



## Some press cuttings relating to Dr Ernest Heathcote Emery

The first is a story of not one, but two, Ernests, plus a little ‘What’s on’ to give a flavour of pre-war music-making in Belfast.

*Belfast Telegraph* - Saturday 16 October 1937, page 11

### ***Rathcol* on Music**

[The music critic *Rathcol* of course was the composer Edward Norman Hay (1889-1943), himself a Doctor of Oxford University since 1915!]

## **Academic Honours**

THE subject for our consideration this week is the value of academic honours in music. I had already decided upon that topic when news reached me of the well-merited honour conferred upon two musicians who have made their homes in Ulster: Mr. Ernest H. Emery, Mus.B. Dunelm, F.R.C.O., and Mr. Ernest A. A. Stoneley, Mus.B.Edin., who graduated last week as Doctors of Music of Edinburgh University. Therefore it is fitting that I should preface this article with our congratulations to the two new Doctors and with a few particulars of their careers.

### **THE NEW DOCTORS.**

Dr. Emery, a native of Manchester, has spent his entire career in the service of the Church, first as a choir-boy and then, from the age of seventeen onwards, as organist of various churches in England and for a short period as assistant in Manchester Cathedral. After three years of war service he came to Bangor in 1920 as choirmaster and organist of the Parish Church, a position he still occupies. Under his direction the services at Bangor have been noted not only for a high standard of performance, but also for the exceptionally good music he has introduced there, especially notable being the performances of Bach cantatas, with chorus, small orchestra and organ, and the excellent monthly organ recitals. Dr. Emery is an organist of very outstanding ability. He has also directed the meritorious performances of light opera by the Bangor Amateur Operatic Society.

Dr. Stoneley, a native of the city in which he has received his doctorate, is by choice and family tradition a devotee of the orchestra, his father having been a well-known solo trombonist, while two sisters are distinguished flautists and a brother is a member of the Hallé Orchestra. It is not necessary to remind his Ulster admirers that he himself is a very accomplished solo and orchestral violinist. His career as violinist began at the early age of seven; and when thirteen he went to study at the Paris Conservatoire. Like Dr. Emery, he had a long period of war service; and an exciting episode of that period occurred in 1918, when the ship on which he was working as wireless operator was torpedoed 90 miles off

Alexandria. After the war he returned to Edinburgh, joining the Reid Orchestra under Sir Donald Tovey, of whom he became a favourite pupil in academic studies, eventually graduating Mus.B under Tovey's Professorate: and before and after the war he was also leader of the Theatre Royal orchestra. Since 1923 Dr. Stoneley has been amongst us, for several years a warm favourite of Ulster 'listeners' as the first leader of the local BBC orchestra and a frequent solo broadcaster, in which roles we happily can still enjoy his artistry occasionally. But in the last dozen years or so he has given himself chiefly to educational pursuits, and has done distinguished work as director of the music at Methodist College.

### **HALLMARK OF MUSICIANSHIP.**

I have dwelt upon these two careers, not only for the personal pleasure it affords me to do so as an intimate friend and colleague of the musicians in question, but also because their careers seem to furnish a practical and weighty argument for the value of academic distinctions in music. There are those whose pet amusement it is to scoff at such distinctions — the scoffers usually the kind of people who could never get within miles of a music degree themselves. A man may be able, they say, to write five-part counterpoint for a Mus.B., or even eight-part for a Mus.D., and yet be a dismal failure as a practical musician. Now, it cannot be denied that in olden times and even as late, say, as fifty years ago that was true, up to a point. Back in the middle ages the graduate in music was often no more than a learned pedant of the dullest type, and even up to sixty or seventy years ago the requirements were mainly of the nature of a mathematical problem: a man might be able to 'fill in' six or seven voices above a given figured bass and yet have very little of the vital spark within. Indeed the change for the better may be said to date — synchronously with the general change for the better known as the English Renaissance — from the nineties, when Parry went to Oxford as Professor of Music.

Certainly to-day there is no justification for the charge of dull pedantry, for even in those universities where a 'practical' test is not imposed the paper-work covers a wide field of practical knowledge, including as it does problems in musical composition of a definitely alive and modern type. Surely the man who holds such a degree bears a hall-mark of musicianship which not only gives him a salutary prestige in the public eye but also is a good thing for the prestige of the art in general. These two Ernests, whose careers I have outlined, are not a whit the better organist and violinist, respectively, for their degrees; but at least those degrees are an earnest, before the world, of their soundness in all-round musicianship.

### **ANTIDOTE TO QUACKERY.**

I hope I may be forgiven the pun. I indulged in it because the point I wish to make, with all possible emphasis, is that it is the qualities of earnestness and soundness we need most of all in the world of music to-day, when we are beset by every species of quackery and jimcrackery that sets itself up as serious art.

A writer in the [*Belfast*] *Telegraph* recently suggested that degrees and diplomas are futile and needless, since some of the best teachers possess no such decoration. I grant the assertion about the undecorated good teachers; I go even so far as to say that in an ideal realm of art, with a vast public fitted by real discernment and centuries of tradition behind it to judge rightly (as in Germany), there would be no need for academic adornment. But as things are, especially in our own nation which (after two centuries of darkness) is only beginning to grope its way to a real culture, academic distinction is a wise and safe provision — and

something the 'good teachers' aforesaid would be the better for, if only for the sake of the better ordering and safeguarding of their art.

Another writer said: Why pour scorn upon the so-called 'dubious' decorations? — and went on to aver that such diplomas give the talented people of limited means a chance, people who have as much right to succeed as have the upper-crust musicians who charge high fees. That is such blatant nonsense that I almost scorn to reply to it. Those who have followed the policy of these weekly articles know that I am all out to encourage the talented strugglers; but their progress will never be built up on the foundation of a spurious diploma. The real encouragement of the strugglers must come from a State; and when the Ulster College of Music comes to be founded we must see to it that the foundation is well and truly laid. I hinted last week at recent instances of ill-timed patronage in Ulster music; and here I appeal, with all the earnestness at my command, to those whose authoritative positions in our public life give such bestowals of patronage a peculiar value in the public estimation, to exercise a wise and benevolent discretion.

### **MIDDAY QUEEN'S CONCERTS.**

Hastening the day when, as we hope, it will include music in its degree curricula, the Queen's University has of late shown a more lively interest in music; and Captain Brennan, lecturer in music and organist at Queen's, finds his hands strengthened by the support of a Vice-Chancellor who is himself a talented amateur and a keen enthusiast for music. At my request. Captain Brennan has sent me particulars of the midday concerts to be held this season at the University — a splendid scheme instituted last year. On October 21 the Griller String Quartet will play the Brahms C minor, op. 51, and interesting examples of the work of Matthew Locke (1632-77), and that vital modernist, Ernest Bloch. On November 25 our finest baritone, Keith Falkner, will give a recital of songs of the 14th and 16th centuries, some Bach, Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, and a modern group (Stanford, Vaughan Williams, etc.). Frederick Stone will accompany and will also give piano solos. On January 20 the B.B.C. string orchestra will play; and on February 17 the Pougnet-Morrison-Pini Trio. The concerts, held from 1-10 till 2 p.m., are open to the public; admission 1s.

Finally, I remind readers of the Philharmonic concert next Friday: Brahms's Piano Concerto in B flat (Myra Hess, soloist), a Handel Organ Concerto (Frederick Stone, soloist), and Vaughan Williams's *Flourish for a Coronation*.

**'RATHCOL.'**

*North Down Herald and County Down Independent, Saturday 04 January 1936, page 7*

**Bangor Organists.** — Mr. E. H. Emery, Mus.Bac., F.R.C.O., organist of Bangor Parish Church, has been elected a vice-president of the Ulster Society of Organists and Choir Masters. Mr. Frank Parsons, F.R.C.O., L.Muc.T.C.U, organist at First Bangor Presbyterian Church, has been elected a member of the committee.

*North Down Herald and County Down Independent*, Saturday 27 June 1936, page 6

**On the Air.** — Mr. E. Emery, organist of the Parish Church, will broadcast in the Northern Ireland programme at 6-30 next Monday evening. His programme will include Reger's Toccata and Fugue in D minor, Opus 50, Bossi's *Pastorale*, Rhapsody No.3 by Howells, and César Franck's *Finale*. Mr. Emery is a newcomer to the group of organists who broadcast in these programmes.

*Lisburn Herald, and Antrim and Down Advertiser*, Saturday 28 July 1956, page 4

## **BANGOR OPERATIC SOCIETY**

One of the oldest opera organisations in Ireland is the Bangor Operatic Society and on Friday night, 3rd August, they will be introduced to radio listeners in a programme of excerpts from some of their recent shows. The society was founded nearly forty years ago and its first director, Dr. E H. Emery has been its conductor ever since. The members are lucky in having a theatre of their own — the Little Theatre in Bangor — but they have also put on many shows in Belfast. Friday night's broadcast was recorded in their own theatre and it will include extracts from such shows as *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Oklahoma* and *The Desert Song*.

Besides conducting Bangor Operatic Society, Dr Emery is organist of Saint Comgall's Parish Church, and as such he is a veteran broadcaster — one of the first musicians to perform 'on the wireless' in Northern Ireland. He gave his first broadcast recital about thirty-two years ago, a month or so after the first Belfast station had been opened.

For many years he was best known as a pianist and his frequent recitals from the old BBC studios in Linenhall Street, Belfast, brought him appreciative letters from all over the British Isles. His organ recitals were heard even further afield. He was one of the first organists to play in the newly opened BBC Empire Service in the early 'thirties and it seemed like a miracle, he recalls, when someone wrote to him from the American Middle West saying how well it had 'come over'. After more than a quarter of a century, Dr Emery's recitals from Saint Comgall's are still a regular and much appreciated ingredient of Northern Ireland broadcasting.

*Belfast Telegraph*, Monday 10 October 1960, page 3

## **Harvest services in Bangor**

Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held in Bangor in all the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, and Methodist Churches.

In Bangor Parish Church, Dr. E. H. Emery, organist since 1919, officiated for the last time. Dr. Emery who comes from Manchester, founded the local Operatic Society in 1919 and was Musical Director for 38 years till ill-health forced his retirement.

*Belfast Telegraph*, Saturday 26 November 1960, page 2

## **Organist at Bangor church for 41 years**

DR. E. H. EMERY, who died at Casterbridge Nursing Home, Redhill, Surrey, was organist and choirmaster of Bangor Parish Church for 41 years. He was 74.

He retired last month and since had been living with his son, Mr. Trevor Emery at Horsham, Sussex.

A Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, Dr. Emery was widely known to radio audiences, and was one of the veteran broadcasters in the British Isles, having given his first BBC recital in 1925.

After gaining his F.R.C.O. as a student at Durham University, he joined the King's Liverpool Regiment on the outbreak of war. At the end of the war he returned to the University and took a Mus.Bac. degree, and later he also gained a Doctorate in Music at Edinburgh University.

Dr. R. C. H. G. Elliott, now Bishop of Connor and a former curate of Bangor, who was Dr. Emery's wartime padre, was instrumental in bringing him to Bangor.

Dr. Emery was a founder member of the Bangor Amateur Operatic Society and conducted many of their performances.

His wife died in 1952.

*Belfast Telegraph*, Monday 02 January 1961, page 8

### **Church tribute to late Bangor organist**

A MEMORIAL service for Dr. E.H. Emery, organist and choirmaster of Bangor Parish Church for 41 years until his retirement in October, was held in the Church.

The address was given by the Bishop of Connor, Dr. R. C. H. Elliott, who first met Dr. Emery 44 years ago — while both were serving in the army in the First World War. It was Dr. Elliott who persuaded Dr. Emery, a native of Manchester, to come to Bangor on his demobilisation in 1919.

The large congregation included members of Bangor Amateur Operatic Society which Dr. Emery founded, and whose musical director he was for 38 years.

The service was conducted by the rector, Ven. Archdeacon G. A. Quin, assisted by his curates Rev. J. E. Moore, and Rev. G. C. Martin.