

## Australian Discovery Orchestra

Managing Director: Janine Hanrahan

31 August & 1 September 2019

### Sat. 31 August

#### 7:00 pm Festival Opening

The premiere screening of a new, interactive, short-film introducing the life of Sir Arnold Edward Trevor Bax (1883-1953). The film will also be available online immediately after the opening concert to allow exploration of all the interactive elements.

#### 7:15 pm

Pre-concert talk on the life of Sir Arnold Bax, discussing why this titan of 20th-Century British music and Master of the King's Music has been inexplicably neglected on the concert stage over the last 60 years. Speaker: Kevin Purcell

#### 7:45 pm

Pro-Musica Orchestra – Conductor John Ferguson

Arnold E. T. Bax

**Mediterranean** for orchestra

Edward Elgar

**King Arthur Suite**

### Sun. 1 September

#### 11:00 am

ADO Chamber Soloists

Arnold E. T. Bax

Frank Bridge

Eugène Goossens

Arnold E.T. Bax

**An Elegaic Trio**

**Divertimenti**

**Pastorale et Arlequinade**

**Clarinet Sonata in D Major**

Soloist: Anne Brisk

#### 2:30 am

Australian Discovery Orchestra – Conductor Kevin Purcell

Arnold E. T. Bax

**From Dusk 'Till Dawn** Ballet Suite

Frank Bridge

**Lament (for Catherine, aged 9 "Lusitania" 1915)**

Arnold E. T. Bax

**Tintagel** for orchestra

**All Day Festival Tickets from \$15:00. Children under 15 years come for FREE!**

BOOKINGS:

<https://australiandiscoveryorchestra.com/buy-tickets-ado-season-2019/>



Australia's most innovative orchestra

**Conductor**  
**Kevin Purcell**



**Edition 1**



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**W**elcome to the inaugural, biennial, festival celebrating the works of Sir Arnold Bax (1883 – 1953). Today, almost entirely neglected across the world’s classical concert stages, this titan of British Music was appointed Master of the King’s Music in 1942.

Although one of the most important and unique musical voices of the first-half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century, inexplicably the music of Arnold Bax has been consigned to a footnote of British musical history.

Largely due to changes at the BBC and its music policy in the latter part of the 1930s; eschewing music by home grown composers inspired by the erstwhile long 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Romantic Music aesthetic, the music of Arnold Bax along with many of his contemporaries was supplanted in favour of composers of the new avant-garde. Bax especially seemed to suffer the ignominies of this rejection more than any other of his contemporaries.

Existing in the long shadows cast by Edward Elgar and the younger Ralph Vaughan Williams, Bax’s music was wrongly assumed to belong to a time synonymous with the fading light of Empire and the passing of the Edwardian age. Compounded by his fascination with Ireland and his personal interest in Celtic mythology, Bax’s music was increasingly deemed to be out-of-step with the new realities of post-War Britain.

**Bax** is not the only British composer active in the first half the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century to suffer the ignominy of neglect on the concert platform. The extraordinary music of Charles Villiers Stanford, Hubert Parry, John Ireland, the Irishman E. J. Moeran, Arthur Bliss, Eugene Goossens, Cecil Armstrong Gibbs, Herbert Howells; and even Delius to an extent, with numerous others have received little interest by orchestral programmers of live concert music.

It is argued that they are not popular with audiences, which, of course, must be true when they are not performed!

Equally, too, is the continuing neglect by Australia’s main performing arts organisations to schedule performances of works by these composers. Inevitably, the responsibility for much of this inattention has to be levelled at the ABC who at one period slavishly adopted the policies and biases of the BBC. A case in point: In the 1990s I remember clearly being told by a then ABC managing director, “We simply don’t play British music.” Inasmuch as Elgar and Vaughan Williams have to a point escaped this prejudice, the neglect of Bax’s works remains an act of astounding dereliction.



For all the lack of live performances of Bax’s works two record labels, predominantly, have been responsible for ensuring that at least all of the composer’s orchestral works have been captured for posterity: namely the Lyrita and Chandos labels. Equally, an increase over the last several years in new recording releases of his chamber music has been welcomed.

To a large extent this recorded legacy is due to several excellent British conductors who were champions for Bax’s music including, Sir Adrian Boult, John Pritchard, Bryden Thomson, Vernon Handley and Myer Fredman.

In this inaugural Festival, the ADO is undertaking a discursive look at some of the orchestral and ballet music Bax composed between 1916-17 prior to his first foray into formal symphonic writing in 1922 with the publication of his first symphony.

The 2019 Festival culminates on Day 2 with performances of *Tintagel* with its overt imagery to the Arthurian legend bound up with Tintagel Castle in Cornwall, as well as the first performance outside of the UK (and the first anywhere since 1982) of Bax’s Ballet-Ruses inspired ballet music, *From Dusk ‘Till Dawn*.

The period between 1916-17 is formative in the composer’s output as it aligns with two events that had lasting impact on Bax the man: namely the 1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin in which the composer lost several Irish friends and the continuing War in Europe where vital friends and musical colleagues were similarly lost to the escalating carnage at the Western Front.

The Festival also explores the music of Edward Elgar and Frank Bridge with two pieces that are also rarely performed: Elgar’s remarkable incidental music to Lawrence Binyon’s 1922 play, *King Arthur*, and Bridge’s haunting *Lament (for Catherine, aged 9 "Lusitania" 1915)* for string orchestra. The former will be performed in a concert by the Pro-Musica Orchestra (cond. John Ferguson) on Day 1 of the Festival in a program that includes Bax’s charming short tone poem, *Mediterranean* (1920).

Please join us on August 31 and September 1 for what will be a weekend of wonderful orchestra and chamber music making and associated Festival events. Full Festival details including how to book is shown over the page.

Come, join us, to discover the glorious music of Sir Arnold Bax!

Kevin Purcell  
Principal Conductor  
Australian Discovery Orchestra