

## Legendary British Performers

The cellist **Jacqueline du Pré** (1945-1987) was born in Oxford into a musical family. A pupil of William Pleeth, Mstislav Rostropovich and Paul Tortelier, she gave her debut recital at the Wigmore Hall in 1961, and first performed the Elgar *Cello Concerto*, a work with which she was closely identified, during the following year at the Royal Festival Hall. She made her American debut at Carnegie Hall, in 1965. Two years later she married the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim, with whom she worked closely, giving numerous orchestral and chamber music concerts. In 1973 she was diagnosed as suffering from multiple sclerosis, and subsequently withdrew from public performance, devoting herself to teaching and giving master classes. In these performances of rare repertoire, recorded when she was only sixteen, she is accompanied by her mother, Iris, who taught the piano at the Royal Academy of Music and also composed.

The English composer **Benjamin Britten** (1913-1976) grew up in the East Anglian town of Lowestoft. He studied piano with Harold Samuel and composition with Frank Bridge, and later with Arthur Benjamin and John Ireland at the Royal College of Music. His extraordinary facility for composition was soon apparent in his work for radio and film during the 1930s. He spent the earlier part of the Second World War in the USA with his partner, the tenor Peter Pears, before returning to the United Kingdom. His opera *Peter Grimes*, first performed in London in 1945, established him as a composer of the first rank. In addition to being a gifted composer, Britten was a superb pianist and accompanist, as may clearly

heard in these performances from 1964, which feature not only in his own music, but that of his teacher Bridge and of Mozart, whom Britten revered. The tenor Peter Pears (1910-1986) studied at the Royal College of Music, and later with Elena Gerhardt. During the 1930s he was a member of the BBC and Glyndebourne Festival Opera choruses. He was a leading tenor with the Sadler's *Wells Opera Company* from 1943 to 1946. He created the role of Peter Grimes in 1945, and later all the leading tenor roles in Britten's subsequent operas. A musician of wide culture and discrimination, he was recognized as one of the leading lieder singers of his day, who also possessed a natural feeling for less formal music.

The counter-tenor **Alfred Deller** (1912-1979) was entirely self-taught as a singer. He joined the choir of Canterbury Cathedral in 1940, and moved to St. Paul's Cathedral in London in 1947. In the following year he formed the Deller Consort, with which he performed a repertoire based mainly on English and Italian madrigals throughout Europe, the Americas, Australasia, and the Far East. He continued to be active as a singer right up until his death, after which the Deller Consort continued under the direction of his son, Mark Deller. A singer of great taste and refinement, Alfred Deller restored the counter-tenor voice to a position in music which it had not held for over two centuries. In so doing he brought to the public's attention a wide range of previously unfamiliar repertoire, such as the songs presented here.

The conductor **Sir John Barbirolli** (1899-1970) was born in London into a highly musical family of Italian origin. He made his debut as a cellist at the age of 11, and

went on to study at Trinity College and the Royal Academy of Music. He joined the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1915 and began to conduct professionally during the mid-1920s. Following his appearance with the London Symphony Orchestra as a substitute for Sir Thomas Beecham in 1926, his reputation was made. He succeeded Toscanini as chief conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in 1937. In the midst of the Second World War he was invited to rebuild the Manchester's Hallé Orchestra, and from 1943 onwards he was closely associated with this orchestra. During the last years of his life he toured widely, appearing with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra frequently as well as serving as chief conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra in the USA. A conductor of great personality and wide musical sympathies, Barbirolli excelled in the romantic repertoire. He was a noted interpreter of the music of Dvořák, clearly relishing the Czech *joie de vivre*, as may be seen in this 1961 broadcast from Manchester.

The pianist **John Ogdon** (1937-1989) was born in Nottinghamshire. When he was eight years old he became a student of Iso Elinson at the Royal Manchester College of Music. Later teachers included the Busoni pupil, Egon Petri. He first attracted critical attention when he took over a performance of Brahms's *Second Piano Concerto* in Liverpool, playing this vast work almost at sight. His debut London recital of 1959 received high praise. This recording of Ogdon's powerful performance of Liszt's *Dante Sonata* followed his success in winning the Liszt Prize in 1961, and anticipated his triumph as the joint winner with Vladimir Ashkenazy of the 1962 Moscow Tchaikovsky Competition. During the 1970s Ogdon was

diagnosed as suffering from mental illness. Once this condition was stabilized he was able to return to the concert platform and was active right up until his death. A true virtuoso, he possessed a technique of extraordinary power and range.

**Solomon** (1902-1988) was born in London where he studied with Mathilde Verne, a pupil of Clara Schumann. He made his concert debut at the age of eight with the Tchaikovsky *First Piano Concerto*, and thereafter appeared widely as an infant prodigy, before withdrawing from playing in public for several years, and relaunching his career in 1924.

The extraordinary eloquence and virtuosity of his playing soon conquered audiences both across Europe and the USA. This extremely rare recording of Solomon playing Schubert was made shortly before he was partially paralyzed by a stroke in 1956, as a result of which he was unable to perform. His playing of Beethoven's *Appassionata Sonata*, from the same broadcast, is available as a bonus on another *Classic Archive* DVD, devoted to Claudio Arrau (catalogue no: DVB4928389).

**Dame Myra Hess** (1890-1965) studied at the Guildhall School of Music and then at the Royal Academy of Music with Tobias Matthay from the age of twelve. She made her concert debut in London in 1907 with Beecham conducting, and during the following year appeared for the first time with Sir Henry Wood, with whom she was to collaborate frequently. Her international career commenced in 1912 when she appeared in the Netherlands with Willem Mengelberg. During the Second World War she presented daily lunchtime concerts at the National Gallery in London.

Following a heart attack in 1960, her health declined rapidly. Dame Myra Hess was especially celebrated for her piano transcriptions of the music of Bach, which achieved great popularity. During the later part of her career she was renowned for her interpretations of the final Beethoven piano sonatas, frequently performing the last three in recital. Her playing possessed unforced warmth, poetry and poise, as well as powerful reserves of strength when required.

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