



Gerald Finzi: An English Composer

Stephen Banfield

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The music of Gerald Finzi, whose popularity has recently enjoyed a great resurgence, is rooted in the tradition of Elgar, Parry, Vaughan Williams and those composers of the early part of this century for whom song writing was a principal means of expression. While retaining a general picture of the modest, quintessentially English composer, Stephen Banfield's stylish, witty and acute biography reveals Finzi as a more complex and engaged figure than he is often given credit for. Finzi's ambiguous relationship with his craft, his affluent and intellectually stimulating family background and his Jewishness lend a mysterious and troubled quality to his life and work, and ultimately invite us to question the notions of Englishness he represents. 'In this outstanding study, Stephen Banfield remarks that although Finzi's output and influence were those of a minor composer, "something about his profile, the way he went about his job, the breadth of his thought, the depths of his personality and its impact on others, in short his individuality, always suggested something greater." Thus it is that Finzi, with a relatively small output, now receives a 571-page biography in which the author brings to bear the full weight and authority of analytical scholarship. Is he worth it? Banfield compels one to answer yes.' Michael Kennedy, BBC Music Magazine 'Stephen Banfield's long-needed and doubly welcome book does all that a good life-and-works study should do ... he earns the most heartfelt gratitude. So, it should be added, do his publishers.' Musical Times

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