

# RALPH HAWKES

Mr. Ralph Hawkes, senior director of Boosey & Hawkes Limited, died suddenly at his home at Westport, Connecticut, on Friday, 8th September, at the age of 52. He was the younger son of the late Oliver and Amelia Hawkes, of London. He was educated at Clifton College, passed through the Royal Artillery Academy, Woolwich, and after seeing military service in the latter part of the first world war, in which he was wounded, studied for a time at the Handelshochschule, St. Gallen.

Entering the family business of Hawkes & Son Limited, he and his elder brother were quickly thrust into a position of great responsibility by the death of their father in 1919. From then onwards Ralph Hawkes lived a life of intense activity, entering with the same zest into his recreations—which embraced winter sports, sailing and golf—as he did into every aspect of his work. A first-class yachtsman, he was a prominent member of the Ocean Racing Club, with many wins to his credit, and in 1929 he won the famous Curzon Cup for the Cresta Run at St. Moritz.

It was through his initiative and that of Mr. Leslie Boosey that the amalgamation between Hawkes & Son Limited and Boosey & Company Limited was brought about in 1930. The fusion of two such old-established and highly individual family businesses was no easy undertaking, but in the years that have followed it has proved amply justified. From this time onwards the scope of Ralph Hawkes's activities became ever wider, and amongst other interests, he began to concern himself increasingly with contemporary music. He was quick to recognise an outstanding talent in the youthful Benjamin Britten, and Béla Bartók, Stravinsky and Richard Strauss, to name only three composers, were also among his friends. Again in close co-operation with his chairman and colleague, Mr. Leslie Boosey, he played an important part at the close of the 1939-1945 war in securing for Boosey & Hawkes Limited a five years lease of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, whereby this famous building was placed at the disposal of the Arts Council and restored to its historic position as the national home of opera and ballet in Great Britain.

In 1946 he undertook to supervise personally the development of the two North American companies, Boosey & Hawkes Incorporated of New York and Boosey & Hawkes (Canada) Limited, of Toronto. For the past two years he had been largely resident in the United States, where he also served as personal representative of the Performing Right Society, of which he had long been a prominent director, playing an active part in its development from the earliest days.

It is to be feared that the intense concentration with which he tackled the many problems of Anglo-American trade, both in the field of music publishing and performance and in that of musical instruments, must have hastened his death from a heart ailment of which he received the first warning just a year ago. He leaves a widow, to whom the deep sympathy of all his many friends in Europe, America, Australia and New Zealand, which he visited last year, is now extended.

The following appreciation by Mr. Leslie Boosey appeared in *The Times* :—

“ Anyone meeting him was quickly impressed with his powerful personality and his tremendously vital and active mind. Those who, like the writer, had the privilege of being associated with him for many years in his business activities will always recall him for his tireless energy and prodigious industry. He gave everything he had to everything he undertook and he sometimes seemed a hard task master to those who worked for him because he demanded from them as much as he demanded from himself.

Yet, with all his apparent—one might almost say—ruthlessness he had a quick sympathy and a readiness to help those who really needed it, particularly young people anxious to make their way in life, and this aspect of his character was very noticeable in his dealing with composers. He counted among his friends nearly all the leading composers of the day and it was he first and foremost who recognised the genius of Benjamin Britten.

He was elected to membership of the Board of the Performing Right Society in his early twenties on the death of his father, and from that time onwards was one of its most powerful and skilful advisers. During the latter years of his life, he represented the interests of the Performing Right Society in America, where he was quickly appreciated not only as a strong protagonist of the interest of his own Society, but a man whose wide experience was no less valuable to the American Society than to his own.

He will be missed by a host of friends and it is probably only as the years go on that the full weight of the loss which has been suffered by the musical world in his early death will be fully appreciated.”

The following appeared in *The New York Times*:—

“ When Béla Bartók died, without the necessary funds for his own burial, there was a hue and cry. Who was to blame? Who but the composer’s publisher, Ralph Hawkes? All those who had been too blind to give Bartók recognition in his lifetime, who had been too busy to perform him because the public was not interested, who looked away with embarrassment when Mr. Hawkes begged engagements, performances or commissions for him stormed loudest. Ralph Hawkes was the natural whipping boy.

Now that Ralph Hawkes is no more, it is time to put a stop to this sham. The truth is that Ralph Hawkes did more than anyone else; he stood behind Bartók when few even dreamed of the man’s genius.

In the world of publishers Ralph Hawkes was the true and born artist. He liked to say of himself that he didn’t know music too well, but had an uncanny nose for the real thing. It didn’t matter how new the music was, how old, or how difficult to grasp technically or texturally. If it had something, if it said something, if it showed promise, a path, a vision, Ralph Hawkes couldn’t miss it.

He went to Hungary to see Kodály to arrange for publication of some of his works. Kodály brought in his friend Bartók. Would Mr. Hawkes be interested in Bartók also? Hawkes didn’t know much of his music, but he took one look at Bartók’s face, and said yes without a moment’s hesitation.

Hawkes knew and admired Benjamin Britten from the beginning, gave him a yearly income on which to work in peace and security.

He took on Igor Strawinsky and gave him a contract so lavish that at last one composer could feel that something was being put over on a publisher. Again Hawkes knew what he was doing. He counted on the renewed upsurge of Strawinsky's music in Europe and proved to be right.

He took a similar gamble by buying out Koussevitzky's "Edition Russe" at a heavy sum. Constituting a fantastic catalogue in itself, this investment is well on the way to paying itself off.

But the victory he was proudest of was when he helped to get A.S.C.A.P. to give the works of serious composers adequate rating.

—FRIEDE F. ROTHE."

The following appeared in *The Saturday Review* (New York):—

"For some acquainted with the recent history of the Sadler's Wells enterprise, the Covent Garden Opera Trust, and the Arts Council itself this opening (*of the Sadler's Wells Ballet season at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York*) was clouded by the death, on its very eve, of Ralph Hawkes, senior partner in the publishing firm of Boosey & Hawkes. Since the war's end Hawkes had taken on the management of the American activities of his firm and made his home here. Those who know of his part in the recent upsurge of musical activity in England know, too, that his death was a chilling thing to the company he greeted on its arrival in New York just a day or two before.

It was the firm of Boosey & Hawkes, for example, which posted a substantial sum of money to preserve Covent Garden for artistic purposes after the war, when it seemed fated to remain a dance hall, as it had been during the war.

The gamble was eventually validated by the formation of the Covent Garden Opera Trust, which, with the assistance of the Arts Council, established a year-round pattern of opera and ballet. Without the intervention at a crucial moment of Hawkes and his firm none of this might have happened.

In the postwar musical life of New York Hawkes was a new and stimulating personality. The idea of a publisher with a creative interest in contemporary music was something strange in this circle; almost as strange as a publisher who went perpetually to concerts and operas of all sorts whether they involved the works of men he published or not. In his modest person was contained a great power of decision over the creative spirits of his time, and it may be considered a measure of the way he used that power that those who mourn his death, at the untimely age of fifty-two are not only family and friends, critics and artists, but such others to whose welfare he contributed as Martinu, Copland and Benjamin Britten. Surely his best memorial would be the preservation, through some kindred spirit, of the broad, adventurous enterprise he imparted to the firm of which he was so integral a part.

—IRVING KOLODIN."



*RALPH HAWKES*



