?'<sup>2</sup> It is only by looking through the basic material of his music that it is possible to understand exactly how and why he achieved such legendary status and attracted a host of admirers.

As a composer Coates did not have a unique musical voice, but composed well-written, skilfully orchestrated, tuneful music. Indeed, his musical language, a throwback to a nineteenth-century musical rhetoric, was largely *passé* in the 1920s and 1930s, but his natural aptitude as a melodist in addition to his natural legerdemain as an orchestrator

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<sup>1</sup> 'Promenade Concerts.' In *Musical Times* 52 (1911), 730.

<sup>2</sup> Coates, Eric. 'Arnold Bax: 1883-1953'. In *Music and Letters*, xxxv (1954), 7.

shone through all his scores. Like Tchaikovsky and Elgar, he thought orchestrally; the piano parts in his songs have a quasi-orchestral character. What bolstered Coates' career was fact that he had composed several career-defining pieces: 'Knightsbridge' (1933), *By the Sleepy Lagoon* (1930), *Calling All Workers* (1940) and *The Dam Busters* (1954). None of these pieces is exceptional and atypical of his output, or necessarily representative of his finest works, but each captured the public's imagination. Several of the marches composed around 1950, particularly *Rhodesia*, could easily have been equally as successful as *The Dam Busters*, but were never subject to the same degree of exposure. Certainly no other light-music composer has written as many cult *à la mode* pieces as Coates (though most had their own significant accomplishments for which their names are indelibly linked). Today, these four pieces have transcended time and have become firmly established 'cult pieces', falling into the bracket of 'Classics for Pleasure.'

Coates' 'career-defining' pieces were certainly linked to his unique gift for writing music that enthused the public. Who could not be enthralled by listening to his valsette *Wood Nymphs* which sparkles, in every bar, with orchestral colour and melodic wit? Writing music which appealed to the masses was the key to his success. Malcolm Sargent, speaking in 1957, believed him to be 'one of the few good composers today who was really able to reach the hearts of the people.'<sup>3</sup> Whereas Elgar's topos was the march, Delius' the dance, Coates that of the creation of music which embodied the adjectives 'light' and 'infectious'. As a composer, he knew both his limitations and his strengths, and seldom overreached himself. As a result, very few pieces, or movements of Coates, exceed the constraints of five minutes; those that do have just enough melodic interest to sustain them for their duration. Of his music Charles Groves proclaimed: 'Someone once said that the marches of Sousa would make a man with a wooden leg step out; a man

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<sup>3</sup> Malcolm Sargent quoted in Eric Coates' Obituary broadcast on BBC Home Service News Bulletins at 13:00, 18:00 and 21:00 on 21/12/1957. *GB-Rwac* December Home Service News Bulletins.

would have to have a wooden heart not to respond to the music of Eric Coates.<sup>4</sup> As the *Musical Times* put it after the Promenade premiere of his *Four Old English Songs*: ‘they seemed to increase the well-deserved reputation of a clever young English composer whose ambition does not exceed his powers.’<sup>5</sup> He was content to compose light miniatures, but unlike many other light composers he never attempted any ‘serious’ works, though the works of the late-1930s do explore new symphonic landscapes. Haydn Wood in his *Violin Concerto* (1932) and *Philharmonic Variations* (1939), Montague Phillips and his *Phantasy for Violin and Orchestra* of 1912, revised 1947, Ronald Binge in his ‘Saturday’ Symphony (1968), Ernest Tomlinson in his *Sinfonia ’62* and *Symphony ’65*, Robert Farnon’s three Symphonies and Eric Roger in the ‘Palladium’ Symphony all explored a large-scale canvas and tried a new musical style; Coates continued to produce his well-crafted miniatures.

In the construction of light music, Coates held lofty views concerning the essential elements required for the composition of good music. Writing to G.F. Stegmann in 1951, he stated:

With regard to what you ask about my personal opinion on “the essential aspects of Light Classical Composition”, I hope the following may prove of interest to you:

1. It must be sincere.
2. It must have melody.
3. It must have form.
4. It must be as perfect as possible in detail and finish.
5. If an orchestral work it must be orchestrated by the composer himself.<sup>6</sup>

His views on construction and particularly on sincerity, are heavily influenced by the education he would have received at the RAM. These are the values of an Edwardian brought up on Victorian musical tradition influenced by Hubert Parry’s seminal text *The*

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Groves quoted in Lace, Ian. ‘Foreword’ to *Suite in Four Movements*. Eric Coates, iv-x. London: Thames, 1986, ix.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Promenade Concerts.’ In *Musical Times* 50 (1909), 665-666, 666.

<sup>6</sup> 13/08/1951 Eric Coates to G.F. Stegmann. *GB-Lcm* Coates’ Archive, box 186.

*Evolution of the Art of Music* with its thumbprints of John Ruskin. Whilst there is no guarantee that Coates read Parry's book, he must surely have come into contact with the text through his education, as Mackenzie was heavily influenced by the work. As Vaughan Williams believed, 'the three watchwords of great music are sincerity, simplicity and serenity.'<sup>7</sup> Coates' five-point plan of composition makes an ideal blueprint for discussion of his music.

By sincerity Coates surely means that any composer of light music must have a serious intent, but be without pretensions of grandeur, but would appeal to all.<sup>8</sup> To construct such a seemingly 'effortless' light work requires the greatest effort and skill:

When you listen to a Suite, or a Phantasy, or an Overture by a genuine composer of the Light Orchestral School, it all sounds so easy, spontaneous, but in all probability it has taken hours and hours of concentrated thought on the part of the writer to give you that impression. The sketching out of the work is the least tedious part of the business, though even that may occupy several weeks.<sup>9</sup>

Undoubtedly his starting point for composition was melody. Writing in 1953, he proclaimed: 'I have always written melodies, I simply cannot help it...'<sup>10</sup> He always held melody in the highest possible esteem:<sup>11</sup>

Tunes are like ambassadors – they break down barriers and make a fraternity between people: for music is a language that is understood by all nationalities rich and poor alike and the composer who has the good fortune to write a melody that is universally known and loved finds that his music has found friends for him all over the world.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Vaughan Williams, Ralph. 'National Music'. In *National Music and Other Essays*. 1-82, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, 67.

<sup>8</sup> This element of sincerity was picked-up in his *Times* obituary: 'Coates did not write with his tongue in his cheek. If his music is superficial, it is also sincere.' (23/12/1957 *Times* 'Mr. Eric Coates'.)

<sup>9</sup> Coates, Eric. *Suite in Four Movements*. London: Heinemann, 1953, 93.

<sup>10</sup> Coates: 1953, 113.

<sup>11</sup> He always held the melodies of Edward German above most other composers: '...his delightful melodies will still be giving us joy when the works of many of our 'moderns' are long dead and forgotten.' (Coates: 1953, 208).

<sup>12</sup> 30/07/1939 *Evening News*. 'This Musical Snobbery'

Elgar was reputed to have proclaimed after writing the first *Pomp and Circumstance* March, that it was ‘a tune that comes once in a lifetime,’<sup>13</sup> yet Coates made a career writing tunes, ‘that only came once in a lifetime’ and ‘tunes that will knock ‘em flat’.<sup>14</sup> His melodies were usually conceived on walks, as he recalled:

My best inspiration is to walk down a London street and a tune soon comes to me. When I can think of nothing I walk down Harley-street, and there there is a lamp-post [*sic.*]. Every time I catch sight of it a tune comes to my mind. That lamp-post has been my inspiration for years.<sup>15</sup>

The construction of a Coates melody is, relatively simplistic. It is usually composed so that the melody seldom moves out of the range of an octave (though *The Merry-makers* is a notable exception) and is easily sung and remembered by the listener. This is a key factor in establishing the success of the piece as if listeners can sing the melody there is a greater chance of them remembering the piece and wanting to hear it again. Farnon’s *Jumping Bean* and *Portrait of a Flirt* are clearly orchestral pieces and their melodies can hardly be sung as their range is vast, complete with large, ungainly intervals. In Coates’ music the melody is effortlessly vocal (whether consciously or unconsciously), invariably conjunct, with few large leaps in pitch and features frequent repeated notes which act as a plane from which the melody burgeons, a device frequently found in the music of Sullivan. This can be clearly seen in the opening of ‘Springtime in Angus’ (*The Three Elizabeths* Suite), where the melody persistently returns to the pivotal D, Ex. 6.1.

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<sup>13</sup> Edward Elgar quoted in: Kennedy, Michael. *The Life of Elgar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 82.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 81. Elgar was a known admirer of Coates: Beatrice Harrison informed him, ‘Elgar used to talk of you Mr Eric Coates so much, he thought you a genius!’ (Undated Beatrice Harrison to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186).

<sup>15</sup> Eric Coates quoted in Unknown, ‘London Lives – No. 7: Eric Coates Salutes the Soldier.’ Coates Scrapbook 2, *GB-STHprivate*. He made frequent, often daily, visits to Chappell in New Bond Street, from his flats around the Baker Street area of London.



Ex. 6.1 'Springtime in Angus' (*The Three Elizabeths Suite*), figure 4.

The hymn-like second subject of 'Youth of Britain' (*The Three Elizabeths*) features a constant repetition of notes, which not only heighten the melody, but also allow for frequent changes of harmony. The repetition also adds to the rhythm, which is reminiscent of marching, but because of the brisk tempi is never dull, Ex. 6.2.



Ex. 6.2 'Youth of Britain' (*The Three Elizabeths Suite*), figure 6.

Occasionally, this frequent repetition of notes can fail, as in the unpublished *Hymn for the Workers*, where the constant repetition of notes, infrequent changes in harmony (often changing chord each half-bar), and a stagnant bass part all conspire to produce a dull piece of composition, Ex. 6.3.

Rather Briskly

Ex. 6.3 *Hymn to the Workers*.<sup>16</sup>

Allied to the repetition of notes is a technique of ‘self-developing melody’. Coates usually opts for a short melody, often between four and eight bars, and uses the opening notes or half the existing phrase, rewriting the ending but using a similar melodic shape as the main-melody. This is clearly demonstrated in the *Television March*, where the second subject is sixteen bars long. He then repeats the opening motif, X and its variant X’ (a repetition of X down a third), before adding six bars, including an E-natural to give the possibility of increased harmonic possibilities (this has a similar melodic outline to Y), before a reprise of the whole section at figure 6, complete with a countersubject, Ex. 6.4.

<sup>16</sup> GB-Lcm Coates Archive, boxes 184 and 192. The words, presumably penned by Coates himself are at GB-STHprivate.

Figure 4: A single staff of music in 4/4 time, measures 4-5. The melody starts on a middle C and moves up stepwise. Motif X is the first four notes, X' is the next four, and Y is the final four. Dynamics are *mp* and *mf*.

Figure 5: A single staff of music in 4/4 time, measures 6-7. The melody continues from figure 4. Motif X is repeated, followed by X'' (a variation), and Y'. Dynamics include *poco cresc*, *mf*, and *dim*.

Ex. 6.4 *Television March*, figures 4-5.

This ploy establishes the melody firmly (especially the opening bars) in the ears of listeners, but each repetition being subtly different from the previous, prevents the listener from tiring of it. Sporadically, Coates derives too much material from this technique, as in the second subject of *Music Everywhere*, where he starts each phrase with motif A (even line four is an inversion of A) and uses the same harmonic pattern for each line; line three is identical to line one, except for the ascent to the tonic rather than the dominant. In addition, the rhythmic cell D is also frequently used within B and C, Ex. 6.5.

Figure 3: The first two staves of music. Motif A is the first four notes of the first staff. Motif B is the next four notes. Motif C is the next four notes. Rhythmic cells D and D' are indicated below the first staff. Dynamics include *p*.

Figure 4: The next two staves of music. Motif A is repeated. Motif B is repeated. Motif C is repeated. A *Cresc.* marking is present below the third staff.

Ex. 6.5 *Music Everywhere*, figures 3 and 4.

Inherent in Coates' melodic construction is the potential for the melody to be used in canon (not often strict) or, at the very least, in imitation. This is clearly seen in 'Knightsbridge' where the second theme is imitated two bars later than the first violin and 'cello by the woodwind and first horn, before returning to unison, at bars 6 and 10, Ex. 6.6.

Ex. 6.6 'Knightsbridge' March (*London Suite*), letter E.

Also included in Coates' 'melodic armoury' was his ability to compose effective countermelodies. His music was based on a three-part texture, common in composition of the time and particularly of Elgar.<sup>17</sup> This texture consisted of melody, accompaniment or countermelody and bass: a gross oversimplification, but one which nonetheless demonstrates the importance of countermelodies in Coates' orchestral texture. His countermelodies were written to be unobtrusive, but to disguise repetitions of the melody, and often to add a luminescent glow to the main melody. Countermelodies were a frequent Elgarian trait, though his tend to be submerged in the orchestral texture, frequently assigned to the horns and/or 'celli, as in figure 23 of 'The Little Bells' (*The Wand of Youth, Suite II*), Ex. 6.7.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Dream of Gerontius* and *Introduction and Allegro*. As George Herbert believed: '...music is but three parts vied and multiplied.'

61 23

*molto cantabile*

24

Fl  
Ob  
Cl  
Bsn

Hr

Timp  
Glock  
Bell

23

24

Vln  
Vla  
Vc  
Cb

72

The musical score consists of four systems of staves. The first system has five staves, the second has two, the third has three, and the fourth has six. Dynamics are marked as *f*, *dim.*, and *pp*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and articulation marks.

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Ex. 6.7 'The Little Bells (Scherzino)' *The Wand of Youth, Suite II* (Edward Elgar), bars 61-83.

Coates' countermelodies usually fall into two categories: the first are used in marches and are often fast, daring filigrees of counterpoint on the first violin and upper woodwind, which hardly work on their own, but when combined with the other elements produce a stimulating effect, as in figures 8-9 in the *Holborn March*. He must surely have seen this in action in the marches of Sousa (cf. the piccolo countersubject in *The Stars and Stripes Forever*). Particularly in *Holborn* the countermelody disguises the, at times, bland nature of the second theme. Ex. 6.8.

Ex. 6.8 *Holborn March*, figures 7-8.

The second type of countermelody Coates' composed was for the slower movements and these tend to be more relaxed, using fewer notes and often given frequent rests, as in figures 4-7 in 'A Song by the Way' (*From Meadow to Mayfair Suite*) and figures 3-5 in 'The-Man-About-Town' (*The Three Men Suite*). However, his most frequent forms of countermelody are his imitation of the main-melody or a slow descending chromatic line in the middle of the orchestral texture; the latter became almost a cliché in his marches (cf. *Dam Busters March* bars 45-49 and 141-145).

The gift of melody had been with Coates from his earliest orchestral works and songs, and remained until the end of his life. Contained in his papers are a number of sketches he made towards the close of his life, and show that his grasp of melody was just as strong as it has always been, as can be judged by a sketch he made for an overture, Ex. 6.9.



Ex. 6.9 *Overture in C Major*, sketches for the second subject, page 2.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box 184. This may well have been sketched in 1953, as a result of a BBC invitation to compose something for the 1954 Light Music Festival. (17/12/1953 Eric Coates to Hubert Clifford. GB-Rwac Eric Coates' file 5, 1949-1957). However, the manuscript is undated and un-addressed.

Underpinning any melody is harmony. As fine as his sketch of the second subject of an *Overture* is, the harmony adds to the aural experience. Harmonically, Coates was conventional in the harmonisation of his melodies, with a predilection for second inversion chords and chromatic bass lines. He also frequently uses sixth, seventh, ninth, eleventh and thirteenth (a particular favourite) chords to add a luminescence, predominately in the slower entr'actes and romances.

After melody, next on his list of importance in composition was form. Whilst his music indubitably has form, it is arguably Coates' weakest trait as a composer. Most of his pieces are in a loose ternary formula; the marches usually fall into ABAB and the shorter entr'actes into ABA with a brief introduction and coda. The works are not like Elgar's *morceaux de concert*, such as *Dream Children II* and *Chanson du Matin* where the B section is foreboding, a marked contrast to the lighter outer sections. In his more extended pieces, Coates' use of form is more limited and episodic, as in the phantasies where the form is governed by the programme. In single-movement works such as the *Saxo-Rhapsody* and *The Enchanted Garden*, he favours a sectional approach, making use of set pieces such as the waltz, and the constant repetition of thematic material, but because of the effectiveness of the material and the brevity of his music, one hardly notices the formal deficiencies.

There are certain genres of piece that Coates habitually composed. The most numerous were the slow reflective movements he composed as middle movements of his suites or as free-standing intermezzi, which are essentially 'songs without words' and along similar lines of construction as his songs. There were also fast, compound pieces in 6/8 or 12/8 pieces, such as the 'Tarantelle' that opens the *London Suite*, or passages in *The Selfish Giant*. He also composed in a relaxed, pastoral 6/8 vein, reminiscent of Edward German, as in 'Fresh Morning' (*Springtime Suite*). He also excelled in writing

marches, though he came upon this niche later in his compositional life with the success of 'Knightsbridge' in 1933.<sup>19</sup>

Whatever form or style of composition Coates graced, he developed his material sparingly, relying more on the spontaneity of his melodic gifts and preferring to alter the melody through his technique of 'self-developing melody'. He was preoccupied with the issue of duration and the majority of his manuscript and published scores have an estimated duration, no doubt to assist with their inclusion in concert and radio programmes. He must have known that a short duration for a piece would enable it to be recorded and broadcasted with ease, in addition to it being quickly digested by audiences. In a century where composers were pushing the boundaries of length and scale to post-Wagnerian, and post-Webern proportions, Coates was largely content in composing collections of short pieces or orchestral miniatures up to the five-minute boundary. Though, certain light composers disliked the limitations of time in composition. In response to an article entitled in 'Your Taste in Light Music' in the *Radio Times* and a letter by Haydn Wood, Ketèlbey felt duty bound to complain:

I find that anything over three or four minutes is frowned on as being too long. Consequently the cuts or hurryings, which are made if the piece is a minute or two over, are rather harmful to the design of the piece. This time-limit bogey is a difficulty which highbrow composers do not have to contend with.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, Coates could remain largely content throughout his life composing, adroit and affable pieces of light orchestral music

Fourth on Coates' list was perfection in detail and finish from the macro-structure of a work, to the lesser details of titles and integration of pictorial elements into his music. He was not a prolific composer but whatever he composed usually ended up

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<sup>19</sup> Coates had composed his first orchestral march 'Northwards' (*The Four Ways Suite*) in 1927, and was a marked difference from his later 'march formula'. A number of his songs contain 'march-like' material including 'Ordered Overseas' *Songs of the Airforce*.

<sup>20</sup> 08/09/1944 *Radio Times*. 'Letter from Albert W. Ketèlbey'.

in print. As such, the majority of his output is up to a high standard as he only composed works which he wanted to or was required to. Austin Coates remembered his father's working habits: 'A peculiarity of Eric Coates, when you lived with him, was that he hardly ever wrote anything unless there was pressure on him to do so; a new work required for a certain date or in fulfilment of a contract or something of that kind.'<sup>21</sup> Other light music composers such as Haydn Wood and Montague Phillips were far more prolific and many of their more laudable and agreeable works have been swamped due to the vastness of their oeuvre.

Perhaps the most striking aspects of Coates' output are the colourful and picturesque titles he assigned to his orchestral works. What conductor or listener could not fail to be intrigued by *From Meadow to Mayfair Suite*, *Sweet Seventeen*, *For Your Delight*, *Under the Stars* or *Summer Days Suite*? He always tried to pick titles and subjects that were appealing, easy to relate to and well-known, such as the children's stories 'Cinderella' and 'The Three Bears'. This fertility for picturesque titles seemed limitless, as Geoffrey Self wryly noted: 'one wonders if the titles didn't cause more headaches than the music.'<sup>22</sup> Coates was not alone in dreaming up colourful titles, for his almost exact contemporaries Haydn Wood and Ketèlbey were wont to use such colourful titles as: *Firelight Fancies*, *A Day in Fairyland* and *Three Famous Cinema Stars* in Wood's case<sup>23</sup> and *Cockney Suite*, *Fiddle Fun* and *Skitty Kitty* for Ketèlbey. This was no doubt influential on subsequent generations of light music composers, such as Charles Williams, Torch and Farnon, who all picked even more colourful titles than Coates. Whilst choosing titles, Coates frequently changed his mind; his publishers may well have had objections promoting such titles or he simply decided against the title: the *London Suite* started life as *London*

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<sup>21</sup> 26/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. GB-Lb/National Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA0399.

<sup>22</sup> Self, Geoffrey. *In Town Tonight*. London: Thames, 1986, 48.

<sup>23</sup> The Suite was subsequently re-titled *Suite for Light Orchestra*. The three movements are: 'Ivor Novello (Valse Apache)', 'Dolores del Rio (Romance)', and 'Charlie Chaplin (Humoresque)'.

*Every Day* (the title was perhaps changed due to its similarity to Mackenzie's *London Day by Day Suite*), *Dancing Nights* was originally *Autumn Woods* (changed possibly because of its propinquity to Bax's tone poem *November Woods*, also published by Chappell)<sup>24</sup> and *The Seven Seas* was RNVR – 'The Reserves.' On occasions he used titles from other composers, namely *Miniature Suite* (a title used by numerous composers), *Cinderella* (Percy Pitt had composed a *Cinderella Suite*) and *The Merrymakers* (Edward German had written 'Merrymakers Dance' (*Nell Gwynn*)) and *The Wood Nymphs* (William Sterndale Bennett had written *Woodnymphs Overture*, which he may well have played during his student days at the RAM).<sup>25</sup>

He readily appropriated Edward German's pastoral vein, and works such as 'On the Edge of a Lake' (*Summer Days Suite*) and 'In the Country' (*From Meadow to Mayfair Suite*) all came with ease owing to their simple construction, 6/8 metre, and effective themes. His scores share a pictorial element, a gift he shared with Delius, whose rhapsodic pieces, *In a Summer Garden*, *Late Swallows*, *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* and *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, like Coates' 'A Song by the Way' (*From Meadow to Mayfair Suite*) and *Summer Afternoon*, effectively conjure their title with ease.<sup>26</sup>

In his melodies, Coates often managed to assimilate the subject matter into his themes. In *Cinderella* he wrote the main theme based around the name of 'Cinderella' in the main theme, Ex. 6.10.



<sup>24</sup> Austin Coates believed that it was the music critic, Ernest Kuhe, a friend of the Coates', suggested (privately) that the original title was not right and subsequently Coates came up with the new title. (26-27/12/1984 Austin Coates to Geoffrey Self GB-ILMprivate.)

<sup>25</sup> Coates: 1953, 65-66. The RAM Student Orchestra definitely performed the work, at Queen's Hall, in 1916, as part of the Sterndale Bennett Centenary whilst Coates was on the teaching staff of the Academy.

<sup>26</sup> Coates had played under Delius during his time at Queen's Hall though he was dismissive of Delius' music in his autobiography (Coates: 1953, 148).



Ex. 6.10 'Cinderella Motif' and *Cinderella*, bars 1-8.

The same is true of the march *London Bridge* and *The Three Elizabeths*. Often, he injects humour into his subject material. Who could forget the witty fugue subject for the entry of the three bears at letter J in *The Three Bears* phantasy? This is even more apposite in 'The Man from the Sea' (*The Three Men Suite*) based on the folk melody 'When Johnny Comes Down to Hilo', the last three notes of which are the same as 'Three Blind Mice'. He could not resist quoting the melody in full, much to the chagrin of the Navy who informed him that mice were never found on ships due to the rats.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps, after melody, the most important aspect in a Coates score was rhythm. Pervading the majority of his pieces there was a rhythmic element. This was undoubtedly due to his frequent walks around London gaining inspiration: a significant proportion of his pieces have a march or walking tempo. This is clearly seen in *London Bridge* March (whose inspiration was people walking to and from their work in the city via the bridge)<sup>28</sup> which gives a great feel of walking with its repetition of quavers and the repeated verbalisation of the title in the music. If his pieces are not primarily influenced by walking, the rhythm of dancing often pervades the score, from the valse (fast and slow) to the more modern foxtrots, tangos and Charlestons.

Perhaps Coates' most significant act as a mature composer in the early 1920s was to adopt the rising idiom of the dance band into his music. This was a shrewd move on his part as dance music was growing in popularity and most of the populace, regardless of class, expressed a liking for the form, as Table 6.1 demonstrates.

<sup>27</sup> Coates: 1953, 226.

<sup>28</sup> 28/05/1934 *A Camera Interview With Eric Coates – The Famous Composer and Conductor*. [www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com).

**Table 6.1 Preferences for Dance Music in 1939.**<sup>29</sup>

Preference	Men (Middle Class)	Women (Middle Class)	Men (Working Class)	Women (Working Class)
Yes	76%	76%	84%	88%
No	6%	19%	13%	3%
Unsure	18%	5%	3%	9%

In an interview in the *Radio Times* in 1935, he stated: ‘I am quite certain I could not have composed “Knightsbridge” or “Three Bears” without studying post-war [World War One] dance rhythms.’<sup>30</sup> The following year, he was quoted in a Belfast newspaper that dancing ‘...keeps one’s music young... I can listen to and enjoy the best dance bands because I can learn something from them.’<sup>31</sup> He had a great love of dance music, both from the perspective of a composer and dancer. As he explained to Henry Hall:

I believe the reason why I like hot tunes and the rhythmic numbers is that they can not be sung – I feel sure that this horrible crooning kills dance music – there is no life in it, and it is a beastly, sloppy, unhealthy influence. ...[We need to] stamp out this unwholesome form of entertainment by giving the lead and getting back once more to cleverly orchestrated rhythmically tuneful dance numbers.<sup>32</sup>

Ragtime, the forerunner of jazz, established itself at the turn of the twentieth century, with the piano rags of Scott Joplin, though it was largely due to the invasion of American revues, especially of those of Albert de Courville, with their orchestrated songs, that the style grew popular in Britain. However, the genre was in terminal decline by the onset of the First World War, jazz being its natural successor. Jazz pervaded England as part of the wider American syncopated dance music craze.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Nott, James. *Music for the People*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 196 (Table 8). These figures date from the tail-end of the popularity of dance music.

<sup>30</sup> 03/05/1935 *Radio Times*. ‘He Composed Knightsbridge.’

<sup>31</sup> 07/03/1936 *Northern Whig and Belfast Post*. ‘Eric Coates in Belfast.’

<sup>32</sup> 26/07/1935 Eric Coates to Henry Hall. *GB-Rvac* Eric Coates’ file 1, 1935-1936.

<sup>33</sup> Parsonage, Catherine. *The Evolution of Jazz in Britain 1880-1935*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, 32.

Nevertheless, it was the integration of ragtime and jazz into art music which marked a new departure for composers. Constant Lambert discussed the whole concept of the integration of jazz into art music, a genre he termed ‘symphonic jazz’ in *Music Ho!*<sup>34</sup> He believed: ‘we need not expect the symphonic jazz of the future to bear any more superficial resemblance to the foxtrot of the nightclub than the scherzo of Beethoven’s symphonies did to the minuets of the eighteenth-century salon.’<sup>35</sup> He also believed that the development of jazz would come ‘...almost inevitably, from the sophisticated or highbrow composer.’<sup>36</sup> Important examples of the integration of ragtime into ‘art music’ include the finale, ‘Gollywog’s Cake-Walk’, of Debussy’s piano Suite *Children’s Corner* (1906-1908), ‘Ragtime du Paquebot’ (*Parade*, 1917) by Erik Satie and Stravinsky’s ‘Ragtime’ (*L’Histoire du Soldat*, 1918), *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (1919), *Piano-Rag-Music* (1919). The composers who were working in Paris during the first twenty years of the twentieth century were unfamiliar with jazz and blues.<sup>37</sup> Darius Milhaud, who was one of the first composers to integrate jazz within ‘art’ music, was gripped by jazz on a visit to London in 1920 and included it within his 1923 ballet *La Création du Monde*, a fusion of jazz and classical elements including a fully worked out fugue.<sup>38</sup> Certainly the opening brass parts, after figure 1 of the ballet, are redolent of a foxtrot, with the characteristic absence of the second minim beat of the bar and the trombone glissandi seven bars after figure 3. *La Création du Monde* was written the year before Gershwin’s seminal work *Rhapsody in Blue*, first performed in 1924, for piano and Paul Whiteman’s jazz band, though later orchestrated. Composers were happy to acculturate the rhythms, harmonic language and orchestration into their music but ignored the key element of jazz – improvisation.

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<sup>34</sup> Lambert, Constant. *Music Ho!* London, Hogarth Press: 1985, 189.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 198-199.

<sup>37</sup> Mawer, Deborah. *Darius Milhaud*. Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997, 118.

<sup>38</sup> Drake, Jeremy. ‘Darius Milhaud’ In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie: xvi 674-683. London: Macmillan, 2001, 678. In 1926 Milhaud claimed that jazz did not interest him (*Ibid*).

In England, several non-establishment British composers also integrated elements of jazz into their music, notably Arthur Bliss in his ‘experimental’, Stravinskyian works, *Madame Noy* (1918) and *Rout* for wordless soprano and ensemble. Bliss also paid homage to jazz towards the close of the third movement, ‘Blue’ of his *Colour Symphony* composed during 1921-1922. William Walton was also influenced by jazz during this period, particularly after hearing the Savoy Havana Band at London’s Savoy Hotel, a favourite haunt of the Coates’; Walton was keen on the music of Duke Ellington (as too were Constant Lambert, Coates and Percy Grainger),<sup>39</sup> and he incorporated jazz into *Façade*, which was first performed privately in 1922,<sup>40</sup> and into the overture *Portsmouth Point* (1924-1925). During 1923-1924, Walton was contemplating, and partially sketched, a *Fantasia Concertante* for piano, jazz band and orchestra, which Kennedy suggests may well have been for the Savoy band; Walton was forced to abandon the piece as there would be little future for such a work.<sup>41</sup> Lambert was later than Bliss and Walton in assimilating jazz into his music, notably in *Elegiac Blues* (1927) and *The Rio Grande* of the same year. However, Coates was amongst the few composers whose influence was not jazz *per se*, but the ‘English version’ of jazz, the dance bands. Vaughan Williams, lauded the genre in ‘Intermezzo (Homage to Henry Hall)’, of his *Partita* for Double String Orchestra making full use of the cross-rhythms of dance music, as too did Percy Whitlock in the third movement of his Organ Sonata. Jack Payne maintained that John Ireland sought his assistance over muted brass for use in ‘a classic concerto’,<sup>42</sup> which was surely Ireland’s jazz-inspired Piano Concerto (1930). Coates was certainly not the first to integrate ragtime or jazz into light music; Ketèlbey had written a ‘skit’ on ragtime in his

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<sup>39</sup> In a 1932 lecture at New York University in America, Grainger, in his own idiosyncratic way, declared Duke Ellington, Delius and Bach to be the greatest composers who ever lived. (Bird, John. *Percy Grainger*. London: Paul Elek, 1976, 204).

<sup>40</sup> It is impossible to ascertain which movements were composed for the premiere and those composed subsequently for further performances of the work (Kennedy, Michael. *A Portrait of William Walton*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, 28-30).

<sup>41</sup> Kennedy: 1989, 39. Ironically, Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* a work originally written for a similar orchestral combination has become a popular work in its own right (albeit in Grofé’s orchestration).

<sup>42</sup> Payne, Jack. *This is Jack Payne*. London: Sampson, Low and Marston, 1932, 56.

1916 novelty *Mind the Slide!* in which a sequence of ragtime melodies are interrupted by an insolent, malapert trombone. Haydn Wood also wrote a tango *Morena* and the *Jimmy Sale Rag* in the 1910s.

Dance music was perceived very much as an English equivalent of jazz, where the bands adopted a style of 'symphonic syncopation' in which the music was fully written out by an arranger despite the fact that several members of Hylton's band could improvise 'hot jazz', though never in recording sessions.<sup>43</sup> The genre was often given a more positive press; regular record reviews featured in *The Gramophone* almost from its inception; the BBC, initially, never broadcast jazz, but 'dance music'.<sup>44</sup> The class-conscious Savoy was keen to stress that they presented 'civilised white dance music' rather than 'black hot jazz'.<sup>45</sup> Writing in the *Musical Times* in 1926 (shortly after his landmark BBC debate with Landon Ronald over jazz), Jack Hylton explained the dance band perspective: 'modern syncopated music is not 'jazz', but has retained that same rhythmic under-current as an essential constituent.'<sup>46</sup> The following year, in an article in *The Gramophone*, Hylton explained his methods with dealing with 'jazz in England': 'Before it [jazz] can be played here it must be modified, *given the British touch*, which Americans and other foreigners never understand. Symphonic syncopation, which I feel proud to have developed in this country is pre-eminently British.'<sup>47</sup>

Hylton and his band were always at the vanguard of their genre during the 1920s and 1930s. Hylton had several concepts of what dance music could do that influenced Coates, particularly Hylton's paraphrasing of the classics, as outlined in the *Musical Times* in 1926:

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<sup>43</sup> Parsonage: 2005, 172 & 199. Jack Hylton's arrangers included Leighton Lucas (later famous for his film scores), Peter Yorke (who composed numerous pieces of light music, Billy Tennernt and Paul Fenoulet (the initial music director for the BBC's *Round the Horne*). (McCarthy, Albert. *The Dance Band Era*. Radnor (Philadelphia): Chiltern Book Company, 1982, 96).

<sup>44</sup> Parsonage: 2005, 45.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 187. This was possibly why the term 'syncopated' was oft-used during this period.

<sup>46</sup> Hylton, Jack. 'Dance Music of To-Day'. In *Musical Times* 67 (1926), 799-800, 799.

<sup>47</sup> Hylton, Jack. 'The British Touch'. In *The Gramophone* 4 (1926-1927), 145-146.

Many of the classics have been paraphrased rhythmically, in order to produce music which will satisfy not only the dancers but also listeners, and much of the criticism poured upon such attempts has in some measure being merited... But I see no valid reason why rhythmic paraphrases of the classics – if properly done, so that the original ideas of the composer are retained – should not be works of art any less than the originals.<sup>48</sup>

Hylton recorded ‘syncopated versions’ of Rachmaninoff, Chopin and Ravel to try to introduce audiences to the delights of ‘Classical music’, albeit in a wildly different, but nonetheless musical vein. Coates’ integration of syncopation into light music was to prove more popular and have a longer life. Whilst to some extent, Hylton was alienating both audiences of the classics and of dance, Coates was uniting them in the concert hall. Henry Hall believed, ‘to some extent my own style lay between the dance idioms of Whiteman and light orchestral music.’<sup>49</sup> This is also partially true of Coates, though he lent far more towards the school of light orchestral music and Hall towards Paul Whiteman (for whom Coates had a great affection).<sup>50</sup> Hylton proved to be an influential and useful acquaintance for Coates in this popular world as he recalled in an interview with *The Gramophone* in 1937:

[“]Meeting Jack Hylton gave my music a new lease of life. When his orchestra performed my *Three Bears* I practically lived with him for days on end, and hearing his band rehearsals gave me many ideas. Jack is an old friend of mine and it was he who gave me my first introduction to dance bands.

“On the night when I was conducting the first performance of *The Three Bears* at the Queen’s Hall, Jack walked into the promenade with my wife. At first he was just mildly interested, but when the music got to the rhythmic part it got hold of him. To the amusement of people standing near by, he, quite unconsciously, began to jig a Charleston, his shoulders swaying, his feet tapping. That was how he came to do *The Three Bears* himself.[”]<sup>51</sup>

Eric Coates and his wife, Phyl, were perennial dancers, and were regular visitors to certain hotspot developments of dance music in London. When they were young they

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<sup>48</sup> Hylton: 1926, 800.

<sup>49</sup> Hall, Henry. *Here’s To the Next Time*. London: Odhams Press, 1955, 68.

<sup>50</sup> Coates: 1953, 240.

<sup>51</sup> Meadmore, W.S. ‘Eric Coates.’ In *The Gramophone*. 15 (1936-1937), 235-237, 237.

spent a large proportion of their leisure time dancing, subscribing to the *carpe diem* philosophy popular in the 1920s:

[We would go] ...to dinner at the Savoy and to dance to the Savoy Havana Band until the restaurant closed, and then downstairs to the ballroom and the Savoy Orpheans, to carry on our strenuous way until a tired band and even more tired waiters intimated that it was 2 a.m. and time to get our things, pick up the car and drive home...<sup>52</sup>

Coates always kept abreast of the developments in dance music throughout his life, commenting in 1937 that:

I find the longer I live the more interested I become in all kinds of music. I love it all! I recently got an enormous stimulus out of Duke Ellington. I wore a Larry Adler record to a shadow! I believe that since the advent of the dance bands orchestras generally have played much better. Notice a theatre orchestra after a dance band has played on the stage, and how their playing immediately afterwards seems to take on a fresh vitality. All the good musicians I know like rhythmic music.<sup>53</sup>

However, he was often scathing of the developments of the late-1930s and 1940s, especially crooners: 'How right we were, for with the coming of this unpleasant cult came the slow, monotonous beat of the blues, the slow foxtrot and the nauseating sentimental love croon... gone were the lovely dancing melodies which... set our feet tingling.'<sup>54</sup>

He began to use elements of jazz and dance bands initially within his songs, mirroring the development of jazz within Britain, which began in popular songs, later transferring it to his orchestral works.<sup>55</sup> His song 'Pepita', composed at the close of 1919, employs a Habanera rhythm (a forerunner of the tango), complete with castanets in the orchestral version.<sup>56</sup> In 1921, he published a song foxtrot 'Roses all the Way' which

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<sup>52</sup> Coates: 1953, 205.

<sup>53</sup> Meadmore, W.S. 'Eric Coates.' In *The Gramophone*. 15 (1936-1937), 235-237, 237.

<sup>54</sup> Coates: 1953, 205.

<sup>55</sup> Parsonage: 2005, 13-14.

<sup>56</sup> 25/01/1920 Queen's Hall Sunday Afternoon Concert Programme, *GB-Lcm* Performance Archive Queen's Hall 1919-1920. The score of the work is lost, but a detailed programme note by Rosa Newmarch for the first performance survives. The song is one of his most advanced songs, and is cast in ternary form with the Habanera rhythm acting as an ostinato before a more lyrical *animato* section in the subdominant major before a return to the tonic and the A section, closing with a coda in the tonic major. The song also imitates the harmonic and rhythmic idiom of the dance bands.

makes use of the displacing of the third beat, by tying the note to the previous note as well as employing dotted rhythms and a syncopated piano-accompaniment, though the vocal line remains rhythmically simplistic. Coates had also experimented in a more 'hot jazz' vein and published several attempts under the pseudonym of Jack Arnold; also he had written several pieces of cabaret and theatre music under the name of Charles Hilton. However, it was in 1923 that he first integrated elements of jazz into his orchestral works; first in *The Merry-makers*, predominately in his writing for the brass. It was the *Two Light Syncopated Pieces*, *The Selfish Giant* and *The Three Bears* phantasies that marked the wholesale integration of the technique.

The manifestation of his love of dance music was seen in his repeated use of the foxtrot. During the 1920s and 1930s, he would try and feature the dance in his more extended works. He also featured the Charleston, a dance of which Eric and Phyl were fans during the 1920s, in 'Rhythm' (*The Four Ways Suite*) and in *Cinderella*. This integration of dance rhythms was a technique that endeared him to the populace, though it did cause consternation to certain members of the music profession. As Lambert pointed out, 'one can be light or frivolous in a valse, but in a foxtrot one can be either be solemn or facetious.'<sup>57</sup>

Another aspect that Coates adopted from the dance bands was the notion of close scoring for the brass. The tightness of scoring in the brass section lends his scores of the 1920s a warmth and intimacy. He also uses a variety of mutes to create dance effects, such as in 'The-Man-About-Town' (*The Three Men Suite*) and 'Rhythm' (*The Four Centuries Suite*) both of which feature the direction for the trumpets to play with 'harmon mute' or 'play-in-hat'. After hearing Hylton's band give a performance of Leighton

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<sup>57</sup> Lambert: 1985, 195. The foxtrot has remained in the orchestral repertoire with works by Peter Maxwell Davies and John Adam's *The Chairman Dances*, a by-product of *Nixon in China*.

Lucas' arrangement of his phantasy *The Selfish Giant* in 1925,<sup>58</sup> he proclaimed: 'from that moment I began to realise what brass could do when in the hands of capable players, for up to that time my experience had been limited to the sphere of 'straight' orchestral musicians.'<sup>59</sup> This emancipation also spread to his use of the percussion which increased markedly during the 1920s. He wrote his scores to include parts for two percussionists to give him the ability to create more percussive colour and flexibility; he often dispensed with timpani altogether, preferring several 'bright' percussion instruments, as in *By the Sleepy Lagoon* which is scored for glockenspiel and triangle.

Despite the wholesale adoption of the dance band style into his music, Coates did not exclusively employ the idiom in all his orchestral works. Often the *morceaux de concerts* were written in a more traditional 'light music' vein. During the 1930s, which produced such classic syncopated suites as *The Three Men* and *London Again*, he also composed works with no influence of the dance style such as the suites *From Meadow to Mayfair* (1931) and *Springtime* (1937). The latter could have easily have dated from the 1910s as a successor to *Summer Days*, forgotten until the 1930s, and clearly shows how much Coates derived from the lighter music of Edward German.

His first major work to absorb the influences of the dance bands was the *Two Light Syncopated Pieces* probably composed in 1925. They were surely the result of two events: firstly, during 1924, Hylton entertained Coates and Maurice Ravel to lunch at the Savoy Hotel to ask them both if he could adapt several of their pieces for his band.<sup>60</sup> Secondly, during 1925, the combined bands of the Savoy Hotel gave a series of five concerts at Queen's Hall showcasing their syncopated music and including paraphrases

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<sup>58</sup> Orchestrated for: oboe, clarinet, 4 alto saxophones (doubling baritones), 2 tenor saxophones, 4 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, 2 violins, piano/harp, banjo and drums. Lucas also arranged *The Three Bears* for 3 alto saxophones, 1 tenor saxophone, 3 trumpets, 2 trombones, bass trombone, banjo, 2 violins, viola, timpani and percussion. The scores and parts survive at GB-LAu Jack Hylton Archive.

<sup>59</sup> Coates: 1953, 203.

<sup>60</sup> 12/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. GB-Lbl/National Sound Archive, PLN 622/86 ZA0397. Austin Coates believed that this meeting influenced the composition of *The Selfish Giant* though it seems more likely that the earlier *Two Light Syncopated Pieces* were written as a response to the lunch.

of the classics.<sup>61</sup> Whilst no evidence survives that Coates attended these concerts, both Phyl and Eric were regular dancers at the Savoy Hotel and would have presumably have heard about the concerts either before or after them by word of mouth; they were also well-documented in the Press. These two events must have had a major influence on him and the *Syncopated Pieces* must surely be the first result of his increased interest in dance music. He must have realised that through his adaptation of dance syncopation he was appealing to a significant cross-section of the listening public, creating what he later was to call a 'public meeting ground in all music.'<sup>62</sup>

The harmonic construction of these two pieces is very much along dance band lines with frequent occurrences of major seventh and eleventh chords in both pieces and no significant modulations. The melodic construction of both pieces shows hallmarks of popular dance band melodies with frequent chromatic 'decorating' melodies and the use of muted brass. In 'Moon Magic', the melody at letter A, is quite angular, with several leaps of a seventh, syncopated crotchets and chromatic triplets and groups of instruments moving together as units of sound, are all reminiscent of many well-orchestrated dance tunes of the period, Ex. 6.11. For a large proportion of 'Rose of Samarkand', Coates sustains a 'drum beat', initially a steady crotchet pulse on the tenor drum from letter A to C, which returns from G to I. From J to O the side drum takes the rhythm of the accompaniment of the orchestra, very much a reminder of the function of the drums in a dance band. At times, he treats the orchestra very much as units of sound. As in a dance orchestra, there is the 'saxophone team', the 'brass team' and the 'rhythm team'. At letter B, the strings and percussion are providing the rhythm, of static crotchets,

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<sup>61</sup> Dickinson, Peter. *Marigold: The Music of Billy Mayerl*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 48-66.

<sup>62</sup> Coates, Eric. *Report on Light Music*. Presented to the BBC, 22/05/1943, 2. *GB-Rwac* Music General Light Music File 1939-1943 and *GB-STHprivate*.

32 **A**

Fl *mf* 3

Ob *mf* 3

Cl *mf*

Bsn *mf*

Hn *mf*

Tpt *mf* MUTES OUT *p*

Tbn *p* *p*

Tri

Vln *mf* 3

Vla *mf*

Vc arco *mf*

Cb arco *mf* 3 pizz.

**A** *mf*

Musical score for 'Moon Magic' (Two Light Syncopated Pieces), bars 32-42. The score is for a full orchestra and includes parts for Flute (Fl), Oboe (Ob), Clarinet (Clt), Bassoon (Bsn), Horn (Hn), Trumpet (Tpt), Trombone (Tbn), Triangle (Tri), Violin (Vln), Viola (Vla), Violoncello (Vc), and Contrabass (Cb). The score shows various musical notations including dynamics (f, mf, cresc), articulation (arco), and phrasing (trills, triplets).

Ex. 6.11 'Moon Magic' (Two Light Syncopated Pieces), bars 32-42.

whilst the horns are sustaining the harmony, the woodwind present the melody, or at bar 17, alternate with the brass in providing the melody – they never quite play together as a unit, Ex. 6.12.

Furthermore, the instrumentation reflects this, as Coates uses muted brass in bars 33-34, 37-38, 42, 46-50 in 'Rose of Samarkand'. Later, at figure J, he uses two low clarinets, doubled with 'celli making a sound akin to the saxophone, over which he juxtaposes a solo violin melody – highly reminiscent of the string sound of dance orchestras (if they employed strings as few did).

With *The Three Bears* phantasy, he integrated the idiom further; the majority of the melodies are more angular than the *Syncopated Pieces* and the brass behaves with a greater assertion in the foxtrot, eight bars after O. The Phantasy also shows a marked liberation and advancement of syncopation as in the development of the opening melody. After figure F, Coates tries to de-emphasize the first beat of the bar, another standard ploy of the dance bands, either by syncopation or by tying the note to the last note in the previous bar. This is further underpinned by the 3/8 group of the quavers in the celli with the 2/4 framework, and the awkward (at the prescribed tempo) rhythmic pattern of the harp chords, Ex. 6.13.

With the composition of *The Three Bears*, Coates had readily assimilated the clichés and idiom of the dance bands into his own harmonic language, particularly with the frequent use of major sevenths. Ex. 6.14 shows the harmonic reduction of bars 3 to 30 of the Phantasy including the use of minor dominant sevenths and flattened-mediant sixth chords as well as frequent use of pedals to heighten the harmonic tension.

13

Fl

Ob

Cl

Bsn

Hn

Tpt

Tbn

Timp

Perc

Vln

Vla

Vc

Cb

*dim*

*f*

*p*

*mf*

*f*

*>dim*

*dim*

*p*

Cymbal with sticks

*p*

*p*

B

B

17

Fl

Ob

Clt

Bsn

Hn

Tpt

Tbn

Timp

Perc

Vln

Vla

Vc

Cb

*mf*

*molto*

*mf*

*molto*

*f*

MUTED

*mf cresc molto*

*a2*

*mf cresc molto*

*cresc. molto*

*cresc. molto*

*cresc. molto*

*cresc. molto*

*cresc. molto*

*cresc. molto*

21 C

Fl *ff* *mf*

Ob *ff* *f*

Cl *ff*

Bsn *f*

Hn *MUTES OUT* *f* *dim*

Tpt *MUTES OUT* *dim* Solo

Tbn

Timp

Perc *ff* *mf*  
Cymbal roll

Vln *mp* *ff* arco *f*

Vla *ff* arco *f*

Vc *ff* *f*

Cb *ff* *f*

*ff* C *f*

Ex. 6.12 'Rose of Samarkand' (Two Light Syncopated Pieces), bars 13-25.





bar number: 3 9 14 15 16 17 **A** 18 19 20 21 22 23 26 27 28 30

Ex. 6.14 *The Three Bears*, accompaniment chord sequence, bars 3-30.

In 1927 he paid the ultimate acknowledgement to the dance orchestras he loved by composing his first pastiche of their style in the fourth movement of his *Four Ways* Suite. He had conceived a suite based on the four compass points.<sup>63</sup> The whole Suite is atypical of his writing as it is so radically different to anything else he ever composed, due to the variety of styles of each piece, which do not sit well together as a group. The Suite was popular when first composed and has largely been forgotten as one of his most unsuccessful scores. ‘Westwards’, a Charleston, is akin in style to ‘Rose of Samarkand’ and contrasts its syncopation with a more relaxed ‘B’ melody. The opening ‘A’ section hardly gives the melody (scored for clarinets for obvious Dixie/dance band reasons) a chance to establish itself, unlike the ‘Rose of Samarkand’ and is frequently interrupted by brass interjections or descending arpeggiated seventh chords, Ex. 6.15.

**B** 1st & 2nd Violins

<sup>63</sup> Coates: 1953, 204. An interesting comparison can be made with Percy Grainger’s *Youthful Suite*, largely composed between 1899 and 1901, albeit heavily revised during 1940-1945; it bears a striking resemblance to Coates’ *Four Ways* Suite. Grainger’s first movement is a ‘Northern March’; he also uses an ‘Eastern Intermezzo’ and ends with an ‘English Waltz.’

The musical score is divided into four systems. The first system features a piano (p) dynamic, with a Viola/Oboe (Vla, Ob) part containing a triplet (3) and a Bass Drum (BD) part. The second system includes a First Violin (1st Vln Cl) part, Cello and Horns (Cello and Hns) with a crescendo (cresc) marking, and a Bass Drum (BD) part. The third system shows Brass with dynamics p, f, and ff, and a First Violin (1st Vln) part with ff. The fourth system continues with Brass dynamics p, f, and ff, and Cello/Horn/Ob/Viola (Ob, Cl, Vla, Cello) with mf. The Bass Drum (BD) remains at ff throughout.

Ex. 6.15 'Rhythm' (*The Four Ways Suite*), letter B.

Coates also makes frequent use of chromatic passages and closely scored chords for the woodwind and brass to add interest to the movement.

With the production of *The Four Ways Suite*, the Press were firmly equating him with jazz. After the premiere of the Suite in 1927 comments such as: 'It ["Westwards"] is ingenious, but Mr. Coates has too much native refinement to give a faithful idea of the vulgarities and brutalities of the Charleston or the Black Bottom. It needs a few blatant, shrieking discords<sup>64</sup>' or 'If only jazz were as agreeable as Mr. Coates makes it out to be there would not be half the outcry against it that there is.'<sup>65</sup> Quite why he could use 'jazz elements' and achieve success when the majority of the musical establishment were against jazz is bizarre.<sup>66</sup> He always maintained, 'I entirely disagree with the denunciation of modern syncopation, and have incorporated in the last movement of *Four Ways* a definite jazz rhythm seriously treated.'<sup>67</sup> Probably because he maintained that he treated jazz as a serious tool of composition, it was the key to his success. In the eyes of the Press, an orchestral parody was more acceptable than what it parodied. Yet his application of dance music to light orchestral music was successful as it was only applied in certain movements or pieces; it was a subtle blend and was still essentially light orchestral music. In 1928 he stated:

"The Three Bears"... seems to have created more interest than anything I have done for some time. The explanation probably lies in the employment of modern dance rhythms.

This work has frequently been called the connecting link between jazz and legitimate music. I did not write it with this intension, and was surprised myself when these dance rhythms became more insistent that there was no keeping them out. For this reason I consider modern syncopation employed with discretion and occasionally in light orchestral works can be very effective and attractive.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> 24/09/1927 *Daily News*. 'Jazz from Eric Coates'.

<sup>65</sup> 10/11/1927 *Daily News*.

<sup>66</sup> The BBC regularly broadcast dance music from its foundations and until 1926, the Savoy Bands held a monopoly on broadcasting dance music, no other dance band could broadcast without the consent of the Savoy Management. (Parsonage: 2005, 169).

<sup>67</sup> January 1928 'Our Interview Gallery: No 21 Mr Eric Coates.' In the *Performing Right Gazette* 269-271.

<sup>68</sup> 07/01/1928 *The Daily Sketch*. "Taking Jazz Seriously by Eric Coates."

No doubt adding to his reputation as a leading popular composer were the frequent performances and recordings by the foremost British dance orchestras of the period, particularly those of Hylton (who claimed in a 1933 article that *The Three Bears* was written for him),<sup>69</sup> Payne and Hall. Hall remembered whilst he was working at the Midland Hotel in Manchester,

My quest for contemporary up-to-the-minute music extended to these concerts [Sunday Concerts at the Midland Hotel], and we gave one of the first performances of Eric Coates' suite [*sic*] "The Selfish Giant." Our efforts were rewarded and honoured with the attendance of Eric Coates himself, who travelled specially from London to hear it.<sup>70</sup>

Coates must certainly have placed great store on the performance of his music by dance orchestras; in 1928 he orchestrated *The Three Bears* for Payne's BBC Dance Orchestra.<sup>71</sup> Jack Hylton gave several performances of *The Selfish Giant* and *The Three Bears* at prestigious concerts; both phantasies were included in concerts at the Royal Albert Hall; the former on 20 February 1926 to an audience of over 7,000,<sup>72</sup> and the latter on 19 December 1926 by the augmented Hylton Orchestra, in a concert designed to showcase the scope and variety of arrangements for the band.<sup>73</sup> After the February performance of *The Selfish Giant* by Hylton's Band, Coates was reported in *Melody Maker*:

I am overwhelmed by Mr. Hylton's performance, which was such that my ideas on music may become revolutionised. That his performance was absolutely excellent there can be no doubt, but the outstanding feature in my mind is that all of us may be forced to modify many of our ideas on the rendering of certain classes of music, which in some ways are admittedly old-fashioned, to suit the possibilities which have become apparent from the renderings of these modern soloists.

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<sup>69</sup> 20/10/1933 *The Daily Mirror*. 'Why Ostracise Jazz by Jack Hylton.' Hylton may well have been the inspiration for Coates' integration of jazz into his scores of the 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>70</sup> Hall: 1955, 69.

<sup>71</sup> 31/05/1928 J.M. Rose-Troupe to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates' file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>72</sup> This was one of the largest audiences ever recorded at a London Ballad Concert. Hylton's Kit-Kat Band was augmented with Kettner's Band, creating a host of twenty-five musicians. (March 1926 *Melody Maker and British Metronome*. 'Syncopation and Dance Band News', 11.) The band had recorded the Phantasy the previous day.

<sup>73</sup> Faint, Peter. 'Full Biography of Jack Hylton' [www.petefaint.co.uk/jackhylton/biofull.htm](http://www.petefaint.co.uk/jackhylton/biofull.htm) 2004. The band would record the work eleven days later.

Mr. Hylton's Band has shown me that the technique and general musical ability of the musicians he employs are in every way equal to those of the acknowledged symphony players and if Mr. Hylton's men are a fair sample of the English artists who are providing syncopated music, then it is time we all considered them much more seriously and realised that the dance music they have adopted has taught them the means of colouring their renderings in a manner which is at once exhilarating and pleasing. Their interpretation proved at once that these musicians of Mr. Hylton's were capable of taking a genuine and highly intelligent interest in a serious work, which, coupled with the combination's unusual perfection of intonation and attack, its appreciation of light and shade and excellent ensemble work, produced a rendering which was not only musically good, but of such novelty as to have inspired me with many new ideas for exploiting its special style by means of new compositions especially composed to give it the fullest display.<sup>74</sup>

The Press did not always relish the performances of Coates' music by Hylton's Band. *The Gramophone* commented:<sup>75</sup>

...I do not know the constitution of Mr. Hylton's Orchestra, but it is a noisy one, singularly ill-balanced as any unbiased person will agree, I think. This is not jazz, in the usual meaning of the term, though it has the trace of the serpent in it.

This seems to me a quite ineffective attempt (I take it) to blend jazz and light music. It won't work. That, indeed, is one of the beauties of the business; jazz simply won't blend with anything. Hence the failure of these preposterous attempts to write "jazz symphonies," and the ridiculousness, patent to any experienced musician, of speaking grandly of "symphonised syncopation" to the babbling of jazz as the means of reviving symphonic music. Of all the impudence! Jazz holds no possibilities of development. How can a thing so desperately un-rhythmical have any? (Its so-called rhythm is only tiresome repetition of time patterns) But it won't go until something takes its place. I don't believe it's dying. We might have, after it, seven devils worse than the first.

Mr. Eric Coates has done much more interesting work than this. Let him keep to his pleasant light music for a normal orchestra with some balance and blend about it – and let jazz keep to its own domain, which never was that of music.

Nevertheless, the dance bands proved to be a major influence for Coates, even if his predictions (outlined in *Melody Maker*) for them never materialised.

Finally on his list of 'the essential aspects of light music composition' was orchestration – the apex of composition. He always stipulated that orchestration should

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<sup>74</sup> March 1926 *Melody Maker and British Metronome*. 'Syncopation and Dance Band News', 11-12.

<sup>75</sup> May 1926 *The Gramophone*. 'Review of *The Selfish Giant*', 528.

be executed by the composer himself at all times; he clearly had not been involved in the production of a film score, where speed is of the essence:

It has frequently struck me how strange it is that there are so many composers to-day who cannot put down a note of music on paper, let alone write for the orchestra. Perhaps it may be that these people prefer being lazy and making easy money to settling down to what looks like a hard job. I feel sorry for them, for they miss a great deal. Hard work it may be, far harder than many people imagine, and I am sure some will be surprised when they hear what a tremendous amount of care and patience has to be exercised in writing an orchestral work, even of the lightest calibre.<sup>76</sup>

He also had an aversion for anyone tampering with music after the composer had written it: 'music is written by a composer for performance on certain instruments; once written it cannot be altered except by the composer, and to be performed it should be presented exactly as written, for the correct complement of instruments.'<sup>77</sup> He had always wanted to be an orchestral composer and viewed writing for orchestra as the supreme achievement of a composer. After the composition of a piece, usually in short score (the only surviving short score is the manuscript for *Men of Trent* which shows that he thought on four lines, hinting orchestral scoring),<sup>78</sup> he would then turn to orchestration, for him a lengthy process, but one which could be executed in the noisiest of conditions; *The Three Elizabeths* was scored in the Northwick Arms in Evesham<sup>79</sup> and passages of *Cinderella* while Coates' wife Phyl and a group of her friends were playing bridge in their London flat.<sup>80</sup> Certainly he rose to the challenges and intricacies of orchestration as he detailed:

A recent Suite of mine in four movements [*The Four Centuries*] was sketched out in about ten days and the orchestration finished in four months. A laborious and a thankless task, you may think? Laborious, yes, but not thankless. It is one of the most satisfying things I know, after having sat at my desk day in day out, writing, contriving,

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<sup>76</sup> Coates: 1953, 92. He also tells of an American who was could not get anyone to write his music for him and Coates' attitude towards the composer (Ibid).

<sup>77</sup> Coates: 1943, 1.

<sup>78</sup> GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box 181. This was only published in an arrangement for military band; Coates meant to orchestrate the march (09/07/1953 *Nottingham Guardian* 'New Eric Coates March').

<sup>79</sup> Norris, Gerald. *A Musical Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland*. Newton Abbott; David and Charles, 1981, 137 & Coates: 1953, 245. He scored the work in the hotel bar surrounded by the barman sorting out the alcohol for the days' custom! (Ibid).

<sup>80</sup> 01/07/1934 *Sunday Express*.

experimenting, altering, with the work on hand growing slowly under my pen, to be in front of the orchestra, stick in hand, to hear for the first time what I had been listening to in my head for so long. That little passage from the oboe, the divisi string effect here, the woodwind rhythm there, the snappy staccato chords from the brass, the crescendo from the side-drum beginning pianissimo, coming up to a fortissimo and culminating in a terrific climax from the whole orchestra. To know that every sound every instrument was making had been carefully planned and thought out was ample repayment for the weary hours spent over that complicated-looking full-score. Writing within certain instrumental limits, to comply with an orchestra that may not have complete symphonic personnel, is an intricate problem which you come up against frequently. It is not such a difficult matter to write for an orchestra of limitless proportions (provided you know anything about orchestration at all), for here you have any amount of instruments at your disposal to play with. But it takes a good deal of ingenuity to make an effect with an ensemble which is short, say, of a third trombone, or third and fourth horns, or second woodwind players, and so on. You will find a composer like Richard Strauss, who usually paints on an enormous orchestral canvas, equally at home when writing for the Chamber Orchestra. This is the acid test, and is the sign of a master.<sup>81</sup>

In 1934 whilst discussing his music with a journalist from the *Nottingham Guardian* he expressed his views on orchestration: 'First... I try to put in a small part for each player. Having performed in orchestras myself, I realise how much more interesting it becomes for the members if they have each have their own little bit. They play the uninteresting parts then with much more pleasure and vigour.'<sup>82</sup>

Coates' earliest orchestral works are effectively and competently scored for a small orchestra; the *Miniature Suite* is only scored for strings, double woodwind, two horns, (no other brass) and percussion. Such was the popularity of the Suite that Boosey & Co, who published the work, invited Percy Fletcher to rescore the work for a larger ensemble;<sup>83</sup> Fletcher also took the additional liberty of increasing the number of percussion instruments. Today this arrangement is more popular than the original scoring. Despite the nationwide variety of orchestras, Coates usually scored for double

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<sup>81</sup> Coates: 1953, 93.

<sup>82</sup> 29/06/1934 *Nottingham Guardian*. Teddy Holmes, of Chappell, said of Coates' orchestration: 'When Eric was illustrating a new work on the piano, he had a marvellous facility of singing the various counter-melodies, and he could imitate a clarinet or oboe quite beautifully. He used to say that in his early days, he had to play so many dull viola parts that he made up his mind that every instrument – including the cinderella instrument of the orchestra, the viola – should have an interesting part...' (Teddy Holmes quoted in Lace: 1986, viii).

<sup>83</sup> Fletcher may probably have taken a small percentage of Coates' royalties for the Suite.

woodwind, either two or four horns and a full brass section of two trumpets and three trombones (the majority of his orchestral music is scored for three trombones). Throughout the 1910s, he responded to the orchestral fashions and standard use of instruments of the period and included parts for euphonium and cornets, instead of trumpets; he was later disparaging about the tone of the cornet.<sup>84</sup> During the 1920s, when he was writing works for coastal orchestras, he often scaled down the woodwind as follows; two flutes and clarinets and one oboe and bassoon, as in the fantasies *The Three Bears* and *Cinderella* (in the works where he scores two oboes and bassoons, he is often at a loss as to how to employ the second instrument). This is viewed today as the typical 'light music' combination. No doubt his orchestration was, in part, governed by the size of the country's numerous light orchestras, but also the two standard orchestrations used by Chappell in their orchestral music, especially those pieces that were distributed as part of the various 'orchestral clubs' run by Chappell. In 1944, Haydn Wood had complained about the limitations of orchestras for composers of light orchestral music:

I wonder if it is realised with what difficulties the light-music composer has to contend when he orchestrates his music. For instance, the composer of serious music knows full well that whatever instrument he wishes to include in his score will be available when performed; but not so the composer of light music. The latter has to be chary of including such instruments as a cor anglais, bass clarinet, double bassoon, tuba, or even a harp or celeste, not to mention a third and fourth horn and a couple of drummers. These are all available to the serious composer; and how much easier it is to get one's effects, either delicate or grandiose, with such a galaxy of instruments to call upon! The light composer's music is seldom heard with any of the above-mentioned instruments. On the contrary he has often to be content with incomplete brass and wood-wind sections. This deficiency is overcome by extensive cueing – transferring the passages to other instruments not employed at the time. Cueing is one of the bugbears of the light composer's lot. In these circumstances it is only on special occasions that his music sounds as he conceived it. It is much more interesting and satisfactory to write a score for an outsize symphony orchestra than to juggle with that for a probably depleted light orchestra.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> 10/10/1956 Eric Coates to John Lowe. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates' file 5, 1949-1957.

<sup>85</sup> 01/09/1944 *Radio Times*. 'Letter from Haydn Wood'. (This was in response to an article entitled *Tastes in Light Music*, published on 11/08/1944).

Like Malcolm Arnold (whose orchestration could well have been influenced by Coates' somewhat 'clean-cut' style), Coates subscribed to a similar philosophy of instrumentation, as Arnold stated:

I think that, in augmenting the orchestra, composers have been sadly led astray. They usually add instruments to the middle of the orchestra, already the heaviest part, with cellos, violas, horns, bassoons, clarinets and trombones. They add cor anglais or bass clarinet or saxophone. The extremes are the areas that want augmenting, to enrich the colour and add vitality. The instruments needed are: extra flutes, piccolos, E-flat clarinet, contra-bassoon. I've never used a cor anglais in my life.<sup>86</sup>

As far as Coates was concerned, he knew the limitations of writing light music, and only in *The Enchanted Garden* did he call for instrumentation beyond the majority of modest orchestras. Many of the pieces are scored so depleted orchestras could perform them with certain instruments marked *ad lib* and frequent cueing of instruments in the parts. By the 1940s, probably due to orchestral fashions, he began to score for a larger brass section including three trumpets (to obtain triadic fanfares) and the inclusion of the tuba (for pedals), a notable and worthwhile addition in the later marches.

From the radix of his orchestral writing, he seems to have had an effective, consummate grasp of the technique of orchestration. Certainly the early works for strings, the youthful *Ballad* for String Orchestra and *Mennetto* for string quartet show an effective grasp of string-writing technique, as one would expect from a proficient viola player. The *Four Old English Songs* show a precocious and effective grasp of orchestration for student works, which does more than merely accompany the soloist. Playing in a professional orchestra such as the Queen's Hall Orchestra must have offered Coates the best training of hearing and seeing what worked and more importantly did not work for orchestras. Certainly there are many rhetorical gestures and allusions to the orchestration of Tchaikovsky and Elgar, and, to a lesser degree that of Wagner. During the 1910s,

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<sup>86</sup> Malcolm Arnold in Schafer, Murray. *British Composers in Interview*. London: Faber and Faber, 1963, 148.

Coates' orchestration became more assured in works such as *Wood Nymphs* and *Summer Days*, but it was with the overture *The Merry-makers* that he reached compositional and orchestral maturity. The Overture is scored for double woodwind and brass with four horns. The brass writing clearly shows a marked improvement in orchestration from his works of the 1910s, as the section is more competently written for, and is not just used for fanfares, but more successfully integrated into the texture; particularly in their frequent staccato chords which underpin the more fulgent woodwind and string parts. The writing for horns is exemplary; both subjects are flawlessly written for the instrument, especially the second theme, in the recapitulation where the horns are doubled with an oboe, both clarinets and 'celli (bars 158-177); however, the high point is the horn calls at figure G, Ex. 6.16.

From this juncture Coates' orchestral scores took on an element of lightness in orchestration, and the orchestral effects in *The Three Bears* and *Cinderella* have a delicacy more redolent of French pointillism which was occasionally commented on in the press at the time – he was often styled 'the Peter Pan of music'.<sup>87</sup> Dan Godfrey wrote in his autobiography published in 1924 that Coates '...has a notable lightness of touch and orchestrates his music with quite uncommon skill and fancy. A little more originality in his melody would give him a still higher place, but his music is very popular with our less serious audiences...'<sup>88</sup> Other composers of light music of the period, notably Haydn Wood, Montague Phillips and Albert Ketèlbey, were effective orchestrators, but none managed to inject the atmosphere of lightness and slickness that Coates imparted to his scores.

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<sup>87</sup> 16/11/1925 *Morning Post*. 'The Eastbourne Festival. "Peter Pan" of Music: A Lesson to Jazz Composers.'

<sup>88</sup> Godfrey, Dan. *Memories and Music*. London: Hutchinson, 1924, 153.



106

Fl *ff cresc molto*

Ob *ff cresc molto*

Clt (A) *ff cresc molto*

Bsn

Hn (F) *ff cresc molto*

Tpt (A) *ff cresc molto*

Tbn *ff cresc molto*

Timp *p subito cresc molto*

Perc

Vln *ff*

Vla *ff*

Vc *ff*

Cb *ff*

Ex. 6.16 *The Merry-makers Overture*, bars 103-108.

Coates' scores are often marked by his frequent doublings of instruments, often at the interval of two octaves, though not to the extent of Tchaikovsky and Liszt. This was in contradiction to a piece of advice offered to him by Frank Bridge, a tip so important as to warrant inclusion in his autobiography: 'Eric, don't double more than you can help.'<sup>89</sup> This doubling of instruments is best seen in his writing for strings, where rather than use both sets of violins at the top of the orchestral texture, he favours doubling the first violin with the 'cello (often at an interval of two octaves) as at figure 2 in *Sweet Seventeen*, or the first violin with a high viola (written in the treble clef) such as figure 9 in *Rhodesia March* and figure 20 in 'Rhythm' (*Four Centuries Suite*).<sup>90</sup> Occasionally, in his slower pieces, he treats the strings (except the double bass, which usually supplies the bass, either arco or pizzicato) as a group and places the group with the melody; the lower strings are often at the extremities of their register, with the woodwind providing a countermelody and the brass providing the harmony. The effect can be ethereal as in the close of *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, from figure 6 until the end where the intensity of the high 'celli and violas, serenely accompanied by muted brass, conjures up the mythical and soporific paradise of the lagoon, an effect used in *Summer Afternoon*, bars 29-45, Ex. 6.17.

Despite his frequent doublings of the melody in the first violin and lower strings, he seldom uses both violins together, tending to leave the second violin to harmony in addition to providing the rhythmic interest. The 'relegation' of the second violins can undermine the quantity of string sound, and certainly in smaller orchestras, where a piano could be employed to play the accompaniment feature, seems to squander string tone.

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<sup>89</sup> Coates: 1953, 115.

<sup>90</sup> As Haydn Wood stated: 'What is more inspiring to hear a broad melody played in unison by the violins and cellos to a warm sustained accompaniment by the other members of the orchestra?' (01/02/1952 *Radio Times*.)

82: *rall.*

Fl. *dim.*

Ob. *dim.*

Cl. 1 (Bb) *dim.*

Cl. 2 (Bb) *dim.*

Bsn. *dim.*

Hn. 1 (F) *dim.*

Hn. 2 (F) *dim.*

Tpt. 1 (Bb) Muted

Tpt. 2 (Bb) Muted

Tbn. 1 Muted

Tbn. 2 Muted

Glock. *p*

Tri.

Hp. *dim.*

Vln. 1 *dim.*

Vln. 2 *dim.*

Vla. *dim.*

Vlc. *dim.*

Db. *dim.*

*rall.* *dim.*

87 **7 Calando**

Fl. *p* *mf* *p*

Ob. *p* *mf* *p*

Cl. 1 (Bb) *p* *mf* *p*

Cl. 2 (Bb) *p* *mf* *Dim.* *p*

Bsn. *p* *mf* *Dim.* *p*

Hn. 1 (F) *p*

Hn. 2 (F) *p*

Tpt. 1 (Bb) *mp* *pp*

Tpt. 2 (Bb) *mp* *pp*

Tbn. 1 *mp* *pp*

Tbn. 2 *mp* *pp*

Glock. *mp*

Tri.

Hp. *mp*

Vln. 1 *p* *pp*

Vln. 2 *p* *pp*

Vla. *p* *pp*

Vlc. *p* *pp*

Db. *p* *pp*  
arco

**7 Calando**

92

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. 1(Bb)

Cl. 2(Bb)

Bsn.

Hn. 1(F)

Hn. 2(F)

Tpt. 1(Bb)

Tpt. 2(Bb)

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Glock.

Tri.

Hp.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Db.

Ex. 6.17 *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, bars 77-end.

Whilst undoubtedly influenced by the pizzicato bass of the dance band, Coates makes frequent use of the double bass providing the important bass note at the beginning of the bar. This is often played pizzicato, alternating with passages played arco separated by a rest, giving a firm sound, though often doubled by the celli and bassoon(s). This technique gives his scores their delicacy and the effect is also quite telling within a recording studio, recording delightfully. The double bass is often heightened with the addition of bassoon(s) and often ‘cello and occasionally the third trombone – the double bass predominately provides the bass part, and in certain pieces is responsible for providing the pulse whilst the other parts are engaged on melody or countermelodies. This is clearly seen in the outer movements of *The Three Men Suite*. Often he employs pizzicato ‘celli which again lightens the texture (cf. bars 22-33 and 116-129 of *The Dam Busters March* and the opening of *By the Sleepy Lagoon*.)

Aside from its jazz connotations, Coates occasionally employed a saxophone in his orchestrations. He had advocated its use after hearing Hylton’s Band perform their ‘version’ of *The Selfish Giant* in 1926, but it was not until his 1928 intermezzo *Under the Stars* that he first called for the instrument;<sup>91</sup> he might have used the instrument had it been more commonplace within British orchestras as several conductors, including Henry Wood, abhorred the instrument. Coates frequently rallied round to defend the instrument both in his autobiography<sup>92</sup> and in an interview for *Melody Maker* in 1926, though perhaps his comments were overly optimistic for the instrument in the light of its subsequent development:

Personally I think the Saxophone has come to stay as a symphony instrument, providing one can find the right musicians to perform upon it. It lends a colouring to an orchestra and its only fault seems to be that, with its beautiful round sweet fullness of tone, it may make some of the other instruments, particularly, perhaps, the Flute and Bassoon, sound very dead.

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<sup>91</sup> Ketèlbey had used the instrument in his *Cockney Suite*, written in 1924.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 240.

I only hope we shall not revert to hearing the Saxophone played in the old-fashioned straight, hard, vibratoless and wooden-toned style. Its beauty lies chiefly in the way it is played to-day, which is after the American school and in direct opposition to the old-fashioned French idea. It should, and does, to-day, convey the impression of rich golden sunshine. It should not be cold and hard as the moon, since beautiful as the moon may be, it can never outshine the sun, and a cold tone in a Saxophone can never compete with one which is richly round and softly warm. To those who want to criticise any kind of instrument, let me say that it is the instrumentalist who counts every time, and the syncopated artist has a style which is rapidly teaching his 'straight' brother that there is an unexplored field in good class[ical] music which is only just being opened up – and opened up, too, from ideas obtained from the renderings of jazz artists.<sup>93</sup>

On occasions, he uses the saxophone because of its dance band connotations, as in 'The Man-About-Town' (*The Three Men*) and a trio of three in 'Rhythm' (*Four Centuries Suite*). Saxophone parts were also issued for several of his more popular pieces, including the *London Suite* and *The Dam Busters March*.<sup>94</sup> However, in other scores he was keen to exploit the lyrical aspect of the instrument as in the *Unknown Singer* and *Impressions of a Princess* or the solo part of *Saxo-Rhapsody*, where, in the final cadence, he requires the saxophonist to climax quietly in the extremity of their register, surely inspired by the artistry of Rascher, the work's dedicatee, Ex. 6.18.<sup>95</sup>



Ex. 6.18 *Saxo-Rhapsody*, final 6 bars.

For the percussion section, Coates' great skill was to score at least two parts in which the timpani was treated as just another instrument of the section rather than an independent instrument. Several of the entr'actes only require one percussionist; *London*

<sup>93</sup> March 1926 *Melody Maker and British Metronome*. 'Syncopation and Dance Band News', 12-13.

<sup>94</sup> In the case of *The Dam Busters March*, the saxophone parts were written into the autograph score though not in Coates' hand. It is not known whether he composed or sanctioned the saxophone parts in his orchestral music.

<sup>95</sup> Coates later regretted the printed ending to the *Saxo-Rhapsody* as he felt that 'I always had the feeling that the top A sounded a little remote against the low brass chords!' (26/09/1954 Eric Coates to Aubyn Rayinski [saxophone player] *GB-STHprivate*). As such, when Coates performed the work at the 1954 Promenade Concerts, he instructed the soloist Walter Glynn to play the alternative ending.

*Calling March* and *The Unknown Singer* dispense with timpani altogether. To inject lightness into the ensemble, he frequently calls for 'bright' percussion instruments such as triangle and glockenspiel (always marked 'with wooden hammers') or vibraphone to add the necessary brightness. At times, these instruments can make his scores sound saccharine if listened to constantly, but the effect is often quite luminescent. This is further borne out by the predominate use of the suspended cymbal rather than the normal clash cymbal, as in *The Seven Seas*. This enables him to use frequent cymbal rolls as well as short, sharp notes (with sticks) that would be difficult to achieve using clash cymbals.

By the 1930s, he had begun to write for a more emancipated and expanded percussion section, particularly with the frequent inclusion of the vibraphone in the majority of his orchestral scores written between 1934 and 1941, commencing with *The Three Men Suite*. This was undoubtedly due to its links with the dance band and the effects it could create. Coates was one of the earliest composers to adopt the vibraphone into 'western art' music; the instrument had been adopted by the dance bands from the late 1920s.<sup>96</sup> The earliest significant uses of the instrument were by Havergal Brian in his unfinished opera *The Tigers*, written in 1917-1919 and orchestrated in 1928-1929, Milhaud's *L'annonce faite à Marie* (1932) and Berg's *Lulu* (1937).<sup>97</sup> Often the instrument is used in a similar role to the glockenspiel for playing single notes, but Coates frequently uses the instrument for spread triads (often in second inversion). The glockenspiel was frequently used in recording sessions in the 1930s and 1940s as an alternative to the glockenspiel, often displacing this instrument in works that called for it.

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<sup>96</sup> Blades, James & Holland, James. 'Vibraphone.' In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie: xxvi 521-523. London: Macmillan, 2001, 522

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. The English seem to have been fascinated for the instrument: Vaughan Williams (*Seventh and Eighth Symphonies*), Britten (*Spring Symphony, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Prince of Pagodas*), Walton (*Cello Concerto and Partita*), and Tippett (*Third Symphony*). (Ibid. 522-523.)

Eric Coates was unquestionably an orchestral composer; the orchestra was his medium and he excelled at the complex skill of orchestration. Yet his music's success lies in its construction, sincerity, melody, attention to detail. However, it is only possible to see exactly how his music succeeds through close analysis of certain key pieces.

## Chapter 7 The Formula of the Formula

*On October 14 an 'Idyll' by Mr. Eric Coates was heard for the first time, and gave evident pleasure to the large audience. In this, as in the other works already heard, the composer shows himself able to write music which is light, yet refined and musicianly. While one generally knows what is coming next, it is so pleasant that one does not complain. The effect of the full orchestra for the climax left one with impression Mr. Coates had given them something to do merely because they were on the spot. The music is not such as to demand such resources.<sup>1</sup>*

Eric Coates' music is dominated by his use of set pieces such as waltz, march, suite and phantasy with their own individual formulae. This is, however, as a consequence of two factors: firstly, the genre of light music tends to be rather formulaic in its construction, a formula that Sidney Torch believed signature tunes and film music had been responsible in creating, though one, which was clearly in evidence in the works of Edward German and Ketèlbey prior to these genres;<sup>2</sup> secondly, for twenty years, Coates was under a composition contract to Chappell, which stipulated that he compose, at least one extended work (a suite or similar work of extended length), two shorter works and one song to qualify for his retaining fee.<sup>3</sup> Even when Coates broke free from his contract in 1940, he continued to write short miniatures, rather than turn his hand to more symphonic works as several light composers had done. He recognised that this element of formula was one which he could exploit successfully. Peter Rogers, producer of the Carry On... films, themselves renowned for their formula, had a strong belief in the success of a formula, and used the following analogy to explain his repeated successes, a success he never analysed but accepted:

...a man who keeps a sweet shop and who has a regular customer who comes in every week for liquorice all-sorts. If the shopkeeper didn't stock liquorice all-sorts any more

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<sup>1</sup> 'Promenade Concerts.' In *Musical Times* 52 (1913), 746.

<sup>2</sup> 25/03/1949 *Radio Times* 'Sidney Torch Ventures an Opinion or Two.' In 'The Spotlight Turns on Light Music by Douglas Lawrence.'

<sup>3</sup> 12/10/1937 Chappell Contract. GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box 186.

and tried to supply something else instead, the customer would go away and not come back; he'd go where he could get liquorice all-sorts.<sup>4</sup>

This parochial analogy to some extent sums up the dichotomy in which Coates found himself: he had to provide a certain type of light music, but stay loyal to his artistic credo. There are elements of repetition, inherent formulae and clichés of style in the music of Coates, but it is his skilfulness and slickness of melodic and harmonic invention that raises the majority of these pieces to a higher plane. In *The Three Bears* Phantasy, the opening *leitmotif* is put through many adroit transformations, but unlike Liszt's thematic transformation is always easily recognisable, an important consideration for a light composer who wished to provide music that entertained and, as such, needed to have continual (albeit with subtle differences on repetitions) restatements of their melodic material. In 'The Man from the Sea' (*The Three Men Suite*) Coates skilfully weaves in the theme of 'Three Blind Mice', which is thematically related to the movement, but the discrete and subtle method of inclusion as well as the variety of invention, could hardly be regarded as banal. He uses the same techniques of counterpoint, fugue and variation of melodic material in identical methods as any other composer. Despite the inherent use of formulae within Coates' music, his music rises above this (as do the waltzes of Strauss, Chopin and Tchaikovsky and the marches of Elgar, Bliss and Walton) because of its high-standards of construction.

Coates' youthful *Ballad* for String Orchestra Op 2 was composed in 1904 and performed that year in Nottingham when Coates was aged eighteen. Whilst this is undoubtedly a juvenile work (written before his entry to the RAM), which the composer later dismissed in his autobiography as: '...an un-ambitious, youthful attempt, and it did not come off too badly.'<sup>5</sup> There is little evidence that work was performed after its

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<sup>4</sup> Paraphrase of Peter Rogers in Plomley, Roy. *Desert Island Discs*. London: William Kimber, 1975, 131.

<sup>5</sup> Coates, Eric. *Suite in Four Movements*. London: Heinemann, 1953, 42-43.

premiere until its recording in 1991.<sup>6</sup> The *Ballad* has all the hallmarks of his later musical style: sectional form, frequent melodic imitation (even if only for two bars), a well-composed main theme and assured string writing. The work is essentially monothematic and based around through-composed variations of the opening melody (which is unquestionably akin to the melodic writing of Elgar). The theme is composed in two parts (part I, bars 1-3 and part II, 4-8); bars 4-8 bear a resemblance to the theme of Elgar's *'Enigma' Variations*, Ex. 7.1.

Andante Cantabile

Part I *con espress* *mf*

Part II *dolce* *p* *cresc* *f*

Ex. 7.1 *Ballad* for String Orchestra Op. 2, bars 1-8.

The bifurcation the main melody is seen in subsequent works, such as ‘The Man from the Sea’ (*The Three Men Suite*), in which Coates treats the main theme in two parts. Table 7.1 shows a brief analysis of the *Ballad*.

The *Ballad* has many of the hallmarks of Coates’ later orchestral writing predominately with its frequent use of through-composed variation technique, subsequently utilised in *Cinderella* and the *London Suite*. In variations four and five of the *Ballad*, there is a prototype of his ‘self-developing melody’, though not to the degree that is seen in the later marches and suites. Variation 4 clearly shows this at work, featuring frequent variants of the first part of the theme (directly transplanted from G minor into C major, with no transposition), but also shows his effective, yet simple method of

<sup>6</sup> CDWHL 2053 (see Discography for data). There is no evidence of the work being performed during Coates’ time as a viola professor at the RAM, though his *Menuetto on an Old Irish Air* was frequently performed at Prize-Giving, either in quartet or string orchestra format.

Table 7.1 Analysis of *Ballad for Strings*.

Variation	Bar	Key	Comments
Theme	1	G minor	Theme presented in first violin.
1	13	C minor juxtaposed on G minor	Theme in violas and 'celli with first violin countermelody.
2	21	C minor juxtaposed on G minor	Theme in second violins, with semiquaver first violin countermelody.
3	29	G minor (pull towards subdominant)	Theme (part II) in first violins accompanied by pizzicato 'cello arpeggios, which breaks into free-material at bar 32, with the 'cello imitating the first violin at an interval of one bar.
4	37	C major	Variant of theme (part I) in the first violin is imitated by second violin.
5	49	C major (pull towards its subdominant, F major)	New variant of theme (part I) in the first violin and with the viola in imitation.
6	57	F major – B-flat major – G minor	First violin restates the theme and a short chorale section at bar 66 acts as a bridge passage to the next variation.
7	70	Mixture of dominant and tonic tonalities	Heavily disguised theme, full of chromatic passing notes and the emotional core of the work.
8	80	G minor	Snatches of the theme largely over a dominant pedal acting as a coda for the work.

generating the accompaniment. The accompaniment of this variation is highly reminiscent of bars 56-81 and 158-171 of *The Merry-makers Overture*, and is a simple, repeated idea in both the violas and 'celli, with the harmony changing approximately every bar. The pizzicato viola, 'celli and basses, lighten the texture and he frequently used pizzicato 'celli and basses in his later orchestral scores, Ex. 7.2.

Ex. 7.2 *Ballad* for String Orchestra, Op 2, bars 37-44.

This method of *multum in parvo* pervades his music, such as in *Summer Afternoon*, *By the Tamarisk* and *Impressions of a Princess* where a melodic kernel provides most of the material for the piece. The *Ballad* also shows a slight predilection towards mildly unorthodox harmony, as variations 2 and 3 juxtapose C minor onto the tonic of G minor and attempt to modulate via a chromatic of whole-tone descent in the bass as seen in bar 57 where, through a VII<sup>7</sup>-IV-Ib<sup>9-8</sup>, cadence Coates swiftly returns to the tonic from an interlude in C/F major; this swift key-change method is seen in *The Three Bears* (letters G, J, and S) and in many other works. There are also several progressions which appear weak in

theory, but in practice are most effective, such as the final cadence (flat-VII<sup>7</sup>-I), which appears in bars 91-92 in the *Ballad*; this is later seen in the marches where he has a fondness for second inversion chords which again appear weak in theory, but are part of his harmonic language. Overall, the *Ballad* has numerous traits of Coates' later formula, but already shows the sophisticated levels of invention, particularly regarding melody, in which his mind worked.

After the composition of the *Ballad*, Coates appears to not to have composed any other orchestral compositions (excluding the orchestrations of songs) until the *Miniature Suite*, written in 1911. Nevertheless, he always viewed himself as an orchestral composer and often composed his instrumental and song catalogue under duress; a number of his surviving songs were written on orchestral score-paper. As such, much of his formative musical education was gained in the composition of songs which made up the main corpus of his first published works; his early songs such as 'Stonecracker John' and 'Mother England's Brewing' show an assured harmonic grasp. His songs were written in the twilight years of the ballads and, as such, have absorbed several stylised traits of the genre. These songs are not exclusively of the ballad type, nor do they lie in the camp of the 'art song'. This is a dilemma that Coates' music shared with several of the songs of Roger Quilter, though Quilter tended to set 'high-art' texts. Despite their perceived simplicity and relatively low musical standing, they were difficult to render effectively, as Weatherly warned:

People think ballads are easy to sing. As a matter of fact they are the most difficult of all music to render with true effect. The ballad is simple in words, melody and accompaniment. There is nothing to help out the singer. It depends entirely on the power of expression, the intensity and variety of feeling. It is a question of art, interpretation and personality combined.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Weatherly, Fred E. *Piano and Gown*. London: G.P. Putnam, 1926, 120.

Coates enjoyed significant success in the genre of the song at the onset of his career and by the 1930s was still fondly remembered by the concert-going population for his successes, in the much the same way as Haydn Wood (Coates' works never had the same degree of success as Wood's infamous song 'Roses of Picardy' which was reputed to have sold over two million copies; a song which Weatherly offered to Coates before Wood set it).<sup>8</sup> It was difficult to attract the superior writers of words – Coates had initially started off setting Shakespeare and Rossetti – but was fortunate in attracting the services of F.E. Weatherly and Royden Barrie (the *non de plume* of Rodney Bennett). Even after the heyday of the ballad had passed, he still scored numerous successes with 'I Heard You Singing' and 'Bird Songs at Eventide'; a number of his most popular songs, 'Green Hills o'Somerset', 'I Pitch My Lonely Caravan at Night' and 'The Fairy Tales of Ireland' remained in print as late as the 1950s.

Coates' repeated successes in the genre of the ballad were probably due to his 'song formula':

Although I refer to song-writing as being a limited form of expression it is not an easy thing to write a popular song, for there are several points to consider before you can even put pen to paper. First of all comes the question of a lyric with human appeal, this has to be joined to a melody in which you employ a compass which is within range of the average voice, to this you must add a pianoforte accompaniment which must be such that practically anybody can attempt it, and lastly the finished article must sound pleasant, even to the ears of a musician. Of course there are exceptions to the rule, for if a song or an instrumental piece has achieved tremendous popularity through being sung or played a great deal, the public will buy it and have a shot at it on the piano whatever difficulties it may present.<sup>9</sup>

The ballads were like hymn-tunes; many were written, some musically excellent, but only a few were acclaimed and have stood the test of time, but something that most composers tried for a success.

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<sup>8</sup> 12/11/2005 Gilles Gouset to Michael Payne (e-mail).

<sup>9</sup> Coates: 1953, 183. This passage is undoubtedly based on an article Coates wrote in 1928 for the *Musical News* entitled 'How to Write Songs', however, the latter gives much more practical advice to composers.

When composing a song, Coates always started with the melody,<sup>10</sup> and it is usual in his songs to find a well-constructed melody that moves conjunctly avoiding leaps wherever possible, like the melodies in his later orchestral works. The majority of his songs are set strophically, with limited variation in each verse, though there is usually a little variation (cf. ‘Stonecracker John’), and a refrain (a device almost synonymous with the ballad tradition) more memorable than the verse. The songs usually conclude with a coda in which the singer ends either loudly or quietly with a long held note – a requisite of a ballad was to demonstrate the lung capacity of the singer! The issue of dynamics for the passages are often left at the discretion of the soloist, Coates tended to favour quieter endings; though on occasions, as in ‘Music of the Night’, the composer wrote alternative loud and soft endings. During the closing few bars, under the sustained note he would often write a sequential figure for the piano which would move away from the tonic before returning quickly for the final cadence as in ‘Green Hill o’Somerset.’<sup>11</sup>

The piano accompaniment of Coates’ songs tends toward a texture redolent of its period, with the right hand providing the melody and occasional chords, while the left hand plays the bass on the first beat and then jumps to chord on the second beat as seen in ‘Nobody Else but You’ and ‘Little Lady of the Moon’. The nature of Coates’ chordal writing, which is at times ungainly and awkward, causes difficulty for amateur pianist as in ‘Stonecracker John’, though the piano part stands up well even when it is ‘thinned out’. The accompaniments are constructed to give support to the singer (often the melody is in the tenor register of the accompaniment, brought to prominence by the right hand as in the second verse of ‘Our Little Home’ and the refrains in ‘The Fairy Tales of Ireland’)? In addition they provide the necessary rhythmic drive, either via ‘um-cha’ accompaniment, as in ‘Reuben Ranzo’ (which is rather vigorous) or ‘Little Lady of the Moon’ (where the accompaniment is gentler). A number also have a more flowing

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<sup>10</sup> 1928 *Musical News*. ‘How to Write Songs by Eric Coates.’

<sup>11</sup> He employed a similar approach at the close of *The Dam Busters* March.

accompaniment as in 'Love's Fantasy' and 'Rise Up and Reach the Stars'. He also makes frequent use of a sustained pedal point in the left hand (an effect he would use frequently and effectively in his orchestral works, cf. figures 4-9 of *Impressions of Princess*) which, in some respects, is ineffectual on the piano, as in the opening of 'The Outlaw's Song' where a low D is sustained for five-and-a-half bars.

'A Nest in Arcady', composed in 1919, features many of Coates' standard song-writing ploys, and is typical of his slower songs, as it has an effective vocal line sensitively accompanied by a full-textured piano part. The song has two identical verses with a refrain; the second refrain is extended into a brief coda.<sup>12</sup> As typical for songs of this period, the ballad was published in three keys for different singers (D, E-flat and F majors). 'A Nest in Arcady' opens with a brief introduction based on the refrain (from which the title is derived) before opening with the first verse. The verse favours the supertonic and its pull towards the dominant of E-flat major, B-flat, before cadencing onto the tonic (with an added sixth), via a perfect cadence (the dominant having an augmented fifth, a favourite chord of Billy Mayerl) at bars 7-8. Again, via the secondary dominant, the song pulls towards the submediant (hinted at in the introductory piano material), closing onto a diminished sixth chord on C-sharp in bar 10, before returning back to the dominant via the mediant major. The refrain is the first time since the introduction, in which Coates centres on the tonic, though here there are allusions to the submediant. He is not afraid to resort to hackneyed phrases, such as the imperfect cadence extended with a clichéd descending figuration in bar 20 to represent the falling of tears, before a return to the material of bars 14-15 in bars 22-23. Frequent hints of tonic sevenths in bars 24 and 27 lead to a cadence back onto the tonic (via a dominant thirteenth and several instances before) at bar 27-28, where the opening piano

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<sup>12</sup> The song was, unusually, not published by either Chappell or Boosey, but by Cary & Company; no doubt due to the loss of his position with the New Queen's Hall Orchestra, Coates being impecunious would publish with whoever he could.

introduction returns, with the arpeggiated chords rather than the non-arpeggiated chords from the chorus, Ex. 7.3. Nevertheless, these harmonic and melodic clichés are all very much *de rigueur* and accepted practice in the world of the ballads at the time of their composition.

The verse is then repeated identically, as too is the chorus, until the upbeat of bar 57 where yet another V<sup>13</sup>-I cadence occurs. This time the singer sustains the tonic for 4 bars either quietly or loudly, at their discretion, whilst the piano returns with the introduction lending the entire work symmetry. Whilst not profound music, or up to the level of inspiration of his orchestral music, this song is very much ‘music for ordinary people’ to sing in their homes to entertain family members. The vocal line is predominately doubled by the piano and easily sung due to its stepwise motion and frequent repetition of melodic material. Whilst the piano part is at times ungainly, a trait of Coates’ piano-writing as in ‘Stonecracker John’ and ‘The Song of the Wild’, it lies easily under the fingers of an amateur pianist. There are elements of clichéd formula in ‘A Nest in Arcady’ which belong to the ballad tradition, but Coates injects life into this formula through the relative sophistication of his harmonic language.

Coates excelled in writing a more robust form of the ballad – he had shot to fame with the rustic ‘Stonecracker John’ – and ‘The Grenadier’ is an excellent example. He wrote ‘The Grenadier’ in 1913 (the orchestral version dates from 1914 and is dedicated to father-in-law, Frank Black) to a lyric by the doyen of ballad writers, F.E. Weatherly, of which the mawkishness and banality can be gauged from the second verse:

When I’m on guard at the Barrack Yard,  
And the troops go marching by,  
It makes me queer when the drums I hear  
And see the colours fly!  
But it’s up and down with my bearskin on,  
As straight as a prim old maid,  
When they’ve got the route and I want to be out  
With the lads of my old brigade.

# A Nest in Arcady.

Words by  
EDWARD LOCKTON.

Music by  
ERIC COATES.

**Rather slowly.** *mp a tempo*

Voice. There's a

Piano. *mf espress.* *simile.* *poco accel.* *rit.* *mp*

5 ti-ny lit-tle nest in the far-a-way I have fash-ioned for your heart some

8 day It is hid-den from the world where the skies are blue And it's

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The voice part begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics 'There's a' at the end of the first system. The piano accompaniment starts with a series of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. Performance markings include 'mf espress.', 'simile.', 'poco accel.', 'rit.', and 'mp'. The score is divided into three systems, with measure numbers 5 and 8 indicated at the beginning of the second and third systems respectively. The lyrics are: 'ti-ny lit-tle nest in the far-a-way I have fash-ioned for your heart some day It is hid-den from the world where the skies are blue And it's'.

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11

*mf* *espress.* *rit.* *mp a tempo*

wait - ing all the while for you Ah My

*mf* *espress.* *rit.* *mp a tempo*

*ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \*

14

**REFRAIN.**  
*espress.*

dear lit - tle nest in Ar - ca - dy Shall we not wan - der

*ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \*

17

there And live through the hours 'Mid the beau - ti - ful flow'rs And

*ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \*

20

ban - ish all tears and des - pair There'll be

*mf*

*ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \* *ped.* \*

C. 8 09 2244.

22

nev - er a day that is dark and grey, And

24

joy shall be yours and mine For the nest I have fashioned in

27

Ar - ca - dy Is a ha - ven of love di - vine

30

When the

C. & G. 2141.

Ex. 7.3 'A Nest in Arcady', bars 1-32.

Six paces to the front, six paces to the rear,  
That's the way I pass the day of a British Grenadier,  
But cheer up, my hearty, (Says I to myself) Don't fear!  
When it comes to a fight you'll be there all right, you'll be there, my Grenadier!

The song, marked 'alla marcia' in 2/4, and there is clearly much march-like material throughout the song, opens with an introduction based on 'The British Grenadiers' with five appoggiaturas onto low Cs, possibly suggesting marching, or a bass drum. The accompaniment for bars 7-14 is an alternation of bars of dominant and tonic over which the vocal line gradually descends an octave from C to C. In bar 17, Coates cadences (via a perfect cadence) into C major, before pulling towards the submediant of C (or III of F), before returning back to C, via circle of fifths from bar 20-22 (e-a-d), leading to four bars of dominant seventh (with the occasional ninth) of C (the secondary dominant), before another four bars of dominant (of the home key) prolongation, bars 28-32, until the refrain marks a return home to the tonic of F. The refrain, a solid and robust piece of writing, cadences onto the dominant, and via a chromatic descending bass line leads into a descending sequence (bars 41-46, based on another cycle of fifths: C-F-B-flat-E-A-d), leading to an effective *rallentando* for the final line) before a return to the opening introduction, Ex. 7.4.

Verse two is identical to the first, but for the third verse Coates subtly alters the accompaniment by injecting a touch of humour, with a *ritardando* and an ascending piano figure to hint at the lascivious look the Grenadier would undoubtedly wished to give to the passing girl, if only he were allowed, Ex. 7.5.

# THE GRENADIER.

## Song.

Words by  
FRED E. WEATHERLY.

Music by  
ERIC COATES.

*Allegro marcia.*

VOICE.

PIANO.

Musical notation for the first system, measures 1-4. The voice part has a whole rest. The piano part features a marcato accompaniment with dynamics *f* and *mf*.

5

Musical notation for the second system, measures 5-8. The voice part begins with the word "When". The piano part continues with dynamics *mf* and *dim.*

10

Musical notation for the third system, measures 9-12. The voice part continues with the lyrics "Im on guard at the Ad-miral - ty, Where I've got no right to be, I\_". The piano part continues with a steady accompaniment.

25476

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14

can't see the Fleet sail down the Street, Cause there aint no fleet to see! It's

*mf*

18

up and down with my bear-skin on, My arms straight down my side, When I

*cresc.*

22

want to be free like a Tar at sea. Out on the roll - ing tide,

*f deciso.*

*f deciso.* *marcato*

26

out on the roll - ing tide.

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33

Strict time.

*mp*

Six pac - es to the front, six pac - es to the rear,

*mp* *espress.*

37

That's the way I — earn the pay of a Brit - ish Gren - a - dier, But

42

cheer up, my heart - y, (Says I to my self) Don't fear! Stay

46

*mf marcato rit.* *f a tempo*

where you are, for you can't be a Tar as well as a Gren - a - dier.

*mf rit. colla voce.* *f a tempo*

Ex. 7.4 'The Grenadier', verse 1 (bars 1-49).

And I can on-ly look at them— From the cor-ner of my eye;

*poco rit.* *a tempo*

*colla voce* *mf marc.* *mp* *a tempo*

*f*

Ex. 7.5 'The Grenadier', verse 3.

For the final chorus, Coates expands the accompaniment with the left-hand playing continuous quavers and the right hand with three chords per bar rather than two, adding a more dynamic rhythmic drive. After this, he deviates from the previous chorus and alters the harmony, with a move to the secondary dominant, before a hint of 'The British Grenadiers' returns the song to the tonic of F, and a standard ballad ending with several sustained notes.

The song is one of Coates' most humorous and reminiscent of the earlier 'Reuben Ranzo' which utilizes the 'Sailor's Hornpipe' in much the same way. These two ballads fall into the quasi-traditional song that was prevalent in Britain during the early years of the twentieth century, such as Stanford's 'The Old Superb' (*Songs of the Sea*), Quilter's *Non Nobis Domine* and various arrangements of traditional songs by Somervell and Hadow.

Both 'A Nest in Acardy' and 'The Grenadier' by Coates are harmonically and melodically uncomplicated and unchallenging, but have a legerdemain which enable them to be attractive to the purchasers of ballads and to the audiences of ballad concerts. After all, the genre of the ballad was in itself a cliché, with its cloying sentimentality, repeated refrain and long held note finale. This was surely the framework in which Coates

conceived his ballads. These songs are not merely ballads: through their harmonic construction there are closer to the elements of the high-art songs or lieder.

The harmonic and melodic experience Coates gained in writing his songs was transferred to his orchestral works. Out of all his orchestral works, the marches, after the songs, clearly demonstrate the most stylised formula; many marches by other composers (such as Walton and Bliss) are just as formulaic. The genre of the march has prominent associations with the military, though during the nineteenth century the genre became disassociated from this genre and the 'stylised' march became popular in its own right with the Romantic composers.<sup>13</sup> The genre, particularly of funeral marches, became integrated into symphonies by composers as diverse as: Berlioz (*Symphonie Fantastique*), Beethoven (Third Symphony), Mahler (First Symphony) and Stanford.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the march also became popular as a freestanding work, particularly in England, due to the frequent military pageants, Empire Day, Remembrance Day, and Coronations. Marches were written by many composers as different as Sullivan, Elgar, Walton, Holbrook, Rutland Boughton and Montague Phillips.<sup>15</sup> Much 'march-like' material was incorporated into British music of the period, particularly in the music of Stanford and Elgar. Despite the jingoistic association of the marches of Elgar, Coates never viewed the march as a patriotic genre, though a number of his marches of the War years as well as *The Dam Busters* have latterly become associated with patriotism. Coates treated the march as a small-scale form which worked effectively for light music; the majority of his marches last on average for three minutes. His marches are usually quick marches, and fundamentally are too fast to march to, in much the same way that his walses are too fast to dance to.

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<sup>13</sup> Schwandt, Eric. 'March 3: The March in Art Music.' In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie: xv 812-818. London: Macmillan, 2001, 812.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 817.

<sup>15</sup> Richards, Jeffery. *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, 439.

Coates wrote his march *London Calling* at the close of 1941 for the BBC; its original title was *This is London Calling*. In many respects it is one of his finest marches due to the excellence of its contrasting subjects. It is cast in the typical formula for a Coates march: Introduction-ABAB-Coda (similar to the formulae of others, notably Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* marches), as demonstrated in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2 Analysis of *London Calling* March**

Section	Figure	Key	Comments
<b>Introduction</b>	Opening	V of G major	Inverted dominant pedal over which the brass gradually spell out the chord of V <sup>7</sup> .
<b>A</b>	1	G major (pulls toward C major bars 37-40)	Introduces the first subject, which is altered by 'self-developing melody' and extended.
<b>A'</b>	3	G major	Repeat of bars 13-20 with a new ending.
<b>B</b>	4	C major	The second subject is 16 bars long.
<b>B'</b>	5	C major	Repeat of figure 5, with new ending, though without a countersubject.
<b>A</b>	6	G major	Repeat of figures bars 13-56.
<b>Bridge</b>	9	G major	Link between A and B section.
<b>B</b>	10	G major	Direct repeat of figure 4, unusually no broadening of the theme. The climax is a cadence onto the dominant, the bar before figure 12.
<b>Coda</b>	12	G major	A sequence based on the opening of the first theme over a tonic pedal.

The B section of the march is initially in the subdominant (as in *Holborn* and *High Flight*; the submediant is an occasional favourite for the first B section, as in *London Bridge*) returning to the tonic for its recapitulation in a more expansive guise. Not all of his marches are in this formula; his first orchestral march, 'Northwards' (*Four Ways* Suite) is monothematic, with continual melodic variation in a variety of keys. *Rhodesia* is in his 'march formula' albeit on a more expansive scale than the others.

*London Calling* has several elements of Coates' musical formula inherent in it. The introductory material is a verbalisation of the title, (*This is*) *London Calling*, Ex. 7.6 (also seen in *London Bridge* March and the *Cinderella* Phantasy).

1st Tpt  
2nd Tpt  
etc

This is Lon-don Lon-don Call-ing This is Lon-don

Ex. 7.6 *London Calling* March, bars 1-4.<sup>16</sup>

The first subject is heralded via an ascending D major scale (with a flattened leading note), which is frequently used in his marches (such as *Over to You* and *The Seven Seas* and also in *The Merry-makers*) to add interest; in *Impressions of a Princess* each key change in the 'B' section is heralded by an ascending scale. At bar 21, Coates introduces his 'developing melody' technique, starting with the first two bars of the theme and adding a new ending to the existing theme. This is then reused when the first subject group is repeated at figure 3, a new ending is added to the subject at bar 53. In the second subject group, he introduces imitation of the subject at bars 71 (at the interval of a fourth) and bar 88 (at a fifth). This subject also features his clichéd chromatic descending brass line at bars 82-86; this becomes synonymous with his marches, and also creeps into several of his songs, as in the final chorus of 'The Grenadier'.

Despite the parameters of *London Calling* being governed by elements of Coates' formulae, there are several elements in this March which deviate from his formula and as such the formula does not detract from the quality of the work. There is no countersubject to disguise the second statement of the second subject in the first B section. The recapitulation of the B section is not *maestoso* as in 'Youth of Britain' (*The Three Elizabeths*) or *The Dam Busters*, but is largely a restatement of the previous B section, in the tonic rather than the subdominant. Whilst *London Calling* follows the basic ground-

<sup>16</sup> The March was originally entitled *This is London* and, as such, the melodic material may well have been constructed around this title, but the revised title also fits this material.

plan he adopted for his marches, Coates was not afraid to alter the formula or to utilize all of his clichés in one march.

Whilst the genre of the march was often associated with ‘art music’ the waltz was often considered as a ‘light’ or, at the very least, as a ‘lighter’ form. The waltz has proved to be the most enduring of all dance forms and has attracted the attention of a large proportion of the major nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers.<sup>17</sup> The genre not only embraces freestanding works from the hundreds of examples by Waldteufel and the Strauss family, but such was its popularity that it was often included in symphonic forms (cf. Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony, Serenade for Strings and Dvořák’s orchestral works) into operetta (Johan Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*) and ballet (Delibes’ *Sylvia*) and as an archetypal symbol in Richard Strauss’ *Der Rosenkavalier*. The British light composers easily adapted the genre for their concert works; Archibald Joyce became known as the ‘English Waldteufel’. Out of all the dance forms available, Coates had a particular penchant for the valse (he always spelt it in the French form),<sup>18</sup> including the dance in a number of his suites (such as *Summer Days* and *From the Countryside Suites*, the latter also included a valse lento for its slow movement followed by a quick-valse finale) and in valse passages in the phantasies *The Three Bears* and *Cinderella*, in addition to other hybrid forms of the valse such as the valse serenade and valse romantique. Coates’ vales, like many others of the twentieth century, were not designed to be danced to – the tempi were prohibitive – but to be enjoyed in a concert environment.

Coates composed three freestanding concert vales, but frequently used the form as the final movement in numerous suites. *Footlights*, or, as it was originally entitled, *Behind the Footlights*, was composed in 1939. The title is a reference to the nostalgic days when Phyl was on the stage when they were first married; in much the same way that *Sweet*

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<sup>17</sup> Lamb, Andrew. ‘Waltz.’ In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie: xxvii 72-48. London: Macmillan, 2001, 76.

<sup>18</sup> Coates frequently adopted the French forms of spelling of valse, elegie no doubt taking Tchaikovsky as his model for this.



**Table 7.3 Analysis of *Footlights* Concert Valse.**

Section	Figure	Key	Tempo	Comments
<b>Introduction</b>		C major	Allegro vivace	Introduces the melodic material of the second subject (bar 4), third subject (bar 21), the rhythm of which dominates figures 12-13 (figure 3).
<b>A</b>	4	C major	Tempo di valse allegro	The first subject enters and is repeated at figure 5 with an alteration of the last 8 bars.
<b>B</b>	6	G major	Scherzando	The second subject enters and is repeated at figure 7, with an alteration of the last 8 bars.
<b>C</b>	8	C major	Giocoso	The third subject enters and is repeated at figure 9 with an alteration of the last 10 bars.
<b>D</b>	10	F major	Cantabile	The melodic material contained in this section is not unlike the countermelodies of Coates' marches.
<b>E</b>	12	F major	Scherzando	All the melodic material for this section is based on a rhythmic cell.
<b>F</b>	14	D-flat major	n/a	Fourth subject based on a small rhythmic cell and disguised by a melodic filigree.
<b>Bridge</b>	16	F major	n/a	
<b>F</b>	17	A-flat major	n/a	Return of fourth subject.
<b>Introduction/ Bridge</b>	18	C major	Allegro vivace	Direct repeat of figures 1-3.
<b>A</b>	21	C major	Tempo di valse allegro	Direct repeat of figures 4-5 (first subject).
<b>B</b>	23	G major	Scherzando	Direct repeat of figures 5-6 (second subject), which is extended at figure 25 and then breaks into new material at figure 25 (bears a resemblance to figure 10).
<b>Bridge</b>	28	C major	Accel. molto – Allegro molto	
<b>C</b>	30	C major	Molto marcato	8 bar return of the third subject.
<b>Coda</b>	31	C major	Allegro molto	Coda using the scherzo rhythm of figure 12 (also used in the introduction).

*Footlights* ends with an added sixth to the tonic. This is a device rarely used by Coates, but is especially effective in this valse, and in other wistful pieces such as *For Your Delight* and *Summer Afternoon*. He is careful not to overuse what can be perceived as a typical clichéd 'light' ending.

Occasionally, the *Footlights* valse resorts to banal material, as in section E (figures 12-13), where the majority of the melodic material is generated from the first bar of this section in an ascending pattern, Ex. 7.8.

12 Scherzando

Hns, Vla, Cello

Bass

Ex. 7.8 *Footlights*, figure 12.

Overall, the Valse is loosely organised formally which does cause it to ramble and certain passages feel as if they are merely ‘treading water’; certainly the five-minute duration is as long as this formula can sustain successfully. However, the Valse’s strength lies in the majority of melodic material and succinctness of Coates’ insignificant melodies (usually limited to thirty-two bars in length).

Like the valse, the genres of the phantasy and the rhapsody too are synonymous with free forms. Why Coates chose the term ‘phantasy’ (anglicised-German) instead of ‘fantasie’ or ‘fantasy’ is unclear. The term ‘phantasy’ had re-entered the English musical scene due to the establishment of the Cobbett Prize in 1905 at the RCM as well as

Cobbett's commissions from composers such as Frank Bridge,<sup>19</sup> though the phantasies were almost exclusively chamber works.<sup>20</sup> Haydn Wood composed similar single-movement works to Coates' phantasies though he entitled rhapsodies, such as *British Rhapsody*, *Nautical Rhapsody* and *Mylecharane* (the first two were on subjects that Coates might have used for his suites). For Coates, the phantasy was a small-scale symphonic poem with a narrative element. He noted in his *BBC Report* that: 'the greater part of Light Music is pictorial and needs pictorial explanation.'<sup>21</sup> *The Three Bears* and *Cinderella* have captions over various sections of the score informing the performer of the narrative at particular points. The phantasy, like a rhapsody, with its freedom from a pre-existing form could effectively tell a popular story within a single movement. Coates only wrote three phantasies, *The Selfish Giant*, *The Three Bears* and *Cinderella*, though *The Enchanted Garden*, whilst labelled as a ballet, is constructed along similar lines to the phantasies and is a worthy successor to *Cinderella*. It was also a genre for him to exercise his latent symphonic skills and to try his hand at a large-scale work.

*The Selfish Giant* was not only Coates' initial orchestral phantasy and first extended work, but one of the first to incorporate his new 'syncopated dance band' idiom. He completed the work in September 1925 and the phantasy received its premiere in November at the Eastbourne Festival. His usual publishers, Chappell, took fright at the score and he was forced to publish the work with Boosey.<sup>22</sup> As a consequence, Boosey's decided to reduce Coates' scoring (from double woodwind) and alter passages of his string writing to bring it within the scope of the light orchestras that would perform the Phantasy. The work is based on a reduced version of Oscar Wilde's short

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<sup>19</sup> Frank Bridge came third in the first Cobbett Prize, the winning entry was by William Hurlestone, and second prize went to Haydn Wood; Bridge won first prize in 1907.

<sup>20</sup> Field, Christopher. 'Phantasy.' In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie: xix 549. London: Macmillan, 2001, 549. Not only did composers such as Holbrooke and Ireland enter the RCM's Cobbett Prize, but Cobbett commissioned Dale, McEwen, Dunhill and Vaughan Williams to write phantasies for chamber ensembles. (Ibid.).

<sup>21</sup> Coates, Eric. *Report on Light Music*. Presented to the BBC 22/05/1943, 2 GB-Rwac Music General Light Music File 1939-1943 and GB-STHprivate.

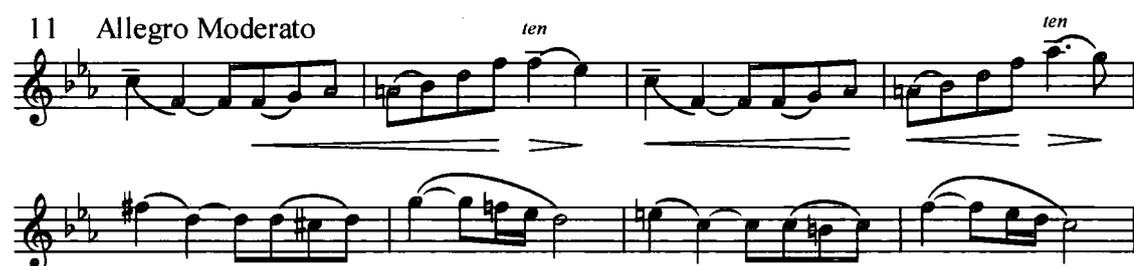
<sup>22</sup> Coates: 1953, 203.

story, first published in 1888 and is prefaced by an anonymous and slightly simplistic analysis of the piece.<sup>23</sup> In the pencil score of *Cinderella*, Coates wrote the narrative over the salient events depicted in the score, which he did not do for *The Selfish Giant*. There are annotations which appear in the score of *The Three Bears*, however, the autograph score is now lost, so it is impossible to ascertain whether Coates wrote them or not.

*The Selfish Giant* is based on two major melodic ideas, the pentatonic giant's theme, which appears in two guises, the second of which slightly alters the ending, Ex. 7.9a, and the theme of happiness (which bears a resemblance to the second subject of *The Merry-makers Overture*), Ex. 7.9b;



Ex. 7.9a *The Selfish Giant*, Giant's Theme (slow and fast versions).



Ex. 7.9b *The Selfish Giant*, Theme of Happiness.

Through rhythmic alteration of the giant's theme Coates is able to vary the associations of the theme: the Phantasy opens with a gentle introduction using the theme to portray

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix 1 for the preface.

the desolation of the giant's garden. The same theme has an entirely different character at figure 2 due to the addition of rests, which emphasise the double dot – also heightened by the increase of tempo. Inherent in the construction of the giant's theme are influences of the dance bands as the theme has beats two and three tied, a characteristic of the foxtrot, along with other popular dances. Coates also calls upon a 'secondary' theme, the theme of the north wind, first heard at figure 5 (which bears a resemblance to the first subject of *The Merry-makers Overture*). Table 7.4 shows an analysis of the work. In *The Selfish Giant*, there are traits of formula such as the juxtaposition of keys onto one another, often E-flat major onto the tonic, A minor – a tritone apart – is partially a dramatic device as the giant is often associated with the 'flattened' world, opposed to the 'pure' world of the children's A minor/major, though the giant's theme does feature in a minor key. Coates also introduces two elements into this score which would become a feature in his later works. The first, jazz, predominately with the foxtrot for the children's dance (figure 18), but also in its absorption into the harmony and rhythm, clearly seen at bars 177-186 with the frequent use of syncopated chords and both major and minor seventh chords, a significant advance from the earlier *Two Light Syncopated Pieces*. Secondly, there is a more fundamental assimilation of the genre in the pentatonic giant's theme; pentatonicism was popular within jazz scores of the period. A number of his scores feature inherent modality; the *leitmotif* of *The Three Bears* has a Phrygian inflection, as too has 'Fresh Morning' (*Springtime Suite*), and several works (such as the trio of *Entr'acte à la Gavotte* and figure 3 in 'In the Country' (*From Meadow to Mayfair Suite*)) feature Mixolydian inflections, prevalent in much British music of this period. Coates also utilises several passages in the dominant juxtaposed onto the tonic, where the flattened leading note is inherent and gains a similar effect, as in the opening of 'Valse' (*Joyous Youth Suite*) and *Footlights*. Overall, the genre of the phantasy is perhaps the least formulaic genre in which

Coates composed. The relative freedom of the form enabled it to be the handmaiden of the narrative.

**Table 7.4 Analysis of *The Selfish Giant*.**

Figure	Tempo	Key	Comment
<b>Opening</b>	Lento	A minor	Opens with the giant's theme which depicts the desolation of the giant's garden.
1	Andante molto	E-flat juxtaposed onto A minor	Snippets of the theme of happiness.
2	Allegro agitato	E-flat juxtaposed onto A minor	Giant's theme in its more rhythmic guise.
3	Andante – Moderato	E major – E-flat major juxtaposed onto A minor	Giant's theme.
5	Allegro vivace	A minor	Theme of the north wind, disguised with a woodwind countermelody. Theme is repeated at bar 46 and breaks into free-material at bar 52. The countersubject is largely set in the supertonic.
7		E-flat juxtaposed onto A minor – E minor	Return of the giant's theme in augmented fifth chords, perhaps representing the giant's restless character.
9	Poco più mosso – Poco meno mosso	G major (with inflections of E-flat major and C minor) – E-flat major	Theme of happiness, with interruptions of the giant's theme at bars 91-94, 99-102.
15	Allegro vivace	A minor – C-sharp minor – A minor – E-flat major juxtaposed onto A minor	Return of the theme of the north wind, a fifth lower than at figure 5, and then a fifth lower at bar 162. The theme is quashed by the giant's theme at figure 16 in C-sharp minor, before a return to the theme of the north wind in A minor. The giant's theme returns in E-flat at bar 173.
18	Allegretto	G-flat major – B-flat major	Children's dance based on the giant's theme in the style of the foxtrot.
19	Heavy	E minor /G major	Giant's theme depicting the silencing of the giant.
20	Largamente	B major juxtaposed onto A major	Return of the theme of happiness.
21	Andante	A major	Juxtaposition of the theme of happiness in the woodwind with the giant's theme in the brass.
22	Andante molto – Lento	A major	Giant's theme with birdsong motifs depicting the return of the birds to the giant's garden, depicting the melting of the giant's ill will. Final return of the theme of happiness at bar 233.

The close of *The Selfish Giant* also features birdsong motifs; a device which he seems to have been adept at composing. He used similar motifs in a song of the

following year, 'Birdsong at Eventide' (and also in the subsequent *Second Symphonic Rhapsody*), and the orchestral idyll *Summer Afternoon* (though the song version does not have any birdsong). Coates undoubtedly borrowed the motif from Ketèlbey's *In a Monastery Garden* published a decade before *The Selfish Giant*.

Like the phantasy, the suite is a genre which consists of an amalgamation of different set pieces and forms. The genre of the suite became antiquated in the seventeenth century (for orchestral music, but flourished as a keyboard genre), then was much used in the eighteenth century as a term for music for military band. The genre crept into orchestral usage due to suites by Sterndale Bennett, Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky and Raff as well as significant suites of material from ballets, operas and incidental music from stage productions, with works by Grieg, Bizet, Tchaikovsky and Dvořák.<sup>24</sup> In England, by the twentieth century, the suite could be thought of as a 'lesser' or 'light' symphony either for 'serious' composers, such as Parry's *English Suite*, Elgar's *Wand of Youth*, *Nursery* and *Severn Suites* (the latter originally for Brass Band), Mackenzie's *London Day by Day* and Malcolm Arnold's *Little Suites* (both orchestral and for brass band) to write lighter works or for light composers to compose extended works. However, works like Stanford's *Suite for Violin Op. 32*, push the boundaries of the genre, due to their length and complexity of construction (the 'Overture' is a fusion of 'old' and 'new' styles in a hybrid of ritornello and sonata principals and the finale, 'Gigue', is in sonata-rondo form).<sup>25</sup> Whilst the genre of the suite was to a certain degree a 'lesser symphony', particularly as it had a similar number of movements to a symphony and they often mirrored the pattern of those in a symphony, its effectiveness was that it was a form that held disparate and thematically unconnected movements together. Unlike a symphony, these movements could usually be performed separately and works such as Armstrong

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<sup>24</sup> Fuller, David. 'Suite' In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie: xxiv 665-684. London: Macmillan, 2001, 665, 681-682.

<sup>25</sup> Dibble, Jeremy. *Charles Stanford*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 206-207. The Suite was written as a work of homage for Joachim.

Gibb's *Fancy Dress Suite* (with its popular movement 'Dusk') and Haydn Wood's *London Landmark* and *Paris Suites* (with 'Horseguards' and 'Montmartre' respectively) have been all but forgotten except for their famous movements. Because of these criteria, the suite has special dominance in the output of light-music composers; Eric Coates, Haydn Wood, Albert Ketèlbey, Montague Phillips, Robert Farnon, Trevor Duncan, Sidney Torch and Ernest Tomlinson all composed numerous suites, though a notable exception is Ronald Binge who wrote none. For Coates the movements of a suite were usually conceived together and contrast effectively with each other when performed together, but worked equally as well when performed separately. He often included single movements of his suites to create balanced programmes in his BBC broadcasts.<sup>26</sup>

Coates composed his suite, *The Three Men* in 1934, at the invitation of the BBC, completing the score early in January 1935. He explained his inspiration for the Suite in 1953: 'I had decided on the idea of describing in music three personalities whom we all know: The Countryman, the Townsman and the Seaman.'<sup>27</sup> The Suite is in his usual three-movement pattern, fast-slow-fast; unusually, no movement is based on a set-piece format such as a march, intermezzo or valse but there are elements of these 'in-built' into the movements. The first movement, 'Man from the Country' is a bucolic, rustic compound duple dance, very much along the lines of Edward German. Whilst the movement has an agrestic feel, with a quasi-folk-melody atmosphere, the melody is original Coates. The form is a curious attempt to amalgamate variation and ternary forms based around the opening theme (the first subject, though it does not re-enter until bar 98, the start of the B section), Ex. 7.10, and a second subject given out at figure 2.

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>27</sup> Coates: 1953, 226.



Ex. 7.10 'The Man from the Country' (*The Three Men Suite*), first subject (fast version).

Table 7.5 shows a brief analysis of the movement and its hybrid between ternary and variation structure.

**Table 7.5 Analysis of 'The Man from the Country' (*The Three Men Suite*).**

Section	Passage	Figure	Key	Comments
<b>Introduction</b>	Introduction		C minor – E-flat major juxtaposed on C minor	First subject in augmentation – <i>allegro</i> passage in 6/8 over dominant pedal, with ascending sequence.
<b>A</b>	Second Theme	2	C minor – G minor	Second theme introduced and repeated.
	Bridge	3	B-flat major	Bridge based on the second theme.
<b>B</b>	First Variation	9 bars after, 4	D minor	First theme over bear fifth redolent of a musette. This is repeated thrice with a scalic countermelody, growing in complexity each time.
	Second Variation	6	A major	
	Third Variation	7	G major – F major	Repeats bars 3 and 4 of the first theme in a descending sequence, emphasised by ascending scales in the horn. Orchestration is expanded for the key change to F major.
	Bridge	8	A major	
<b>A</b>	Introduction	11 bars after 8	C minor – E-flat major juxtaposed on C minor	Direct repeat of figure 1.
	Second theme	9	C minor – G minor – B-flat major	Direct repeat of bars 33-82.
	Extension	12	E-flat major – C minor	Extension of material.
<b>Coda</b>	Coda	9 bars after 16	C minor	Change of tempo to <i>presto</i> before a return of the first theme augmented.

The movement features several elements of Coates' formulae, the first subject has Mixolydian inflections because of its flattened leading note. The second theme, developed first, due to its frequent repetition particularly of G, the dominant, (as in *The*

*Merrymakers* where Coates avoids using the tonic as the important note in both subjects, favouring the dominant) is a rather mechanical subject in the tonic minor. The first bridge passage (to the variation section) is largely based on a rhythmic ostinato, commencing at figure 3, Ex. 7.11, a favourite rhythmic ploy of Coates.



Ex. 7.11 'The Man from the Country' (*The Three Men Suite*), rhythmic cell, figure 3.

This is inaccurately notated in the piano-conductor score as crotchet-quaver rather than quaver-quaver rest-quaver in the autograph score. The coda of the finale, 'Man from the Sea', also emphasises the inadequacies of the piano-conductor scores, with passages marked 'brass sust.' and 'w.w. scale passages' with no indications of what is actually happening; this was a frequent problem with Coates' more complex scores and drew him, by the late-1930s, to offer to pay for the engraving of full scores of his more complex works, though *The Three Men* was never issued in this format.

The 'B' section of the first movement, with its frequent changes of key is akin in style to that of his waltzes (*Dancing Nights* and 'Waltz' (*Joyous Youth Suite*) or the development of the melodic material in *Idyll* and 'Northwards' (*Four Ways Suite*). The third variation (commencing at figure 7) is an example of Coates' skill in creating an effective variation. Instead of presenting the theme in its entirety, he repeats bars 3 and 4 of the theme four times in a descending sequence, emphasised by an ascending horn scale, before allotting the horns to the first four bars of the main theme. The orchestration is particularly effective with violins in unison with the melody, the rhythmic drive and harmony being provided by the violas and 'celli, and the four horns and woodwind provide a simple, yet highly effective, countermelody, largely in a three-part texture, Ex. 7.12.

7

Fl 1  
Cl Bb  
Cl C  
Bsn  
Hrn  
Tpt  
Tbn  
Perc  
Hp

7

7

This is a handwritten musical score for a large ensemble, likely a symphony or concert band. The score is written on multiple staves, with various instruments and parts indicated by clefs and dynamics. The notation includes notes, rests, and articulation marks. Key features include:

- Woodwinds:** Flutes, Clarinets, Bassoons, and Saxophones are represented by their respective clefs and staves.
- Strings:** Violins, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses are represented by their respective clefs and staves.
- Percussion:** Includes a Timpani part and a Cymbal part with the instruction "Cym. with stroke".
- Handwritten Annotations:** The word "Soli" is written above a section of the woodwind parts, indicating a solo performance.
- Dynamics:** Various dynamic markings are present, such as *mp* (mezzo-piano), *f* (forte), and *mf* (mezzo-forte).
- Articulation:** Numerous accents and slurs are used throughout the score to indicate phrasing and emphasis.

Handwritten musical score for 'The Man from the Country' (The Three Men Suite), figure 7. The score is written on 18 staves, organized into three systems of six staves each. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, beams, and dynamic markings like 'f' and 'ff'. There are also some handwritten annotations and corrections throughout the score.

Ex. 7.12 'The Man from the Country' (*The Three Men Suite*), figure 7.

Formally, 'The Man from the Country' is an interesting hybrid of ternary and variation form with the A sections based on the second theme (figure 2), and the introduction and the variations of the B section of the first subject. The variations are subtle enough for the melodic material to be omnipresent, but yet altered enough to hold the listener's attention.

The middle movement 'The-Man-About-Town' is one of the finest middle movements that Coates wrote, and is also one of his finest homages to the dance-bands. Peter Dickinson notes the movement's propinquity to the harmonic language of Billy Mayerl, especially the passages doubled in fourths, at bars 20-27.<sup>28</sup> The movement portrays a sophisticated London gent on the 'prowl'<sup>29</sup> for an evening's entertainment dancing (surely a self-portrait of the composer?). 'The-Man-About-Town' is loosely cast in ternary form, though the material from figures 1-3 is not recapitulated (except for the tango passages). The recapitulation of the A section is in a totally different guise to the initial statement, as in 'On the Edge of a Lake' (*Summer Days Suite*) and *Lazy Night*.

'The-Man-About-Town' opens with a solo violin introducing the main thematic material of the movement accompanied by strings, muted brass and harp in a tonality which is a cross between A minor and C major, rather in the manner of a cadenza; Coates settles on the tonality of C for the piece. The movement commences properly at figure 1 with a syncopated passage with closely scored woodwind chords, in the manner of a dance band and redolent of the rhythm of a tango. The dance band feel is emphasised in bars 13-15 with triple-stopped upper string chords. At bar 20, a new ascending idea enters in the 'cello, and is extended by the violin, breaking into fourths, an effect redolent of Mayerl.

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<sup>28</sup> Dickinson, Peter. *Marigold: The Music of Billy Mayerl*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 105.

<sup>29</sup> A term Coates favoured for 'night' excursions. (Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements*: 453a. GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box M127)

The introductory tango closes halfway through bar 43, with the return of the opening melody, the main thematic material of the movement, scored for tenor saxophone, muted trumpet (marked ‘harmon mute or play in hat’) and ‘celli accompanied by divided second violins and violas, harp and muted horns. The divided first violins imitate the melody at a two beat interval. The woodwind play a dance band inspired countersubject, and the bass is provided by pizzicato double basses, reinforced by the bassoons. The harmony of this passage is full of sevenths and elevenths, with very few concords. The change of harmony usually occurs on beats one and three, or else the harmony only changes once a bar, Ex. 7.13. A brief *rallentando* marks the close of the A section and an *accelerando*, based on the tango passage of bar 13 acts as the harbinger of the B section. The B section is marked *più mosso* and is a fast foxtrot based on the main theme, Ex. 7.14.



Ex. 7.14 ‘The-Man-About-Town’ (*The Three Men Suite*), two bars after figure 5.

In this section, Coates includes all the traits of the dance orchestra, with syncopated brass chords, rhythmic patterns on the side drum, an angular melody, tightly scored trumpet and trombone chords, chromatic saxophone cadential figures, brass interjections and trumpet glissandi fully exploited in the composer’s own 1935. The violins play largely in triads, as they would do if they were used in dance bands; the whole section is a successful pastiche of a London nightclub. Whilst these elements do border on cliché, there are highly eclectic and would have appealed to a large number of people.



③

Flutes

Clarinets

Bassoon

Tenor Sax  
in Bb

Horns

Trumps

Trombs

Drummin

Drum

③

③

Ex. 7.13 'The Man About Town' (*The Three Men Suite*), bars 38-49.

All these elements of formula were later expanded in 'Rhythm' (*Four Centuries Suite*), which shows an allegiance to this movement, but goes further with the inclusion of a trio of saxophones and more emancipated percussion parts. 'The-Man-about-Town' also shows Coates' love of popular dances of the time with use of both tango and foxtrot in the movement. Ex. 7.15 shows how he achieves his dance band pastiche, particularly with his use of the percussion section which is used in the manner of a drum kit with a repeated pattern in the side drum, brass countermelodies, 'riffs' from the saxophone and bassoons and pizzicato chords in the viola and 'cello.

Coates closes the B section in an enchanting way, by means of a *rallentando* and the return of the tango rhythm and a three-note chromatic figure close on to a *tenuto* tonic seventh chord with an augmented fifth. This in turn cadences onto the subdominant, complete with an added sixth; the first seven bars are a mixture of subdominant and supertonic tonality, before a clear cadence back to the tonic six bars after the Tempo I at figure 7).<sup>30</sup> The reprise of the A section is similar to that of the initial A section, though the scoring is fuller, with the melody in the first flute, oboe and violins, and loosely imitated two beats later (at the fifth) by the clarinets, violas and 'celli. After a short saxophone, muted brass and viola soli and pause, a brief coda based on the tango rhythm (making the most of the appoggiatura inherent in the rhythmic cell (redolent of the tango)), the movement ends with a held tonic chord, heightened by a spread vibraphone chord and terminated with a pizzicato string chord. The movement is a most effective pastiche of a dance band style, a genre which Coates held in the highest esteem.

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<sup>30</sup> Figures 7 and 8 are missing from the piano-conductor score, but are marked clearly in the autograph score.

5

ACCEL

PIÙ MOSSO  $\text{♩} = 160$

Handwritten musical score for multiple instruments including Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, Double Bass, and Piano. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, *sf*, and *mf*, and performance instructions like *senza sacchiar*, *senza sordina*, and *(change to straight mule)*. The tempo marking *PIÙ MOSSO* with a quarter note equal to 160 is present at the top right of the system.

5

ACCEL

PIÙ MOSSO  $\text{♩} = 160$

Handwritten musical score for strings (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, Double Bass) and Piano. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *mf*, and *sf*. The tempo marking *PIÙ MOSSO* with a quarter note equal to 160 is present at the top right of the system.

ACCEL

5

PIÙ MOSSO  $\text{♩} = 160$

Ex. 7.15 'The-Man-About-Town' (*The Three Men Suite*), figure 5.

The finale is an orchestral *tour de force* based on the popular sea-shanty, 'When Johnny Comes Down to Hilo', Ex. 7.16a<sup>31</sup> which is 'transformed' into 'Three Blind Mice', Ex. 7.16b through motif X.

Chorus

I neb-ber see de like since I bin born, When a big buck nig-ger wid de sea boots on, Says

"John-ny come down to Hi-lo. Poor old man." Oh wake her oh, shake her, Oh

wake dat gel wid de blue dress on, When John-ny comes down to Hi-lo. Poor old man

Ex. 7.16a 'When Johnny Comes Down to Hilo'.

Three blind mice. Three blind mice. See how they run. See how they

run. They all ran af-ter the farm-er's wife who cut off their tails with a

car-ving knife, Did you ev-er see such a sight in your life as three blind mice?

Ex. 7.16b 'Three Blind Mice'.

'When Johnny' features several inherent repetitions of material; bars 3-7 return at 11-16; and bars 8-9 reused at 9-10. Bars 7-8 and 15-16 of the shanty are identical to the first three notes of 'Three Blind Mice', motif X, which is emphasised in Coates' rhythmicisation of the shanty. He treats 'Three Blind Mice' very much as a secondary

<sup>31</sup> Jacobson, Maurice (edited and compiled). *Songs That Will Live For Ever*. London: Odhams Press, 1938.

theme, exploited in the B section as a fugal exposition. In a programme note for a broadcast in 1953, the composer stated:

Eric Coates wishes to explain to the listeners that it was his original intention only to allow three characters described by the three movements of the Suite to appear in the music. As he was at work on the last movement however, he found that another three characters would insist on coming forward and, try as he might, nothing would keep them out – so they are with us here now, and will be easily recognized as our old friends the “Three Blind Mice”...<sup>32</sup>

This movement is one of the rare occasions when Coates uses borrowed melodic material in his orchestral music; the two other major exceptions are: ‘Northwards’ (*The Four Ways Suite*) a rhythmic distortion of the Scot’s tune ‘Ca’ the Yowes’; and the integration of ‘Cherry Ripe’ into ‘Covent Garden’ (*London Suite*).

‘The Man from the Sea’ is loosely cast in ternary form, with several bridge passages and an extended coda. The first subject is ‘When Johnny Comes Down to Hilo’, which Coates treats in two parts, and uses bars 1-8 as the first part and the upbeat of bar 9-end as the second part, Ex. 7.17.

Ex. 7.17 ‘The Man from the Sea’ (*The Three Men Suite*), first theme.

Coates barely alters the rhythmic pattern of the shanty, though in bar 1 he reduces the number of repeated notes, keeping the original note values. He reduces the note values

<sup>32</sup> Programme notes, attached to 10/05/1953 Eric Coates to Miss Happold. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 5, 1949-1957.

for his 2/2 metre and adds passing notes to the anacrusis of the first and second bars. He also removes the dotted notes in bar 13, and adds an extra flourish at bar 14 of the shanty, Ex. 7.18.

Ex. 7.18 Comparison of Coates' rhythmicisation of 'When Johnny Comes Down to Hilo' with the original.

Table 7.6 shows a brief analysis of the movement.

Table 7.6 Analysis of 'The Man from the Sea' (*The Three Men Suite*).

Section	Figure	Comments
<b>Introduction</b>		Introduces part II of 'When Johnny' and hint of 'Sailor's Hornpipe'.
<b>A</b>	1	Part I of 'When Johnny Comes', countersubject added between bars 23-25 (reminiscent of a hornpipe). Extension of the theme at bar 29, with a new countermelody. At bar 50 the main melodic interest is the countersubject.
	3	Part II of 'When Johnny', which is subsequently extended with a scalic sequence.
<b>B</b>	5	Fugal exposition based on 'Three Blind Mice'.
	8	Descends into free material, largely based around the opening three-notes of 'Three Blind Mice'.
<b>Bridge</b>	10	Return of material from the chorus of 'When Johnny'.
<b>A</b>	11	Return of figures 1-4.
<b>Coda</b>	15	Coda based on part of the chorus of 'When Johnny'.

The movement is an essay in counterpoint and in some respects a fugue, or, at the very least a fugato, is inevitable due to the genre's reputation as the pinnacle of counterpoint. There are links with Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' Sonata Op 106, where the development section of the first movement takes the guise of a fugue and to opening movement of Mendelssohn's Third Organ Sonata where a fugal exposition opens the B section. Coates' subject is composed in such a way that the melody of 'Three Blind Mice' is presented in repeated fragments, and it is obvious where he has derived the melody from, especially as the three notes in question are accented in his rhythmicisation of he shanty, Ex. 7.19.



Ex. 7.19 'The Man from the Sea' (*The Three Men Suite*), figure 5 fugue subject (tonic).

The second entry of the fugue is in the dominant, figure 6, is scored for the second violin and clarinet, with the first violins and oboes providing the countersubject, largely derived from the first two bars of the fugue subject. The third entry of the fugue subject (in the tonic) at figure 7, is assigned to the viola, 'cello and bassoons, the second violins and clarinets providing the countersubject and the first flute, oboes and first violin departing into free-material – a typical Coates filigree countermelody. The three-part texture makes for dashing counterpoint of the highest order, and each part is expertly and deftly handled, creating a virtuosic legerdemain effect, Ex 7.20.

6 Più mosso

107 [Vln 1]

Vln 2  
Clts

111

115

120

Vln 1 7

Vla, Cello, Bassn

125

131



Ex. 7.20 'The Man from the Sea' (*The Three Men Suite*), Figures 6-7.

At figure 8, the fugue departs into free material, largely based on the opening three notes of 'Three Blind Mice', and pushes towards the dominant for the climax of the section based on bar 9 of the fugue subject at bar 157 of the movement, almost redolent of a final entry of the subject in a true fugue. This was not the only time Coates had used fugue in his works; *The Three Bears* includes a similar fugal exposition, though the key-structure is less clear-cut. For Coates, trained at the RAM, fugues were very much part of the pedagogical training, as they were for many light composers, and are not out of place in a light work – Quilter used similar fugal elements in *The Children's Overture* – or beyond the skills of any 'light' composer.

'The Man-from-the-Sea' also shows Coates' attention to detail and humour. In bars 30-38, he provides a woodwind countersubject which could well be a hornpipe, particularly with the trill in bar 36, giving the movement a nautical feel. This attention to detail is seen in *The Four Centuries Suite*, where, in the first movement, 'Prelude and Hornpipe', the 'Hornpipe' is in 2/4 as a hornpipe of the seventeenth century would have been. Also, his natural *joie de vivre* shines through in this movement with a brief allusion to the 'The Sailor's Hornpipe', with its inherent affinity to the opening of 'When Johnny',

Ex. 7.21.

Ex. 7.21 'The Man from the Sea' (*The Three Men Suite*), bars 8-10.

The whole movement is a real *tour de force*, sparkling with contrapuntal wit and effervescing with orchestral virtuosity and colour in a sophisticated variation formula. There is a link to Mackenzie's *Britannia Overture*, in which Mackenzie's ingenuity hides 'Rule Britannia' (cf. the opening of 'The Man from the Sea' with its snippets of the 'Sailor's Hornpipe') introducing fragments of the theme and gradually these add up to full melody in the closing pages and to a lesser extent Coates does this with 'Three Blind Mice' from 'When Johnny Comes Down to Hilo'.

Overall, *The Three Men* is one of Coates' finest suites as the movements complement each other, and there is sufficient variety between the outer 'folk melody' movements. Certainly, the reliance on the variation technique within the movements was expanded for the subsequent lengthy Suites, *Four Centuries* and *Three Elizabeths*.

The genre of the overture has similarities with the suite, in that traditionally they have been linked to opera, ballet and incidental music, and then in the nineteenth century more freestanding concert overtures emerged and the genre became established in its own right, like the suite. It is a tragedy that Coates only composed one overture, *The Merry-makers*; Haydn Wood composed eight, Montague Philips many. Austin Coates maintains that his father wrote the first movement of *The Three Elizabeths* Suite (published in 1944) in 1940 initially as a concert overture, but that his father sensed it belonged to another work and subsequently integrated it into the Suite.<sup>33</sup> *The Merry-makers* was largely

<sup>33</sup> 26/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. GB-Lbl/National Sound Archive, PLN 622/86 ZA 0399 & 09/03/1986 Austin Coates to Geoffrey Self GB-ILMprivate. Austin Coates was most emphatic

composed in 1922 and originally entitled 'A New Years Overture', but its completion on 28 January rendered impossible the use of that title. It was first produced at a Chappell ballad concert in March that year. It is unequivocally one of Coates' masterpieces because of its succinctness, melodic charm and buoyant orchestration in which the horns play such a vital role. Its melodic construction owes something to Elgar, whose broad, extended-range melodies are evident in the second subject, whilst those of Edward German are a blueprint for the first subject – the Overture is undeniably conceived for the orchestra. The Overture also has the melodic and harmonic syntax of Parry, particularly Parry's *Overture to an Unwritten Tragedy*. Unusually, for Coates, the Overture is cast in a loose sonata-form structure, with a limited development section in which the introduction plays a vital role. Table 7.7 shows a brief analysis of the work.

The second subject is one of Coates' most beautiful melodies, broad and majestic; much is gained by its use of the interval of a sixth, which is subsequently extended to an octave (cf. bar 60). This theme breaks free from his usual characteristic conjunct movement particularly as there are frequent leaps of sixths and octaves, though often continued by step-wise motion in the exposition statement of the subject. The melody is assigned to the oboes and the first clarinet, accompanied by repeated quavers in the violins, with rhythmic interest provided by the violas in duplets, the pizzicato 'celli and basses (playing on beats one and three, giving a feeling of space and pulse, which, because of the tempo, needs to be conducted in two-beats-per-bar), Ex. 7.22.

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about this, despite the fact that the pencil and published full score date the movement as 1944. Coates usually published his compositions soon after completion and it seems unlikely that he would hold onto such a work unless he was convinced that it would not be acceptable for publishing. Eric Coates made no reference to this fact in either his autobiography or in Press comments of the period. However, he was at work on his return visits to London, whilst stopping with his mother-in-law in Chesham Bois when and where Austin alleged that his father had written the movement. (11/09/1940 Eric Coates to Stanford Robinson. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942).

**Table 7.7 Analysis of *The Merry-makers Overture*.**

Section	Sub-Section	Bar	Key	Comments
<b>Introduction</b>	Introduction	Opening	A major	Opening fanfare.
<b>Exposition</b>	First Subject	6	A major	The first subject is often decorated with vertiginous flute and clarinet embellishments.
		14	A major	Passage loosely based on the opening four notes of first subject. Repeated down a tone at bar 22. Very much part of the first subject group.
		30	A major	Return of first subject.
	Bridge	46	A major – E major	Extension of a descending sequence and brief return of fragments of first subject.
	Second Subject	56	E major	After its initial statement, the second subject is repeated a fourth higher lending a supertonic/submediant direction to the harmony.
		70	E major	Repeat of the second subject, though it is altered through 'self-developing melody' at bar 77 and then a repeat of material first heard at bar 63, though changing the harmony.
<b>Development</b>	Development	93	E major – C major – F-sharp major – B major (with a subdominant pedal) – E major	Development of a fragment of the first subject which is varied through a selection of keys and orchestral timbres.
	Bridge	109	E major	The opening introduction returns with a new ending to modulate back to the tonic.
<b>Recapitulation</b>	First subject	113	A major	The first three notes of the theme are omitted. The free-material attached to the first subject group is also expanded.
	Bridge	136	A major	This passage is based on the first two bars of the first subject, but is more chromatic than previously. Also a held dominant pedal (bars 140-157) heightens the tension for the recapitulation of the second subject.
	Second Subject	158	A major	The scoring of the subject grows in the varying repetitions of the subject.
<b>Coda</b>	Coda	182	A major	Use of material from first subject, woodwind inverted pedal trills and string tremolandi.
		188	A major	Return of opening introduction expanded to provide a close to the Overture.

**D** *Appassionato*

55

Fl

Ob

Clt (A)

Bsn

Hn (F)

Tpt (A)

Tbn

Timp

Perc

*Appassionato*

Vln

Vla

Vc

Cb

**D** *p*

57

Fl

Ob

Cl (A)

Bsn

Hn (F)

Tpt (A)

Tbn

Timp

Perc

Vln

Vla

Vc

Cb

*mf*

div. >

*mp*

3

*mp*

2

2

2

60

Fl

Ob

Clt (A)

Bsn

Hn (F)

Tpt (A)

Tbn

Timp

Perc

Vln

Vla

Vc

Cb

Ex. 7.22 *The Merry-makers Overture*, bars 55-62.

The Overture has traits of Coates' melodic formula with 'self-developing melody' and the fusion of elements of variation form onto sonata form; there is a good deal of variation within the exposition and recapitulation. In the development he derives a large proportion of this slender section from a rhythmic cell (bars 93-94) which he modulates through a variety of keys and orchestrations, than to resort to a more organic and lengthy development. Despite this, he never does exactly what the listener expects. This is particularly true of the recapitulation of the second subject, which is preceded by a bridge passage over a dominant pedal, a trait learned from Edward German, from bars 140-157. This effect leads the listener to expect the subject in a bombastic guise (akin to the recapitulation of the second subject in a Coates march), but Coates starts the subject quietly after a *lunga pausa* and allows the subject to swell most effectively.

Overall, *The Merry-makers* is an exceptional piece, one of the finest (light) concert overtures of the twentieth century as Coates never does exactly what is expected, particularly with the recapitulation of the second subject at bar 158. He also derives much from his material, particularly the first subject which is particularly effective in this miniature-overture.

The intermezzo, *Impressions of a Princess*, written for the BBC Light Music Festival, was composed the year before his death and was the penultimate orchestral work Coates wrote. The harmonic language echoes that of the 1930s, the nostalgia of which had been heralded by the interlude *The Unknown Singer* composed in 1952. The similarity between the two works is striking, as both employ a saxophone, something that Coates seldom resorted to in the 1920s and 1930s, in a semi-soloist role. The piece is cast very much in the mould of all entr'actes: Introduction-A-B-(usually slightly faster than the A section)-A-Coda. Unusually for a Coates entr'acte, it is essentially monothematic, the B section being derived entirely from the A section and presented in a variety of keys and tempi

similar to the earlier 'Northwards' (*Four Ways Suite*) and the B section of 'The Man from the Country' (*The Three Men Suite*).

The main theme of *Impressions of a Princess* is sixteen bars long (akin to the majority of Coates melodies falling into regular phrase patterns and usually being of an even value of 8, 10, 12 and 16 bars in length). Much is made of motif x, and the opening three descending notes, Ex. 7.23.

Ex. 7.23 *Impressions of a Princess*, bars 11-26.

Also inherent in the theme is the quasi inversion of x, as x', utilising the rhythm of x. Much is gained through the techniques of 'self-developing melody' and simple variation of the theme. Table 7.8 shows a brief analysis of the Intermezzo. The Intermezzo is an economic construction with all interest being derived from variations of the melody, through change of key and gradual increase of the tempo in the B section. Whilst Coates could be criticised for the formal simplicity, and that the melody is not developed to the degree of Liszt or Franck, but is always obvious. There is much inherent beauty in the delightful theme (which is itself largely derived from one motif) and what he does with it.

**Table 7.8 Brief Analysis of *Impressions of a Princess*.**

Section	Figure	Key	Tempo	Comments
<b>Introduction</b>		E-flat major – C-flat major – A-flat minor – E-flat major	Andante	Sequence based on opening three notes of main theme.
<b>A</b>	1	E-flat major	a Tempo [Andante]	Main theme in viola, cello and saxophone, 16 bars in length.
<b>A'</b>	2	E-flat major	n/a	Repetition of theme with a change of harmony from bar 33 and alteration of the theme from bar 37
<b>B</b>	3	G minor – B-flat major	Poco animato	The theme is altered by 'self-developing melody' and is assisted through modulation, each time heralded by an ascending scale.
	4	E-flat major	n/a	
	5	G major – C major	Poco accelerando	Introduction of triplet figure into theme (previously restricted to the accompaniment).
	6	E major	Più mosso	
	7	A major	n/a	Accompaniment reminiscent of the opening of A section with harp arpeggios.
	8	D major	Accelerando	
<b>A</b>	9	E-flat major	Tempo I	Not a straight recapitulation of the A section, but presents the theme in a different guise from the A section, though this section is very much the emotional core of the work.
<b>A'</b>	10	E-flat major	[Tempo I] - Poco meno	Repetition of main theme, altered with 'self-developing melody'.
<b>Coda</b>	12	E-flat major	[Poco meno]	Repetition of first phrase of the melody at varying registers. Figure 13 reminiscent of close of the <i>Saxo-Rhapsody</i> .

The foundations of Eric Coates' successful career as a composer are based primarily on his music; if his music was not of the requisite quality and standard, he would never have reached the levels of fame and fortune he attained. The harmonisation, orchestration, and above all the melodic saturation of his scores was of a continual high calibre. Whilst he resorted to a formula, the music was often of sufficient invention and beauty to rise above this. If his music is formulaic it is surely the very nature of light music and its successful formula to which Coates was ultimately responding to. The conductor Charles Groves summed up the success of Coates' music: 'Eric Coates was a

gentle quietly-spoken man but his music crackled with vitality. He could write tunes and clothe them in the most attractive colours; not for nothing had he been Henry Wood's principal viola in the Queen's Hall Orchestra.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Charles Groves quoted in Lacey, Ian. 'Foreword' In *Suite in Four Movements* Eric Coates, iv-x. London: Thames, 1986, ix.

## Part IV

### Case Studies

#### Chapter 8 Eric Coates and the Press

*When I wrote the 'London Suite' I moved from the music page to the news page, and it's one of the few moves I have never regretted.<sup>1</sup>*

**E**ric Coates was a popular figure in the media during his lifetime; throughout the twentieth century the growth of widespread press coverage was immense and he was one of the first composers to benefit from the fame offered by the mass media.<sup>2</sup> From his time as a student at the RAM until the onset of his career as a freelance composer, his music often received favourable coverage from the *Musical Times*, and other such journals, but by the 1920s, his music was receiving more widespread press attention in the small-scale regional newspapers. By the late-1920s, performances of his music often attracted coverage from national newspapers and soon he was treated as a social phenomenon rather than a musical one. This was something that he never lost for the rest of his life, though the level of media interest did diminish in the 1950s. Coates' relationship with the Press was unconventional as he was often quoted from an interview rather than penning articles himself,<sup>3</sup> and he was apt to provide information for the press to ensure accuracy. Many of his articles and notices, however brief, were sent to him by his press-cutting agency and mounted, by Phyl, into seven scrapbooks; volume four is entirely devoted to the coverage generated by the publication of *Suite in Four Movements* in

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Coates quoted in 26-27/12/1984 Austin Coates to Geoffrey Self. *GB-ILMprivate*. This was a wry observation on the part of Coates, as they were frequently moving house. See Appendix 4.

<sup>2</sup> During the conception of *The Three Elizabeths*, Austin Coates remembers his father making use of the advantage of the trappings of fame: 'He went over to the telephone, and made what was in those days was a 'long distance' call to Berkshire, a terrible business in wartime, but he had to give his name and this had a good effect on the operator.' (26/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. *GB-Lbl* British Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA 0399).

<sup>3</sup> Though he did author several articles over the vicissitudes of snobbery that light music was attracting in the late 1930s himself. See section I, Appendix 1 for more details.

1953.<sup>4</sup> There are also several bags containing an amount of un-mounted cuttings (including many from after Coates' death until the 1970s).<sup>5</sup> There are significant omissions from his scrapbooks as there are no extracts from the *Musical Times* or *The Gramophone*, nor are there any articles which give a negative portrayal of his music (which there surely must have been). They range from mere fripperies, such as the latest humorous stories that had befallen the composer, features on the Coates' Sussex cottages, geneses of new works (predominantly 'Knightsbridge' March and *Calling All Workers*), to his more vociferous attacks on musical snobbery in the 1930s. An article entitled 'Garage Suite', which appeared in the *News Chronicle*, is typical of the 'light' stories that abounded about him in the media: 'While his London flat is being redecorated and his country house in Selsey, Sussex reconstructed, composer Eric Coates is living in his garage. This inconvenience scarcely puts a brake on his output, which normally functions in unconventional surroundings.'<sup>6</sup>

His appearances in print were highly important in establishing his music, as by 1936 almost every home in England was taking a daily newspaper – nearly half of them were taking an evening paper as well,<sup>7</sup> and it was into this world that his press coverage reached. Coates was always keen for the newspapers to propagate correct information; he wrote to the *Nottingham Guardian* in 1936 to complain about an inaccurate article:

As I have given no interview whatever to the Press I am at loss as to who the writer of this article can be, and I must ask you to please point out to him the inaccuracy of his material. I am anxious for this type of error to be avoided in future...<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> GB-STHprivate.

<sup>5</sup> GB-STHprivate.

<sup>6</sup> 01/07/1949 *News Chronicle* 'Garage Suite'. His next piece of work (except for sketching ideas) was *Holborn March* completed and probably composed entirely in 1950.

<sup>7</sup> Moore, Tim. *Do Not Pass Go*. London: Vantage, 2002, 188.

<sup>8</sup> Undated Letter *Nottingham Guardian*. 'A Famous Notts Composer'. GB-STHprivate Coates Scrapbook 2. The letter was dated 6 October but with no year, Phyl filed the letter in 1936.

In 1941, his publishers, Chappell, wrote on his behalf to correct erroneous information in the *Nottingham Journal*.<sup>9</sup> In some respects, his desire to propagate only correct information was mirrored by his manipulation of the press as part of a self-promotion and advertisement of his music; incorrect facts certainly impeded this and he was anxious to avoid this. Yet the use of the press for self-advertisement was not born out of a desire to inflate his persona, but to promote his music and his own performances of it.

During Coates' lifetime, the press in England underwent a transformation. Newspapers changed from dense columns of text to text broken up by headlines, advertisements and photographs. Due to the increases in income and the reduction of the working week, newspapers could be afforded and read by the working classes.<sup>10</sup> From 1918 to 1939, the average daily circulation of national daily newspapers rose from 3.1 million copies to 10.6; the press became a major industry with its turnover outstripping that of ship building and the chemical industry.<sup>11</sup> In 1934, (at the start of Coates' fame) out of every 100 families, 95 bought a daily morning newspaper and 130 bought a Sunday paper.<sup>12</sup> The mass media had arrived and were hungry for popular 'personalities' such as the likes of Eric Coates.

The first references to Coates in newspapers date back to reviews of concerts in 1902, when he was well-known as a string player in the Nottingham area. Subsequent appearances were often reviews of his first tentative steps as a composer. The first article which he appears to have authored was, 'Taking Jazz Seriously', published in 1928, when he had become a well-known composer, aided by the popularity of *The Three Bears* and *The Four Ways* Suite. With this article, the Press attention changed, and focused more on him as a *personality* rather than as a mere composer. Many articles expiated about his lifestyle and habits, perhaps pandering to the public's desire to be conversant with the

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<sup>9</sup> 13/09/1941 *Nottingham Journal*. 'Eric Coates'.

<sup>10</sup> LeMahieu, D.L. *A Culture for Democracy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, 12.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 229.

'man behind the music'. The revolution caused by the *London Suite* in 1933 caused numerous articles to be written on the story behind the 'Knightsbridge' March, and, from this juncture, Coates was barely out of the popular press, who frequently sought his opinions on subjects as diverse as crooners and accordions.<sup>13</sup> Even by 1950 he was still heavily associated with 'Knightsbridge' though this had evaporated to some extent with the immense popularity of *The Dam Busters*. In 1935, Coates also used the Press to proselytise his views on musical snobbery, which he believed were stifling performances and a positive attitude towards light music. During the War, his press-cuttings show a predilection for his new marches, and the composer was often photographed with a handwritten excerpt from his new piece, as with *Calling All Workers*, Fig. 8.1.<sup>14</sup>



The BBC Theatre Orchestra's public concert at a famous spa tonight at 9.25 will feature the first performance of this new march by Eric Coates

Fig. 8.1 *Calling All Workers*. *Radio Times*.

In 1941, Coates received extensive press coverage over his decision to donate his viola (which he had not played since he retired from playing in public performances and

<sup>13</sup> 09/03/1936 *Belfast News Letter*. 'Mr. Eric Coates Visits Belfast' & November 1937 *Accordion Times*. 'Eric Coates Looks at Accordion Day'.

<sup>14</sup> 30/08/1940 *Radio Times*.

which had been loaned to his former tutor, Lionel Tertis, since 1937)<sup>15</sup> to a member of the LPO who had lost his instrument in the destruction of Queen's Hall by the Luftwaffe. Other press-cuttings of this period feature the Coates' 'at home' in their fashionable residences as in the 'high-society' *The Tatler and Bystander* in 1942 with their picturesque temporary home in Hampstead.<sup>16</sup> In 1946 their Sussex cottage featured in the same magazine with photographs taken by the composer himself (a keen amateur photographer).<sup>17</sup> For the remainder of his life, Coates' press-cuttings were largely interviews recounting stories especially of 'Knightsbridge', *Calling All Workers* and reviews of new compositions and gramophone recordings. His opinions on the music of Sibelius were quoted by a variety of newspapers after the death of the latter when Sibelius was still regarded in Britain as a modernist despite his obvious influences on Bax and Moeran. Coates' involvement with the press demonstrates the esteem he was held in by both the media and the musical community of the country.

The majority of his press-cuttings show what a popular figure he had become in a relatively short period of time. He featured in a wide spectrum of newspapers from the humble local papers of Newcastle, Manchester and Hucknall to the national dailies (many long since forgotten) from the *Star* and *Mirror* to the more exclusive *Daily Telegraph* and *Times*. He also enjoyed a special relationship with the Nottinghamshire newspapers through a local journalist, Henry Morley (who founded the *Hucknall Dispatch* in 1903),<sup>18</sup> who ensured that the composer's news and recent compositions remained popular in the newspapers of his locality.<sup>19</sup> Coates' scrapbooks feature several press-cuttings of his

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<sup>15</sup> Coates Scrapbook 2, 1936-1944. GB-STHprivate.

<sup>16</sup> 16/09/1942 *The Tatler and Bystander*. 'A Famous British Composer at Home with his Wife'.

<sup>17</sup> 04/09/1946 *The Tatler and Bystander*. 'Eric Coates as a Photographer'.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, Harry. *Hucknall Looking Back*. Brimscombe Port: Tempus Publishing, 2000, 73. By 1913, the towns' three other daily newspapers had vanquished.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Morley invited Coates to write an introduction to the 1935 edition of *Sunray* (the magazine of Hucknall Carnival, which Coates was to open). This was the first tentative step towards writing an autobiography as he recalled experiences of his youth. Morley was also responsible for Coates composing his 'Children's Hymn' for Hucknall Baptist Chapel. I am grateful to Harry Smith for supplying information on the Morley family.

homecomings, from opening carnivals and fêtes, to his appearances as a guest-conductor with the Hucknall Light Orchestra (which he conducted on numerous occasions). All of his interviews with the press, his own articles and his autobiography show his natural jocosity and *savoir faire*. A typical example of his bonhomie was found in an interview with the *West Lancashire Evening Gazette* in August 1932 concerning his first visit to Blackpool:

### **Blackpool Surprises Famous Composer**

A musical event of decided interest in Blackpool last night was the visit of Mr. Eric Coates, the eminent composer who, in addition to paying his first visit to Blackpool, acted as guest conductor of the South Shore Pier orchestra, usually conducted by Mr. Edward Dunn.

Mr. Coates has won fame by his distinctive style, and one of the secrets was revealed by him to an "Evening Gazette" reporter when he said that in all his work he weaved into the theme a story. "I always work by story" he said. "People love stories."

There must be something in what Mr. Coates said, for who has not heard of the "Three Bears" suite for orchestra [*sic.*], the popular ballad, "Bird Songs at Eventide" (his best seller), or the "Cinderella" fantasy?

And how many modern composers are there who can say that a song they wrote a quarter of a century ago is still as popular as ever to-day? And yet this record can be claimed by Mr. Coates with his "Stonecracker John."

Mr. Coates talked about Blackpool. "I ought to be ashamed to confess it" he said, "but I have never been to Blackpool before. Of course" he added with a smile, "I have heard of Blackpool. Coming by road in my car I entered the town by way of Lytham and, do you know, when I first got sight of Blackpool from the south end I saw something I had never dreamed I should see in Lancashire, even including Blackpool, and that was something that had appearance of a Continental city."

#### **"FRIGHTENED ME"**

"As a matter of fact it frightened for a moment. As I arrived at South Shore I saw golden domes and minarets and towers surmounted by white buildings, and the impression it gave me a moment was that I was entering some Continental or eastern town. I was never more surprised in all my life."

Asked his opinion as to the taste the public in regard to music, Mr. Coates soon summed up the situation.

"I think the people will enjoy anything" he said, "if it is done well."

Mr. Coates had heard of the song demonstration places in Blackpool. "I have never seen one in operation," he said, "but it must be a marvellous sight to see and hear people learning and singing songs in that fashion.

### "Marvellous"

"Although I have never been to Blackpool before," he said, in conclusion "I have met many Blackpool people and Lancashire people and I think they are marvellous. They may not be very demonstrative but you can soon find whether they like you and your work."

Before leaving Mr. Coates was conducted round one or two of the amusement resorts and he told an "Evening Gazette" reporter that one of his most vivid impressions was the *flea circus in Olympia*.<sup>20</sup>

Occasionally his wife, Phyl, who herself was viewed as a 'household figure', would exploit her uxorial position and be interviewed instead of her husband, presumably if the composer was unavailable. She also attended to the majority of her husband's business correspondence whilst he was ill. In the *Southern Weekly News*, she informed readers of her single-handed renovation of their sixteenth-century cottage in Siddlesham.<sup>21</sup> Phyl also penned an affectionate tribute to the former porter of the RAM, Hallett (about whom Coates would speak affectionately in *Suite in Four Movements*),<sup>22</sup> to which she appended the story of her husband's fraught 1933 recording of the *London Suite*.<sup>23</sup> On several occasions the Coates' were interviewed together and in one of his final interviews in 1957 for *Reveille*, Coates being uxorious, and in all probability dominated by Phyl, let her speak a little disingenuously;

"Composing is never far from his mind" said Phyllis Coates; "*After 44 years' marriage to Eric I always know when he's about to start composing. He goes broody. Yes, I mean really broody. When I speak to him he doesn't hear a word I am saying. He won't answer letters, he forgets to shave or turn up for meals. And he can't have any distractions like radio or television. HE CAN'T EVEN LISTEN TO HIS OWN MUSIC*".<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 15/07/1932 *West Lancashire Evening Gazette*. 'Blackpool Surprises Famous Composer.' For the programme of the concert, see Table 10.1.

<sup>21</sup> 17/12/1938 *Southern Weekly News*. 'Woman's World: Mr and Mrs Eric Coates Have Simple Tastes.'

<sup>22</sup> Coates: 1953, 111-112 & 161-164.

<sup>23</sup> 22/11/1938 *Daily Mail*. 'Charles Graves' Personality Page'.

<sup>24</sup> 01/04/1957 *Reveille*.

Coates appears to have had his own methods of dealing with the media – it was very much a ‘home-spun’ industry, which was happily augmented by Chappell and the circulation of the BBC’s *Radio Times*. If he wished to appear in the newspapers over a certain issue he (or Phyl) would write a ‘press release’ typed on their typewriter to give it a professional gloss, and despatch it to the newspapers. This was certainly the case over his hasty return from Scandinavia and Holland in 1938 to Bournemouth where he was due to conduct the first public performance of his latest work *The Enchanted Garden* in England. The Coates’ (though the article was probably penned by Phyl in Eric’s absence) prepared a press release about his triumphs conducting abroad, including several positive quotes from foreign newspapers over his recent continental engagements and his alacritous and expedient journey home to conduct at Bournemouth; the article featured in the *Daily Telegraph*, amongst other papers.<sup>25</sup> There had also been earlier releases in different national newspapers along similar lines including one entitled ‘Mania for Speed’.<sup>26</sup> The Coates’ wrote numerous press releases about the promotion of Eric’s music (aside from the promotion offered by Chappell). In addition, they wrote a number of short biographies of the composer, programme notes of his music for concert programmes and for inclusion in the *Radio Times*;<sup>27</sup> Phyl also penned the prefaces to the published scores of several orchestral works including *The Enchanted Garden*, based on one of her own short stories.

Furthermore, Coates seems to have befriended a couple of journalists such as Charles Graves and Collie Knox. Graves in one article described Coates to his readers: ‘As to his appearance, Eric Coates really looks like a composer. He is five foot seven, with greying hair, slightly sunken brown eyes, sad smile and you should see his hands...’<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> 17/12/1938 *Daily Telegraph* ‘The Enchanted Garden.’ The Coates’ original typescript of this article survives GB-Lcm Eric Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>26</sup> 02/12/1938 *Daily Sketch*. ‘Mania for Speed’.

<sup>27</sup> Many carbon-copies survive at GB-Lcm Eric Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>28</sup> 14/12/1938 *The Bystander*.

Occasionally these journalists recounted snippets of news relating to the composer's recent endeavours. Knox, who was one of the most outspoken radio critics of his generation and whose column in the *Daily Mail* was very much in the American 'gossip-column style',<sup>29</sup> was one of the first journalists to give details of Coates' joint venture with his son, Austin, to produce a musical production in 1948.<sup>30</sup> In an article published in 1937, Knox gave his personal insight and opinion on how Coates would cope with his forthcoming invitation to conduct at that year's Radiolympia at London's Earl's Court as:

Knowing Mr Coates I cannot imagine him facing an audience of two, three, four – or is it five thousand? – people at the Olympia. He is one of the most of retiring of men and only becomes demoniac when he plays croquet. But thousands of his admirers will be delighted to see him.<sup>31</sup>

Several of the journalists, such as Ernest Kuhe, music critic of the *Telegraph*, were personal friends of the Coates' and returned several times for follow-up articles; Kuhe was a frequent guest of the Coates' during their residence at their house in Hampstead.<sup>32</sup>

One critic, Jonah Barrington, informed his readers in the *Sunday Express*,

Some years ago, I was playing bridge with Eric's wife and two others, Eric, abominating bridge, sat in one corner, scribbling.

The more noise we made, the more Eric scribbled. I lost half-a-crown while Eric made a masterpiece... his famous "Cinderella" suite [*sic*].<sup>33</sup>

A number of his press appearances were conducted as interviews, with frequent direct quotes from the composer, with the majority of the work executed by the journalist. Nevertheless, the bulk of his appearances in the media were rewrites of traditional

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<sup>29</sup> LeMahieu: 1988, 275.

<sup>30</sup> 19/03/1948 *Home Notes*. 'Collie Knox: Talking With You'. However the idea had dated back to at least 1944 when Coates wished to team up on the same project with Lawrence Howard and Christopher Hassall, though on Austin's release from the RAF in 1946, the project was developed between father and son. (25/06/1944 Eric Coates to Christopher Hassall & 12/11/1944 Eric Coates to Christopher Hassall. *GB-Cul* Add 8905/10/0/61 & Add 8905/10/0/62).

<sup>31</sup> 12/07/1937 *Daily Mail*. 'Collie Knox Calling'.

<sup>32</sup> Coates: 1953, 205. Their property in Willifield Way, not the later Hampstead cottage.

<sup>33</sup> 01/07/1934 *Sunday Express*. 'He Fiddled at Five'.

stories, either told vicariously to the newspaper, or information given to the press, either through the Coates' own 'in-house' press releases or through the auspices of his publisher, Chappell.

One of the few occasions when Coates asked for his inclusion in a newspaper, no doubt due to the notoriety gained from *Calling All Workers*, was early in 1941 in the 'invalid's section' of *The Times*, announcing that: 'Mr. Eric Coates has been ill at his London home for 10 days suffering from congestion of the lungs following influenza. He has been obliged to cancel engagements for a few weeks.'<sup>34</sup>

From the 1930s until his death, the announcements of his new orchestral works often appeared in the papers. The range of coverage was vast; the marches *Calling All Workers* and *The Eighth Army* appeared in the 'News in Brief' section of *The Times*.<sup>35</sup> 'A New march by Mr. Eric Coates, dedicated to the Eighth Army, will be broadcast for the first time at 7.45 p.m. to-morrow in the Forces programme, and to the forces in the Middle East. Mr. Coates has composed the march at the suggestion of the B.B.C. and without fee.'<sup>36</sup> Whereas in other more 'lowbrow' newspapers a new work could merit a more extended piece of journalism including the saga of the work's genesis, as for *Salute the Soldier*.

A "Salute the Soldier" march has been written by Mr. Eric Coates for the National Savings Committee's new campaign next month.

It is written largely in the form of Mr. Coates' "London Suite" and makes a companion to his "Eighth Army" march.<sup>37</sup> Mr. Coates is giving all the gramophone and sheet music royalties to the Army Benevolent Fund.

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<sup>34</sup> 15/01/1941 *The Times*. 'Invalids'. He also appeared in this section on 16/01/1941 & 22/04/1941, when he was reported as was making 'satisfactory progress'. Coates put this bout of influenza down to the provincial tours he made with the London Philharmonic in 1940. (Autograph copy *Suite in Four Movements*. GB-Lcm Eric Coates Archive, box M125).

<sup>35</sup> 28/08/1940 *The Times*. 'Calling All Workers' & 09/12/1942 *The Times*. 'News in Brief'.

<sup>36</sup> 09/12/1942 *The Times*. 'News in Brief'.

<sup>37</sup> The two marches were released together on gramophone records JG 213 and 214.

The idea to write the march he had been asked to write came to Mr. Coates and his wife whilst they were lunching in a restaurant, and within a week the work was finished.

Mr. Coates has the closest associations with Nottinghamshire having been born in Hucknall in 1886. His father, Dr. W. Harrison Coates, was in practice for many years.

Mr. Coates was a frequent visitor to Hucknall before the war and in 1930 opened the carnival there, conducting a massed band – many of them colliers – on the football ground.<sup>38</sup>

The formal announcements of the titles of new orchestral pieces not only drew the public's attention to his latest opus, but also formally identified Coates' name with the piece, thus avoiding any unfortunate incidents with copyright, as was narrowly circumvented in 1954, over Alan Herbert's claims to part-ownership of *Calling All Workers*.<sup>39</sup>

By the 1930s, such was Coates' popularity that various excerpts from his music actually appeared in the newspaper coupled with a superimposed photograph of the composer. These were often snippets which he wrote out especially for the benefit of the press, or, as in the case of *The Three Men*, the *Radio Times* superimposed his photograph onto the first page of the full score of the Suite, Fig. 8.2.

During the Second World War, excerpts of the music of Coates' new marches appeared with articles about the composer and his new pieces in the press. Today, it may seem unusual that the melodic outline of a new march was printed, but it is worth noting that: Charles Stanford published his 'A Carol of the Nativity' in the *Daily Express* of 1909; Peter Warlock wrote his carol 'Bethlehem Down' for issue by the *Daily Telegraph* on Christmas Eve 1927; William Walton followed suit in 1931 with 'Make We Joy Now in This Feast' composed exclusively for the Manchester newspaper, *The Daily Dispatch*.

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<sup>38</sup> Unknown date, c. February 1944 *Nottingham Journal*. 'New March by Eric Coates'. Coates Scrapbook 2 GB-STHprivate.

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter 9 for more details.



### A NEW ERIC COATES SUITE

The first performance of a suite, 'The Three Men', by Eric Coates will be given during the concert of his music which he will conduct tonight at 9.0. His march 'Knightsbridge', which introduces the popular Saturday feature 'In Town Tonight', will also be heard in the programme.

Fig. 8.2 'A New Eric Coates Suite', *Radio Times*.<sup>40</sup>

Many of the musical examples Coates' marches that featured in the press during this period were handwritten snippets of the melody, but *The Eighth Army* March was reproduced in 'piano format', Fig. 8.3.<sup>41</sup>



Fig. 8.3 'Eighth Army March', *News Chronicle*.

<sup>40</sup> 25/01/1935 *Radio Times*.

<sup>41</sup> 09/12/1942 *News Chronicle*.

In 1943, the *Radio Times* featured a printed excerpt from the piano-conductor score of *Calling All Workers* on its front cover to celebrate the third anniversary of 'Music While You Work', though Coates' March had not actually been associated with the programme from its inception, Fig. 8.4.

Radio Times, June 18, 1943 Vol. 79 No. 1029 Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper

PRICE TWOPENCE

PROGRAMMES FOR  
June 20—26

# RADIO TIMES

JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

(INCORPORATING WORLD-RADIO)

## This Week

**Verdi's 'Requiem'**  
On Sunday afternoon this work will be broadcast from Huddersfield Town Hall by the Huddersfield Choral Society with the Hallé Orchestra. Soloists will be Eva Turner, Mary Jarred, Parry Jones, and Norman Walker; the conductor will be Dr. Malcolm Sargent.

**'Storm'**  
A dramatised version of this American novel will be presented on Sunday night. It shows the advance upon and across a part of the American continent of a weight of wind and snow and rain, bringing differing problems or dangers or reliefs to weather forecasters, road and flood authorities, farmers, and business men.

**'The Stage Presents . . .'**  
Sunday night's stars will be Sydney Howard, Gwen Catley, Margaret Lockwood, Michael Wilding, Stanley Holloway, and the principal singing stars from the London production of *Magic Carpet*.

**Poor Fish!**  
Monday evening's programme in the series from the Columbia Workshop is a fantasy called *The Fish on the Bathroom Floor*.

**J. B. Priestley**  
On Monday night he will return to the Home Service microphone to begin his new series of six talks with the title 'Make it Monday!'

**Along the Mississippi**  
'Up-River', also on Monday night, is a gramophone programme about the townships and the coloured people along the river which provides one of the most individual patterns in the kaleidoscope of life in the United States.

**Grieg Centenary Concert**  
Tuesday evening's *Prom* will continue the celebration of the centenary of the composer's birth. Janet Howe sings, and Clifford Curzon plays the well-known Piano Concerto.

**Russia and her Enemies**  
On Tuesday evening the second anniversary of Hitler's invasion of Russia will be marked by a programme called 'Retreat from Russia', comparing the Nazi onslaught with that of Napoleon in 1812, pointing the parallels between the two dictators and their armies, and emphasising the tremendous strength invariably shown by the Russians in defence of their country.

**'New Judgment'**  
On Tuesday night Edith Evans will talk about that famous predecessor of hers on the English stage, Sarah Siddons.

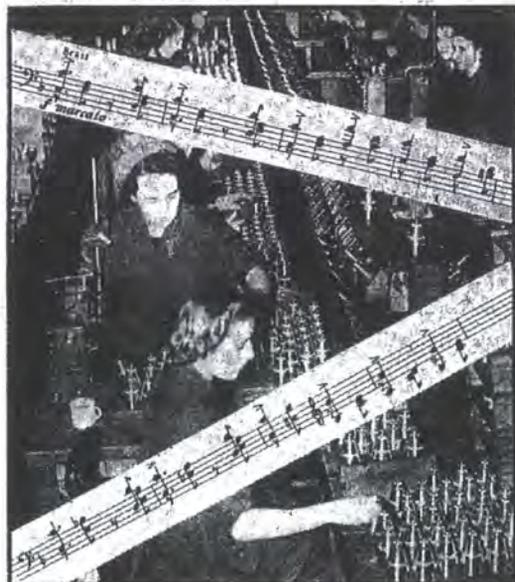
**Serial Reading**  
This popular form of radio entertainment will be revived on Wednesday evening, when Felix Aylmer will begin nine weekly readings from R. L. Stevenson's thriller 'The Wrecker'.

**From Joseph Conrad**  
His story 'The Partner', arranged for broadcasting by Sybil Clarke, will be presented in dramatic form on Friday evening.

**Don and Puppets**  
*Master Peter's Puppet-Show*, a musical episode by Falla taken from the story of Don Quixote, is to be presented in radio form on Friday night. See page 3.

**Cricket**  
Tom Craig will give a short commentary on the closing overs before lunch during the match between the Army and Yorkshire at Headingley on Saturday afternoon.

**London Holiday**  
In a programme on Saturday evening a factory worker and his family will sample the holidays-at-home attractions available this summer for Londoners. These attractions include the circus, a concert party, a military band, dancing in the open air, and cricket in the parks.



## Third Anniversary of 'MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK'

'MUSIC While You Work' was first broadcast by Dudley Beaven at the theatre organ from 10.30 to 11.0 a.m. on Sunday, June 23, 1940. This was at the height of the 'Go to it' period, when every minute counted more desperately than we knew; and in introducing this programme of tuneful, rhythmic music for war-workers as a new kind of contribution towards the winning of the war, the BBC was launching something bigger than it knew.

The item has been broadcast twice a day ever since. On August 2, 1942, a third period was introduced, to reach workers on the night shift.

The third anniversary broadcast on June 23, 1943, will be the 2,515th performance.

Some 7,000 factories now tune in regularly to 'Music While You Work'. This represents well over four million workers.

The Ministry of Supply are taking increasing interest in the programmes and are now having the Royal Ordnance Factories wired for reception.

More than once the programmes have been the subject of considerable

research along scientific lines. Reports from all kinds of war factories leave no room for doubt that the right type of music played by the right type of orchestra or band is a direct stimulus to the workers and leads to increased output.

Canada and the United States have not hesitated to follow the British example. The American battleship *Albatross* was built to music. In a recent U.S. survey, it was established that while production without music reached a capacity of 72 per cent, production with music reached 78 per cent, and production with music properly planned, on the lines of 'Music While You Work', reached 87 per cent.

The programmes are found to be particularly suitable for Overseas transmission, and recordings are often included in the BBC's Overseas programmes.

Finally, of course, many who are not war-workers in the strict sense of the term—more especially housewives—miss no chance of tuning into 'Music While You Work' and being cheered and helped by one of the most invigorating of all programmes.

Fig. 8.4 Front Cover of the *Radio Times*.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> 18/06/1943 *Radio Times*.

Several of Coates' works were sufficiently well-known to appear as subjects of cartoons in a variety of periodicals. The first was in 1935 *Radio Times* who seized on his inclusion of the nursery rhyme 'Three Blind Mice' in the finale of his Suite *The Three Men*. The cartoon depicts two sailors who found the mice that Coates was alluding to, Fig. 8.5.<sup>43</sup>

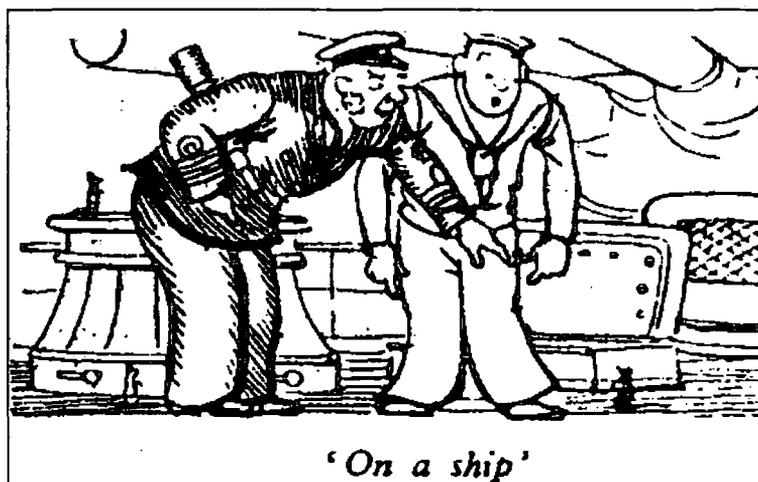


Fig. 8.5. 'On A Ship', *Radio Times*.

The ultimate accolade to his music in this format was in *Punch* with a cartoon based on his popular song and *First Symphonic Rhapsody*, 'I Pitch My Lonely Caravan at Night', such was the level of its popularity, Fig. 8.6.<sup>44</sup>

Coates himself was also the subject of a couple of caricatures and was frequently captured in photographs in many journals and newspapers, often with his standard publicity photographs (taken by a professional photographer akin to the publicity photographs of film stars), though numerous reporters did take photographs of Coates composing in Chiltern Court. However, his caricature was occasionally to be found once he had risen to the ranks of a 'celebrity', as in the 1935 edition of *Sunray*, the magazine of

<sup>43</sup> 25/01/1935 *Radio Times*. The mice are located in the bottom right-hand corner, with two mice behind the sailors in the top and bottom left-corner.

<sup>44</sup> June 1935 *Punch*.

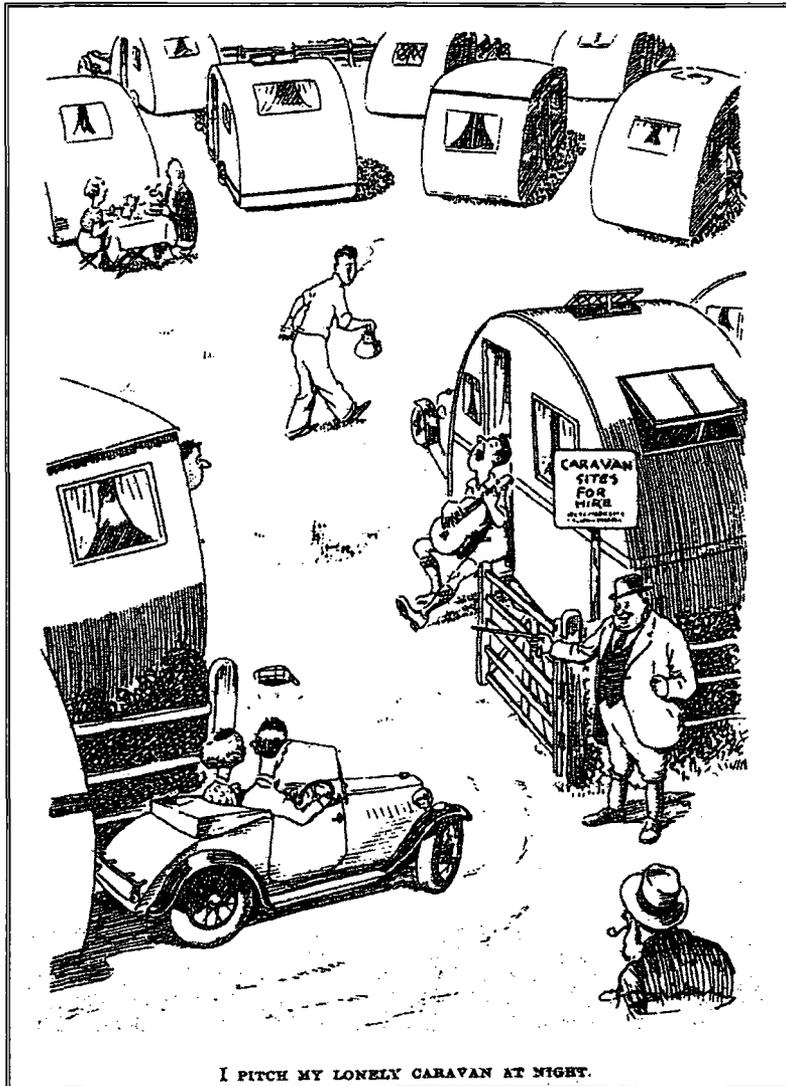


Fig. 8.6 'I Pitch My Lonely Caravan at Night', *Punch*.

Hucknall Carnival.<sup>45</sup> A caricature of him even featured in the *Buenos Aires Herald* of 1948 to mark his visit to South Africa as a plenipotentiary of the PRS, Fig. 8.7.<sup>46</sup>

A couple of his press appearances were really quite unusual for a composer, but undoubtedly represented his popular appeal. In 1949, he appeared in the '20 Questions' section of the *New Outlook on Motoring* detailing his views on motoring (he often listed driving, along with photography, as one of his indulgences; he frequently drove to engagements and to his Sussex retreats whenever he could), Fig. 8.8.

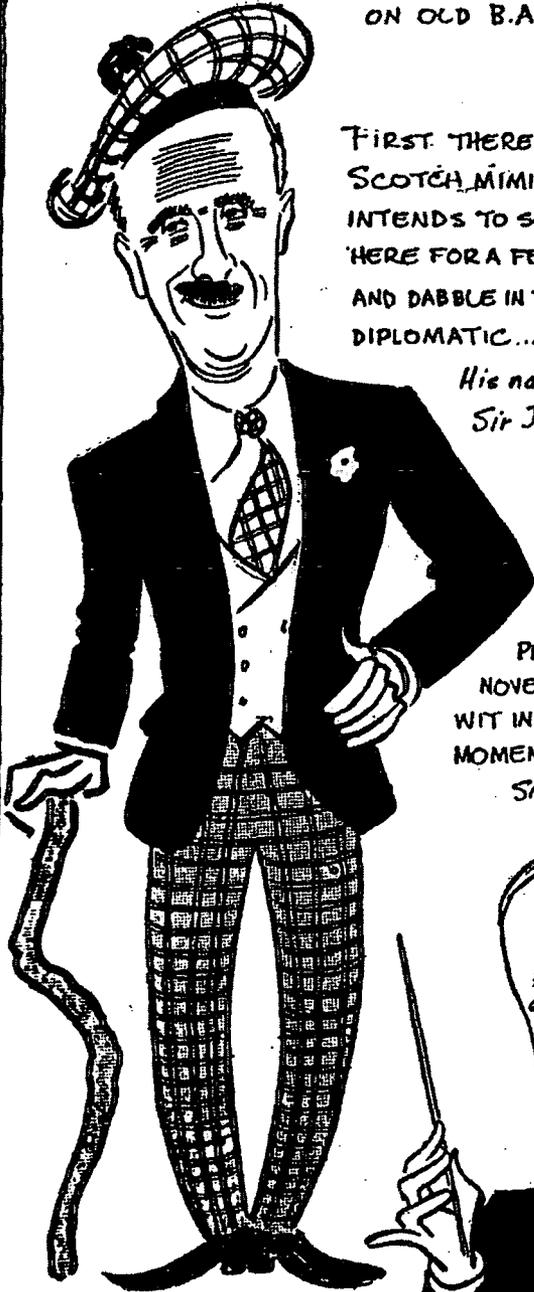
<sup>45</sup> 1935 *Sunday*. 'From Meadow to Mayfair', 9. See frontispiece.

<sup>46</sup> 18/10/1948 *Buenos Aires Herald*. 'Visiting Talent'. Coates' caricature appeared with John Balfour and Alan Herbert. The newspaper was keen to 'knight' Coates, though, of course, he was not knighted.

# VISITING TALENT

by Bizzg

"THE 'HIGHLAND BRIGADE' UNLOADED SOME VERY INTERESTING TALENT ON OLD B.A. LAST WEEK...



FIRST THERE WAS A SCOTCH MIMICK WHO INTENDS TO SETTLE HERE FOR A FEW YEARS AND DABBLE IN THINGS DIPLOMATIC...

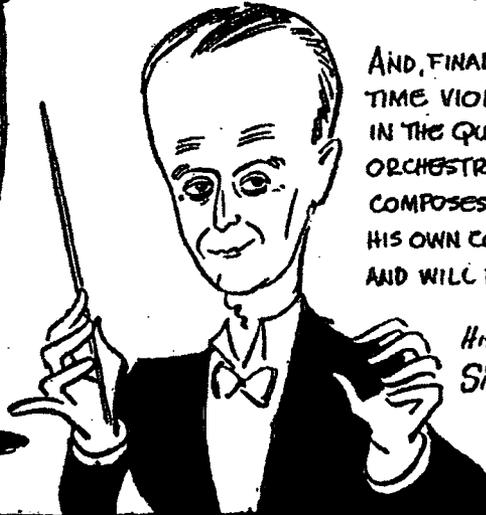
His name?

Sir John Balfour  
K.C.M.G.



AND THEN THERE WAS A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT WHO IS A POET, PLAYWRIGHT NOVELIST AND WIT IN HIS ODD MOMENTS... His name?

Sir Alan Herbert M.P.



AND, FINALLY, A ONE-TIME VIOLA PLAYER IN THE QUEEN'S HALL ORCHESTRA WHO NOW COMPOSES AND DIRECTS HIS OWN COMPOSITIONS AND WILL DO SO HERE...

His name?

Sir Eric Coates

Fig. 8.7 'Visiting Talent', *Buenos Aires Herald*.

# 20 QUESTIONS



answered by the  
composer of the  
"Knightsbridge  
March," and  
one of Britain's  
most popular  
tune makers:

**ERIC  
COATES**

1. How long have you been a motorist? *Twenty-five years.*
2. Do you feel you must have a car capable of carrying you at 60 m.p.h.? *This is crawling. Make it 90.*
3. What improvements would you hope to find in your ideal post-war car? *No squeaks. No leaks. A windscreen wiper that works in snow and everlasting tyres which will not skid.*
4. What is your favourite colour for a car? *Silver-grey.*
5. Do you use your luggage boot? *Not if I can help it.*
6. If you were the Chancellor, what would you do about motor-car taxation? *Tax should be on a rising scale according to the price of the motorcar when new.*
7. What would you do to reduce the number of road accidents? *Abolish the thirty-mile speed limit and fine pedestrians for being careless. The road should be for the motorist and the pavement for the pedestrian, but if the latter must use the road then he should be forced to obey the traffic-lights or else take the consequences.*
8. What are the main improvements you consider necessary on our roads? *More sign-posts. Fewer signs. Abolish the penalizing of motorists.*
9. . . . and in our holiday hotels? *I never go to these, so have no suggestions.*
10. What is your opinion of the R.A.C. and the A.A., and the service they give? *Excellent. It is a pity that all motorists are not obliged to join these organizations, for without the co-operation of every motorist in the country the A.A. and the R.A.C. cannot do very much towards getting them a square deal.*
11. Are you satisfied with your local garage service? *Yes.*
12. How would you solve the car park problem? *By avoiding parking.*
13. Should car parks be free? *No.*
14. How would you solve the problem of the traffic jams? *By having better and wider roads and more by-passes.*
15. Do you feel an uncontrollable urge to lean out of the window and remonstrate with absent-minded pedestrians and cyclists? *How well you know me!*
16. Would you make driving tests more severe? *Driving tests are a waste of time, anyhow. Anybody will behave nicely during a test, but see what happens as soon as he sees that inviting straight road ahead (never mind about the slide-turnings).*
17. What do you think of cyclists and their behaviour on the roads? *Completely terrifying.*
18. Do you think heavy transport should be given special roads to itself? *Not necessarily, if the roads are adequate.*
19. Would you make it compulsory for all dogs to be kept on leads in the streets? *This depends on whether the dog has had proper training. If he has, leads are not necessary.*
20. What are your views on women drivers? *My wife is a motorist so I must ask you to excuse me.*

## ON MOTORING

Fig. 8.8 'Twenty Questions on Motoring: Eric Coates', *New Outlook on Motoring*.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> August 1949. *New Outlook on Motoring*. '20 Questions on Motoring: Eric Coates'.

Coates was not the only light composer to be treated in this way; Haydn Wood, who also collected and mounted his numerous press-cuttings in his scrapbooks, enjoyed widespread press attention but not to the same level as Coates.

There were occasions when the media propagated false information about Coates. A case in point was in 1936 over the forthcoming coronation of Edward VIII, shortly before the Abdication Crisis, when *The Observer* ran a small feature on British composers writing music for the service. The article concluded: "There is good reason to believe that Mr. Eric Coates is to be invited to write the solemn processional march which concludes the service as the King passes from the Abbey."<sup>48</sup> The *Nottingham Guardian* reported the following month:

To a reporter who saw Mr. Coates yesterday, about the matter, he stated that, although he was aware of the reported decision to ask him to perform this service, no official representation had reached him, and that pending a formal invitation, he did not care to comment on the matter; but if it came he would look upon it as a great honour to provide the march for such an historic event.<sup>49</sup>

Notwithstanding his great popularity in this period, it is hard to believe that Walford Davies, in his official capacity as Master of the King's Musick, seriously intended to invite Coates to write a piece for the service. It is difficult to imagine Coates undertaking such an extensive commission, for solemnity was hardly a feature of his 'miniature' marches. Nevertheless, as a professional composer he might well have composed an effective and successful march for the occasion. Austin Coates believed that no official approach was ever made to his father on the issue, but that it was merely hype and speculation created by the media.<sup>50</sup> With the abdication of Edward VIII and the subsequent coronation of George VI the matter was laid to rest, only James Agate, who also recommended Coates for an honour, stated: 'If I were king, it would be this,

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<sup>48</sup> 27/09/1936 *The Observer*. 'Music for the Coronation'.

<sup>49</sup> Undated, c. October 1936 *Nottingham Guardian*. 'Honour for Notts. Composer?' Coates Scrapbook 2, GB-STHprivate.

<sup>50</sup> 11/11/1985 Austin Coates to Geoffrey Self. GB-ILMprivate.

['Knightsbridge'] among all modern English airs, that I would soonest march down the aisle after my coronation.<sup>51</sup> Notwithstanding Coates' exclusion, music by lighter composers, Thomas Dunhill (*Canticum Fidei*, used for the entry of Queen Mary into the Abbey) and Edward German (*Coronation March*) was performed at the 1937 service. There was no mention, in the press during 1952-1953 of Coates providing any music for the Coronation of Elizabeth II, certainly proving that attitudes towards composers of light music had turned against them providing music for such an occasion. Furthermore, it demonstrates that by 1936 he was heavily associated with the topos of the march (though he had only composed five by this stage of his career)<sup>52</sup> one which was set to last for the rest of his life.

Despite the coverage by the media of Coates' doubtful undertakings and initiatives, several of the articles on him were of dubious literary quality and often stretched the truth somewhat, as in an article entitled 'Dressing-Gown Tunes':

### ***Dressing-Gown Tunes***

Mr. Eric Coates's manner is as cheerful as his music, some of which he conducts on the air this evening, and the nearest approach to "temperament" he can claim is that when starting on a new score he (1) loses his appetite; (2) is inseparable from his old dressing gown; and (3) finds it an awful job to drag himself before a mirror to shave.

Since the BBC adopted his "Knightsbridge March" as the signature tune to their popular feature "In Town To-night" nearly half a million copies have been sold.

### ***Serious Saxophony***

Very early in his career he was attracted to the music of Sullivan and German: but post-war dance rhythms have had an influence on his work; and in writing his "saxo-rhapsody" for the saxophonist Sigurd Rascher he did much to dispel the idea that the saxophone is solely a jazz instrument.

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<sup>51</sup> 13/04/1937 *Daily Express*. 'My Private Honours List by James Agate'.

<sup>52</sup> 'Northwards' (*Four Ways* Suite), 'The Princess Arrives' (*The Jester at the Wedding*), 'Knightsbridge' (*London Suite*), *London Bridge* March and 'Oxford Street' (*London Again* Suite). The conclusion of *Cinderella*, is in essence a march.

Of this piece he had said that, nevertheless, “secretly feeling that where there is a saxophone, syncopation is never far away,” he surreptitiously slipped in a few bars of syncopated rhythm, hoping the classically-minded Sigurd would not mind.<sup>53</sup>

A number of his press-cuttings also gave false information on new musical ideas he was contemplating or at least led readers to believe what he was about to write. An intriguing cutting from the *Sunday Graphic* entitled ‘Eric Coates’s Health Air’, appropriately dated 1 April, and may well have been an ‘April Fool’; as no other documentary evidence or press-cuttings survive to support the *Sunday Graphic* report:<sup>54</sup>

Famous composer Eric Coates is to compose a “suitable air to help workers keep at concert pitch by breathing exercises.”

This was announced at a health conference in London yesterday by Capt. W.P. Knowles, soldier, scientist, who advocated deep breathing every day as a vital aid to health.

Occasionally Coates’ name would be associated with the endorsement of certain products or causes. This ranged from Allison’s miniature pianos to Basildon Bond writing paper,<sup>55</sup> which, it was claimed, that he used. In 1947, his phantasy *The Three Bears* was used to advertise Ferranti radio sets, such was the work’s popularity, Fig 8.9.<sup>56</sup> On several occasions his name was used to help good causes as in 1936 when he appeared in *The Times* in a fund-raising campaign for the Samaritan Hospital of Women.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Unknown, c1937. Coates Scrapbook 2, *GB-STHprivate*. The first section of this article is almost identical to information contained in 03/05/1935 *Radio Times*. ‘He Composed Knightsbridge’.

<sup>54</sup> 01/04/1943 *Sunday Graphic*. ‘Eric Coates’s Health Air’. However, during this period he was busily engaged in writing his *Report on Light Music* for the BBC.

<sup>55</sup> 29/10/1957 *Daily Telegraph* & 20/11/1957 *Glasgow Sunday Post*. ‘Basildon Bond Writing Paper’.

<sup>56</sup> 03/07/1947 *The Times*. ‘Display Advertising: Ferranti Ltd.’.

<sup>57</sup> 05/09/1936 *The Times*. Coates also made a plea for the Hospital on BBC London Regional programme at 20.45 the following evening.

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**Children's Hour**

ANTON CHEKOV'S "The Three Sisters" — or Eric Coates' "The Three Bears" — whichever programme you want, you want it with every tone and undertone. And that's how a Ferranti set gives it to you.

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Fig. 8.9 'Ferranti Ltd.', *The Times*.

Out of all Coates' relationships with the Press, one of the closest was with the *Hucknall Dispatch*. He was befriended by the founder, Henry Morley, and later Morley's son, Eric, named after the composer.<sup>58</sup> The newspaper frequently contained general information relating to his recent compositional ventures, visits to Hucknall and a wide range of sundry features often including photographs.<sup>59</sup> Coates certainly relished his

<sup>58</sup> And delivered by Coates' father Dr Harrison Coates. (Smith, Ann. *The Life of Henry Morley and the Birth of the Hucknall Dispatch*. Southwell: Private, 2003, 28).

<sup>59</sup> Many of these photographs (first published in the *Dispatch*) have been reprinted in Smith, H: 2000, 74-76.

associations with the *Hucknall Dispatch*, writing to Morley in 1935 stating: 'I really must congratulate you on the excellence of your publications – the way you present the Dispatch puts some of the London Press to shame.<sup>60</sup>' One of the first important pieces on Coates in the *Dispatch*<sup>61</sup> was a précis of his article in the *Daily Mail*, 'Is the Highbrow Running Music?'<sup>62</sup> which brought his views on musical snobbery to a local audience. Coates must surely have informed Morley about the article (published two days after the *Mail* in the *Hucknall Dispatch*) and sent him an advance copy of the article before it was published, unless Morley was such a dedicated aficionado of Coates that he saw the article in the *Mail* and abridged it for his own paper. Coates was also invited to write an introduction to the 1935 edition of *Sunray* (the magazine of Hucknall Carnival) under Morley's editorship. This letter, with its reminiscences of his childhood in Hucknall, became a useful starting point for his memoirs. The *Dispatch* also proved of use as it led to a 'knock-on' effect with other local newspapers in the Nottingham district who often took their stories about the composer from the *Hucknall Dispatch*.

Through Coates' relationship with the *Dispatch*, a friendship ensued with the Morley family who worked hard to keep his name alive in Nottinghamshire, particularly after his death in 1957: Henry Morley and the Hucknall Rotary Club provided and memorial plaque on his childhood home at Tenter Hill, unveiled by Phyl in 1961;<sup>63</sup> Eric Morley also worked hard to arrange and publicise numerous events in Hucknall and Nottinghamshire in Coates' centenary year, 1986. Today, articles on Coates still feature in the newspaper.

Due to the wide variety of press-cuttings that the Coates' received from their press-cutting agencies it is obvious that he was a well-known and popular figure within the media, as too was Phyl; his superlative press reputation was not that usually

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<sup>60</sup> 19/07/1935 Eric Coates to Henry Morley. GB-HCKJ

<sup>61</sup> 16/05/1935 *Hucknall Dispatch*. 'Eric Coates Indicts the Highbrows'.

<sup>62</sup> 14/05/1935 *Daily Mail*. 'The Highbrow is Running Music by Eric Coates.'

<sup>63</sup> 14/07/1961 *Hucknall Dispatch*

associated with a composer. He featured in a wide variety of papers all over the country and must surely have been known by many millions. The media projected his personality, both socially and musically, to the newspaper- and magazine-reading population and through the wide variety of newspapers, from the humblest to the most exalted, his media persona had the widest possible dissemination and linked him to the BBC and his gramophone records.

Coates clearly knew how to manipulate the press, along with the extensive exposure he received from the BBC and this enabled him to become a popular composer of household repute. Few composers in the twentieth century have been able to choreograph the media in such a way and be portrayed in such an affable and jocular manner, though his press coverage should never be thought in terms of propaganda. There are seldom any negative press comments in relation to either his personality or his music in his scrapbooks or in other contemporary articles. Without doubt the immense press coverage which Coates received was yet another reason for his supreme success in the sphere of light music; he seemed to have 'the popular touch'.

## Chapter 9 Performing Right Society

*What we should do without the Society in these days of mechanical reproduction and reduced sales of sheet music I hesitate to think. Mr. William Boosey's words at the last Quinquennial Dinner are proving absolutely true – we have to look more and more to performing rights for our income as the years pass.<sup>1</sup>*

For Eric Coates, and no doubt most other British composers without a private income, the formation of the Performing Right Society in 1914 was nothing short of a revolution. The foundation of the PRS came at the onset of Coates' career as a professional composer and he was one of the first generation of British composers who could reap the significant financial benefit. In his autobiography, he stated that the PRS was the first important organisation to play a part in establishing his career as a composer.<sup>2</sup> The PRS may well have been his fillip to turn to composition as a career. Through the PRS, Coates no longer had to rely on the one-off payments and royalty collections from his publishers, but could earn a comfortable living. John Ireland remarked in 1924:

To a composer of popular ballads, the sale of whose "Success" runs into six figures and whose income is profitable to the super-tax collector, perhaps the advantages of the PRS may be negligible; but the composer of serious music is in quite a different position, and to him I consider a great service is done by this Society which helps him to live by his work.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike Bax, Quilter and Balfour Gardiner who had independent means, Coates had to earn his living solely by composing (from 1922) or else he would have to return to playing and teaching the viola. In 1945 one newspaper proclaimed: 'Today of all British composers, Eric Coates is played most, and paid most; for the income he enjoys from

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Coates quoted in January 1928 *The Performing Right Gazette* 'Our Interview Gallery, No 21: Mr Eric Coates' 269 & 271.

<sup>2</sup> Coates, Eric. *Suite in Four Movements*. London: Heinemann, 1953, 182.

<sup>3</sup> John Ireland in *The Performing Right Gazette* quoted in Peacock, Alan and Weir, Robert. *The Composer in the Market Place*. London: Faber Music, 1975, 87.

the performance, publication of sheet music, and the sale of gramophone records exceeds that of any of our other composers.<sup>4</sup>

The information held in the archives of the PRS, on which this chapter is based, gives an indication not only of Coates' successes, but also of exactly which pieces of his were popular and exactly which countries performed his music.

The formation of the PRS in 1914 brought about a radical change in the financial aspirations of composers; they could earn a living by composing orchestral works which in the past had proved to be very much a labour of love. William Walton was fond of recounting the positive benefits of the PRS: 'Think of Schubert. Penniless and dead at thirty-one, with over a thousand works to his credit. What the PRS and a decent Health Service would have done for him!<sup>5</sup>' In 1898, Coleridge Taylor was paid a flat fee of fifteen guineas by Novello for the score and performing rights to his immensely popular cantata, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*,<sup>6</sup> even when he died destitute in 1912 Novellos refused to give any assistance to Coleridge Taylor's pauperised family.<sup>7</sup> The 1906 Musical Copyright Act (which at last made it a criminal offence to produce, sell and possess pirated copies of music)<sup>8</sup> and the 1911 Copyright Act had to a certain degree addressed the issues of piracy and the 'ground rules of copyright', but had done little concerning the issue of royalties for composers. Several publishers administered royalties for their composers, others bought works outright. There was a need for a society, along similar lines to France's SACAM to collect royalties; SACAM (established in 1851) became the prototype for similar organisations in Europe: Italy (1882), Austria (1897), Spain (1901)

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<sup>4</sup> May 1945 *Everybody's*. 'A People's Composer.'

<sup>5</sup> William Walton quoted in Walton, Susana. *William Walton*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 182.

<sup>6</sup> Self, Geoffrey. *The Hiawatha Man*. Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995, 71. At the height of the piece's popularity, Littleton gave the composer a further £25 and occasional gifts (Ibid, 82).

<sup>7</sup> As early as 1902 Stanford had been on a crusade over the exploitation of Coleridge Taylor from this work. (03/11/1902 Charles Stanford to Edward Elgar. In Dibble, Jeremy. *Charles Villiers Stanford*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 140-141). This fact was borne out soon after the foundation of the PRS when Coleridge-Taylor's widow was amongst the highest earners of the Society (see Table 9.1).

<sup>8</sup> Ehrlich, Cyril. *Harmonious Alliance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, 11.

and Germany (1903).<sup>9</sup> Thus, after the groundwork by William Boosey (of Chappell), the Performing Right Society Limited came into existence and was officially registered on 6 March 1914 with William Boosey as Chairman and Pierre Sarpy as Secretary.<sup>10</sup> Initially, not all publishers were members and it was not until 1926, an *annus mirabilis* for the PRS, that a number of the more 'popular' publishers, including Boosey & Co. and Laraway (who had already been a stumbling block for the PRS) finally joined the Society.<sup>11</sup> Though the initial years of the PRS were awkward, the Society soon became the main source of income for composers as sales of sheet music seriously declined; total sales fell from £537,000 in 1921 to £318,000 in 1929 to £185,000 in 1935.<sup>12</sup> The fees generated by the PRS were important to composers such as Delius and Stanford, who, during the First World War, saw a large proportion of their income dry up, since many of their works were published in Germany. Between 1925 and 1928, there was, in fact, a decrease in sheet music sales of twenty-two per cent.<sup>13</sup> During the Second World War, Haydn Wood felt that his income principally depended upon his PRS fees generated from broadcasting.<sup>14</sup>

As Cyril Ehrlich has noted about the membership of the PRS, 'the composers and authors were, thus, mostly representative of the music-hall and a type of light music at which the English then excelled.'<sup>15</sup> The initial PRS board had a strong light music contingent, including Lionel Monckton, the first Vice-Chairman, Charles Ancliffe and Herman Finck.<sup>16</sup> There were certain initial disagreements over the higher earning capacity of light composers. The level of remuneration for Ketèlbey (who by the late 1920s was receiving more than £1,500 in PRS fees per annum, largely due to the use of his music in

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 16-17. Sarpy, along with Boosey, had worked hard to form the Society and unexpectedly died at the beginning of 1915, leaving the PRS in turmoil.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>13</sup> 04/04/1928 *The Times*. 'Less Sheet Music Sold'.

<sup>14</sup> 07/03/1940 Haydn Wood to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Haydn Wood, file 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ehrlich: 1989, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 16-17.

the cinema)<sup>17</sup> caused a problem in the PRS. Ketèlbey and Bosworths (his main publisher) believed that his level of income did not equate with the number of performances, in short he deserved more money than he received from the PRS.<sup>18</sup> Ketèlbey therefore resigned from the PRS in 1926, though he was subsequently persuaded to revoke his resignation.<sup>19</sup>

For composers, the foundation of the PRS had revolutionised their income, especially with the addition of royalties from gramophone recordings. However, this remained a moot point for composers, as sheet music sales were declining in favour of record sales. William Boosey of Coates' publishers Chappell noted that total sales of sheet music for Chappell fell from £92,733 in 1922-1923 to £62,954 in 1926-1927.<sup>20</sup> At an enquiry by the Board of Trade in 1928 into copyright royalties on mechanical musical instruments, John Ireland informed the Board that he had seen a marked reduction in sales of his songs which had not been compensated for by gramophone sales. Ireland furthermore believed that his total royalties had fallen by fifty per cent. Haydn Wood, at the same enquiry, declared that he had received the same royalties from the sale of one piece of music as from seventeen records.<sup>21</sup>

Coates was one of the earliest members of the PRS, though not, as some sources suggest, a founder member.<sup>22</sup> He joined the Society in the 'second wave' of membership on 3 May 1914 as member 125.<sup>23</sup> Writing in 1952, Coates explained his initial motives for joining the Society:

When the Performing Right Society was formed over here in 1915 [*sic.*] he [William Boosey] asked me if I would like to join and, a request from W.B. being more in the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>20</sup> 04/04/1928 *The Times*. 'Less Sheet Music Sold'.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Self, Geoffrey. *In Town Tonight*. London; Thames, 1986, 30 & Self, Geoffrey. 'Eric Coates'. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004: [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32462](http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32462).

<sup>23</sup> Undated Contract. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

nature of an order than anything else, I became one of the original members of this Society, which, besides its other uses, protects that most unbusinesslike of human creatures, the composer.<sup>24</sup>

He soon realised that the PRS would assist in his ambition to become, and more importantly remain, an orchestral composer:

Writing orchestral music in those days was a labour of love, and glancing back to 1911, the year in which Sir Henry Wood launched my 'Miniature Suite' at the Promenade Concerts, I feel thankful for the desire I always had, and always will have, to express myself through the medium of the orchestra...

...Before the advent of the Society, many of the successful songwriters of that time said to me that they wondered how I could spend so much thought and energy on writing orchestral works with no hope of financial return, when there was so much money to be made out of songs. To tell the truth, although I have been fortunate enough to have composed several songs which have achieved popularity, I have never been able to get up much enthusiasm over this limited form of expression. I have always 'thought' orchestrally and... much as I would have liked to have exchanged banking accounts with any of the composers I have just mentioned, a small voice inside me kept on repeating: "Don't listen to them! The orchestra is your first love! Stick to it!" And so my labour of love continued unabated and unrewarded until that fifty pounds arrived one morning at our flat for 'Three Years' Performing Fees', and from that time onwards finances improved, until some years later I was able to say "Thank you" to the little, insistent voice which had helped me for so long and given me the courage to stick to my guns.<sup>25</sup>

Coates' membership of the PRS brought about two separate crises. The first occurred in the summer of 1914 and was over the production of his second suite, *From the Countryside*. Following on from the success of the *Miniature Suite* he had opted to publish the new Suite with Boosey & Co, which, at this stage, was opposed to the PRS. Whilst the full score was being engraved he was informed that if he remained a member of the Society, Boosey & Co would not publish his Suite, leaving him responsible for the cost of the plates thus far engraved, which were well beyond the pocket of an impecunious orchestral viola player.<sup>26</sup> It was through the *savoir faire* of William Boosey who persuaded Hawkes & Co to segue the production of the Suite from their rivals, Boosey & Co, which

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<sup>24</sup> Coates: 1953, 180.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 180.

they did publishing the Suite in 1915. Ironically, William Boosey did not take on the production of the Suite with his own firm Chappell, despite their having published a corpus of Coates' songs and several of his *morceaux de concert*; it was Coates' only orchestral work to be produced away from the publishing houses of Chappell or Booseys. The second crisis occurred in early 1915 when Coates finally reached a *crise de nerfs* over his membership of the Society. Ever since he joined the Society he remembered '...at the time, what a compensation this sum [his annual royalties] seemed to us when I was receiving almost daily letters from Musical Directors about the country intimating their intentions of cutting my music out of their programmes on account of having associated myself with such an outrageous Trade Union!<sup>27</sup>' The level of umbrage was particularly virulent from military band personnel. Coates wrote to Pierre Sarpy in January 1915, 'I have decided to resign my Performing Rights [*sic.*] Society membership as I find that Artistes will not perform my works if a fee is demanded, therefore it is detrimental to my interests to remain any longer a member.'<sup>28</sup> Sarpy managed to pacify Coates,<sup>29</sup> and by the following month, he had decided to withdraw his resignation as '...the difficulty I was in at that moment has been settled.'<sup>30</sup>

Notwithstanding these crises, he remained loyal to the PRS and in 1917 received his first royalty cheque for £50,<sup>31</sup> a welcome boost to his income from publisher's royalties, teaching and viola playing. From this juncture, his career went from strength to strength, as too did his income from the Society, though it was a number of years before he was amongst the highest earners of the PRS. In 1928, he was sufficiently well-known to be interviewed in the PRS's own magazine *Performing Right Gazette*, telling the magazine

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<sup>27</sup> 03/06/1945 Eric Coates to H.L. Walters. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

<sup>28</sup> 20/01/1915 Eric Coates to Pierre Sarpy. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

<sup>29</sup> 21/01/1915 Pierre Sarpy to Eric Coates. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

<sup>30</sup> 03/02/1915 Eric Coates to PRS. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

<sup>31</sup> 28/06/1945 H.L. Waters to Eric Coates. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1 & Coates: 1953, 181.

of his early involvement and views on the Society.<sup>32</sup> During the 1930s and 1940s, Coates was the Society's highest earner; few composers approached the level of his fees.<sup>33</sup> His membership of the PRS enabled him to earn a living from orchestral composition, unquestionably boosted by the royalties accrued from the BBC's continual broadcasts and the mechanical fees from the sales of gramophone records of his music. With the production of several works for the BBC during the 1930s, he was happy to rely solely on the royalties he would reap from continuous broadcasts rather than receive a one-off commissioning fee from the Corporation.<sup>34</sup> In the case of the *Television March*, he was contemplating not publishing the piece, just reaping the PRS fees accruing from its continual broadcast.<sup>35</sup>

By 1939, Coates was in a sufficiently well-thought-of position to be elected onto the Board of Directors, but he was narrowly outvoted in favour of Haydn Wood.<sup>36</sup> However, in July of the following year he was elected to the Board to replace Noel Gay.<sup>37</sup> Through his position on the Board, a post he held until his death, Coates came into contact with most of the prominent musicians and political figures.<sup>38</sup> Kenneth Wright noted in 1941, 'He is so highly thought of in the profession and on the committees of the P.R.S....<sup>39</sup>' Coates was responsible for the election of Arnold Bax onto the Board in 1945 as the successor to Maurice Besly (Coates had pleaded with and cajoled Bax to stand for election).<sup>40</sup> The PRS Board were torn between Bax and Walton, but felt that as Bax was

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<sup>32</sup> *The Performing Right Gazette* 'Our Interview Gallery, No 21: Mr Eric Coates' 269 & 271.

<sup>33</sup> Ehrlich: 1989, 116-117.

<sup>34</sup> 14/05/1946 Kenneth Wright to Cecil Maddern. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates Archive 4, 1943-1947 & Eric Coates Copyright File, December 1941-1962.

<sup>35</sup> 06/06/1946 *Daily Mail*.

<sup>36</sup> 22/05/1939 Leslie Boosey to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>37</sup> James, Charles. *The Story of the Performing Right Society*. London: Performing Right Society, 1951, 93.

<sup>38</sup> Through the 1943 PRS Lunch he met Sir Thomas Moore, who helped to move Austin Coates up the promotion ladder in the RAF. (7/10/1943 Thomas Moore to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm* Eric Coates Archive, box 186).

<sup>39</sup> 04/12/1941 Kenneth Wright to Arthur Bliss. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates Archive 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>40</sup> 13/04/1945 Secretary of the PRS to Haydn Wood. *GB-Lprs* Haydn Wood file.

Master of the King's Musick it '...would be ungracious not to invite him and might put the Society in an invidious position'.<sup>41</sup>

Coates' roles on the PRS Board and various committees were usually executed with his customary zeal and humour, as he remembered in his obituary for Arnold Bax, '... When bored by the proceedings, he [Bax] would push his writing-pad towards me with the words: "Eric, draw me a ship!" To which I would oblige by sketching a liner at full steam, and he would add some clouds and a few seagulls.<sup>42</sup> On the arrival of the Report of the Copyright Committee in 1952 Coates replied, 'What a ghastly tome to have to digest!<sup>43</sup>

In 1946, 1947 and 1948, the PRS were invited to various International Confederation of Authors and Composers conferences which Leslie Boosey had spent much of his time since the termination of the War organising.<sup>44</sup> These conferences not only enabled Coates to act as a plenipotentiary of the PRS, but also to make numerous friends and contacts abroad. He struck up a friendship with the composer Deems Taylor, President of ASCAP (the American equivalent of the PRS) and a fellow light-music composer, with whom he resided during his trip to the 1946 Conference,<sup>45</sup> and in 1949, Taylor was keen for Coates to return to the USA.<sup>46</sup> As a result of the trips he made on behalf of the PRS, he received several conducting dates. In 1946, he was invited to conduct on the CBS whilst in New York and in 1948 on Radio Privincio in La Plata and Radio del Estado from Buenos Aires engineered by the BBC.<sup>47</sup> On board the ship Highland Brigade (which the Coates' had renamed 'Highland Fling')<sup>48</sup> bound for

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Coates, Eric. 'Arnold Bax: 1883-1953'. In *Music and Letters*, xxxv (1954), 7.

<sup>43</sup> 18/09/1952 Eric Coates to H.L. Walter. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ehrlich: 1989, 108.

<sup>45</sup> Manuscript copy of *Suite in Four Movements*. *GB-Lcm* Eric Coates Archive, box M125.

<sup>46</sup> 25/07/1949 Eric Coates to Deems Taylor. *GB-Lcm* Eric Coates Archive, box 186. Coates refused any trips until 1950 as his lungs had been in poor shape due to combined bronchitis and asthma.

<sup>47</sup> 16/07/1948 C.B. McNair to Head of Latin American Service & 21/07/1948 F.B. Thornton to George Hills (in Buenos Aires) *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>48</sup> 16/09/1948 Eric Coates to C.B. McNair. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

Argentina, he received a telegram: ‘Art willing conduct public concerts your works plus one other British work example Waltons Facade fee three thousand Argentine Pesos Secondly canst write a short piece dedicated to Argentina...’<sup>49</sup> The Argentineans subsequently invited Coates to return the following year for a three-month tour, which he dismissed as, ‘I think it looks rather like too much hard work!’<sup>50</sup> He seemed to enjoy the tour: ‘They seem to know my music very well out in South America and things like “Knightsbridge” and “Sleepy Lagoon” were a kind of “Open Sesame” wherever I went.’<sup>51</sup> The after-effects of the journey took a toll on his health and he was forbidden to take on engagements as he enlightened the *Nottingham Guardian* the following year: ‘I was affected by the crossing, the ozone upsetting my bronchial trouble. There has been some improvement of late, but it has meant a postponement of my intended visit to New York until October, until May.’<sup>52</sup>

The most important aspect of any composer’s relationship with the PRS was the yearly fees paid on the collection of performances of their music. The early figures, from 1914 until 1923, show that, whilst Coates was among the higher earners of the Society, other light music composers such as Haydn Wood (who between 1919 and 1921 was the highest earner, probably due to the success of ‘Roses of Picardy’) were more successful as they secured a greater number of performances of their music. It was not until the mid-1920s, with the inclusion of the dance band idiom in *The Selfish Giant*, and more importantly with *The Three Bears*, that Coates’ music rose in popularity, a rise which was mirrored by his PRS income.<sup>53</sup> Table 9.1 shows Coates’ early income compared with

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<sup>49</sup> 1/10/1948 Cable to Eric Coates. *GB-STHprivate* Coates Scrapbook 3. Grammar and spelling have been left unaltered.

<sup>50</sup> 28/11/1948 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 4, 1943-1948.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Eric Coates quoted in 26/09/1949 *Nottingham Guardian*. ‘Eric Coates in Hucknall.’ Coates’ planned tour to New York never materialised.

<sup>53</sup> The usual distribution of Coates’ royalties was, as agreed in his numerous surviving contracts, 8/12 went to Coates and 4/12 to Chappell, with Coates receiving 50% of the mechanical royalties. In addition, depending on the size of the works he received 3d or 4d per copy sold and 1d on all arrangements of his

other significant composers of light music, Haydn Wood and Ketèlbey and a general comparison with the other highest earners of the Society.

**Table 9.1. Comparison of the PRS Incomes of Eric Coates, Haydn Wood and Albert Ketèlbey, 1914-1923.**<sup>54</sup>

Year	Coates' Total Royalties	Coates' Foreign Royalties	Haydn Wood's Royalties	Albert Ketèlbey's Royalties	Highest Earners
1914-1917	£50	£0	£75	n/a	Lionel Monckton (£150)
1917-1918	£35	£0	£150	n/a	n/a
1918-1919	£42-10-0	£0	£157-10-4	n/a	Nat D. Ayers (£285-7-7) H. Fraser Simpson (£127-10-0) James W. Tate (£277-6-2)
1919-1920	£75-7-2	£0-7-2	£242-13-6	£50	Hermann Löhr (£224-11-8) H. Fraser Simpson (£220-3-9) Haydn Wood (£242-13-6)
1920-1921	£95-1-4	£0-1-4	£256-8-8	£95-2-10	Mrs. Coleridge Taylor (£250-9-5) Hermann Löhr (£255-4-6) Haydn Wood (£256-8-8)
1921-1922	£130-2-7	£0-2-7	£201-14-10	£131-8-11	Mrs Coleridge Taylor (£260-8-11) Edward German (£257-5-6) Hermann Löhr (£259-4-6)
1922-1923	£140-15-5	£0-2-3	£227-8-4	£151-15-1	Mrs Coleridge Taylor (£276-10-2) Edward German (£272-0-9) Hermann Löhr (£274-11-11)

With the popularity awarded to him with the advent of 'In Town Tonight' and his gradual attainment of celebrity status, his royalties soon rose, as Table 9.2 shows.

By the 1950s, Coates' royalties had risen regularly to the region of £12,000-£13,000, as Table 9.3 shows.

In comparison with other composers of the period, this was a significant income considering his other incomes from publishing royalties, mechanical rights, conducting engagements and other sundry activities. Coates' 1938 Royalty Statement stated that he was paid a retaining fee of £300 (for the past year and a half), and his

songs. (Various contracts, *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186 & 28/04/1937 Chappell Contract. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.)

<sup>54</sup> Assembled from 1914-1923 Statement of Apportionments held at *GB-Lprs*. Ketèlbey did not join the Society until 1918.

**Table 9.2 Eric Coates' 1942 and 1943 Royalties.**<sup>55</sup>

Distribution Number	Date Paid	Amount
48	10/04/1942	£ 1220-9-2
49	18/06/1942	£ 1575-18-4
50	19/10/1942	£ 1412-6-8
51	18/12/1942	£ 863-3-8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1942</b>	<b>£ 5071-17-10</b>
52	n/a	£ 1460-1-8
53	n/a	£ 1330-16-5
54	n/a	£ 1237-2-8
55	n/a	£ 1103-8-7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1943</b>	<b>£ 5131-15-0</b>

**Table 9.3 Eric Coates' Total Royalties, 1953-1957.**<sup>56</sup>

Year	Total Royalties
1953	£10,482-19-5
1954	£12,923-09-3
1955	£12,894-14-6
1956	£13,813-14-6
1957	£12,568-09-2

compositions published since 1 January 1937 alone had produced £372 in copies sold, £12.1.7 in mechanical royalties and £147.5.7 in performing fees.<sup>57</sup> Billy Mayerl only earned £183.84 in PRS fees for the whole of 1938.<sup>58</sup> Despite the scale of his income, Coates remained bitter that he did not gain as much income from *The Dam Busters* March as he felt he ought. He informed the *Evening Standard*: 'It would have made me a near

<sup>55</sup> Data assembled from 05/04/1943 Statement of Fees Paid & 16/10/1944 Statement of Fees Paid. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates, file 1.

<sup>56</sup> *GB-Lprs*. There are two different sets of figures for this period, but those quoted were sent to Phyl after Eric's death and are probably more accurate.

<sup>57</sup> 12/10/1938 Chappell Royalty Statement. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>58</sup> Dickinson, Peter. *Marigold: The Music of Billy Mayerl*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 231. The values given are in post-1971 pounds and pence (though at their original values).

fortune... if I had been able to keep the money. But I hardly made a thing.<sup>59</sup> His income tax from this period also remained a sensitive issue, as Austin Coates remembered:

On one occasion I came back from Hongkong [*sic.*] and found him turning out electric lights all over the place. I asked him why on earth he was doing so. He said, 'It's this terrible income tax. If I write another *Sleepy Lagoon* I shall be ruined.' I thought of this when he wrote *The Dambusters* [*sic.*].<sup>60</sup>

In the early years of the PRS, Coates and Ketèlbey had largely earned similar amounts; by the 1920s Ketèlbey was earning more through the PRS, due to the popularity of his music in the cinema, but by the 1950s, Coates' royalties were nearly four times greater than Ketèlbey's, showing how much the latter's music had fallen out of favour, Table 9.4.

**Table 9.4 Comparison of Royalties between Bridge, Coates, Ewing, Holst and Ketèlbey from 1955.**<sup>61</sup>

Composer	Total Royalties
Bridge, Frank	£781
Coates, Eric	£12,895
Ewing, Montague	£2,185
Holst, Gustav	£6,546
Ketèlbey, Albert	£3,641

Whilst the 1950s were understandably the apex of Coates' earnings from the PRS, due to the size of his catalogue and number of performances, there was a decrease in the income generated from his home fees, but this was adequately compensated by a marked increase in his overseas royalties.

It is tempting to dismiss light music as a British peculiarity, as there have been many British composers of light music and a veritable 'school' of light composition has

<sup>59</sup> 21/12/1957 *Evening Standard*.

<sup>60</sup> Austin Coates quoted in Lacey, Ian. 'Foreword' In *Suite in Four Movements* Eric Coates. London: Thames, 1986, vi.

<sup>61</sup> Assembled from data from Ehrlich: 1989, 164 and *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 2. Ehrlich gives an incorrect Christian name of Arnold to Ketèlbey.

grown up in England; Europe does not have a similar legacy. Despite this, Coates' music was popular in Europe. During the period of 1936-1938 his foreign royalties equated to almost half of his total home royalties. Whilst not immensely popular in Europe, his music attracted a healthy number of performances. Nevertheless, the export value of his music was not just significant in the number of performances it attracted, but in the prestige it attracted for Britain, as Kenneth Wright remarked,

...My work [through the BBC] in the last war revealed to me, as probably no other post could have done, the immense amount of goodwill Eric's music brought to this country. I had of course discovered this long before – hence my invitation to him to accompany me to Stockholm in 1936, which started him off on a long series of foreign engagements crowned eventually by your PRS trips to international congresses. But there was more to it than that: I suspected that the spread of his music across the world must bring Britain very considerable and welcome foreign currency at a time when we sorely need it.<sup>62</sup>

Coates' music was highly valued abroad. The PRS archives hold numerous breakdowns of the royalties paid on foreign performances. Table 9.5 shows a breakdown of his 1936-1938 foreign royalties, though the 1938 figures are incomplete and do not include his American royalties, which were not known at the time of the analysis.<sup>63</sup>

These figures clearly show that Coates' music was most popular with home and American audiences. In Europe, his music was popular in France, Austria and Sweden. Whilst these figures give a good general indication of where his music was performed, they are not exact as many performances probably happened without royalties being paid. In a press release after his 1938 European tour several Dutch and Danish and Swedish newspapers were quoted. The *Stockholm Tidningen* stated:

Later in the evening the English composer, Eric Coates, who has become exceedingly popular here, personally conducted a programme of his own works. He has a fresh go-ahead humour in his compositions and also conducts with snap and spirit and with a marked sense of the orchestral effects of which he takes delight in making use in his

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<sup>62</sup> 17/05/1964 Kenneth Wright to PRS. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 2.

<sup>63</sup> 09/12/1939 Analysis of December 1938 Distribution.

**Table 9.5 Breakdowns of Eric Coates' PRS Royalties, 1936-1938.**<sup>64</sup>

Country/ Distribution	1936	1937	1938
<b>British:</b>			
Cinema	£ 244-15-11	£ 275-4-0	
General I	£ 218-8-7	£ 169-0-5	
General II	£ 475-15-9	£ 457-1-3	
Dance Halls	£ 1-9-10	£ 0-19-8	
Individual Works	£ 0-0-2	£ 1-3-1	
<b>Total (British)</b>	<b>£ 940-10-3</b>	<b>£ 903-8-5</b>	<b>£320-19-6</b>
<b>Overseas:</b>			
Australian	£ 82-9-4	£ 3-13-2 £ 72-2-1	£ 2-4-1 (Sound Films)
African	£ 54-6-4	£ 29-2-1	£ 64-14-9
Canadian	£ 7-14-2	£ 12-14-5	£ 36-18-9
Mediterranean	£ 1-3-3	£ 0-0-9	£ 0-17-11
Far Eastern	£ 17-15-5	£ 7-6-1	£ 26-5-10
British West Indies	£ 1-4-8		£ 0-13-5
Miscellaneous Sound Films	£ 3-17-1	£ 0-8-1	£ 0-0-3
<b>Total (Overseas)</b>	<b>£ 168-13-3</b>	<b>£ 125-6-10</b>	<b>£ 131-15-0</b>
<b>Foreign:</b>			
American	£ 406-3-5	£ 156-0-5 £ 75-3-5	Not available
Argentine	£ 0-10-0	£ 0-19-2	
Austrian	£ 19-2-4	£ 1-7-5	£ 19-14-7
Brazilian	£ 0-0-3		
Czecho-Slovak	£ 0-5-10		
Danish	£ 2-19-5	£ 23-19-7	
Dutch	£ 4-17-5	£ 16-14-9	
Finnish	£ 0-14-1	£ 1-6-3	
French	£ 67-18-0	£ 56-1-0	£ 34-3-3
German	£ 19-19-1	£ 2-10-6	£ 10-9-3
Hungarian	£ 1-1-8	£ 2-17-8	
Italian	£ 5-4-8	£ 1-7-9	£ 1-2-2
Norwegian	£ 7-12-2	£ 12-3-3	
Polish	£ 2-17-2		
Portuguese		£ 0-0-4	
Rumanian	£ 0-0-1	£ 0-0-10	
Spanish			
Swedish	£ 8-9-4	£ 58-15-2	
<b>Total (Foreign)</b>	<b>£ 547-1</b>	<b>£ 409-17-5</b>	<b>£ 65-9-5</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£ 1,716-9-3</b>	<b>£ 1,498-8-5</b>	<b>£ 518-3-9</b>
Balance paid at Distributions	£ 758-19-4	£ 911-4-7	

<sup>64</sup> Assembled from 16/06/1938 Copyright Statement & 09/12/1939 Analysis of December 1938 Distribution & 09/01/1939 Comparative Statement of General Fees. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates, file 1.

pieces... Eric Coates's lively mood makes his works a welcome feature in our broadcasting programme.<sup>65</sup>

Whilst the Amsterdam *Telegraaf* stated:

There are very few English composers whose works are performed as often as those by Eric Coates. He writes music which is always typically English and excels by its colour, rhythm and above all by its carefully finished form... he speaks his own language without yielding to the influence of currents and tendencies not in accord with his conception. The Knightsbridge March... No better ending could have been selected as Eric Coates's name will always be linked with this piece as a composer who put the life of his own country into music.<sup>66</sup>

Coates seemed to value his foreign performances and frequently related to the Press that during the War his music was used by the Germans to simulate a British broadcast.<sup>67</sup> The *American Record Guide*, stated, '...[Knightsbridge] March] was the liberation march and official signal music for the Danish underground during the war.'<sup>68</sup> Every evening during the Nazi occupation, this march was played in the clock tower of Copenhagen.<sup>69</sup> One newspaper reported that he was '...the proud possessor of a letter from an allied serviceman who informed him that the Allies were going to march into Berlin to the tune of 'Knightsbridge'.<sup>70</sup> In a programme note to the *London Suite* Coates also professed, 'the British Press gave out that it was blared-out by loud-speakers in the Square in Copenhagen during the German occupation as a sign of the Danes' sympathy with London and that it took a Nazi machine-gun crew to silence it.'<sup>71</sup>

As Table 9.5 shows, America was one of the major foreign outlets for his music. From 1938, his music steadily grew in popularity in America spurred on by the great success of the song hit 'Sleepy Lagoon' from 1942 onwards. With this 'hit' (though his

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<sup>65</sup> Stockholm Tidningen quoted in 17/12/1938 *Daily Telegraph*. 'The Enchanted Garden'.

<sup>66</sup> De Telegraaf Amsterdam quoted in 17/12/1938 *Daily Telegraph*. 'The Enchanted Garden'.

<sup>67</sup> 26/08/1948 *Around and About*. BBC Midland Home Service. GB-Lbl/National Sound Archive, MT12048.

<sup>68</sup> October 1948 *American Record Review*, 43-44.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> November 1946 *Radio Camera*. 'Calling All Workers'

<sup>71</sup> Undated programme note, 'Eric Coates' Favourite Piece of His Own Music'. GB-Lcm Coates Archive, box 186.

name was often not associated with the piece), similar to the success of 'Knightsbridge' March in England, his music began to grow and gradually provide a healthy supplement to his home royalties. Post-war, he was besieged to write a musical for the American 'market'. Paul Whiteman (of the American Broadcasting Company) wrote to him asking to use some of Coates' music for a joint Broadway and London Musical, though Coates withheld his consent.<sup>72</sup> The Press had speculated that he turned down a lucrative five-figure contract to write film music in Hollywood.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, his own gramophone recordings were available and were attracting fair reviews in the *American Record Guide*, while his 1948 recordings for Decca of the *London* and *London Again* Suites gained reviews in the *New York Sun*<sup>74</sup> and *New York Telegram*.<sup>75</sup> Table 9.6 shows a gradual acceleration in the popularity and size of his royalties after the advent of 'Sleepy Lagoon' and a comparison with the income he received from all other foreign countries; the American fees occasionally equalled the remainder of his overseas royalties. The figures also show dramatic fluctuations in size, which probably reflect the system by which ASCAP collected royalties.

The success of Coates' music in America was undoubtedly due to its recurrent broadcasting by the numerous television and radio stations, assisted greatly by the plethora of recordings of his music available. Table 9.7 shows the dominance of radio and television in his American PRS earnings and how few live performances there were by comparison. After his death, Phyl felt duty-bound to complain about the size of his American royalties.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> 04/04/1950 Paul Whiteman to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186. Coates was involved in negotiations for several years before he managed to extricate himself.

<sup>73</sup> 24/12/1947 *Sketch* & 26/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. *GB-Lbl* Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA0399.

<sup>74</sup> 03/02/1949 *New York Sun* 'New Records'.

<sup>75</sup> 01/02/1949 *New York World Telegram* 'Records'.

<sup>76</sup> 03/06/1962 Phyllis Coates to PRS. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 2. Phyl had heard that Eric's music was frequently broadcast by FM stations and should be worth a sizable income. The PRS attributed this to the 'selective system' used by ASCAP for collecting royalties (06/06/1962 PRS to Phyllis Coates)

**Table 9.6 Eric Coates' American and Foreign Royalties, 1938-1963.<sup>77</sup>**

Year	Fees from ASCAP etc (USA)	Fees from Other Affiliated Societies	Total
1938	£478-1-10	£333-8-2	£811-10-0
1939	£541-9-1	£446-17-11	£988-7-0
1940	£626-6-4	£901-5-1	£1,527-11-5
1941	£293-6-11	£651-19-5	£945-6-4
1942	£248-18-5	£514-12-6	£763-10-11
1943	£613-8-11	£562-19-10	£1,176-8-9
1944	£284-18-3	£654-8-3	£939-6-6
1945	£238-8-9	£540-11-7	£779-0-4
1946	£1067-3-7	£1,091-15-6	£2,158-18-1
1947	£390-2-3	£1,629-19-1	£2,020-1-4
1948	£333-8-6	£1,350-7-9	£1,683-16-3
1949	£469-14-1	£1,616-14-3	£2,086-8-4
1950	£768-7-9	£2,432-5-0	£3,200-12-9
1951	£1,571-13-2	£3,466-12-4	£5,038-5-6
1952	£1,710-14-4	£2,506-15-3	£4,217-9-2
1953	£2,155-6-8	£2,959-19-6	£6,505-7-7
1954	£3,372-14-3	£3,132-13-4	£6,505-7-7
1955	£3,391-13-4	£3,567-9-11	£6,959-3-4
1956	£2,828-5-0	£3,302-18-10	£6,131-3-10
1957	£2,297-4-2	£2,918-5-4	£5,215-9-6
1958	£1,269-17-8	£2,717-11-10	£3,987-9-6
1959	£1,000-0-6	£2,922-1-4	£3,922-1-10
1960	£948-11-0	£3,048-8-5	£3,996-19-5
1961	£2,131-5-6	£2,890-19-6	£5,022-5-0
1962	£1,585-16-1	£3,085-15-4	£4,671-11-5
1963 (part)	£1,557-16-4	£1,691-3-5	£3,248-19-9

**Table 9.7 Breakdown of Coates' 1952-1956 American Royalties.<sup>78</sup>**

Dist.	Date	Radio	Television	Serious Music	Total	Less Benevolent Fund	Net Total
95	1952	£810-15-4	£1,295-6-5	£49-4-11	£2,155-6-8	£43-2-1	£2,112-4-7
99	1953	£1,817-5-8	£1,508-2-6	£147-6-1	£3,372-14-3	£67-9-1	£3,305-5-2
103	1954	£1,479-19-3	£1,874-16-8	£36-17-6	£3,391-13-5	£67-16-8	£3,323-16-9
107	1955	£1,413-11-1	£1,323-19-4	£90-14-7	£2,828-5-0	£56-11-3	£2,771-13-9
111	1956	£1,055-1-3	£1,207-12-0	£34-10-11	£2,297-4-2	£45-18-11	£2,251-5-3
Total		£6,576-12-7	£7,209-16-11	£258-14-0	£14,045-3-6	£280-18-0	£13,764-5-6

Whilst Tables 9.6 and 9.7 are documentary proof of the popularity of Coates' music in America, the topic of American royalties always remained a sensitive issue for

<sup>77</sup> Undated. Schedule of Fees Form PRS Affiliated Societies Abroad of the Late Eric Coates. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 2. These breakdowns were prepared for Kenneth Wright's *Dictionary of National Biography* article on Coates for the 1971 edition. However, Phyl did not think that Wright should be privy to the figures.

<sup>78</sup> Undated Memo: USA fees 5 years. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates, file 2.

him; he never felt he received the income he warranted from the USA. The first instance of his umbrage was in 1931,<sup>79</sup> and he was disgruntled enough in 1937 to write to the PRS to complain that his royalties in general had decreased, but the number of the overall total of his performances had not.<sup>80</sup> The PRS replied informing him that his American royalties had dropped by ten per cent and also that American cash values had decreased.<sup>81</sup> Despite this explanation, the issue remained a recurrent bugbear for him. One newspaper proclaimed in 1945: ‘America is his biggest overseas market, though he will tell you ruefully that for every £1,000 earned there, considerably less than £100 finds its way into his own exchequer, owing to the exactions of the income tax authorities on both sides of the Atlantic.’<sup>82</sup>

In 1940, Coates was invited to give his consent for words to be added to his valse serenade *By the Sleepy Lagoon*. Jack Lawrence obliged, and Coates felt duty-bound to write to him:

I have just received a copy of my Serenade “By the Sleepy Lagoon”, to which you have written words, and I am writing to tell you how delighted I am with your poem. You have set the words to my music so cleverly and one would never suspect that the music had been written first. Up to now I always thought it practically impossible to do a really good work in this way, but after having seen what you have done with my melody, I am beginning to think that “all things are possible”...<sup>83</sup>

P.S I am wondering whether you have any lyrics by you that you would care to send me with an object of setting to music?

With this letter, Coates forgot about the song arrangement until 1942 when he unexpectedly received a telegram from Max Dreyfus at Chappell in New York, ‘Greetings and felicitations to the composer of America’s number one song, Sleepy

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<sup>79</sup> 21/04/1931 PRS Internal Memorandum. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates, file 1.

<sup>80</sup> 22/12/1936 Eric Coates to G.H. Hatchman. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates, file 1.

<sup>81</sup> 24/12/1936 G.H. Hatchman to Eric Coates. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates, file 1.

<sup>82</sup> May 1945 *Everybody’s*. ‘A People’s Composer.’

<sup>83</sup> 24/06/1940 Eric Coates to Jack Lawrence. *GB-STHprivate*.

Lagoon...<sup>84</sup> Without knowing it, Coates had gained a huge popular success in America without doing anything; the song was providing good business for the American branch of Chappell. He felt, however, that because of the frequent broadcasting of the piece, he should gain more royalties from it and blamed the income tax demands from both the British and American governments. The song (and performances of the orchestral Valse Serenade) soon escalated, as Table 9.8 shows.

**Table 9.8 American Fees accrued for *By the Sleepy Lagoon* and ‘Sleepy Lagoon’.**<sup>85</sup>

Year	<i>By the Sleepy Lagoon</i> Valse Serenade	‘Sleepy Lagoon’ (Popular Song)
1942	£ 10-11-4	£ 171-19-2
1943	£ 19-5-6	£ 95-15-6
1944	£ 7-18-11	£ 82-13-8
1945	£ 14-17-10	£ 107-2-10
1946	£ 11-5-6	£ 115-16-10
1947	£ 0-19-11	£ 113-19-8
1948		£ 222-1-7
1949		£ 149-13-0
1950		£ 151-13-7
1951		£ 204-9-5
1952		£ 201-19-3

In 1948, one newspaper estimated that *By the Sleepy Lagoon* was played on average four times a day on varying radio stations across America;<sup>86</sup> the piece became popular in an arrangement by the trumpeter, Harry James;<sup>87</sup> even Mantovani (with Sidney Torch on the organ) recorded a version of the piece.<sup>88</sup> Coates was also informed that in 1955 *By the Sleepy Lagoon* (in all probability the ‘hit song’ not the Valse Serenade) was one of the first musical requests that President Eisenhower made when he became President.<sup>89</sup> There

<sup>84</sup> 14/06/1942 Max Dreyfus to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm* Eric Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>85</sup> Data assembled from 14/11/1954 PRS Secretary to Eric Coates & Undated Comparison of *By the Sleepy Lagoon* and ‘Sleepy Lagoon’. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates, file 1. The figures for 1948-1952 are ambiguous as the letter only refers to *By the Sleepy Lagoon* and the figures are too high to refer solely to the valse serenade so either refers to the song ‘Sleepy Lagoon’ or to the combined totals.

<sup>86</sup> 08/05/1948 *Everybody’s*. ‘A People’s Composer.’

<sup>87</sup> *By the Sleepy Lagoon*. Harry James and his Orchestra. Parlophone, R2859.

<sup>88</sup> *By the Sleepy Lagoon*. Mantovani (violin), Sidney Torch (organ). Decca, F2343.

<sup>89</sup> 30/09/1955 Albert Sirmay (Chappell, New York) to Eric Coates. *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 186.

was little that the PRS could do about the loss of Coates' income due to taxation on both sides of the Atlantic.

Towards the close of 1954 Coates was still unhappy with the American figures of 'Sleepy Lagoon', writing to the PRS he was most indignant:

Taking into consideration the phenomenal success of "SLEEPY LAGOON" it seems extraordinary that my fees from the USA, when its performances were at their peak, did not show any appreciable increase. This piece must have been broadcast and played hundreds of thousands of times during the first two years of its success – even in 1950 I was told it was being broadcast in New York alone about seven to eight times daily.

I would not have brought this matter up if I have not read in Mr Walter's recent communication about the gratifying increase of one of our member's fees from £50 odd (?) to £7000 (?) – I have not the actual figures in front of me. This was certainly not my experience.

Now that the fees from the USA are becoming organised I feel I ought to see a substantial rise in my returns from that country as I understand, from letters I receive from all parts of the USA, that my catalogue is becoming increasingly popular. I was very pleased to hear that, on my birthday, programmes of my music were broadcast throughout the day on all the principal networks.<sup>90</sup>

Coates was pacified by the reply he received from the PRS,

I have your letter of the 14th of this month regarding ASCAP fees. The reason why very large sums did not accrue in the early 40's in respect of your great success "SLEEPY LAGOON" is that our ASCAP fees at that time were a mere fraction of what they are now. For that year 1942 we received from ASCAP a little over £25,000 that is about 1/12th of what has accrued to us in respect of 1953. The ASCAP fees for 1943 were 1/9th, for 1944 1/7th, and for 1945 1/6th of what they are now.

There is, moreover another factor which cannot be disregarded, and that is the point award system which, under pressure from PRS, ASCAP has now adopted and which is very much more favourable to the PRS repertoire than was the system in force some ten or twelve years ago.

I should mention that your ASCAP fees have, in fact been increasing in the last few years, as shown by the figures for the most recent distributions...<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> 14/11/1954 Eric Coates to R.H. Whale. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

<sup>91</sup> 15/11/1954 R.H. Whale to Eric Coates. *GB-Lprs* Eric Coates file 1.

Coates no doubt felt bitter at his lack of success in the issue. Not only was 'Sleepy Lagoon' popular in the USA but achieved success worldwide; it was also rearranged into a foxtrot version (the original 3/4 metre was retained in the published song edition).<sup>92</sup>

The BBC was undoubtedly one of the main reasons for Coates' success as a composer and, as such, paid large sums via the PRS to him, for the use of his music. In 1947, one newspaper estimated that the BBC played Coates' music, on average, fifty times a week, in various guises.<sup>93</sup> Since its publication, the march *Calling All Workers* remained one of his most popular pieces, predominately through its repeated use as the signature tune to 'Music While You Work'. In May 1954, the PRS received a letter from Alan Herbert claiming half of the total royalties of *Calling All Workers*.<sup>94</sup> Herbert alleged that he had authored words which were put to the trio melody before the first performance of the March and as joint author he was entitled to half the PRS fees.<sup>95</sup> Why Herbert waited to 1954, fourteen years after the composition and publication of the March is unclear, though he may have been impecunious at the time of the claim. Herbert appears not to have discussed the matter with Coates, whom he must have known, as Coates appears to have had no knowledge of Herbert's claims until the PRS forwarded a copy of Herbert's letter. This claim from Herbert must have shaken Coates, since, as Table 9.9 shows, the royalties earned from BBC broadcasts alone were substantial. Nevertheless, he was able to prove that the march was first published on 17 August 1940 and that vocal form which Herbert authored was from a Cochran Revue broadcast in late September and the beginning of October 1940.

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<sup>92</sup> Austin Coates has expounded a good deal of false information about the song: 26/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. *GB-Lb/National Sound Archive*, PLN 622/86 ZA0399.

<sup>93</sup> 14/06/1947 *John Bull* 'Private Views of Eric Coates'.

<sup>94</sup> 04/05/1954 Alan Herbert to PRS. Copy of letter in *GB-Lcm Eric Coates Archive*, box 186.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

**Table 9.9 Fees accrued by *Calling All Workers* from BBC 1951-1953.<sup>96</sup>**

PRS Distribution Number	Amount
86	£ 556-16-8
88	£ 500-18-9
90	£ 565-15-2
92	£ 541-3-4
94	£ 540-3-7
94a	£146-10-4
96	£ 697-19-2
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 3549-19-2</b>

However, Coates and the PRS were keen to point out to Herbert that he could take the matter to a PRS Committee if he still felt that he had a legitimate case, but stressed that the PRS felt this course of action was unwise.<sup>97</sup> Coates was certainly traumatized by the whole affair and wrote to H.L. Walter, ‘I am indeed glad to know that the “Calling All Workers” contretemps is at an end. I shall certainly think very hard if any author in the future suggests setting words to any of my music!’<sup>98</sup>

The revolution caused by the formation of the PRS in 1914 for Coates was nothing short of a miracle. He could earn his living through the composition of orchestral works rather than having to compose the more prosperous ballads. Through the fees collected by the PRS, and the records kept, it is possible to analyse the worldwide success and profitability of his music. Because of the popularity of *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, ‘Knightsbridge’ and *Calling All Workers* he was able to live in affluence. Nevertheless, it was not all pure success as Coates was often bitter about the lack of income from the American royalties from his music. Despite his personal gripe on this issue, the PRS along with the BBC and the numerous light orchestras was a significant weapon in his armoury enabling his triumph as a composer.

<sup>96</sup> 05/05/1954 Broadcasting Department Fees for *Calling All Workers*. GB-Lprs Eric Coates, file 1.

<sup>97</sup> 13/05/1953 PRS to Alan Herbert. Copy of letter in GB-Lcm Eric Coates Archive, box 186.

<sup>98</sup> 19/05/1954 Eric Coates to H.L. Walter. GB-Lprs Eric Coates, file 1.

## Chapter 10 Music Festivals and Light Orchestras

... [I] had the good fortune for many years to have my works included in representative concerts of British music, where I found myself appearing on the same platform as Edward Elgar, Granville Bantock, Hamilton Harty, Gustav Holst and Edward German. In those days those in authority were only too *pleased* to include lighter British works in their programmes, providing that they were written by composers who understand the medium of the orchestra...<sup>1</sup>

**D**uring the first forty years of the twentieth century many English coastal and spa towns employed an orchestra to entertain holidaymakers. These orchestras were often ‘double-handed’ forming a military band during the day and an orchestra in the evening or separating into two different ensembles during the day to play in separated locations. At the *fin de siècle* many coastal towns employed a military band; in 1910 at Scarborough there was a public outcry at Alick Maclean’s decision to turn their band into an orchestra and the move was not welcomed by the town council.<sup>2</sup> The routine of an average seaside and spa orchestra during the season was often an exhaustive and strenuous affair, performing at least twice a day for the majority of the week with occasional evening concerts. These orchestras were often small but performed a large proportion of both the serious and light repertoire, albeit adjusted for the available forces. They did not scorn light music, and in many respects it formed the staple of their musical diet, as can be seen from the amount of Coates’ music performed by the Harrogate Municipal Orchestra in 1927, Table 10.5. The programmes of these concerts usually took the form of an overture, march, waltz, a solo feature (the xylophone was a popular instrument, with a wide range of novelty items composed for it) – a concerto would be far too lofty title, selection from a musical comedy or even from ballets or operas and several short entr’actes slotted in ‘as and when.’

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<sup>1</sup> 08/09/1940 Eric Coates to Kenneth Wright. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates file 3, 1940-1942.

<sup>2</sup> 16/12/2005 *Brian Kay’s Light Programme*. ‘Scarborough Spa Orchestra’, BBC Radio 3.

Once a year the more prestigious spa and seaside orchestras arranged a music festival and invited several well-known conductors and soloists. While, these festivals were not on the same scale as those of Leeds, Birmingham or the Three Choirs, and perhaps not so aesthetically or intellectually satisfying, they went a long way towards bringing music to the ordinary person. Nevertheless, several of these resorts attracted significant names, such as at Bournemouth where Sibelius conducted the Orchestra on his fifth and final visit to England in 1921, Bartók appeared as a soloist in 1923, and Stravinsky conducted there in 1936.<sup>3</sup> Several music festivals featured a high light music contingent, as in the 1928 Bournemouth Festival which numbered Coates, Ansell and Haydn Wood amongst the usual distinguished visitors; the 1938 Bath Music Festival also hosted a Light Music Concert, featuring Montague Phillips, Haydn Wood and Eric Coates, which was broadcast by the BBC from the Pavilion, Bath.<sup>4</sup> These Festivals also invited new works, commissioned and premiered many works as well as giving performances of new and neglected British work (cf. Bournemouth). William Walton commented that in the 1920s and 1930s there were very few commissions for composers, works were usually invited or it was suggested that a composer wrote a work for a certain performer; Walton wrote his Viola Concerto for Tertis (who refused to premiere the work) on the advice of Beecham.<sup>5</sup>

On the South Coast there were many orchestras of which Bournemouth was the most prominent, prestigious and successful, commencing symphony concerts from 1895.<sup>6</sup> Bournemouth with its orchestra, variety and symphony concerts was the example which many towns adopted: the Eastbourne Orchestra dated back to 1874, but in 1922 became a 'double-handed' orchestra and military band subsidised by the Council, playing

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<sup>3</sup> Lloyd, Stephen. *Sir Dan Godfrey*. London: Thames, 1995, 137, 159 & 160.

<sup>4</sup> Wood conducted *Apollo Overture* and *Cities of Romance Suite*, Phillips, *Moorland Idyll* and *Charles II Overture*, Coates, *Saxo-Rhapsody* (Deryk Fawcett, saxophone) and *The Three Bears*. See Appendix 1 for further details.

<sup>5</sup> Walton, Susana. *William Walton*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd: 1995, 31.

five weekly concerts in Devonshire Park and one Thursday evening concert on St. Leonard's Pier; the Hastings Orchestra, created in 1919 (initially of eighteen players but soon raised to thirty-one); Folkestone formed in 1927 with twenty-five players; and Weymouth whose thirty-piece orchestra was reduced to an octet in 1927.<sup>7</sup> Following Bournemouth's example, several South Coast orchestras staged their own festivals: Eastbourne began theirs in 1923 and Hastings held a Festival of British Music under Julian Clifford in 1921.<sup>8</sup> However, with the onset of the Second World War, many of these ensembles fell into terminal decline and few made it through the War; Bournemouth was one of the few to do so, but due to lack of subsidy on the part of the council, the Orchestra went through several guises, eventually becoming the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (run by the Western Orchestra Ltd, of whose Board of Management Coates was a member). The Eastbourne Orchestra fared less well and merged in 1941 with the almost defunct Hastings Orchestra to form the short-lived South Coast Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>9</sup> The Scarborough Spa Orchestra is still run today on traditional 'light orchestral lines' and billed as 'the only remaining full-time summer season seaside orchestra in the country', performing ten concerts a week 'in season'.<sup>10</sup> The orchestra of ten-players (several being 'double-handed'), relies heavily on the cues in their parts as well as specialised editions of pieces and a conductor who directs from the piano.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst many of the spa and coastal orchestras must have provided much music for the holidaymakers, there is little documentation (apart from Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra) of how they actually sounded. Hastings Municipal Orchestra recorded a first-

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 165-166.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 165-166.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>10</sup> 16/12/2004 *Brian Kay's Light Programme: The Scarborough Spa Orchestra*. BBC Radio 3. The orchestra has built on the legacy left by Max Jaffa.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Today the orchestra is smaller than in the past, but regards itself as more versatile playing music from the classics to British dance band classics. The Orchestra still performs many of the arrangements made for it in the 1920s and 1930s.

rate performance of *The Three Bears* under Basil Cameron in 1930 at White Rock Pavilion, Hastings.<sup>12</sup> *The Gramophone* lauded the performance,

This orchestra is one of the best small bodies we have... Coates's fantasy is good fun. I suppose its programme is well enough known, so I do not need to repeat it. The recording is fiery – too fiery for my liking, and, I feel a little too much so for this small orchestra. The more fire, the thinner the effect, sometimes. The band is so good that I want to hear it even better.<sup>13</sup>

Coates fitted into the world of these orchestras and their festivals as he was prepared to write and conduct performances of his works for the orchestras at Bath, Blackpool, Bournemouth, Brighton, Eastbourne, Folkestone, Scarborough, Harrogate and Torquay. He often held these Festivals in high esteem, and adapted their musical values into his artistic credo. Reminiscing in 1952, he recalled:

... the English Musical Festivals that were so popular about this time. Those were the days when music was not put into categories as it is to-day, or laid out on the operating table for dissection, but looked upon simply as music to delight and elevate. They were interesting occasions both musically and socially, for people flocked from far and wide to hear and see the famous composers and executants who had been engaged to appear.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, this viewpoint was to form the salient argument of his vehement attacks against the snobbery surrounding light music which pervaded the British music scene for a number of years – light music had often appeared in the coastal and spa orchestras' programmes, both in their regular concerts and annual festivals, and it should continue to do so.

At times, Coates was inclined to hold a romanticised notion of the Festivals, and after their termination (due to the onset of the War), he never readjusted to the post-war opportunities available to light music. For him, these regional festivals were the apogee of the widespread adoption and acceptance of light music. The seaside and spa

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<sup>12</sup> 11-12/04/1930 *Three Bears* Phantasy. Hastings Municipal Orchestra, Basil Cameron. Decca K 515.

<sup>13</sup> July 1930 *The Gramophone*. 'Review of *The Three Bears* Phantasy', 82.

<sup>14</sup> Coates, Eric. *Suite in Four Movements*. London: Heinemann, 1953, 206.

orchestras were a curious phenomenon which he never forgot and he always believed that their *status quo* would one day return and he too would recrudescence with the new post-war generation of composers such as Berkeley, Britten, Rawsthorne, Rubbra, Tippett and Walton (many of whom he had met through the auspices of the PRS). Though, alas, for Coates (and less so for Haydn Wood) this exclusion from these 'contemporary' music remained a bone of contention for the last fifteen years of his life. However, the BBC's Light Music Festivals of the 1950s enabled him to recapture the ethos of the halcyon music festivals of 1930s and offered opportunities to present premieres of his new works.

Out of all of England's music festivals, perhaps none was as prestigious as London's Promenade Concerts founded in 1895 with Henry Wood at the helm. Coates held these concerts in the highest possible esteem and due to his position with the (New) Queen's Hall Orchestra his music featured almost annually in the programmes until the BBC segued the festival from Chappell in 1927. These concerts enabled his early orchestral music and song cycles to have a wide, influential circulation. Appendix 3 shows the wide variety of his youthful compositions performed at the Promenades, many of them first performances, from the Woods' championing of his student Shakespeare songs in 1909 to the performances of the *Saxo-Rhapsody* and *Four Centuries* under the composer towards the close of his life. The audiences of the Promenades seem to have taken to his *Summer Days Suite*, and to *Wood Nymphs* which remained popular until the change of policy and direction of the Promenades under the BBC.<sup>15</sup> However, the

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<sup>15</sup> Coates' music is occasionally still played at the Promenades, though sadly only as 'un-programmed' encores; the Hallé performed *Calling All Workers* on 26/07/2003 and the World Orchestra for Peace, conducted by Gergiev, caught everyone unaware by playing 'Knightsbridge' during its appearance at the Festival on 27/08/2005; the concert was broadcast on BBC television, but alas there was no time for the broadcast of the Coates encore. However, *Calling All Workers* is to open the second half of the Last Night of the Proms in the 2006 Season, on 09/09/2006; possibly his first 'official' appearance at a 'Last Night' since 1920.

Promenades were not typical of the standards and levels of exposure he received from the smaller orchestras of the coastal and spa towns.

The majority of seaside and spa towns arranged an annual music festival, often out of season, and invited numerous composer-conductors and famous soloists to perform. These Festivals could range from a showcase of British musical talent to a vehicle for one particular composer; Basil Cameron forged a reputation for himself with his three-day Wagner Festival at Torquay in the spring of 1913, celebrating the composer's centenary, though records of how the orchestra coped with Wagner's music have been consigned to history.<sup>16</sup>

Besides conducting his new orchestral works at these Festivals, Coates obliged several orchestras by fulfilling invitations and commissions for new works, though it was often a labour of love, as for the first Harrogate Festival of 1927:

Then came an invitation from my old friend, Basil Cameron, to write a new work for the Harrogate Festival. I regret to say I was feeling in lazy mood and said that I would write something for him if I could think of anything. But Basil would not accept this and insisted in my getting down to a new work at once; and so, much against my will, I accepted his invitation.

Weeks passed, during which time I journeyed about the country in pursuit of Phyl, utterly oblivious of the fact that the Harrogate Festival was looming near.

Then one morning came a telegram informing me that the Musical Director wished to know the title of the new work, for its inclusion in the preliminary notices. Could I think of a title! Could I think of anything at all to do with music! My mind could only register the times of north-bound trains to outlandish districts, or else jigsaw-like patterns of intricate Charleston steps which I had been taught by my attractive dancing instructress in Kensington and which Phyl and I were bent on trying out the next time we took the floor. I was just on the point of giving up in despair when, suddenly, there came an idea, and off went the telegram: 'New work "Four Ways". When must you have it? Not started yet.' This brought back yet another from Basil, to the effect that the full-score and band parts were wanted far too soon for my liking, and intimating at the same time that I was a lazy devil!<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Howes, Frank (revised). 'Basil Cameron'. In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* ed Stanley Sadie, iii 872. London: Macmillan, 2001. Cameron also made a reputation for himself by attempting ideas that most other ensembles would not have dared to attempt.

<sup>17</sup> Coates: 1953, 204.

During the late-1920s and 1930s, until the BBC became the desired outlet for first performances, many premieres of his important works were performed at these Festivals or by their orchestras during the season. The notices for the premiere of the *Saxo-Rhapsody* at Folkestone are typical of the press reviews he received at such festivals:

The four festival concerts given this week by the Folkestone Orchestra have formed, if not an ambitious, at least a very pleasant musical event... Then last night we had a programme of light music, at which there was a novelty – a saxophone rhapsody by Eric Coates.

The saxophone is looked at askance by some, but when its resources are skilfully exploited, when its melancholy tones are blended with those gentler and nobler instruments, it is capable of effects both novel and pleasant.

Mr. Coates writes for the tricky instrument with great tact; his skill and the virtuosity of Sigurd Rascher's performance made no slight impression, and the rhapsody proved a most successful adventure.

The orchestra is not a numerous company, but individual alertness and goodwill can go a long way to compensate lack of numbers.<sup>18</sup>

Aside from the more glamorous music festivals the orchestras performed regular concerts and daily performances for holidaymakers. Coates relished the performances and exposure his music received from the coastal and spa orchestras and would often conduct whenever he was free to do so. In August 1932, he visited Blackpool to conduct the South Pier Orchestra in a concert featuring his music.<sup>19</sup> The orchestra numbered forty-players, under its conductor Edward Dunn, performed a full evening's concert, with the composer conducting his own music. For the programme, Coates provided brief programme notes on the pieces he was to conduct. Table 10.1 shows the evening's

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<sup>18</sup> 17/09/1936 *Daily Telegraph*. 'Seaside Music Festival'.

<sup>19</sup> The concert was on 14/08/1932 at 19:45. The following day the *West Lancashire Evening Gazette* printed an article on Coates and his views on Blackpool (15/08/1932 *West Lancashire Evening Gazette* 'Blackpool Surprises Famous Composer').

programme, and the typical orchestral fare performed by such ensembles at evening concerts.<sup>20</sup>

**Table 10.1 Programme of South Pier, Blackpool Orchestra Concert, 14/08/1932.**  
(Coates conducted his own pieces and Edward Dunn conducted the rest of the programme.)

Piece	Composer
<i>Spirit of Pageantry</i> March	Percy Fletcher
<i>Flight of the Bumble Bee</i>	Rimsky-Korsakov
<i>Musical Snuff Box</i>	Nickalowsky
<i>The Three Bears</i> Phantasy	Eric Coates
Overture to <i>Saul</i>	Bazzini
<i>From Meadow to Mayfair</i> Suite	Eric Coates
<b>Interval</b>	<b>Interval</b>
<i>Three Woodland Dances</i>	Harries
<i>Cinderella</i> Phantasy	Eric Coates
Selection from <i>Quaker Girl</i>	Lionel Monckton

However, Coates' visits to conduct coastal and spa orchestras were not always harmless fun, as he recalled in *Suite in Four Movements*, with a performance of *The Three Bears* at Eastbourne (presumably on 10 November 1926):

Many people said they found Elgar difficult, but I always found him charming. It was he who scared me out of my life at Eastbourne by appearing in the artists' room just as I was about to go on to the platform to conduct my 'Three Bears' and who insisted on sitting behind the drums. He was quite oblivious of the fact that his entry into the orchestra had created a minor sensation among the audience and that during the performance he nearly dried me up by tapping his feet and waggling his head from side to side, to such effect that it was only with the greatest difficulty I managed to keep my mind on directing the orchestra through the cross-rhythm of the foxtrot section in my Phantasy.<sup>21</sup>

Eastbourne remained the most popular venue for these first performances, either during their festivals or just through 'normal' performances; Coates struck up a good friendship with Captain H.G. Amers and they had the honour of premiering new works by Coates.

<sup>20</sup> The programme is reproduced in: Jonge de, Jon. *The Three Piers*. Preston: Lancashire County Books, 1993, 22.

<sup>21</sup> Coates: 1953, 206. Elgar had presumably arrived early as he was conducting the orchestra the following day.

Table 10.2 shows the dominance of Eastbourne in regional ensembles that gave premieres of Coates' works.

**Table 10.2 First Performances of New Works by Eric Coates By Regional Orchestras.<sup>22</sup>**

Year	Place	Piece
1925	Eastbourne	<i>The Selfish Giant</i> Phantasy
1927	Harrogate	<i>Four Ways</i> Suite
1929	Eastbourne	<i>Cinderella</i> Phantasy
1932	Torquay	<i>The Jester at the Wedding</i>
1931	Eastbourne	<i>Dancing Nights</i> Concert Valse
1931	Eastbourne	<i>From Meadow to Mayfair</i> Suite
1936	Folkestone	<i>Saxo-Rhapsody</i>

Despite the popularity of Eastbourne for the premieres of his new phantasies and other works, two other of his favourite locations, Scarborough and Bournemouth, were never the scene of premieres. Despite his friendship with Alick Maclean (conductor of the orchestra and an old friend) and frequent visits North to conduct at Scarborough, the ensemble and conductor were never so rewarded, despite the fact that Maclean conducted premieres of Coates' music with the New Queen's Hall Light Orchestra. Coates needed little persuasion after Maclean's description of Scarborough to agree to conduct there:

It was after I had given up my viola-playing in 1919, and when I was attending an orchestral rehearsal for one of the Ballad Concerts at Queen's Hall, that the maestro buttonholed me on the stairs leading down from the entrance in Riding House Street to the artists' room:

"Would you like to come up to Scarborough during the Summer Season at the Spa and conduct some of your works with my orchestra?"

<sup>22</sup> This table is not an exhaustive list as there may be several earlier works, such as *From the Countryside* Suite (dedicated to Cameron, who was then conductor of the Torquay Orchestra), first performed at such Festivals or by seaside orchestras that have not be traced. The table also excludes *Unknown Singer* which was performed at the Cheltenham Festival by the BBC Midland Orchestra; it was largely a BBC decision for the premiere of the work at the Festival.

His face lit up as he continued: “I think you’d enjoy yourself, that is, if we have a calm sea and a low tide. You see” – this with a twinkle in his eye – “we play in the open, but under cover, of course, and the audiences” – he raised his hands and chuckled – “the audiences are a thing to be seen to be believed, and if we are lucky and have a still summer night, it is just like making music in fairyland. Will you come?”

And each year, usually during the last two days of August and the first two in September, up to the time when ill-health prevented him from fulfilling his duties as Musical Director in 1935, I took the turning on the Finchley Road where the sign-post points ‘TO THE NORTH’ and made music with my friend under conditions which were as near approaching a Continental atmosphere as anything you could find in the British Isles. They were days of romance indeed, and ones which I look back upon with intense pleasure, mingled with regret that they will never be repeated. For with the passing of the lovable, high-shouldered, black-coated, large-brimmed-black-felt-hatted figure which walked to and fro from the bandstand to the dressing-room of the Spa, summer in summer [*sic.*] out for twenty-four years, the attraction that Scarborough held for me seemed to pass.<sup>23</sup>

Writing to Maclean’s wife in 1934 he extolled the virtues of the Spa town, and their performances of his music:

This is to thank you and your husband for your great kindness to me at Scarborough. It was simply marvellous seeing you both again and I loved every moment of my visit.

What a wonderful man your husband is – I think I admire him more than any man I know.<sup>24</sup>

Despite his love of Scarborough, he ranked Bournemouth as ‘the most notable’ of the Festivals:

The most notable of these Festivals was the one which usually took place annually at Bournemouth, where Sir Dan Godfrey officiated in the dual capacity of Musical Director and Manager. Here it was here I first met Sir Edward Elgar, who told me that he always bought my gramophone recordings, his favourite at the time being my ‘Summer Days’ Suite, which, he said, he had literally worn out.<sup>25</sup>

Like Scarborough, Bournemouth never received a first performance of a new work, though it received the public premiere of *The Enchanted Garden* in 1938. In his youth,

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<sup>23</sup> Coates: 1953, 190. Coates enjoyed his visits to Scarborough and his first scrapbook contains a photograph of himself about to conduct the orchestra by the sea in 1929, (*GB-STHprivate*).

<sup>24</sup> 06/09/1934 Eric Coates to Joanna Maclean. *GB-Lbl*/Alick Maclean Collection, MS MUS 201.

<sup>25</sup> Coates: 1953, 206.

Coates was keen to join Godfrey's orchestra at the resort and, being informed that he needed to be 'double-handed', learned the flute; however, despite a few lessons he never joined the orchestra.<sup>26</sup>

The music festivals at Bournemouth ran during the Easter period from 1922 until 1928 when they ceased under the conductorship of Dan Godfrey; they were later resurrected under Godfrey's successor, Richard Austin. For Coates, the festivals were an opportunity to mix and finally to meet the many distinguished composer-conductors under whom he previously only played when they visited Queen's Hall, such as Elgar and Ethel Smyth.<sup>27</sup> At the 1923 Festival, he conducted his largest programme at Bournemouth including his new overture, *The Merry-makers*: one of its earliest outings after its premiere twenty-eight days previously at Queen's Hall (the parts may still have been in manuscript). He also renewed his acquaintance with Roger Quilter, under whom he had played under at Queen's Hall, both in concerts and in Balfour Gardiner's landmark concerts of 1912-1913. During this Festival, Quilter captured a rare moment of informality, Figure 10.1.<sup>28</sup>

Coates was a visitor to the majority of the Festivals, often conducting himself, though he was absent from the 1922, and his music was absent from the 1925 festival; he usually conducted his latest work at these occasions. Table 10.3 shows the works performed at the various Easter Festivals. The 1928 festival featured a strong light music contingent, with works conducted by John Ansell and Haydn Wood in addition to Coates.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 44-45.

<sup>27</sup> Coates: 1953, 206 & 152.

<sup>28</sup> From Roger Quilter's private photograph album. Left to right, Eric Coates, Roger Quilter, Mrs Saville, Carrie Tubbs, Mr Saville. I am indebted to Valerie Langfield for supplying a copy of this photograph and to Jane Szilvassy (the copyright holder) for permission to reproduce it.

<sup>29</sup> Lloyd: 1995, 178.



Figure 10.1 Bournemouth Music Festival, 31 March 1923.

**Table 10.3 Bournemouth Music Festivals, 1922-1928 Featuring Coates' Music.**<sup>30</sup>  
 (\* denotes conducted by the composer)

Date	Work
1922	<i>Joyous Youth Suite</i>
*1923	<i>Joyous Youth Suite</i> <i>Merrymakers Overture</i> <i>Moresque Dance Interlude</i> <i>Summer Days Suite</i> <i>Wood Nymphs Valsette</i>
*1924	<i>Summer Days Suite</i> <i>Wood Nymphs Valsette</i>
*1926	<i>The Merrymakers Overture</i> <i>The Selfish Giant Phantasy</i>
*1927	<i>Summer Days Suite</i> <i>The Three Bears Phantasy</i>
*1928	<i>The Four Ways Suite</i> <i>The Three Bears Phantasy</i>

Aside from the Easter Music Festivals, his music made frequent appearances in many concerts held at Bournemouth. Godfrey had presumably come across his music due to Coates' reputation as 'the Queen's Hall viola player who writes attractive music'; in addition Godfrey had contacts with numerous publishing houses who no doubt

<sup>30</sup> 08/10/2004 Stephen Lloyd to Michael Payne (e-mail).

recommended Coates' music.<sup>31</sup> His work first appeared at Bournemouth in 1915<sup>32</sup> and was to remain in the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's repertoire throughout Godfrey's tenure. Austin, Godfrey's successor, could hardly overlook Coates' music due to his immense following after 'In Town Tonight.' His music undoubtedly featured in many of the popular concerts, but documentation of these programmes is scarce. Important performances of his work by the Bournemouth ensemble included: Carrie Tubb singing two of his *Four Old English Songs* to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Municipal Orchestra in 1918; the 'Knightsbridge' March was included in the final half of Godfrey's farewell concert from the orchestra in September 1934.<sup>33</sup> However, Coates only made two visits to conduct at the symphony concerts. Table 10.4 shows the works included in the Bournemouth Symphony Concerts.

**Table 10.4 Bournemouth Symphony Concerts Featuring Coates' Music (During Dan Godfrey's Tenure as Conductor).**<sup>34</sup>

(\* denotes conducted by the composer)

Date	Work
18/10/1915	<i>From the Countryside Suite</i>
22/05/1918	'Who is Sylvia?' ( <i>Four Old English Songs</i> ) 'It was a Lover' ( <i>Four Old English Songs</i> )
08/12/1919	<i>From the Countryside Suite</i>
*04/03/1920	<i>Summer Days Suite</i>
21/04/1924	<i>The Merry-makers Overture</i>
14/01/1934	<i>London Suite</i>
11/02/1934	<i>Joyous Youth Suite</i>
01/04/1934	<i>London Suite</i> <i>Summer Days Suite</i>
08/07/1934	<i>London Suite</i>
*12/08/1934	<i>London Bridge March</i> <i>London Suite</i> <i>The Three Bears Phantasy</i> <i>Two Symphonic Rhapsodies</i>
09/09/1934	<i>London Suite</i>

<sup>31</sup> Godfrey had an affection for Coates' music, making numerous Military Band arrangements, probably starting with *Wood Nymphs* in 1918.

<sup>32</sup> Lloyd: 1995, 119.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 203.

<sup>34</sup> 08/10/2004 Stephen Lloyd to Michael Payne (e-mail).

After the adoption of 'Knightsbridge' for 'In Town Tonight' at the close of 1933, the *London Suite* became a regular feature at the Symphony concerts. Austin Coates remembers listening to a performance of the *London Suite*, conducted by his father, possibly in August 1934 (a year and a half after the Suite's premiere): 'My father gave the first concert performance at Bournemouth, where audiences were noted for their somnolence. My mother and I were listening on the radio; to our surprise they applauded every movement and after the 'Knightsbridge' March went on clapping to an extent which by Bournemouth standards was extraordinary.'<sup>35</sup>

Bournemouth was not the only location where Coates and his music were popular. Whilst his old friend, Basil Cameron, was in charge of the orchestra at Harrogate during the late-1920s until his departure abroad, his music made frequent appearances on the programme. Harrogate Council supported the Municipal Orchestra, which gave concerts from April to October, in the afternoons and evenings; several concerts in August were scheduled to commence at 08:00.<sup>36</sup> Table 10.5 shows the number of performances of Coates' music during the 1927 season. The conductors in the 1927 season were Basil Cameron, Thomas Peatfield and Barrs Partridge and the composer, who duly obliged at the premiere of the *Four Ways Suite*.

A wide variety of Coates' music was performed during the season, though, with the exception of *Wood Nymphs*, his suites and songs featured, rather than any of his numerous brief entr'actes, though the ensemble may just have performed one movement from the suites in their concerts. A remarkable exclusion was his recent phantasy *The Three Bears*, composed the previous year, and recently published, which Cameron would

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<sup>35</sup> 19/08/1986 *Eric Coates – King of Light Music*. BBC Radio 2. GB-Lbl/Sound Archive PLN 622/86 ZA0398. Austin Coates may well be mistaken about the broadcast of the work from Bournemouth (as the concert was not broadcast by the BBC) and was probably in the audience with his mother. It was also not the first public performance of the Suite either.

<sup>36</sup> 09/03/2004 George Capel to Michael Payne (e-mail).

**Table 10.5 Coates' Compositions Performed at Harrogate, 1927.**<sup>37</sup>

Composition	Date(s)	Conductors and soloists
'Bird Songs at Eventide' (song)	11/06 23/06 07/09	Cameron (Janet Hemsley) Cameron (Garda Hall) Cameron (John Turner)
<i>Four Ways Suite</i>	23/09	Coates
<i>From the Countryside Suite</i>	14/06 25/07 26/09 17/10	Peatfield Peatfield Peatfield Peatfield
'Green Hills o'Somerset' (song)	18/09	Cameron (Sydney Coltham)
'I Heard You Singing' (Song)	26/08	Cameron (Heddle Nash)
<i>Joyous Youth Suite</i>	04/07 16/08 18/08	Partridge Partridge Partridge
<i>Miniature Suite</i>	16/06 12/07 30/07 02/09 29/09	Peatfield Peatfield Peatfield Partridge Cameron
'Moon Daises' (Song)	16/09	Cameron (Sydney Coltham)
<i>Two Light Syncopated Pieces</i>	13/06 24/06 26/07 09/08 30/08 05/09 13/09	Cameron Peatfield Peatfield Peatfield Peatfield Peatfield Partridge
'Sea Rapture' (Song)	19/07 27/08	Cameron (William Heseltine) Cameron (Unknown)
<i>Selfish Giant Phantasy</i>	04/10	Cameron
<i>Summer Days Suite</i>	07/06 15/06 11/07 24/07 06/08 08/08 15/08 10/09 12/09 15/10	Cameron Peatfield Peatfield Cameron Cameron Peatfield Partridge Cameron Partridge Cameron
<i>Wood Nymphs Valsette</i>	06/08 24/09 30/09	Cameron Cameron Cameron

record three years later and make his own piece.<sup>38</sup> The songs were performed by a remarkable galaxy of singers, notably Garda Hall, who had been a favourite soloist in the

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> 'Basil told me that when he was the conductor of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra his arrival on to the platform at a rehearsal was the signal for the oboe, the clarinet and the bassoon to break into a pianissimo rendering of the opening motif of my phantasy, 'The Three Bears', which two bars came to be known as Basil's Private Signature Tune.' (Coates: 1953, 144).

London Ballad concerts of the late-1910s and 1920s. It is hardly surprising that, given the number of performances by the Harrogate forces alone, in one season, through the PRS, Coates became such a high-earner of the Society.

Despite their popularity, the orchestras were often small, under-funded and overworked. An expense sheet that survives in Alick Maclean's papers at the British Library shows the relative costs of several coastal and spa orchestras in 1929; the recurrent weekly costs must have been a fairly substantial outlay for the local town councils, even if they were offset by income from ticket sales, Table 10.6.<sup>39</sup>

**Table 10.6 Number of Musicians Employed by Seaside and Spa Orchestras in 1929.**

Town	Number of Musicians	Cost of Orchestra (including conductor)	Number of Performances per Day
Llandudno	25-35	£190-260	2 on weekdays, 1 on Sunday (2 hours each).
Margate	18 (double-handed)	£174	2 performances. Total performances of 4 hours on 5 days and 3 performances and total of 5 hours on 2 days.
Bridlington	15	£140	2 performances a day, 7 days a week 4½ hours per day.
Eastbourne	34 (25 play as Military Band)	£240	15 hours per week.
Buxton	22	£175	2 performances of 1½ hours and 2 hours on Sundays.
Harrogate	31	£246	Covers orchestra in the Winter Gardens, Valley and Royal Hall.

Many of these ensembles were augmented for important concerts or festivals; the thirty-piece orchestra at Hastings was enlarged to sixty players for the Hastings Festival, as too was the Weymouth Orchestra.<sup>40</sup>

In surviving correspondence and press commentary, Coates has little to say about the performances he received from the spa and seaside ensembles, augmented or not. He recalled the 1927 premiere of *The Four Ways* Suite at Harrogate in his autobiography:

<sup>39</sup> 1929 Relative Costs of Orchestras. *GB-Lbl*/Alick Maclean Collection, MS MUS 204.

<sup>40</sup> Lloyd: 1995, 166.

The first performance of 'Four Ways' will always bring back a picture of an audience half rising from its seat to stand to attention, owing to the side-drum roll and cymbal crash in the first bars of the opening movement which unintentionally gave the impression of a 'God Save the King' to follow. At the rehearsal I had a tussle with the Charleston rhythm of the last movement and at one time almost gave up hope of being able to get the brass and percussion to produce the effect I wanted. But at the concert they came up to scratch and the work was well played and, I am thankful to say, well received.<sup>41</sup>

For all the works specially written for the coastal and spa orchestras, listed in Table 10.2, most notably for Eastbourne, he reduced the scoring of the orchestra to the more standard 'light combination' of two flutes, one oboe, two clarinets, one bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, percussion, occasionally harp and the usual complement of strings. Most of his more extended works from the 1930s were written for the fuller BBC forces of double woodwind and four horns, though notable exceptions are the *London* and *Springtime* Suites; most of the entr'actes of this period are for a smaller ensemble. This convention was also applied the *Saxo-Rhapsody* written in 1936 for the Folkestone Festival. Nevertheless, the BBC Orchestra Section C and the BBC Theatre Orchestra (the two BBC ensembles usually delegated to premiere his music) were, unless the latter was augmented for the broadcasts, of a similar size to most of the municipal orchestras of this period, numbering thirty-six players in the former and twenty-seven in the later during the 1930s. Surely with the burgeoning number of premieres and performances by BBC forces he was forced to compose for a larger orchestra which was, after all, in his own best interests; the smaller orchestras could resort to cueing the missing parts.

When writing his music for the coastal and spa orchestras, Coates may well have been forced to make several concessions to their proficiency. In the orchestration of *The Jester at the Wedding* for the Torquay Municipal Orchestra he scores a piano instead of the more usual harp; the piano fulfils essentially the same role as the harp and is written in a

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<sup>41</sup> Coates: 1953, 204.

similar manner to such a part. This may well have been an influence from the earlier *Snowdrop* which features two pianos in its original 'theatre' orchestration. When the BBC first asked Coates for permission to perform *Snowdrop* with BBC forces, he was most insistent about the two piano parts and the fact that they should be performed on *grand* pianos.<sup>42</sup> However, it was more than likely that the Torquay orchestra either did not employ or could not afford a harpist for the premiere of the work and no doubt had a pianist to hand.<sup>43</sup> In the final movement of the ballet, 'The Princess and the Jester', he was forced to alter his ideas after the first performance of the work. In pages 146 and 147 of the autograph score of the movement,<sup>44</sup> he removed a fanfare motif (seen earlier in the movement and in the opening movement, though the passage he removed was a diminution of this motif) in the trumpets and first trombone, presumably because the brass found the passage too difficult after numerous awkward passages. He may also have decided that the passage was a little too forceful, even when the brass was muted, in relation to the high strings and solo horn. For the publication, he removed the first three bars of L (of the autograph) and abolished the brass fanfares (a rhythmically diminished version of the fanfares from the opening movement), leaving the horn solo, triangle, piano and strings – no doubt a more pleasing aesthetic effect than the original idea. Ex. 10.1a shows the original orchestration and Ex. 10.1b shows the printed full score.

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<sup>42</sup> 17/10/1930 Eric Coates to Joseph Lewis. *GB-Rwa* Eric Coates file 1, 1928-1935.

<sup>43</sup> In Coates' 1949 recording of 'Dance of the Orange Blossom', he omits the piano part in its entirety (though it is doubled by the woodwind); the recording session also featured *The Three Men Suite*, which does not require a piano, but does call for a harp, which was not used in the 'Dance of the Orange Blossom'.

<sup>44</sup> *The Jester at the Wedding* *GB-Lcm* Coates Archive, box 182.



This musical score page features the following instruments and parts:

- Flute (Fl):** Part 1, marked *mf*.
- Oboe (Ob):** Part 1, marked *mf*.
- Clarinet in B-flat (Clt (Bb)):** Part 1, marked *mf*.
- Bassoon (Bsn):** Part 1, marked *mf*.
- Horn in F (Hn (F)):** Part 1, marked *mf*.
- Trumpet in B-flat (Tpt (Bb)):** Part 1, marked *p*.
- Trombone (Tbn):** Part 1, marked *p*.
- Timpani (Timp):** Part 1, marked *p*.
- Percussion (Perc):** Part 1, marked *p*, including a Triangle.
- Piano (Pno):** Part 1, marked *p*, featuring triplet patterns.
- Violin (Vin):** Part 1, marked *p*.
- Viola (Vla):** Part 1, marked *p*.
- Violoncello (Vc):** Part 1, marked *p*.
- Contrabass (Cb):** Part 1, marked *p*.

This musical score page features the following instruments and parts:

- Flute (Fl):** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#).
- Oboe (Ob):** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#).
- Clarinet in B-flat (Cl (Bb)):** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#).
- Bassoon (Bsn):** Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#).
- Horn in F (Hn (F)):** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Dynamics include *mp* and *p*.
- Trumpet in B-flat (Tpt (Bb)):** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Dynamics include *pp*.
- Trombone (Tbn):** Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Dynamics include *pp*.
- Timpani (Timp):** Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#).
- Percussion (Perc):** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Dynamics include *pp*.
- Piano (Pno):** Grand staff (treble and bass clefs), key signature of one sharp (F#). Features triplet markings and dynamics like *pp*.
- Violin (Vln):** Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#).
- Viola (Vla):** Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#).
- Violoncello (Vc):** Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#).
- Double Bass (Cb):** Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#).

Ex. 10.1a 'Final, The Princess and the Jester' (*The Jester at the Wedding*), autograph score, pages 146 and 147.



128

Fl.

Ob.

Cls.

Bsns.

Hns.

Trpts.

Trombs.

Perc.

Pfca.

VI. I

VI. II

Vla.

Cello

Bass

Glock. (with wooden hammer)

Tri.

Cym. (with soft sticks)

Solo

dim.

ppp

pp

pp

[4] minutes

Chappell

Ex. 10.1b 'Final, The Princess and the Jester' (*The Jester at the Wedding*), printed full score, pages 127-128.

This alteration in the orchestration and length is one of the rare examples when he changed his mind after writing the autograph score. The only other example (from the remaining autograph scores) is eleven bars after letter H in ‘Covent Garden’ (*London Suite*) from which eight bars were removed before the Suites’ publication.<sup>45</sup>

Despite certain concessions, Coates did not leave much time for the orchestra to learn the music, often leaving less than a month between the completion of a score and its premiere. During this time the parts would need to be copied (by his copyist) or engraved (by Chappell), then despatched to the ensemble who would need to find time in their busy performance schedule to learn the work before the first performance, as Table 10.7 shows:

**Table 10.7 Dates of Completion and Premiere of Coates’ Works for Coastal Orchestras.**

Work	Location of Premiere	Date of Completion	Date of Premiere
<i>Selfish Giant</i> Phantasy	Eastbourne	September 1925	15/11/1925
<i>Four Ways</i> Suite	Harrogate	03/09/1927	23/09/1927
<i>Cinderella</i> Phantasy	Eastbourne	09/09/1929	28/11/1929
<i>Dancing Nights</i> Valse	Eastbourne	10/11/1931	25/11/1921
<i>Jester at the Wedding</i>	Torquay	06/03/1932	07/04/1932
<i>From Meadow to Mayfair</i> Suite	Eastbourne	Undated, probably January-February 1931	21/02/1931
<i>Saxo-Rhapsody</i>	Folkestone	30/07/1936	15/09/1936

One major festival which marked a change in the *status quo* prevalent at many of the fast disappearing coastal music festivals, were the Light Music Festivals organised, almost annually, by the BBC from 1949 until 1960. Due to the BBC’s financial patronage and prestige, the orchestras were often first-rate (from 1954, the BBC Concert Orchestra), and problems regarding a successful first performance were vanquished. The Festivals marked a new departure for Coates as it was a return to the halcyon days of the 1920s and 1930s when light music featured on such an elevated pedestal; the majority, if

<sup>45</sup> ‘Covent Garden’ *London Suite*, page 22-23. GB-Lcm Eric Coates Archive, Box 181.

not the entirety of the concerts (latterly from the Royal Festival Hall, and initially from Kingsway Hall) were broadcast on the BBC's Light Programme. The BBC's levels of patronage of the genre were high, as they keen were point out in a publication entitled *Music for Millions* published for the 1958 Festival, Table 10.8.<sup>46</sup>

**Table 10.8 Commissions by the BBC for Light Music Festivals 1953-1958.**<sup>47</sup>

Composer	Work	Year
Addison, John	<i>Conversation Piece</i> (Piano and Orchestra)	1958
Alwyn, William	<i>Elizabethan Dances</i>	1957
Arnold, Malcolm	<i>Scottish Dances</i>	1957
Binge, Ronald	<i>Saxophone Concerto</i>	1956
Bush, Geoffrey	<i>Concerto for Light Orchestra</i>	1958
Chagrin, Francis	<i>Roumanian Fantasy. Rhapsody for Harmonica and Orchestra</i>	1956
Clifford, Hubert	<i>Cowes Suite</i>	1958
Coates, Eric	<i>Sweet Seventeen Concert Valse</i>	1954
Farnon, Robert	<i>Variations 'A la Clair Fontaine'</i>	1954
Farnon, Robert	<i>Frontiersman Overture</i>	1957
Hamilton, Ian	<i>Concerto for Jazz Trumpet and Orchestra</i>	1958
Hill-Brown, W.	<i>Backstreet Ballet</i>	1956
Hoddinot, Alun	<i>Welsh Dances</i>	1958
Hughes, Spike	<i>Scherzo 'The Nonsensical Sailor'</i>	1958
Jacob, Gordon	<i>Sea Songs Suite for Chorus and Orchestra</i>	1957
Liter, Monia	<i>Scherzo for Piano and Orchestra</i>	1956
Phillips, Montague	<i>Hampton Court Overture</i>	1954
Spinks, Charles	<i>Toccata for Organ and Brass</i>	1957
Tate, Phyllis	<i>London Fields Suite</i>	1958
Tomlinson, Ernest	<i>Rhapsody and Rondo for French Horn and Orchestra</i>	1957
Tomlinson, Ernest	<i>Festival Suite</i>	1956
Torch, Sidney	<i>London Transport Suite</i>	1957
Wood, Haydn	<i>Gipsy Suite</i>	1954

For Coates, these festivals provided him with an occasion to write new works, though it appears than only *Sweet Seventeen*, for which he refused payment and retained all his rights was formally commissioned<sup>48</sup> – all the other works premiered at the Festivals were offered by Coates; several of his final compositions received an impressive and substantial premiere at these Festivals.

<sup>46</sup> Anon. *Music for Millions*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1958, 3, though this was not an exhaustive list of premieres at the Festivals, but a list of BBC commissions.

<sup>47</sup> Assembled from Ibid, and private knowledge.

<sup>48</sup> 04/01/1954 R.G. Walford to Eric Coates. *GB-Rwac* Eric Coates Copyright File, December 1941-1962.

For the first forty years of the twentieth century, live music was everywhere; in most towns there was a small orchestra to be had, found in hotels, restaurants and cafes. These orchestras had a huge thirst for light music. Many of these orchestras held large collections of sheet music, and subscribed to the numerous 'orchestral clubs' run by the major publishing houses. Walter Collins, Director of the Bexhill-on-Sea Orchestra amassed a large personal library of performing material of around c.2,500 sets.<sup>49</sup> Frank Cantell (best known from his spell as Music Director on the BBC's 'Take it From Here') amassed a large personal collection of material as during the 1950-1960s he had two broadcasts a week on the BBC and was always on the look out for new material which, more often or not, he would perform.<sup>50</sup> His library also contains several items which publishers sent him to perform, and as such works like Haydn Wood's *Lutine Aboy!* and Ray Martin's *Marching Strings* only survive through his library.

The Winter Gardens Orchestra at Blackpool, by no means Blackpool's only proficient orchestra,<sup>51</sup> held an enormous library of sheet music, including over 3,000 waltzes, including a large proportion of the waltzes of Waldteufel, nearly 4,000 entr'actes, 1,400 marches and over 1,500 selections from operas, operettas, musicals and theatre shows.<sup>52</sup> Not only did their library hold a large quantity of lighter fare, but their catalogue

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<sup>49</sup> Walter Collins' daughter bequeathed his personal library, including many of his own compositions and manuscript arrangements to the Light Music Society, *GB-P/ms*. Collins also acted as the Music Director for numerous recordings of library music for Paxton's as well as being a notable composer of light music.

<sup>50</sup> Cantell's Library is housed at *GB-P/ms*.

<sup>51</sup> Though Blackpool was the apogee of the seaside resort, the town had numerous theatres and cinemas would have had orchestras, as too did Blackpool Tower; the North Pier had an orchestra of 35-performers under Edward de Joy, though this was later reduced to 18 under 'Toni' (from 1933-1958). ('Toni' was a leading light in the formation of the short-lived BBC Northern Light Orchestra.) The South Pier Orchestra had an orchestra of up to forty-players under Edward Dunn and the Central Pier favoured a dance band for its 'open-air' dances. (de Jonge: 1993, 17, 19, 21.)

<sup>52</sup> The Winter Gardens opened in July 1878 and was Blackpool's first 'all-weather venue' including a concert hall, indoor ornamental promenades and a roller-skating rink. The Empress Ball Room was added in 1896-1897 at a cost of £130,000 (the entire complex only cost £107,000 when first built). In the late-1920s notable extensions included a Baronial Hall, Spanish Galleon and Courtyard and Tudor Room (Walton, John K. *Blackpool*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, 88 & Pevsner, Nikolaus. *The Buildings of England: South Lancashire*. London: Penguin, 1969, 71.) From its origins, the Winter Gardens attracted the largest names in the entertainment and musical worlds, including Caruso, (who was reputed to have been paid nearly £1,000 for his concert in 1909) Kreisler, Patti, Tetrazini and Nellie Melba. (Eyre, Kathleen. *Seven Golden Miles*. St. Anne's and Lytham St. Anne's: Weaver and Youles, 1961, 92.) By 1893, the orchestra boasted 36 musicians with a variety of venues and genres to perform; from accompanying

also included such titles as: Beethoven's Fifth, Sixth and Eighth Symphonies, Mendelssohn's First Piano Concerto and numerous Haydn Symphonies; and contemporary British music including: Stanford's Prelude to *Oedipus Rex* and *First Irish Rhapsody*, Elgar's '*Enigma*' Variations and Holst's *The Planets*.<sup>53</sup> There is no guarantee that the Winter Gardens Orchestra performed any of these titles, but it may well have entertained holidaymakers with single movements or brief passages. In its library, it held a large number of Coates' pieces and probably performed them frequently along with a large quantity of now-forgotten light composers. Table 10.9 shows the number and variety of Coates' compositions held in the library of the Winter Gardens Orchestra.<sup>54</sup>

The collection embraced thirteen entr'actes, twelve marches, eight suites and numerous other sundry pieces, providing the ensemble with a large crossover of Coates' repertoire featuring pieces from most genres and periods of his composition. However, there are several gaps in the orchestra's collection as his more pastoral *From Meadow to Mayfair* and *Springtime* Suites are absent as too are the more vivacious *The Three Men* and *London Again* Suites. The Winter Gardens also did not purchase his earlier concert waltzes, *Dancing Nights* and *Footlights*, probably because they favoured the 'old-time waltzes', though through a change in policy and style in the 1950s, the orchestra purchased *Sweet Seventeen*. Furthermore, the orchestra had several of his more ambitious pieces, such as *Jester at the Wedding*, *The Selfish Giant*, *The Three Bears* and *The Three Elizabeths* Suite (curiously the only suite to have its movements listed individually) though whether the orchestra attempted these difficult pieces, or movements or sections of these pieces is not known. Whilst the Winter Gardens Orchestra held a reasonable selection of Coates'

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dancing to symphony concerts and visiting stars and variety acts. (Allen, Charles. *The Story of Blackpool*. East Ardsley: S.R. Publishers, 1969, 218).

<sup>53</sup> The collection and its handwritten catalogue are now held (despite a torturous history after the disbandment of the orchestra) at *GB-PR/MS*.

<sup>54</sup> Assembled from the Winter Gardens Orchestral Catalogue, *GB-PR/MS*. The catalogue is arranged alphabetically, in genres such as march, original, waltz, entr'acte, selection, as were those of many light orchestras. Walter Collins went even further and in addition to the already listed categories, categorised suites, intermezzos and 'light numbers'.

**Table 10.9 List of Music by Eric Coates Held by the Winter Gardens Blackpool.**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Date of Publication</b>
<i>Bird Songs at Eventide</i> (arr. H.M. Higgs)	Entr'acte	1927
<i>By the Sleepy Lagoon</i> Valse Serenade	Entr'acte	1930
<i>By the Tamarisk</i> Intermezzo	Entr'acte	1926
<i>Calling All Workers</i>	March	1940
<i>Dam Busters, The</i> March	March	1954
<i>For Your Delight</i> Serenade	Entr'acte	1937
<i>Four Ways</i> Suite	Original	1928
<i>From the Countryside</i> Suite	Original	1915
<i>High Flight</i> March	March	1957
<i>Idyll</i>	Entr'acte	1914
<i>Impressions of a Princess</i> Intermezzo	Entr'acte	1956
<i>Jester at the Wedding</i> Suite from the Ballet	Original	1932
<i>Joyous Youth</i> Suite	Original	1921
'Knightsbridge' March	March	1933
<i>Lazy Night</i> Valse Romantique	Entr'acte	1932
<i>London Bridge</i> March	March	1934
<i>London</i> Suite	Original	1933
<i>Mermaid</i> Graceful Dance	Entr'acte	1912
<i>Miniature Suite</i> (arr. P. Fletcher)	Original	1912
<i>Mirage</i> Romance	Entr'acte	1928
<i>Music Everywhere</i> Rediffusion March	March	1949
<i>Over to You</i> March	March	1941
<i>Popular Songs of Eric Coates</i> (arr. H.M. Higgs)	Selections	1938
<i>Rhodesia</i> March	March	1953
<i>Salute the Soldier</i> March	March	1944
<i>Selfish Giant, The</i> Phantasy	Original	1926
<i>Seven Seas, The</i> March	March	1938
<i>Sound and Vision</i> March	March	1955
<i>Summer Afternoon</i> Idyll	Entr'acte	1932
<i>Summer Days</i> Suite	Original	1919
<i>Sweet Seventeen</i> Valse	Waltz	1954
<i>Television</i> March	March	1946
<i>Three Bears, The</i> Phantasy	Original	1927
<i>Three Elizabeths, The</i> Suite	Original	1945
<i>Two Light Syncopated</i> Pieces	Original	1926
<i>Under the Stars</i>	Entr'acte	1929
<i>Unknown Singer</i> Interlude	Entr'acte	1953
<i>Valse</i> (from <i>The Three Bears</i> )	Original	1949
<i>Wood Nymphs</i> Valsette	Entr'acte/Waltz	1918

entr'actes, the selection is peculiar as the entr'actes were not, apart from *By the Sleepy Lagoon* and *Wood Nymphs* (also listed in the waltz category), amongst his most well-known entr'actes. After the Second World War, the orchestra tended to purchase more light music, such as pieces by Charles Williams, Torch, Farnon and Binge, and bought a larger

a proportion of Coates' music than they had before the War, including the rarely-performed *Unknown Singer* and *Rhodesia March*.

The coastal and spa orchestras were of tremendous importance for Coates for not only did they invite him to write new works for them, but frequently performed his music during their concerts. This not only made his music popular, but also lucrative due to the regular accrument of fees from the PRS. Frequent invitations for the composer to conduct his own music, such as the annual four days he spent conducting Maclean's orchestra in Scarborough in the 1920-1930s, were important in establishing his name with a significant cross-section of the public. Whilst the standard of performance must have varied tremendously from resort to resort, ultimately, it was an essential tool in securing the long term popularity of his music, in addition to frequent BBC broadcasts, gramophone records and press releases.

## Conclusion

*There is no need to commend this good light music [From Meadow to Mayfair Suite] that seeks no fresh expression of thoughts either old or new. A great deal of the musician's complaint about light music is that it is poorly made. If only the dance merchants would seek this modest level of originality, they would come up 100 per cent. The Romance is one of the neatest of slight sentimentals, and the Valse makes it clear that we do not need to bring foreigners to provide our musical comedy – not even dead ones.<sup>1</sup>*

After Coates' death in 1957, one commentator wrote, 'Eric Coates was a composer whose music helped this new public [audiences of the Promenade Concerts] on its way to more serious things,<sup>2</sup> and this is exactly what his music set out to achieve. Not only is it enjoyable, but it used many of the key elements of orchestral music in exactly the same manner as any other work of 'high art'. He may have been a light music composer but he did not use the elements of music in a light way. His obituary in the *Musical Times* concluded,

His own music is narrower in range and sometimes rather more trivial in content [than the music of Edward German]. But it is invariably tuneful and adroit, the work of a thoroughly equipped, professional musician; and it gave, and will continue to give, pleasure to a vast number of people.<sup>3</sup>

Surely, this last sentence is the ultimate accolade and exactly what he achieved in the sphere of musical composition. As Adrian Boult commented, 'he was a master of charm and gentle beauty in music...'<sup>4</sup>

Throughout his career, Coates was fortunate to have composed numerous pieces that achieved cult status through their frequent repetition as signature tunes or works such as *The Dam Busters* March that have captured the public's imagination. This was in part due to his symbiotic relationship with the BBC, where his friendships with Messers

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<sup>1</sup> September 1932 *The Gramophone*, 138.

<sup>2</sup> 02/01/1958 *The Times* 'Mr Eric Coates' [R.I.F.].

<sup>3</sup> Eric Coates, Obituary. In *Musical Times*, 99 (1958), 99. [H.R.]

<sup>4</sup> Adrian Boult quoted in BBC Home Service News Bulletin (13:00 & 21:00) 21/12/1957. GB-Rwac December Home Service News Bulletins.

Robinson and Wright provided significant opportunities, despite the, at times, patrician attitude of the Corporation. Furthermore, the BBC's continual thirst for, and programming of, light orchestral music enabled his music frequently to be within easy reach of any radio listener, a circumstance further cemented by repeated invitations for him to conduct concerts of his own works with BBC ensembles.

Allied to his success in broadcasting were the numerous recordings he made as a conductor throughout his career from 1923 until 1957. These recordings were often of the highest calibre, made usually with the LSO or LPO, though, usually due to snobbery, the ensemble's name was disguised. Coates' recordings are marked by their changes in orchestration, and attempts to constrict movements to reduce the playing time. Whilst at times these cuts are little more than bowdlerisations of the musical text, they prove that he was concerned about presenting to the public performances he thought were too long or works that were not sufficiently succinct.

However, in the musical construction of his *œuvre*, from the youthful orchestral songs to the final orchestral works there is often a mastery of melody and orchestration which abounds in almost every score. He was not prolific, nor were his pieces longer than five minutes which was the key to his success as seldom could one tire of his music. He had a gift of giving the public exactly what they desired in orchestral music, as he remembered in his autobiography:

It is extraordinary the way in which the 'Knightsbridge March' never fails to rouse the dullest of audiences. I cannot understand the reason for it, but over and over again, when I have been conducting it in public both in this country and abroad, the moment the double-basses begin the reiterated quaver beats at the opening I can feel a sensation of excited anticipation coming from the audience and striking me in the back of the head.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Coates, Eric. *Suite in Four Movements*. London: Heinemann, 1953, 221.

His adoption of the style of the dance band or ‘syncopated idiom’, as he often termed it, gave his scores a contemporary and popular edge which appealed to both the public and the Press, who occasionally styled him ‘the Peter-Pan of music.’

His relationships with the Press were unique for a composer, as he had risen to the ranks of a minor celebrity, and as such, often featured in a host of articles and advertisements in the popular press, even if several were of a dubious literary, as well as factual, content. In addition to this was the foundation of the PRS in 1914, roughly the same time as he was coming to prominence as a composer. The royalties accrued from many ensembles across England and abroad which performed his music. In England, such orchestras often invited him to conduct, and occasionally to give first performances of his works; the highlight for him was the music festival where he would appear on the same platform as many of the titled members of the profession. These orchestras were invaluable as they would perform his music to people who may not have come across it before.

All these disparate elements combined to create a composer who, at times refused to change his obdurate views on music, but was happy to stay as a composer of *light* music without parallel in England. He may not have been the finest composer of light music – certain pieces of Haydn Wood and Montague Phillips are arguably on a higher plane – but what he did, he did successfully and with consummate skill. It is only with the current resurgence of interest in light music that he can be seen more within the context, and in the achievements, of others in the field. After an unexpected encore of the ‘Knightsbridge’ March at the 2005 Promenade Concerts by the World Orchestra for Peace conducted by Valery Gergiev in a programme including works by Rimsky-Korsakov, Rossini, Debussy and Wagner, the *Independent* reported: ‘And I never thought I’d hear an orchestra of this calibre play Eric Coates’s endearingly cheesy “Knightsbridge

March” with such conviction. World peace suddenly seemed possible.<sup>6</sup> This encore by such an ensemble proves that Coates can hold his own in a programme of ‘greats’, by a leading orchestra, at one of the world’s greatest music festivals; one cannot imagine the same for Ketèlbey’s *In a Monastery Garden*, Haydn Wood’s ‘Montmartre’ (*Paris Suite*) or even Farnon’s *Jumping Bean* and *Portrait of a Flirt*.

A comparison between Eric Coates and the author P.G. Wodehouse is apt, as perhaps greatness should not solely be equated with high art but with popularity. Perhaps today, with the changes in culture, their artistry is on the bottom-rung of the high-art ladder where they are both largely forgotten and neglected. Both Coates and Wodehouse wrote light, humorous and effortless works which encapsulate a nostalgic period in English history, a period that probably never existed. Whilst many know their key works, few know the real treasures that lie behind the façade and, though not bastions of ‘high art’, they are nevertheless works of genius which have given, and continue to give, escapism and pleasure to millions.

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<sup>6</sup> 30/08/2005 *The Independent*. ‘Proms 57 and 58’ [by Edward Seckerson]

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