

Topic Page: [Bliss, Arthur, 1891-1975](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bliss_arthur_1891_1975)

Definition: **Bliss, Sir Arthur** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

English composer. He was a pupil of Charles Villiers Stanford, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Gustav Holst. Bliss' works include the *Colour Symphony* (1932), quintets for oboe (1927) and clarinet (1931), a piano concerto (1938), two operas and a number of choral works. From 1953 he was Master of the Queen's Music.

Summary Article: **Bliss, Arthur Edward Drummond**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

English composer and conductor. He became Master of the Queen's Musick in 1953. Among his works are *A Colour Symphony* (1922); music for the ballets *Checkmate* (1937), *Miracle in the Gorbals* (1944), and *Adam Zero* (1946); an opera *The Olympians* (1949); and dramatic film music, including *Things to Come* (1935). He conducted the first performance of US composer Igor Stravinsky's *Ragtime* for 11 instruments in 1918.

Bliss was educated at Rugby and Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he studied music under Charles Wood. He entered the Royal College of Music in London in 1913, studying with Charles Stanford, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Gustav Holst, but joined the army in 1914, serving until 1918. He was appointed professor of composition at the Royal College of Music in 1921, but took wholly to composing the next year, never holding any official post until he was appointed music director of the BBC in 1941, an appointment he resigned to Victor Hely-Hutchinson in 1945. Early experiments with unusual musical media, as in a Concerto for tenor, piano, strings, and percussion and *Rout* for soprano and chamber orchestra to a text constructed of nonsense syllables, gained him a reputation as an *enfant terrible*. His early music was miniaturist in scope but he later embraced larger forms. With some success, Bliss sought to evoke comparisons with Edward Elgar in his *Colour Symphony*, *Introduction and Allegro*, and violin concerto. He published his memoirs, *As I Remember*, in 1970.

WorksDramatic operas *The Olympians* (libretto by J B Priestley; 1949) and *Tobias and the Angel* (C Hassall; 1960); ballets *Checkmate* (1937), *Miracle in the Gorbals* (1944), and *Adam Zero* (1946); incidental music for Shakespeare's *Tempest*; film music for *Things to Come* (H G Wells; 1935), *Conquest of the Air*, *Caesar and Cleopatra* (G B Shaw).

Orchestral *A Colour Symphony* (1922), *Introduction and Allegro* (1926), *Hymn to Apollo*, *Meditations on a Theme by John Blow* (1955); concertos for piano and two pianos; march *Phoenix* for the liberation of France; *Music for Strings*.

Vocal *Morning Heroes* for orator, chorus, and orchestra (1930), *Pastoral* for mezzo, chorus, flute, strings, and drums, cantata *Mary of Magdala* for contralto, bass, chorus, and orchestra (1963), *Serenade* for baritone and orchestra (1929), concerto for piano, tenor, and chamber orchestra, *Rout* for voice and chamber orchestra (1919), *Madam Noy* for voice and six instruments; several song cycles with various instruments or piano, including *Five American Songs* (Edna St Vincent Millay).

Chamber *Conversations* for flute, oboe, violin, viola, and cello; two string quartets (1941, 1950), oboe quintet, clarinet quintet; sonatas for violin and piano, and viola and piano.

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Chicago

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Harvard

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