



SIR JACK ALLAN WESTRUP

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1904-1975

JACK ALLAN WESTRUP was born at Dulwich on 26 April 1904, the second of the three sons of George Westrup and his wife Harriet (Allan). Although his father was not a clergyman, both his brothers entered the Church and, as the elder, the Revd. Canon Allan Westrup—all three bore 'Allan' as one of their names—has recorded: 'Both our parents were people of deep Christian faith, which was the basis and inspiration of their lives, expressed in regular worship and service for the Church. Although this naturally affected our upbringing, there was no undue compulsion on us as regards religious observance; we just took it for granted.' To which the Revd. Wilfrid Westrup adds: 'After some time at Oxford he shook loose from the orthodox traditions in which he had been brought up although he never lost his sense of ethical values. Of his religious beliefs in later life I know nothing, but I could not fail to be deeply impressed by the beautiful anthem of his, "Nearer my God to thee", that was sung at his memorial service. Perhaps there was an experience here on which we could not intrude.' Indeed this was an area, one of the areas, on which he allowed no one to intrude. His reserve as a boy often puzzled his parents and his father used to say, 'Funny boy, Jack. You never know what he is doing.' His brother adds, 'Even less did we know what he was thinking.' Jack himself wrote in a chapter on 'Problems of Biography' in his book *Sharps and Flats*: 'Each one of us has a secret self which he hides from all but a very few or one alone. . . . A man may live for years, even for his whole life, without betraying his secret mysteries.' However, Canon Westrup believes he had 'a deep if latent faith in God and Christian values'.

They were a happy, close-knit family, sharing seaside holidays each summer and enjoying Bank Holiday outings to the Surrey hills. All three boys went to Alleyn's School, Dulwich. Jack and Allan belonged to a Scout troop and had piano lessons from the music master at Alleyn's, a Mr. Carrick, who lamented Allan's slower progress: 'If only he would practise like his brother!' Actually, writes Wilfrid, who also composed hymn tunes at the piano,

Allan practised industriously, whereas Jack merely sat down to the

piano and amused himself. Jack enjoyed improvising on the piano, sometimes using irrelevant words such as 'Mr. Barclay Baron, O.B.E.' as a starting point. He also rather shocked my father, who had a harmonium on which he occasionally played hymns, by using the instrument with most unreligious bounce and gusto.

Jack not only improvised; he composed and his boyish compositions—he was no Mozart—were most carefully written out and dated. After winning a scholarship to Dulwich College he was not only trained in the classics but learned, by membership of the O.T.C. band, to play practically every brass instrument. This was an activity he enjoyed much more than rigger; one of his parlour tricks was to play the euphonium while accompanying himself with one hand at the piano, and to the end of his life he would occasionally sing military march tunes to words of the utmost impropriety. His lifelong love of Gilbert and Sullivan—as a young man in the days long before xeroxing he copied out the complete full score of *The Mikado*—probably dates from this period. His tastes were always eclectic; as a boy he enjoyed Debussy as well as Schumann and he widened his knowledge of Bach when, still at school, he had organ lessons from Dr. John Rodgers, organist of St. Saviour's, Denmark Park, for whom after a time he came to deputize. His younger brother says,

In this he showed his natural resourcefulness. One Sunday he had to cope with a bad cipher on the organ and climbing around in its upper storey he found that a pailful of water poised at a certain spot relieved the trouble. The weight, however, was not quite enough, so at the next service he stationed the large and solidly built sacristan at the same spot.

Given the task of preparing a performance of Stainer's *Crucifixion* with a very inadequate choir

he was determined to make the performance the best the church had known and boldly announced at the beginning of rehearsals that he did not expect anyone to be singing on the night who had not attended all of these. Inevitably one or two choirmen failed the test and were asked to step down. . . . The Vicar gallantly supported Jack's ruling and the performance was outstanding.

In 1923 Westrup won a music scholarship to Balliol where he read Classical Honour Mods. and Greats, taking his B.A.—a First in Mods. and Second in Greats—and B.Mus. in 1926. (He proceeded to M.A. in 1929.) 'Throughout his life he remained

proud of being a Balliol man,' writes one of his friends, Dr. George Rettie, 'but although he gained immensely from his years there he saw little of the social or esoteric side of the university as he was extremely poor.' Naturally he was deeply involved in Oxford music, playing the organ at Pusey House for a time, composing music for the Balliol Players' production of the *Oresteia*—which was performed at, among other places, St. Paul's School, Corfe Castle, and Max Gate (where Hardy left an indelible blot on Jack's memory by the profound remark, 'Ah, if those hills could speak, what a tale they could tell!')—and above all in helping to found the Oxford University Opera Club.

Westrup's performing edition of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, based on the 1615 edition in the Bodleian, was the origin both of his reputation as a musical scholar and of the Club. In 1925 W. H. Harris (later Sir William Harris), then organist of New College and director of the Sunday night Balliol concerts, conducted a performance of *Orfeo* so outstandingly successful that it was decided to found a club, which began operations with Gluck's *Alceste*, again under Harris. In 1927 Westrup himself conducted his performing edition of Monteverdi's *Coronation of Poppea*. Then, coming down from Oxford, he was awarded a research grant enabling him to spend a considerable time at Avignon collecting and studying Provençal *noëls*.¹ His work on Provençal song led indirectly to an invitation from Percy Buck to contribute a chapter on 'Song' to the revised second volume (1400–c. 1600) of the *Oxford History of Music* which Buck had in hand. It was published in 1932 and was another landmark in his career, but he had found no foothold in the musical world and reckoned himself fortunate in being able to teach classics at his old school from 1928 to 1934.

At Dulwich College he taught at two levels, as a fourth-form master dealing with 13–15-year-olds and at university scholarship level. He told me more than once with what a sinking heart he first confronted the seniors ('But *they* never guessed'). Dr. Rettie, who studied under him at both levels and to whom he later dedicated his book on Purcell, writes that 'his whole

¹ Some of the fruits of his studies were published belatedly in *Music and Letters*, xxi (1940), 'Nicolas Saboly and his *Noëls provençaux*', pp. 34–49. Searching for carols in the Bibliothèque d'Inguibert at Carpentras, he had the extraordinary luck to come across the composition sketch of Schumann's Piano Quintet, op. 44, which he described in one of his last published writings, his contribution to *Convivium Musicorum: Festschrift Wolfgang Boetticher zum 60sten Geburtstag* (Berlin, 1974), pp. 367–71.

approach to teaching considerably influenced the development of my outlook on life':

Jack Westrup brought a lively, questing, original and often impudent approach to anything he touched. He encouraged his younger pupils to answer him back with wit and confidence, and he would take infinite pains to develop the potential of any promising youngster. As a result, a high proportion of those who had started in his form passed effortlessly into the scholarship stream.

In the sixth form his passion for meticulous accuracy came into its own, and anyone who tried to get away with slovenly work soon got the benefit of his waspish tongue. If the subject was dull he would allow of no concessions, and despite protests would plod on through some obscure point of Greek history or Latin grammar with ferocious thoroughness until it was fully understood.

In a school which was obsessed with every form of game he would have nothing to do with them, saying they were suitable only for block-heads. He assisted in running the school music and played the piano, organ, horn or trombone as the occasion arose. The master in charge was a genial but not very talented amateur and Jack's behaviour was always impeccable in that he never by word or implication criticised what was done, however much grief it may have caused him. He was keenly interested in dramatics and in his last two years at the school directed spirited productions of *Macbeth* and *Henry V*. These were enormous fun, but to some extent all the players walked a tightrope. Jack knew what he wanted from each of them and provided they co-operated and did their best all went well. With those who did not he would never lose his temper—that would have been uncivilised—but he coolly and thoroughly cut them down to size.

Westrup was rescued from schoolmastering by Richard Capell, author of a classic study of *Schubert's Songs*, music critic of the *Daily Mail*, and editor of *The Monthly Musical Record*, a modest but scholarly periodical first edited, sixty years earlier, by the formidable Ebenezer Prout. In 1933 Capell left the *Mail* to become chief music critic of the *Daily Telegraph* and, under the pressure of this new post, decided to give up the *Record*—to which Westrup had been contributing since 1928—and suggested to the proprietors that the 'young schoolmaster' should succeed him. He did—and continued to edit the *Record* until 1945, when I took over from him. Some of his most polished and most stimulating early writing appeared in it anonymously as 'Notes of the Day'. But Capell's help did not end there; in 1934 he invited Westrup to leave Dulwich and join the music staff of the *Telegraph*. The invitation was accepted without hesitation.

Westrup thoroughly enjoyed the round of concert-going and

the occasional interviewing of visiting celebrities such as Kussevitsky, and his readers enjoyed his pungent writing though second-rate performers and composers can hardly have done so. His utter truthfulness did not allow the sparing of friends, though he disliked hurting them. (After a severe, but just, review of a book of mine he at once telephoned, 'But I still want you to be my friend'.) And it forbade false modesty. (A former colleague at Dulwich recalls 'congratulating him on the publication of his book on Purcell, and his reply was "It's definitive" '; it was not a boast but a cold statement of fact.) *Purcell* was published in Dent's 'Master Musicians' series in 1937 and is indeed as definitive biographically and penetrating critically as any book can be; it established him as the most brilliant English musical scholar of his generation.

Not long after its appearance he surprised his friends by marrying. He had been regarded as a confirmed bachelor and I remember that two lively sisters considered it a great triumph when they took him back to their flat after a concert, tied on an apron, and made him help with the washing up. But in 1938 he met a very beautiful girl, Solweig Rösell, daughter of a Swedish musician, was bowled over by her, and married her in Linköping Cathedral—having composed his own wedding march. He soon added Swedish to his languages and she lost little time in bearing him children, four in all. Marriage made him more sociable; our friendship became quadrilateral and was cemented in later years when we became godparents to each others' children. But the outbreak of war soon disturbed happy married life. All London concerts were abandoned, the *Telegraph* cut down its size, and Westrup found himself without a job. However, the leisure gave him an opportunity to make a collection of his essays, nearly all from the *Record* and *Telegraph*, published by the Oxford University Press under the title *Sharps and Flats* in 1940. He and Solweig and their little daughter were given a temporary home by Frank Howes, chief music critic of *The Times*, and his wife Barbara, at Newbridge Mill, near Witney, where he used to invent endless bedtime serial stories for the Howes children. Seeking a scholastic post, since a musical one seemed hopeless, he bethought of him of an old Oxford friend, Walter Oakeshott, then High Master of St. Paul's School, later Rector of Lincoln College and Vice-Chancellor, and of course a Fellow of the British Academy. St. Paul's had been moved out of London to Crowthorne in Berkshire and, Dr. Oakeshott writes,

I jumped at the chance of securing him for the staff. Few men could have been better qualified all round. It happened that at that time we needed more hostels for boys to live in; he and Solweig almost immediately took one over and established it most successfully. He was a great asset.

But he did not stay long at Crowthorne for in 1941 he was offered a Lectureship in Music at King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne, then part of the University of Durham, at 37 his first academic musical post.

At Newcastle he had a chance to conduct again, directing the Bach Choir during 1942-4, and he enjoyed the Northumbrian countryside. Canon Westrup remembers how, when he was staying with them, Jack

had planned a short walking tour for us, which, however, broke down on the second day when we came back home drenched to the skin, having failed to find lodging for the night. The next morning at breakfast I ventured to ask 'What shall we do today?' His answer was 'Walk, of course'. This was a clear glimpse of his character; having once made a decision, he was determined, come what may, to carry it through.

Yet Newcastle was a species of exile. He took as many opportunities as possible to come to London and we became accustomed to his early-morning appearances at our Hampstead house for breakfast after his all-night train journey. Thus his appointment to the Peyton and Barber Chair of Music at Birmingham in 1944 meant much more than promotion; it took him to a much livelier musical centre, with the excellent music library of the Barber Institute, and more congenial friends including an old one, Eric Blom, music critic of the *Birmingham Post* and editor of the quarterly *Music and Letters*, while his brother Wilfrid already had a Birmingham parish. Wilfrid was able to join the University Choral Society which Jack conducted in Brahms's *Requiem* and other works, and relates how 'during rehearsals for Handel's *Saul* he lashed the contraltos at one point with the remark "You sing like a procession of toads down a slippery plank". They loved it!' He appeared particularly happy and relaxed at Birmingham and would romp with his children, enjoying what he called 'elephant races' in which grown-ups on hands and knees would race with children on their backs. But he had never been averse to romping and horseplay; one such bout at home, while an undergraduate, ended in his falling downstairs and spraining an ankle with the result that, by special concession, he had to take one of his examinations at home on the sofa.

In November 1945 Westrup gave the Philip Maurice Deneke Lecture on 'The Meaning of Musical History' at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and the following year his old university gave him a doctorate *honoris causa*, preludes to the offer of the Heather Professorship in 1947 and election to a Fellowship of Wadham. In view of his passionate devotion to Oxford—he once told an assemblage of distinguished foreign scholars that Oxford was the most beautiful city in the world—this was doubly gratifying. Yet Oxford was to present him with perhaps unexpected problems and load him with burdens, some inevitable but some self-imposed, too heavy for any man however tough and determined. To begin with, his appointment was not universally welcomed in Oxford. His predecessor, Sir Hugh Allen, was a very fine all-round musician, an overpowering, magnetic personality who had inspired intense devotion but had no interest in scholarly research; indeed he resigned the emoluments of his Fellowship of New College rather than undertake it. Westrup's personality was not 'magnetic' and he inspired intense devotion only in those who knew him well—and Oxford did not then know him. Moreover, the heir presumptive to the Chair had been passed over. (Many years later he told me that, though disappointed at the time, he had long recognized the rightness of the choice.) Allen had devised a plan for the training of music students within the University and the undergraduate school attracted unexpectedly large numbers for whom there was really no room in those immediately post-war years; welcome in itself, this was one of Westrup's first problems. And although a Faculty of Music had been established under Allen in 1944, with a distinguished scholar (Egon Wellesz) as a member of the Board, it was not until 1950 that music was accepted as a subject for an Arts degree with a curriculum more liberal than that of the B.Mus., which was retained but restructured.

It was only natural that Westrup should be offered the direction of the University Opera Club which had been dormant, save for an isolated production in 1943, during the war period. He led off at once with a performance of *Idomeneo*, followed it in 1948 with *The Beggar's Opera* in E. J. Dent's edition, and in 1949 with Stanford's *Much Ado about Nothing*. Then came a remarkable series of operas, mostly unfamiliar: Gluck's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Berlioz's *Trojans*, the first performance of Wellesz's *Incognita*, Mozart's *Clemenza di Tito*, Marschner's *Hans Heiling*, Verdi's *Macbeth*, Bizet's *Fair Maid of Perth*, Smetana's *Secret*, Verdi's *Ernani*, Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and Ravel's *L'Enfant*

et les sortilèges (as a double bill), Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*, the first British performance of Alan Bush's *Men of Blackmore*, Alessandro Scarlatti's *Mitridate Eupatore*, and—the last before he resigned the directorship in 1962—Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. This was a wonderful operatic education for Oxford, a revelation to many non-Oxfordians, and a source of continuing pleasure and deep satisfaction to Westrup. But the cost was heavy. His work extended far beyond the subsidiary labour that conscientious conductors undertake, the correction of parts, insertion of phrasing, and so on. In the case of *The Trojans* no full score had yet been published and the score hired from the French publisher was an incredible mess of corrections, alternative versions, and montage from which he had to educe an acceptable reading. He even insisted on translating seven of the foreign libretti himself, basing the Czech and Russian ones on close prose versions supplied by an Oxford friend. If he had had few other calls on his time and energy besides the normal ones on a university professor or if he had handed over after seven instead of seventeen years, this would not have mattered. But there were innumerable other calls—and irresistible temptations. (He always found it difficult to say 'No' and there were times when the need to provide for the education of four children made it hardly possible to do so.) It was not merely that he was in constant demand for lectures, contributions to composite works, reviews: he was the obvious and natural leader in every musicological enterprise in Britain.

First among these was the *New Oxford History of Music*. Soon after the war the University Press had contemplated yet another revision of the old *Oxford History* which, in the wrong hands as seemed likely, would have been disastrous. Wellesz was the first to get wind of this, and he and Westrup persuaded the Press to embark on an entirely new history to be planned by an editorial board with Westrup as chairman. On my suggestion it was decided to give the *New Oxford History* a 'sound companion' of gramophone records, *The History of Music in Sound*, each volume of which—with the accompanying handbook—was to be planned and supervised by the editor of the corresponding volume of the main *History*. Westrup threw himself into all this with his usual zest and his powerful combination of scholarship and practical musicianship but it was symptomatic that, whereas he conducted performances of Orlando Gibbons, Monteverdi, Cesti, Stradella, Alessandro Scarlatti, Logroscino, Blow, Keiser, J. C. Bach, J. S. Bach, Buxtehude, he failed to

deliver on time the handbooks to volumes IV, V, and VI for which he was personally responsible and I had to write and edit them.¹ The fate of the main volumes in the *New Oxford History* was even sadder; in the end I had to edit IV, Anthony Lewis and Nigel Fortune V, and he had just begun to write his own chapters for VI when he died.

Another great project in which he was involved from the first was *Musica Britannica*, a collection of the classics of British music published by the Royal Musical Association and initiated on the occasion of the Festival of Britain in 1951. The editorial committee was chaired by Anthony Lewis but Westrup was an active member of it until his death. He was the figurehead (though he was never as passive as a figurehead) of a number of organizations: President of the Galpin Society for research in the history of European instruments from its foundation in 1946 until his death, chairman of the Purcell Society committee from Dent's death in 1957 onwards, President of the Royal Musical Association (1958–63), of the Incorporated Society of Musicians (1963), and of the Royal College of Organists (1964–6). And his eminence was recognized by official honours. In 1954 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy,² only the third musician to be admitted—the first two were Dent and Wellesz in 1953—and when the Academy launched the *Early English Church Music* series he was naturally the chairman of the committee. In 1961 he was knighted. During 1971–2 he was Master of the Worshipful Company of Musicians.

He somehow found time to 'revise'—that is, to produce a greatly expanded edition of—Ernest Walker's *History of Music in England* (1952), as he later did for Edmund Fellowes's *English Cathedral Music* (1969), to write his own *Introduction to Musical History* (1955) for the music series of Hutchinson's University Library, and edit the series, and to organize the Sixth Congress of the International Musicological Society at Oxford in 1955, though not, alas, to edit its Proceedings which remain unpublished.

Some summer holidays were spent with his family on the Isle of Wight where we had a summer home, and there he relaxed, enthusiastically digging sand-castles on the beach at Compton Bay with a former Birmingham colleague Professor Alastair

¹ The information in the bibliography of the memorial volume, *Essays on Opera and English Music* (Basil Blackwell, 1975), pp. 179–80, is incorrect.

² On 18 Jan. 1956 he gave the Aspects of Art Lecture, 'The Nature of Recitative', *Proceedings*, xlii. 27–43.

Frazer and his family, and our own, and taking long walks on the downs with me. On one such walk he planned that when we reached the tea place at our goal and the waitress asked, according to precedent as she put the pot on the table, 'Now which of you gentlemen is going to be "mother"?'', he would say, 'Neither—unless one of us undergoes an extraordinary physiological change', a typical Westrupian joke. Unfortunately she forgot her cue. But too many long vacations were spent lecturing at American universities, financially rewarding yet exhausting.

Then in 1959, still deeply involved with the Opera Club—and from 1954 to 1963 with the Oxford University Orchestra which he had founded—he embarked on what can only be described as an act of heroic folly. On the death of Eric Blom he took over the editing of both Dent's 'Master Musicians' series of books and the quarterly *Music and Letters*. He did it superbly but he should never have done it, at any rate the editing of *Music and Letters*, at all. He was a real, not nominal, editor of a book or periodical, meticulous in matters of literary and typographical styles, taking endless pains to save his writers from suspected slips or downright blunders. But he was not content with editing *Music and Letters*, which he continued to do across the Atlantic when necessary; he contributed numerous reviews; and, having only occasional secretarial help, deliberately accepted the drudgery of packing and sending out books and music to reviewers and compiling very long and detailed lists of 'Books Received'. He was equally efficient in both roles, editor and office boy, for he did everything, whether intellectual or mechanical, with the utmost care and clarity and precision. These activities worried his friends, who felt that the time given to work which many could do should have been given to the work of scholarship which very few could do, but they were not caprices; they were necessities of his nature.

Yet he went on contributing to encyclopedias and dictionaries, German and American and Italian as well as British, and *Festschriften* for German, American, Danish, and Flemish scholars. In 1966 he edited the *Essays Presented to Egon Wellesz*, which includes his own on Bizet's *Jolie Fille de Perth*. He wrote two admirable little B.B.C. music guides, *Bach Cantatas* (1966) and *Schubert Chamber Music* (1969). And so far as practical music-making was concerned, he ended his Oxford years by taking over the conductorship of the Bach Choir and Orchestral Society in 1970 and giving a fine performance of Elgar's *Kingdom* with them in 1971. He has, incidentally, a permanent monument in

Oxford: the Holywell Music Room. Built in 1748, it had been partially restored and redecorated in the early years of the present century but its genuine restoration to its original form, plus a foyer, was mainly due to the efforts of Westrup, supported by Wellesz and Oakeshott who had found a print of the original plans in a collection in the Lincoln library.

When he left Oxford in 1971 and settled in the east Hampshire countryside near Headley he was quite boyishly excited at possessing a house of his own; hitherto he had lived in university houses. He had never bothered about the scrap of garden in Woodstock Road; now he had a large one and became an enthusiastic gardener, overworking himself at that as at everything else. He continued to write and to attend meetings in London, and of course to edit *Music and Letters* and the 'Master Musicians'. He paid a last visit to the States in 1974, lecturing at Boston. And he continued to play schoolboyish jokes; during the war, an ITMA enthusiast, he would announce himself on the phone in sepulchral tones as 'Funf speaking'; in the 1970s we were haunted by another Germanic voice, 'Professor Stinken-stein'. He was more relaxed, perhaps happier than he had been for thirty years. He knew and made no secret of it that he had *angina pectoris* but appeared not to be worried. And then the end came quite suddenly on 21 April 1975. It was infinitely regrettable that the book which should have been presented to him on his seventieth birthday nine months before, the *Essays on Opera and English Music. In honour of Sir Jack Westrup*, edited by Dr. F. W. Sternfield, Dr. Nigel Fortune, and Dr. Edward Olleson, could be only a tribute to his memory.

In their preface the editors remark, among other things that Westrup 'shunned the tendency of our age toward a proliferation of books that are, in fact, inflated articles'. Dr. Rettie recalls how in his concert notices for the *Telegraph* 'Jack always strove to extract value from every word he wrote. In this respect his devotion to the works and style of Tacitus stood him in good stead.' His brother Wilfrid says the same:

Whatever subject he was dealing with, he showed the same clarity and mastery of language. Picking up a second-hand volume of Pope, he delighted to discover and repeat such lines as:

The same adust complexion hath impelled
Charles to the convent, Philip to the field,¹

¹ *Moral Essays*, Epistle I, ll. 107-8.

and his favourite limerick was that of the old man of Uplyme who married three wives at a time.

When they said 'Why the third?'
He replied 'One's absurd
And bigamy, Sir, is a crime'.

He had an instinctive dislike for all pretentiousness and humbug. A modern prayer ends with the words 'We do not ask that Thou wilt keep us safe but that Thou wilt keep us loyal'. To Jack there was something of a pose in this not asking to be kept safe and he would comment 'It seems a perfectly reasonable request'.

One kind of humbug he particularly despised was the kind of musicology that has lost touch with music.

Condemnatory attitudes were easily suggested by a cold, severe manner which completely deceived strangers and terrified his students in earlier days, much less latterly. They never even suspected the existence of the great warmth and generosity under the cool surface. But the coolness was not a mere mask; it was of his essence which was Apollonian, not Dionysian. In that chapter on 'Problems of Biography' from which I have already quoted, Westrup wrote that biographers

are often constrained to refuse credence to simple records, on the ground that their evidence conflicts with what may be deduced from other sources. Not so, they say, could such-and-such a man have behaved. . . . We have only to look within ourselves or to study our closest friends to see the truth of the philosophical commonplace that the individual is at the same time one and many.

It was the integrated complex of all his disparate qualities that made Jack Westrup the outstanding personality he was, that compelled so much respect and admiration, and drew to him such deep affection from all who truly knew him.

GERALD ABRAHAM