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# Granville BANTOCK

Hebridean Symphony  
Old English Suite • Russian Scenes

Czechoslovak State Philharmonic  
(Košice)  
Adrian Leaper



## **Granville Bantock (1868 - 1946)**

### **Old English Suite Russian Scenes Hebridean Symphony**

Granville Bantock was originally intended for the Indian Civil Service. The son of a Scottish doctor, he was born in London in 1868 and turned to music relatively late in adolescence, entering the Royal Academy in 1889 after a period at Trinity College of Music. Under his teacher Frederick Corder, a former pupil of Hiller in Cologne, he did well enough to have a number of his student compositions performed at the Academy, including a one-act opera, *Caedmar*, an Egyptian ballet suite from the incidental music to his own play *Rameses II*, a dramatic cantata, *The Fire Worshipers*, and *Wulstan*, a scena for baritone and orchestra, all marks of his very considerable ambition. In 1893 he left the Academy and for the next three years edited *The New Quarterly Music Review*, while serving as a conductor for performances of light music, directing musical comedies for George Edwardes in a world tour in 1894 and 1895 and Stanford's opera *Shamus O'Brien*. He followed this with an ambitious London concert devoted entirely to the music of contemporary British composers, most of whom are now forgotten, except for Bantock himself.

In 1897 Bantock became conductor at The Tower in New Brighton, where he remained for four years, taking the opportunity to do what he could to encourage British composers in a musical establishment of limited possibility, augmented in 1898 by the foundation of the New Brighton Choral Society. In 1900 he conducted a programme of British music in Antwerp, including first performances of some of his own compositions, among which was the symphonic poem *Jaga-Naut*, intended as the second of 24 projected symphonic poems, based on Robert Southey's poem *The Curse of Kehama*. Later tone poems followed, generally with some declared literary derivation.

In 1900 Bantock became principal of the Birmingham and Midland Institute School of Music, following Elgar as Peyton Professor of Music at the University in 1908, appointments which inevitably drew him into the musical establishment, leading in 1930 to a knighthood. The system of musical training he advocated involved a much wider education than is usual for music students and included general literature, mathematics and languages, a sign of his own breadth of interest, reflected in the variety of his compositions and in particular their wide literary terms of reference. These included the monumental setting of Edward Fitzgerald's translation of *Omar Khayyam*, a work in three parts that was first heard at music festivals in England and Wales and in 1912 received a successful performance in Vienna. His subsequent involvement with competitive festivals in England led him to write a considerable amount of music for this purpose. He retired from his position in Birmingham in 1934, continuing thereafter his activity as a composer, a conductor and an examiner for Trinity College of Music. Sir Thomas Beecham, eleven years Bantock's junior, saw his gifts as principally operatic, praising what he describes as a "flow of genial melody, unmistakably of the 'stagey' sort, a solid but lively handling of the orchestra, and a by no means too common capacity for passing swiftly and easily from one contrasting mood to another", finding in him one of the two outstanding figures in English musical life. Bantock died in 1946.

The *Old English Suite*, scored for small orchestra, was written in 1909, and consists of well crafted orchestral arrangements of music from the golden age of Queen Elizabeth I and her immediate successor. An arrangement of an Orlando Gibbons Fantasia is followed by a tribute to John Dowland, whose *Lachrymae Pavans, Seven Tears of a Sorrowful Soul*, reflected well enough the fashionable melancholy of the period, although the lutenist was himself a cheerful soul enough, according to the testimony of his contemporaries. The great keyboard composer John Bull's best known work, *The King's Hunt*, leads to Giles Farnaby's *Quodling's Delight*, and homage to the greatest Elizabethan of all, the recusant composer William Byrd, is based on his variations on a popular song of the period, *Sellingier's Round*.

The orchestral suite *Russian Scenes* was written in 1899, a companion to a second suite of *English Scenes*, while the much more musically ambitious *Hebridean* Symphony was completed in 1915 and first performed in Glasgow the following year. A work of brooding mystery and impetuous drama, the symphony reflects Bantock's interest in traditional Scottish music, brought to his attention through the researches of Marjorie Kennedy-Fraser, whose text he used for his opera *The Seal-Woman*, staged in Birmingham in 1924. The same interest is evident in a number of orchestral works that show a similar romantic preoccupation with the Hebrides and other aspects of Celtic culture. This is geographically balanced by an almost equal interest in Chinese subjects and other exotic and distant cultures. It would be rash to claim too close an affinity in the *Hebridean* Symphony between Bantock and his friend Sibelius, whose music he introduced to England. Nevertheless it is a work of some power, breadth of conception and imagination, an example of Bantock in a mood that is ambitious, dramatic, occasionally grandiose, suggesting in a demanding score, which trumpet-players must dread, something of his own conception of a Celtic world with which he had renewed acquaintance by a walking tour of the Highlands as a necessary preparation for the symphony. At second hand he shows equal familiarity with what Beecham describes as "the sumptuous Orient" and "the radiance of Antiquity".

**Adrian Leaper**

Adrian Leaper studied conducting with Maurice Miles at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he was trained also as a horn-player, later appearing with the London Sinfonietta and the English Chamber Orchestra, as well as serving eight years in the Philharmonia Orchestra, five of them as co-principal. At the same time he undertook a variety of conducting engagements with amateur and professional orchestras, in particular with the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra, of which he was appointed Musical Director and Principal Conductor in 1982. He has more recently been appointed to the new position of Assistant Conductor with the Halle Orchestra. Adrian Leaper has appeared at a number of major festivals including Edinburgh, Bonn, Bath, King's Lynn, Greenwich, Cambridge and Henley.

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(Košice)  
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<b>Old English Suite</b>		<b>Russian Scenes</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Orlando Gibbons: Fantasia</b>	<b>3:14</b>	<b>6</b> <b>At the Fair</b> <b>3:17</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>John Dowland: Lachrymae Pavan</b>	<b>3:45</b>	<b>7</b> <b>Mazurka</b> <b>2:35</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>John Bull: The King's Hunt</b>	<b>2:18</b>	<b>8</b> <b>Polka</b> <b>2:38</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Giles Farnaby: Quodling's Delight</b>	<b>2:59</b>	<b>9</b> <b>Valse</b> <b>3:03</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>William Byrd: Sellinger's Round</b>	<b>3:07</b>	<b>10</b> <b>Cossack Dance</b> <b>2:05</b>
			<b>11</b> <b>Hebridean Symphony</b> <b>32:32</b>

**Recorded at the House of Arts in Košice, from 16th to 20th January, 1989..**

**Producer: Peter Breiner**

**Engineer: Gustáv Šoral**

**Music Notes: Keith Anderson**

**Cover: Sir Granville Bantock**

**(Painting by Chai Ben-shan)**

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BANTOCK: Hebridean Symphony

**Old English Suite**

- |   |                                      |      |
|---|--------------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Orlando Gibbons:<br>Fantasia         |      |
| 2 | John Dowland: Lachrymae<br>Pavan     | 3:14 |
| 3 | John Bull: The King's<br>Hunt        | 3:45 |
| 4 | Giles Farnaby: Quodling's<br>Delight | 2:18 |
| 5 | William Byrd: Sellinger's<br>Round   | 2:59 |
|   |                                      | 3:07 |

**Russian Scenes**

- |    |                           |              |
|----|---------------------------|--------------|
| 6  | At the Fair               | 3:17         |
| 7  | Mazurka                   | 2:35         |
| 8  | Polka                     | 2:38         |
| 9  | Valse                     | 3:03         |
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BANTOCK: Hebridean Symphony

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