



Mark Sumner, *conductor*
William García Ganz, *assistant conductor*

in concert with

Perfect Fifth
UC Men's Chorale
UC Women's Chorale
First Unitarian Universalist Choir
of San Francisco
UC Wind Ensemble,
Bob Calonico, *director*

William Walton's choral masterwork

Belshazzar's



Feast

and other works

Sunday April 17, 2005
Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley campus

Programme

Notturmo, Op. 40

Antonín Dvořák

As a budding composer, Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) fell completely under the influence of Richard Wagner. In 1869 and 1870 he composed three string quartets, in B-flat, D, and E minor filled with Wagnerian endless melody, sequential chromatic harmonies, and climactic intensification. Some time later, in an excess of critical passion, he destroyed them all as unworthy of his goals. But the performing parts survived, so the scores could be reconstructed. The most interesting part of the discarded quartets is the slow movement, *Andante religioso*, of the E-minor quartet. Dvorak reworked it twice. First he added a part for double-bass and inserted it as the first of two slow movements in his G-major string quintet, Opus 77. Then, deciding that two slow movements seemed to be too much, he removed it from the quintet, reworked it for string orchestra, and sent it out into the world as the Nocturne, Opus 40.

The general tempo marking of the piece is *Andante religioso* and the melody, on the first violins, is virtually continuous. It is notable that for more than half its length the cello's bass remains unchanged, being quietly adorned by the pizzicato of the double bass, below the harmonies of the second violins and violas.

Overture from Belshazzar

George F. Handel

George F. Handel wrote the oratorio, *Belshazzar* in 1744. The fate of the hedonistic King, determined to bring about his own ruin through his alcohol-fuelled libertine lifestyle, is transformed into a tragedy by the heartfelt love and fear of his long-suffering mother Nictoris, who has converted to worshipping the true God of Israel (with aid from the conveniently placed prophet Daniel). The self-destructive King, doomed after he orders the gold vessels pillaged from the Temple at Jerusalem to be used at a drunken feast, is the model of selfish and idolatrous Kingship. In contrast, the invading Persian King Cyrus is the perfect monarch who shows dignity, compassion, modesty, respect, and wisdom. The secondary character Gobrias thirsts for revenge due to Belshazzar's murder of his son. The emotionally complex relationships between the five main characters produce a magnificent drama comfortably on a par with his more popular and familiar oratorios.

Psalm 96

Jan P. Sweelinck

Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, (1562-1621) Dutch organist, harpsichordist, composer, and teacher, spent most of his life in Amsterdam. In 1580 he became the organist of the Oude Kerk (Old Church) succeeding his father, Pieter. Though he never ventured much out of Holland, Sweelinck's influence spread through the North German organ school via his students, who include Scheidt, Scheidemann, Praetorius, and Hasse.

Sweelinck's compositional style was also highly influential. He was the first to use independent pedal parts, including fugue subjects in the pedal line. He took many important forms from around Europe, including the Italian *ricercar* and the English virginal style, expanding and developing them in ways unknown before. In fact, many of his pieces contain the embryo of the fugue form, later perfected by J. S. Bach. His compositions bridge the gap from the Renaissance to the Baroque periods.

Sweelinck set all 150 psalms in French metrical versions for three to eight voices, using melodies from the Genevan psalter as *cantus firmi*.

Psalm 96: *Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.*

Sing to the Lord, bless his name; announce his salvation day after day.

Super flumina Babylonis

Giovanni p. Luigi de Palestrina

Giovanni per Luigi de Palestrina was born in the town of Palestrina, southeast of Rome. He studied singing at the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome beginning about 1537. In 1544 he became organist and choir director at the cathedral in Palestrina, leaving in 1551 to become choirmaster at the Julian Chapel at Saint Peter's in Rome. His next positions were also in Rome, at Saint John Lateran (1555-60), at Santa Maria Maggiore (1561-66), and as master of music at a seminary for Jesuits (1565-71). His music remained close to the mystical and highly ritualized spirit of the church.

The serenity of Palestrina's style arises from several technical sources. His music is vocal; no parts are written specifically for instruments. All the voice parts have a similar character, producing a homogeneous sound. The music is almost always contrapuntal, with simultaneously sounding, equally important melodic lines. Although Palestrina used only a few chords in any one composition, he altered the manner in which the individual tones of each chord were spaced among the various voice parts. He thus achieved subtle changes while maintaining a general feeling of constancy. In rhythm he avoided the feeling of a strong pulse by allowing each voice part to have its own accent patterns independent of the other parts. He created a subtle pulse by confining dissonant, or unstable, tones to weak beats within a measure and always placing consonant, or stable, tones on strong beats. Finally, his melodic lines unfold in long, gentle curves in which any large leaps upward or downward are balanced by a return to the center of the curve.

Palestrina's religious music includes 102 masses, 250 motets, 35 magnificats, 68 offertories, 45 hymns, and other works. His secular works include many madrigals. Unlike most influential composers, Palestrina was not primarily an innovator in musical technique. Rather, he provided a model for other composers to emulate when they wished to recapture the mystical religious tone that his music exemplifies.

The complete translation for one of Palestrina's most often performed motets, *Super flumina Babylonis*, can be found in the opening lines of *Belshazzar's Feast*.

Psalm 150

Giuseppe Pitoni

Pitoni, Giuseppe (1657-1743), Italian musical composer, was born at Rieti in 1657. He came to Rome as a boy and sang in the choir of SS Apostoli. Foggia gave him instructions in counterpoint, and he became maestro di Cappella, first at Terra di Rotondo and later (1673) at Assisi. In 1676 he went to Rieti, and in 1677 to Rome, where he held various appointments, dying on the 1st of February, 1743 as maestro di Cappella at St Marco, where he was buried. Pitoni appears to have devoted himself exclusively to church music, and although he did not disdain the modern style with instrumental accompaniment, he is best known by his Masses and other works in the manner of Palestrina.

Psalm 150: *Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in his might firmament!
Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp!
Praise Him with loud crashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Alleluia!*

Romance in C, Op. 42

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Written in 1903, the Romance belongs to the composer's middle period. It is an attractive small-scale work, rather rhapsodic in form yet clearly divisible into sections and containing a recapitulation. It has many endearing aspects, not least of which is the surprising first chord. The opening unaccompanied theme suggests that the piece is going to be in E minor, but this impression is contradicted when the theme's final note is harmonized with a C major chord.

Intermission

Belshazzar's Feast

William Walton

Performers

Hugh Davies was born and educated in England, and started his singing career as a boy chorister at St. Albans Abbey under the direction of Peter Hurford and Simon Preston. While a student at Cambridge University, he was a Choral Scholar at King's College, under the direction of David Willcocks.

As a professional singer based in London, he appeared with Glyndebourne Opera and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and performed as a soloist with leading choirs and orchestras throughout Europe. He was a member of the Monteverdi Choir, the Schütz Choir and the John Alldis Choir, and made many recordings and broadcasts on television and radio.

After teaching music in Australia for two years, Hugh Davies moved to California. He now sings in the San Francisco area both as a soloist and as a member of several professional ensembles, and has appeared with groups such as Theatre of Voices, the American Bach Soloists, the California Bach Society, Magnificat, the Santa Rosa Symphony, the Sonoma County Bach Choir and the Albany Consort.

Hugh is also President of ACFEA Tour Consultants, a worldwide organization that arranges tours for performing arts groups. ACFEA has been arranging tours for UC Berkeley groups since the early 1980s.

Mark Sumner has been both the Director of UC Berkeley's Choral Ensembles and the Director of Music at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Francisco for the past eight years. At Berkeley he conducts the UC Alumni Chorus, the UC Women's Chorale, Perfect Fifth, is musical director of BareStage, the student managed musical theater group, and administers five other singing groups. His previous teaching experience includes choral music conducting at UC Santa Barbara, at the University of Southern California, and eight years in his hometown, Sapulpa, Oklahoma. He has an extensive background as a professional performer, having sung with the American Bach Soloists, San Francisco Chamber Singers (Volti), the Los Angeles Chamber Singers and Cappella, the St. Marks School Schola Cantorum, Zephyr, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Los Angeles Music Center Opera, Tulsa Opera and Dallas Civic Opera. He has also served as musical and stage director for various theater companies.

A native of Oklahoma, Mark received his Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Music from The University of Southern California, his Master of Music in Choral Conducting from Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas and his Bachelor's degree from Oklahoma State University. He was the recipient of several music scholarships including the Gordon Getty Music scholarship at USC. He was also the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from the Sapulpa Board of Education in 1989.

Wm. García Ganz, Associate Director of UC Choral Ensembles, conducts the UC Men's Chorale, the Cal Jazz Choir, and assists with the UC Alumni Chorus. In 1999, while Acting Director of UCCE, he led the Alumni Chorus on tour to the United Kingdom. He has long been active in the San Francisco/Bay Area choral arena, and for many years directed the SF Cable Car Chorus and the Golden Gate Men's Chorus. He earned his graduate degree in conducting from San Francisco State University, studying with Byron MacGilvray, Laslo Varga, and Karla Lemon. He has also studied with Rodney Eichenberger and Greg Lyne. In addition to his conducting activities, he maintains a private studio teaching and coaching both voice and piano.

The **UC Alumni Chorus** (UCAC) is a 90 member ensemble composed of UC alumni, faculty, staff, graduate students and community members. Their repertoire includes a wide variety of music in many musical styles, ranging from 16th century classical works to 20th century musical theater, and, of course, CAL songs. Formed in 1985 by a small group of UC Berkeley alumni, UCAC's mission has been to represent the Cal community as a high quality performance chorus and to provide financial support for the student groups of UC Choral Ensembles (UCCE). The chorus has performed abroad, recently touring the Baltics and Russia. The chorus will finish this season performing Verdi's *Macbeth* in collaboration with the Berkeley Opera: May 7, 11, 13, and 15 at the Julia Morgan Center for the Arts.

Perfect Fifth (P5), the UC Choral Ensembles' (UCCE) small a cappella choir specializes in medieval and Renaissance music and contemporary art music. P5 performs throughout the bay area, recently at the Pier 39 Tree lighting, Yo Yo Ma's Silk Road Project, and Mark Morris' Hard Nut. In May 2004, P5 accompanied the Alumni Chorus on tour to Finland, Latvia, Russia, and Estonia.

The **Women's Chorale** is undergraduate and graduate students at UC Berkeley who love to sing for FUN! Though the chorale draws its repertoire primarily from the choral music written for female voices from all historical periods. The Chorale tours annually and performs at a variety of University and community events. The Women's Chorale is also the resident choir of Cal Performances/Mark Morris Dance Group's *The Hard Nut*.

Since its founding in 1885, the **UC Men's Chorale** has drawn members with a wide variety of backgrounds and musical experience. Under the direction of William Garcia Ganz, the Men's Chorale sings a variety of music including classical, folk, spirituals, and show tunes from various cultures. The group regularly performs the national anthem and Cal songs at campus events.

The **First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco adult choir** performs from a large repertoire of classical, liturgical, and modern music approximately three Sundays each month with summers off. The annual schedule includes special holiday music, a spring concert of a major work with orchestra, and performances with the combined choirs of other Bay Area UU congregations. Believing that the wonders of the universe outspill every category into which we try to fit them and that the ultimate meaning of our lives can never be permanently reduced to a brief written statement, Unitarian Universalists choose not to organize our church around a creed. The Mission of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco is to be a sanctuary for individual religious growth and learning, to celebrate life and worship in diverse fellowship, to bear witness to suffering and joy, and to work for peace and justice in our world.

UC Alumni Chorus	Michelle Oltman	Perfect Fifth	Erin McFeely	Grace Troupe	Ernie Hinds	<i>Tympani</i>
<i>Soprano</i>	Alma Raymond	<i>Soprano</i>	Evelyn Chang	Theresa Johnson	Bill Klingelhoffer	John Manrique
Susan Bernstein**	Judy Roberts**	Stacy Rutz	Kristina Minor	Jody Lin	Mike McGirr	<i>Percussion</i>
Erica Breneman	Debbie Sanford	Caitlin Brickman	Mara Booster	*Section Leader	Ken Newman	Dylan Wilkerson
Kate Caldwell	Susan Stanley	<i>Mezzo</i>	Mary Prescop	#Board Member	UC Wind Ensemble	Jason Mukai
Wendy Chou	Carol Suveda	Sabrina Santiago	Nadine Spingola	**Officer		Monique Rheume
Lizzie Coyle	Julia Viamonte	Athena Kirk	<i>Soprano II</i>	First Unitarian Universalist Society of SF Choir	<i>Piccolo/Flute:</i>	String Orchestra
Doris Fine	Ann Watrous	<i>Alto</i>	Jessica Lam *		Sue-Ting Cheng	Robin May, contractor
Rose Forest	Mary Widenor	Hyung-Gyu Park	Charisse Carolino	<i>Soprano:</i>	<i>Flute</i>	<i>Violin I</i>
Mary Gallahue	Pazit Zohar	<i>Tenor</i>	Christina Kim	Mary Castiglia	Shaochen Wu	Nathan Rubin,
Erin Gray	<i>Tenor</i>	Keith Rarick	Christy Lai	Vergilia Dakin	<i>Oboe/English Horn</i>	concertmaster
Elizabeth Green	Anand Aswarte	Anand Aswarte	Effie Hsu **	Karen Darr	Nick Rastegar	Vivian Warkentin
Marisa Knox	Gan Bai	<i>Baritone</i>	Grace Kang	Kathleen Duncan	<i>Oboe</i>	Robin Hansen
Marian Kohlstedt	Dennis Butzlaff	Joey Tuan	Jane Park	Toni Gabel	Scott Moura	Lina Bouze
Eva Lee	Joshua Cairns**	<i>Bass</i>	Julia Lee	Elen Nettlebeck	<i>Clarinet</i>	Ellen Gronningen
Julie Lewis	Ben Files	Daniel Chen	Kasia Langer	Audrey Parvin	Michael Tsia	Lawrence Hansen
Elizabeth Mayer	Jon Johnsen	Ari Nieh	Katie Estrada	Judy Payne	Nathan Bramall	<i>Violin II</i>
*Karen Moore	Stan Lee	UC Men's Chorale	Lauren Polinsky	Millie Phillips	<i>Bass Clarinet</i>	Cynthia Mei
Susan Parkinson	Virginia Lew**	<i>Tenor 1</i>	Lulu Chiu	Laurel Sprigg	Brett Voss	Adrienne
Connie Philipp	*Monte Meyers	Wayne Hsu	Michelle Yang	Maria Solis	<i>Alto Saxophone</i>	Duckworth
Kelly Powers	Eric Miller**	Robert Lawson**	Minal Patel	Alice Whealey	Zack Bruno	John Tenney
Joyce Putnam	John Moreno	Kevin Lee	Ming Cheng	Jiun-Chyi Yew	<i>Bassoon</i>	Su Buchighani
Luanne Rogers	Robert Peri	Antonio Castillo	Rachael Robertson	<i>Alto:</i>	Keith Leung	Lisa Pratt
Stacy Rutz	David Poland	Khang Nguyen	Stephanie Pace	Bernice Biggs	Kat Reisinger	Rachel Durling
Sarita Shaevitz	Mark Popeney	Raymond Lew	Sue-Ting Chene	Linda Enger	<i>Contrabassoon</i>	Tom Heimberg
Kathy Selleck	Ken Sanderson	Paul Huang	<i>Alto I</i>	Ardeth Fortier	Scott Hayman	David Cann
Cathy Thompson**	Ken Wait	<i>Baritone</i>	Maylin Jue *	Grita Gustafson	<i>French Horn</i>	Janice Negherbon
Stacy Tsukayama	Tom Watrous	Taylen Richards	Anne Awaya	Charlotte Langmaid	Albert Boniske	Wieslaw
Katie Woodruff	Paul Worhach	Dale Dualan	Grace Line	Paula Regan	Ryan Miyakawa	Pogorzelski
Jiun Chyi Yew	<i>Bass</i>	Tim Alexander	Jennifer Kong	Anna Rind	Jessie Wusthoff	Martha Rubin
<i>Alto</i>	Andy Anderson	Gregory Tseng	Jennifer Young	Janet Scott	Kyle Bashaw	Darien Cande
Jody Ames #	David Briggs	<i>Bass</i>	Katie Heinrichs	Lucy Smith	Jordan Suhr	<i>Cello</i>
Ruth Chang #	Raymond Chen	Michael Chen	Kelly Campbell	Sharon Smith	<i>Trumpet</i>	Sharon Bogas
Kathleen Clanon	Gordon Douglass	UC Women's Chorale	Lia Marshall	Carrie Steere-Salazar	James Sharp	Stephen Evans
Mary Cousins	Ed Eng	<i>Soprano I</i>	Maggie Trinh	Edie Wolterbeek	Pat Flynn	Nick Dargahi
Sandy Douglas	Paul Farrell	Mana Kahali *	Megan Marcus	<i>Tenor:</i>	Ian Heung	Cathy Allen
Melinda Erickson	Freddy Hanson	Colleen Ho	Melissa Higbee	Thomas Atwood	<i>Trombone</i>	Jeff Parish
*Cricket Evans #	Mark Johnson	Dalia Yadegar	Sara Kheel	David Jones	Erik Sudin	Robert Proctor
Julie Goldwyn	Don Leighton	Dana Horton	Sun Lee	Jack Ronan	Jonathan De La Paz	<i>Bass</i>
Lora Graham**	David Metcalf	Danielle Bloch	<i>Alto II</i>	Hermia Webber	<i>Bass Trombone</i>	Pat McCarthy
Kathie Hardy #	Robert Moore	Diana Yu	Pearl Chen *	<i>Bass:</i>	Joe West	David Sullivan
Margery Lackman	Doug Raymond #	<i>Soprano</i>	Joana Goic	Matt Anderson	<i>Tuba</i>	Owen Levine
*Joanne Lafler	Daniel Smith	<i>Alto</i>	Sarah Varki	Dick Endres	Mark McDonald	Ellen Lim
Cathy Less	*Gary Smith	<i>Soprano</i>	Sandy Tsang			
Virginia Lew**	Hannes Sternerson	<i>Tenor</i>	Joyce Hon			
Christina Martin	Garrett Turner	<i>Baritone</i>	Mary Combs			
Kristen Nickel**		<i>Bass</i>				

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Belshazzar's Feast: text and notes

Sir Osbert Sitwell (1892-1969), who arranged the text for "Belshazzar's Feast," was a member of a gifted literary family and the author of poems, novels, short stories and memoirs. For "Belshazzar's Feast" he interwove and adapted passages from the Old and New Testament.

(Quotations below are from the Kings James version.)

The opening lines are based on Isaiah, Chapter 39, verses 6-7:

Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall be taken away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

The passage beginning "By the waters of Babylon" is based upon Psalm 137, which is one of the most famous laments of exile and captivity:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

The passage beginning: "Babylon was a great city" is based on the Book of Revelations, Chapter 18, verse 12.

The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen...and all manner vessels of ivory...

The passages about the feast of Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall come from the Book of Daniel, chapter 5:

Belshazzar the King made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. (1)

Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. (2)

They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of

silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. (4)

In that same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. (5)

And this is the writing that was written, ME-NE, ME-NE, TE-KEL, U-PHAR-SIN. (25)

TE-KEL; thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting. (27)

In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. (30)

The passage beginning: "Then the King commanded us: Bring ye the cornet, flute, sackbut [trombone], psaltery" is based on Chapter 3, verse 5 of the Book of Daniel, which describes events during the reign of Belshazzar's father, Nebuchadnezzar:

That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar.

The lines "Then sing aloud to God our strength; make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob" come from Psalm 81.

Throughout the rest of the piece, Sitwell interspersed these lines with passages from Chapter 18 of the Book of Revelations, which tells of the fall of Babylon.

Babylon the great is fallen. (2)

Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet... (3)

And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee... (22)

And the light of the candle shall shine no more in thee (23)

The Babylonian Captivity and Its Contemporary Relevance

The exile of the Jews in Babylon is an historical event that occurred during the 6th century B.C.E. after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar. The date for the first deportation of Jews to Babylon is commonly given as 597 B.C.E. and the captivity lasted until 538, when Babylon fell to the Persian king Cyrus. Most of the Jews who had been taken into exile returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple. They had been treated reasonably well in Babylon, being allowed to practice their religion and maintain their cultural identity. But exile is exile; captivity is captivity. The painfulness of exile would be remembered in the haunting opening lines of Psalm 137.

For many Biblical prophets, the city of Babylon embodied all that was bad: great wealth, power, godlessness and pride. Its fall, therefore, was considered an occasion for rejoicing, not only because the Jews were able to return to their homeland but because the mighty had fallen. Babylon's relevance for us is that it was located on the Euphrates River in present-day Iraq.

William Walton was born to a choirmaster/singing teacher father and a mother who also sang. As a boy he took piano and violin lessons, without any marked success, and sang in his father's choir at St. John's Church Oldham, England. There is no evidence of a particular interest in music, but he had a good voice and was a natural singer. He entered the Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford school at age ten, started composing at twelve and became an undergraduate at Oxford at sixteen. Repeatedly failing "Responsions" he never got his degree.

For the next ten years, he lived as the 'adopted, or elected, brother' of Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell, whom he had met at Oxford. Although viewed with alarm in Oldham, this was an excellent arrangement, giving Walton the freedom to compose and greatly broadening his cultural experience.

From 1923-24, Walton spent his time immersed in jazz, writing and scoring fox-trots for the Savoy Orpheus Band and working on a monumentally planned concerto for two pianos, jazz band and orchestra. This remains legendary; no trace of the foxtrots has been found, and the 'concerto' was withdrawn, and possibly destroyed, when about to be performed. Clearly, the syncopation found in 'the Feast' derives from this experience. Equally clearly, Walton was finding his way, reacting sharply first against a Schoenbergian intellectualism and then against its antidote.

In his mid-20s, and widely regarded as an *enfant terrible*, Walton was achieving a position quite different from that of any other English composer. He was often thought of as an English extension of Les Six, but the continental figure he had most in common with was probably Prokofiev. It seems likely that Prokofiev's Violin Concerto served as a model for his own Viola Concerto, widely regarded as Walton's masterpiece. The concerto, at once deeply poetic and of real formal stature, commanded a response far beyond the 'modern music' circles of the day, and it gave Walton the confidence to challenge English musical conservatism in its innermost stronghold, the choral festival. This he did with *Belshazzar's Feast*.

In 1929, Walton was invited by the BBC to compose, for a fee of 50 guineas, a choral work for small chorus, small orchestra of no more than 15 players, and a vocal soloist. Walton accepted the commission, but having worked on it for some months came to realize that his subject demanded a much larger work. A large work it became, though too massive apparently for a work written specifically for broadcasting, so Walton and the BBC agreed that he would later write something else for them. In actual fact, he never did, the success of his big choral composition perhaps sweeping away from all minds any thought of a radio commission.

We call *Belshazzar's Feast* a large work, not because of its length, for it runs for a mere 40 minutes, but for the reason that it is massive in the forces it uses. It is an oratorio for double eight-part mixed choir, baritone voice and greatly enlarged orchestra: conceived for two offstage brass bands as well as the full winds and strings, large percussion battery, 2 harps, piano and organ.

Early in 1931 it was announced that it would have its first performance at the Leeds Festival later that year. No doubt it became part of the Festival because the programme already included Berlioz' Requiem, a large scale work requiring vast choral and orchestral resources—ideally 210 voices and an immense orchestra, including at one point four additional brass bands. And it was this last fact that almost certainly gave rise to the following memorable moment in the progress of *Belshazzar's Feast's* composition.

Thomas Beecham was the Festival's director, although instead of conducting it himself he allocated the Walton piece to Malcolm Sargent. Nevertheless Beecham had several discussions on the work

with the composer during 1931. According to an interview Walton gave to the Daily Mail in 1972, Beecham had early in the proceedings become pessimistic about *Belshazzar's Feast's* future, and "declared in his best seigneurial manner, "As you'll never hear the thing again, my boy, why not throw in a couple of brass bands?" So thrown in they were, and there they remain." (Quoted in Michael Kennedy's *Portrait of Walton*, 1989)

Despite Beecham's cynical warning, Walton lived to hear his *Belshazzar* many times, both in the concert hall and on record. He also conducted it himself on several occasions, two of which were released on vinyl. The last live performance of the work he attended was for his 80th birthday celebrations in March 1982, about a year before he died, with André Previn conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus. "...the audience's reception for *Belshazzar* moved Walton to tears — and there were tears, too, in the eyes of those who saw the frail, white-haired, gaunt-faced old man and remembered the debonair figure of the "white hope of English music" when it seemed he would never grow old." (Kennedy)

Other composers of works about Belshazzar had included Handel, who wrote an oratorio Belshazzar, first performed in 1745, and Sibelius, whose orchestral suite was written in 1906. Not even complete familiarity with both, however, could have prepared that Leeds audience for what they were about to experience as Malcolm Sargent, turning to face the enormous ensemble gathered before him, raised his baton for the opening bars of what is now a classic of choral music.

The oratorio begins with a brass fanfare and the prophecy of Isaiah which foretells the captivity of the Israelites in Egypt. The plight of the captive Israelites is expressed in the setting of the psalm, "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept". The baritone then lists Babylon's riches and the chorus describes the feast at which Belshazzar presided. The profanation of the vessels from the temple brings down the wrath of God; the writing on the wall tells of the King's impending death, and with the shout "slain", the chorus describes his fall. The final section is one of general rejoicing.

Some of Walton's finest works have given him a great deal of trouble. It is said that he was more a 'reluctant' composer than a 'compulsive' one. As an example, in *Belshazzar's Feast*, he was held up for seven months just on how to set to music the word 'gold'. To some extent, Walton adopted the techniques of Jean Sibelius, notably the building-up of tension over a succession of pedal points. Paul Hindemith's affinity is declared in the radiant rhetoric with which the finale is written. There is also the feeling for pageantry that opens up comparisons with Edward Elgar.

It was generally recognized that *Belshazzar's Feast* was the biggest landmark in English choral music since Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*. The fresh and vivid musical imagery, the flair for dramatic effect and realistic expression of violent collective emotions are among the qualities that struck home directly and have continued to do so. Some resisted its frankly pagan tone and/or its musical modernity: the Three Choirs Festival, in England, did not give a performance until 1957.

The first performance of *Belshazzar's Feast* was conducted by Malcolm Sargent, who in the course of the next ten years became Walton's foremost interpreter, a role that was later George Szell's and then Andre Previn's. Walton is also known for his Crown Imperial March and the Orb and Sceptre Marches, as well as a number of film scores, most notably *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Major Barbara*, *The Battle of Britain* and *The Three Sisters*.

The score to *Belshazzar's Feast* was revised considerably in 1948, and again very slightly in 1959.