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***Dan Godfrey Junior and Bournemouth's Municipal Orchestra before 1914***

During the late-Victorian period new orchestras were established in Britain within which players were engaged on a ‘permanent’ basis. Meanwhile, opportunities for aspirant career conductors remained predominantly peripatetic and contractual, based on short seasons with players whose working conditions were insecure. Seizing an opportunity to work with ‘permanent’ players in London, Henry Wood (1869–1944) conducted the Queen’s Hall Orchestra (1895—), managed by Robert Newman, cultivating new audiences and demanding particular discipline from the orchestra. Meanwhile, in the south coast seaside resort of Bournemouth, Dan Godfrey Jr (1868–1939) was musical director and manager of Britain’s first municipal orchestra (1895—). Whilst Wood’s contribution has dominated historiographies of British orchestral institutions, Godfrey’s is less well understood.

This paper evaluates Godfrey’s work with the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra [BMO] before 1914 and argues that his personal agency and strategy shaped the progress, niche and traditions of that institution. Godfrey was not only a designated officer of the Council but the first conductor to forge a role and status within such a structure. His programming of the works of British composers has been examined closely and emphasized (S. Lloyd, Sir Dan Godfrey Champion of British Composers, 1995). By drawing on new archival evidence I shed light not only on Godfrey’s priorities, decisions and negotiations with local councillors but also on the impact of his routines as conductor and manager. The influence of critical opinion and the demands of Godfrey’s answerability as a public servant played out in the BMO’s emerging image, function and reputation. In an era of increased unionization Godfrey’s approach to training and retaining his orchestra whilst educating and growing his audience reveals details of the shifting values associated with orchestral concert-life outside London. As a result, Bournemouth’s ‘Municipal Enterprise’ provides a fresh perspective on Britain’s orchestral concert-life before the First World War.

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