



The Music of Lord Berners, 1883-1950: The Versatile Peer

Bryony Jones

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Gerald Tyrwhitt-Wilson, the 14th Baron Berners, was a well-known figure in his day. Labelled by the national press as "the versatile peer", he was a composer, writer, painter and great socialite. His musical output was small, but highly successful in its day, with ballets staged in London, Monte Carlo and New York, an opera produced in Paris, and two film scores completed in the 1940s. These works, together with Berners' songs, his music for piano, and other instrumental pieces are given their first in-depth examination in this study. Bryony Jones shows how Berners' cosmopolitan musical style radically differed from that of many of his contemporaries who were concerned with creating a "national" music. Instead, Berners drew his inspiration from abroad, and comparisons are drawn with Les Six, and connections made with the work of Satie, Debussy and Ravel. Well-known for his elaborate practical jokes and sense of humour, Berners was an archetype of British eccentricity, and these aspects of his personality shaped much of his musical style. The book concludes with an attempt to explain why Berners' music was neglected following his death, and why there has been a recent resurgence of interest.

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