

CEDRIC THORPE DAVIE (1913- 1983)

by Dr. David C.F. Wright

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Cedric Thorpe Davie had a charisma but was not a God-like figure. He was not an arrogant or pompous man in the Elgar/ Britten mould. He had a big, beaming smile and was unpretentious, lively, full of fun but could be unsure of himself and, as a result, occasionally juvenile. It was rarely that he was in a black mood. Indeed, he had a childlike, mischievous behaviour at times which endured him both to his friends and students alike. He was never a foolish man but very hospitable and fond of children. They were never a nuisance to him.

He was a neat, well-groomed man with good looks, iron-gray hair and an almost supercilious look due to his full lips and prominent mouth and thick arched eyebrows. He never lost his dignity but was not forbidding. He retained his Glaswegian accent with its sing-song quality. He was a warm and friendly man. As a man of fun and wit his students liked him. For the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, he wrote his engaging Divisions on a theme of Thomas Arne which was revived at the Last Night of the Proms in 1955.

He was a good conductor and particularly loved working at Boyce symphonies and music by the Earl of Kelly. He was exceptionally good at rehearsals with the St. Andrews University Orchestra

Like many of his generation his political views were left-wing and, as to religion, he was a sceptic.

After composing the score for the Walt Disney film he called his car Rob Roy and this was a part of the curious enthusiasm he had for trivial things. He was a cat lover as, for example, were Humphrey Searle and Alan Rawsthorne. Cedric had a Siamese cat. To take time off from his teaching, he went weekly to Scottish Country Dancing and collected Scots malt whisky. He was an accomplished book binder and bound his own scores and he was very interested in spiders. He seldom told a joke but maintained a dry style of speech. In his teaching on the history of music and its analysis he displayed a real keenness for Tovey. He never condemned a student or their work. He had some interest in Carl Czerny and loved "Catholic" Bach. Among his friends were Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson. In fact, he edited some of Finzi's scores. At one time at St Andrews, the set works for study were Ferguson's 'Octet' and Walton's magnificent 'Viola Concerto'.

As well as the film score for Rob Roy in 1953 starring Richard Todd he composed the music for the 1959 film Kidnapped with the splendid Peter Finch, the same year as The Bridal Path starring Bill Travers which has some excellent Scottish location scenery. But, in my opinion, his finest film score was for the 1956 Rank film Jacqueline based on the novel A Grand Man by Catherine Cookson, There is an excellent cast with John Gregson, Kathleen Ryan and Jacqueline Ryan in the title role with excellent support from Cyril Cusack, Maureen Delaney, Mairie Keane (an exceptional actress) and Noel Purcell. The film was defamed. Some called it another Pollyana and others just called it mawkish.

Davie played the organ at St Andrews University and at Queen's Park Parish Church.

Cedric was also a good pianist and wrote a 'Concerto for piano and string orchestra' for his friend, Wight Henderson premiered in March 1944 in the Stevenson Hall of the RSAMD by the Glasgow string Orchestra and Henderson. It is a lightweight but attractive work.

He was Master of Music at St Andrews from 1948 having founded the music department and built it up. When he retired he gave a performance of Czerny's Variations on a theme of Haydn with himself as the soloist.

He had many hobbies to engage him in his retirement. He had his cottage in Dalry, Kirkcudbright and he loved to visit Spitzbergen for the winter sunshine. He was also fond of Greenland and the Scandinavian countries. He once told me that one of the happiest moments in his life was meeting Sibelius which is why he went to Finland.

But to go back to the beginning. He was born in Glasgow in May, 1913, the son of a well-known Glasgow musician, a choirmaster of Welsh extraction who was a strict disciplinarian and attended Glasgow High School and then the Scottish National Academy of Music where he took top prize in his first year. He was one of the first Caird scholars and, in 1932, began his studies in London both at the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music where his teachers included Vaughan Williams, Eric Thiman, Aubrey Brain, Gordon Jacob, R. O. Morris and Harold Craxton. He was a prize-winning student winning both the Cobbett Prize for his Phantasie Quartet (1935) and Sullivan Prizes for The Dirge of Cuthullin

which he dedicated to his future wife, Margaret Russell Brown. He made his first performing debut at RAM in October 1934 playing Bach. He was fortunate in being able to assist with his father's choir and learned about vocal and choral music. His studies continued with Egon Petri in Germany, Zoltan Kodaly in Bucharest and Yrjo Kilpinen in Helesinki. He returned to Glasgow in 1936 and began to teach at the Scottish Academy supplementing his income as a church organist at St Margaret's South Side. At that time the only composer in Scotland of any consequence was Francis George Scott, but Davie was interested in the work of Erik Chisholm who tried to interest people in more adventurous music. Perhaps Davie's first real success was his 'Fantasy no. 1 on Scottish Tunes' broadcast by the BBC Scottish Orchestra under Ian Whyte in 1938. No less a person than George Szell took it up and first conducted it in December of the same year.

In 1945, Cedric Thorpe Davie was appointed to the Music department of St. Andrews. He was meticulous in his teaching and believed that all music should have form, hence his excellent book 'Musical Structure and Design'. From 1973 to 1978 he was professor of music, and then he retired. He was at St Andrews for 33 years.

After the Second World War the 'Daily Express' launched a composition competition to those who had served in the war and they had to write a symphony. Cedric won second prize with his attractive 'Symphony in C' which is inscribed "In Honour of My Brother" and was first performed at the Albert Hall under the legendary Constant Lambert on 7 July 1946. The finale is a victory march and is very tuneful and impressive recalling the final movement of 'The Pines of Rome' by Respighi.

Some opined that this promising start to a career in composition was not maintained although he wrote a symphonic poem Beggar's Benison and, in 1950, set verses by Maurice Lindsay in his Ode for St Andrew's Night for tenor, chorus and orchestra.

The success of the symphony caught the attention of the film producer Sidney Box and introduced him to composing film music with *The Brothers* in 1947 a very successful film concerning an orphan girl who comes to Skye at the turn of the century and causes superstition, sexual jealousy and tragedy. The same year he wrote the music for *Snowbound* about groups of people who meet in a ski hut in Switzerland all after Nazi treasure. It was not an outstanding film but had an outstanding cast lead by Robert Newton. During 1948/9 he was writing the score for *The Bad Lord Byron* starring Denis Price with a superb performance from Joan Greenwood. Byron imagines that he is in a Heavenly Court and his life is under review.

During the war Thorpe Davie worked with the Fire Brigade in the docklands of Glasgow. He found the war utterly repugnant.

However, the symphony has been taken up by Ian Whyte, Norman Del Mar and Sir John Barbirolli. As a result of this endearing success, Cedric was asked to write the score for the film 'The Brothers'. Other film scores followed including Walt Disney productions such as 'Rob Roy' and 'Kidnapped'. The tight deadline for writing film scores led him to write certain scores which imply a deadline such as 'Directions for a map', a setting by his friend Alistair Reid, which work is scored for soprano and string quartet having been commissioned for the 1956 McEwan Memorial Concerts. He used to say that he was given three weeks to write 'Rob Roy' and two months for 'Directions'.

Cedric wrote an opera, 'Gammer Gurton's Needle', based on the fifteenth century morality play. In fact, many people who know Cedric's work believe that his setting of words constitute his most successful pieces.

When the author and playwright Robert Kemp (1908-1967) was asked to prepare David Lindsay's extensive play 'The Three Estates' for the Edinburgh International Festival, Cedric was asked to write the music. It was performed there in 1948 and repeated in 1949 and 1951 and revived by Tyrone Guthrie in 1959. It brought him more recognition. This encouraged him to set Allan Ramsay's ballad-opera *The Gentle Shepherd* in 1949. For the Braemar Festival he set Burns's *The Jolly Beggars* which has been televised, broadcast and was issued on a LP.

His style is tonal and conventional and shows fine craftsmanship.

As I have said, Cedric got on well with his students and with children. He adjudicated at festivals, examined for various bodies and occasionally conducted the National Youth Brass Band of Scotland. The Aberdeen Education Committee commissioned 'The Thistle and the Rose' at the time of the Coronation of Queen Elisabeth in 1953. It was an amazing success and the famous story is that the children loved it so much that they would not return their scores!

He was awarded the OBE in 1955. He had given much time to public service particularly on the Scottish

Arts Council.

He was particularly interested in all things Scottish and, late in life, wrote a short book 'Scotland's Music'. He was an expert on Scots songs and this has inspired Alan Workman and I to prepare recording of many less-known Scots songs. We will be using Cedric's compilation with George C. McVicar's 'The Oxford Scottish Song Book'. Cedric also set Robbie Burns 'The Jolly Beggars'.

One of the many endearing qualities that Cedric had was that he eschewed pomp, incompetence and sentimentality in music. Therefore, it will be realised who the composers were that he did not like. His early work may show influences of Vaughan Williams and Sibelius. If he had a weakness it was that his dislike for anything modern kept his own style unadventurous. He had a passion for reviving "ancient composers" as shown, for example, in his engaging 'Variations on a theme of Lully'.

He died on 18 January, 1983

List of works in chronological order (as far as possible)

1. Piano Trio in C minor (1932)
2. Elegy for orchestra
3. The Widow Bird, SSA
4. Concert Overture (1934)
5. Sonatina for cello and piano
6. Two songs for baritone and piano
7. The Kingdom of King Winter, an operetta for children
8. Fantasy String Quartet
9. Dirge for Cuthullin for chorus and orchestra
10. Eight little songs (1935)
11. The Land of Laughter, an operetta for children
12. Gammer Guton's Needle, one act opera (1936)
13. Suite for school orchestra (1936)
14. Sea Tangle, an operetta for children
15. Fantasia no. 1 on Scottish Tunes
16. Christ and the sinner, for contralto and piano
17. Little variations for wind quintet
18. Three Anthems
19. The Man in the Moon, an operetta for children
20. Three free arrangements for male voices
21. Sonatina for flute and piano (revised 1980)
22. Sonata for violin and piano (1939)
23. Music for the documentary film, Scotland Speaks
Two songs arranged for string quartet
24. To Mistress Margaret Hussey
25. Concerto for piano and string orchestra (1943)
26. Six Scots songs
27. Ten Scottish Dance Tunes
28. Three Scots songs
29. Scotland at War, Music for St Andrews Day
30. Six Polish folk songs
31. Music for Bridie's radio play The Switchback (1944)
32. Music for Bridie's radio play The Anatomist
33. Music for Bridie's radio drama A Change for the Worse
34. Music for Scott Moncrieff's radio play A House is Built
35. Music for Neil Gunn's radio play Sun and Moon
O Bothwell Bank for string trio
36. Music for Robert Kemp's radio programme The Ghillie
37. Music for Bridie's radio play A Sleeping Clergyman
38. Music for Birdie's radio play The Forrigan Reel (1945)

39. Music for Compton MacKenzie's Keep the Home Guard Turning
40. Symphony in C (1945)
41. Music for Scoot Moncrieff's radio nativity play Born this happy morning
42. Forrigan Suite (1946)
43. Music for Bridie's radio play The King of Nowhere
44. Music for Robert McLellan's radio play The Carlin Moth
45. Music for radio programme commemorating the 175th anniversary of the birth of Sir Walter Scott
46. Music for John Keir Cross's radio programme The Balloon
47. Arrangements of 12 Scottish Tunes for the play To meet the Macgregors
48. The Trumpeter of Fyvie
49. For St Andrew Day
50. Two Christmas carols
51. Music for the feature film The Brothers (1947)
52. Music for Robert Kemp's radio programme The Country Mouse goes to town
53. The Gentle Shepherd
54. The Beggar's benison
55. Airs from The Beggar's Opera
56. Music for the feature film Snowbound (1947)
57. Variations on Sid Walker's signature tune Day after Day
58. Music for Jessie Kesson's radio play Winter Wud
59. Music for the documentary film The Future of Scotland
60. The Three Estates (1948 revised 1951)
61. Music for the radio play The Grey Wind
62. Under the greenwood tree
63. Six poems by Violet Jacob
64. Music for The Shulamite
65. Music for radio version of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's Sunset Song (1948)
66. Music for the radio adaptation of Waverley
67. Music for the feature film The Bad Lord Byron
68. Orpheus and Euridice (1948-9)
69. Music for radio production of Sydney Goodsir Smith's Tristram & Iseult
70. Music for Henry VIII (1949)
71. The Gentle Shepherd (as Op. 53?)
72. Two fanfares
73. Variations on a theme by A C Mackenzie (1949)
74. Prelude on the psalm-tune Martyrs
75. Variants on The Deil's awa for the radio play The Real Mackay
76. Music for the radio play The Casket Forgery
77. Music for the radio version of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's Cloud House
78. Two Songs (1950)
79. Music for Robert Kemp's radio production of It paid to advertise
80. Three Scottish folk songs
81. Two Gaelic Songs
82. Music for Shakespeare's King Lear (1950)
83. Solemn Music
84. Music for John Home's Douglas
85. Festal Overture
86. Ode for St Andrews Night
87. Music for the feature film South Africa Story (1950)
88. Music for the St Andrews Night radio programme Seas between us
89. Three Songs for Alexander Scott's radio play The Jerusalem farers
90. Music for the radio version of Bridie's The Gillie (1951)
91. Incidental music and three songs for Scott Moncrieff's radio programme The Craftsman's Hand

92. Flowers from the rock
93. Fanfares
94. By the river
95. The Simmer Dim
96. Music for A Midsummer Night's Dream
97. 33 fanfares
98. Music for David Fergus's radio play The Noblest prospect
Six Scottish folk songs for voice and piano
99. Six Scottish folk songs for voice and piano(one arranged for voice and string quartet?)
100. Six Scottish folk songs for tenor and piano
101. Music for the documentary film The Highland Laddie
102. Faill ill o-ho-ro (1952)
103. Music for the feature film You're only young twice (1952)
104. Music for the documentary film The heart is highland
105. The Highland Fair, ballad opera
106. Royal Mile (1952)
107. The Thistle and the Rose (1952-3)
108. True Thomas lay on Huntly Bank for unaccompanied baritone
109. Gaelic Song Maili bheag og
110. The Jolly Beggars, cantata
The Soldiers 's Song from above, baritone and SATB
111. Deil's Work (1953)
112. Royal fanfare
113. Music for the feature film Rob Roy
114. Music for the radio programme Scottish Journey
115. A Princess for a prize, comic opera
116. Mairi mhin mheal shuilach (1954)
117. Music for radio production of Hugh MacDiarmid's A Drunk man looks at the Thistle
118. Two part songs
119. Six Scottish folk songs
120. Three songs from Shakespeare's Twelfth Night
121. Overture and three entr' actes for above
122. Music for the documentary Miner's Widow (1954)
123. Diversions on a tune by Dr Arne for orchestra
The Schoolboy International (1954)
124. An Coineachhan, a fairy lullaby
125. Music for the feature film The Dark Avenger
126. Music for the Gateway Theatre Edinburgh production of Marigold
Villikens and his Dinah
127. Music for the radio programme Heritage
128. Music for the documentary film Heat in harness
The Isle of Mull, arrangement
129. Directions for a map
130. Music for Neil Gunn's play Sun and Moon
131. Music for the documentary The land of Robert Burns
132. Music for the feature film Jacqueline (1956)
133. Music for the feature film The Green Man (1956)
134. Rejoice and be merry
135. Music for the children's feature film The Kid from Canada
136. Music for the Old Vic production of Two Gentlemen of Verona
137. There was a lad was born in Kyle
138. The twa sisters (1957)
139. Two minutes of music for clarinet and harp for the documentary The Enchanted Islands

140. Music for The Atom of Delight retitled The Boy and the salmon (1957)
141. Music for the documentary film Wales
142. Music for the film Scotland
143. Seven Scottish folksongs (1957)
144. Music for the radio programme An Autumn Saturday
145. Arrangements of two Scottish songs
146. Arrangements of two Scottish songs for voice and chamber orchestra
147. Songs and incidental music for the play The Brass Butterfly
148. Scotland the Brave (1958)
149. Seven Scottish folksongs
Daughters of Scotland ; Auld Lang Syne
150. Music for the feature film Rockets galore
151. Music for the feature film The Bridal path
152. Fanfares for Tyrone Guthrie's production of The Merchant of Venice
153. The Wreck of the Hesperus
154. Music for the feature film Kidnapped
155. Cutty Sark, a comic opera
156. Music for the feature film A terrible beauty
Johnny Cope?
157. Tam O'Shanter's Tryst (1959)
On Errnicks banks? Jockey said...
158. Music for STV programme on W D Cooker (1960)
159. Music for STV feature on Burns Night
160. Gur gille mo leannan (1961)
161. Royal Mile arranged for brass band
162. Overture and incidental music for Edinburgh festival production of Robert Kemp's Let Wives tak
tent
163. Ave Maria and Magnificat for Gateway theatre production of That Old serpent
164. Variations on a theme of Lully for brass band
165. Two Gaelic Songs (1962)
166. Music for Robert Kemp's edition of Rob Roy
167. Three Scottish folksongs
168. Music for the television play The Honours of drumlie
169. Two shorts Burns Overtures
170. Five Scottish folksongs
171. Music for the radio play Armstrong's last goodnight
172. Fantasia no. 2 on Scottish tunes
173. Two Scottish folksongs
174. Music for play A servant of twa maisters for the opening of Edinburgh Civic Theatre
175. Opening and closing music for the opening concert of BBC 2 in Scotland
176. I was glad (1966)
177. New Town Suite (1966-7)
178. The Ballad of St John's Town
Miscellaneous songs
179. Four Burns Songs
The Bonnie Earl of Moray (1973)
180. Editor and arranger of The Oxford Scottish song Book (1968)
181. Flodden Field
182. Seven Scottish folksongs
183. Auld Lang Syne (1979)
184. Variations and fugue on The Wee Cooper of Fife (1981)
185. The Queen's Maries
- 186-9. Various arrangements of Hendervic, Schubert and John Farmer

190. The bonnie lass o' Ballochonyle (date unknown)

191 My love's in Germanie (date unknown)

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