

The Elgar Society

# Journal



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# The Elgar Society

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# The Elgar Society Journal

362 Leymoor Road, Golcar, Huddersfield, HD7 4QF

Telephone: 01484 649108

Email: journal@elgar.org

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*The Editor does not necessarily agree with  
the views expressed by contributors,  
nor does the Elgar Society accept responsibility for such views.*

Front Cover: *Carreg Bica, Llangrannog*



# Editorial

I follow this editorial with 'Notes for Contributors', a feature common in journals. They represent not change, but the editor's naïve hope that potential contributors may take advantage of them. A longer version is available on request. I do understand that some earnest researchers don't have computers. In that case, your text can be digitized in house (a grand way of saying that the editor will type it); but it helps if the script already conforms to 'house style'. And if you can't submit digital text, *please* use double spacing.

This issue is unusually large because we are still celebrating 'the Year of Elgar'. The shorter essays concerning Muriel Foster and Frank Schuster's 'Hut' valuably supplement these authors' previous contributions. Andrew Lyle's essay on Powick prepares us for the first ever complete edition of the music Elgar composed for that institution; coincidentally one of the letters refers to this music and a possible quotation of an idea from Wagner (incidentally one he appropriated from Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*). If Elgar did indeed quote Wagner in a dance, doubtless as a jape, he was ahead of his French contemporaries Chabrier (*Souvenirs de Munich*, 1885), and perhaps Fauré and Messager (*Souvenirs de Bayreuth*: date uncertain). And it's good to be reminded that Elgar had a lighter side; his pricklier aspects, even neuroses, have been more emphasized in recent literature. Nevertheless, in response to Carl Newton's letter (July this year), one might quote from an expert, introducing a character test in *The Independent* (17 September): 'I would like to dispel the notion that Neuroticism is always a bad thing, a kind of pathology ... High Neuroticism scorers can bring to bear enormous powers of deep thought, detailed analysis, novel insight ... a high-scorer [sic] ... may well be a member of a thinking profession such as an academic or a writer'. Or, indeed, a composer – for that is certainly a 'thinking profession'.

Warm thanks to Geoffrey Hodgkins for supplying the fascinating broadcast from fifty years ago. The other essays included this month clarify issues and provide some delightful illustrations. For the plethora of reviews – more will follow – we have to thank Elgar's parents, who caused him to be born 150 years ago, and stimulated book and CD publishers to appropriate action this year. Nalini Ghuman's 'Essay' (one of four on Radio 3, and revised for the Journal) reminds us that Elgar does not belong only to middle England, still less only to imperial Britain. The Bard Festival in the United States has demonstrated a growing international interest in his music and, as Diana McVeagh mentioned to me, gave the lie to the notion (see the report on the RCM Study Day below) that only British orchestras can produce a good 'Elgar sound'. May his music flourish for another 150 years around the globe.

Julian Rushton

## **Notes for Contributors**

Please adhere to these as far as possible if you deliver writing (as is much preferred) in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format. A longer version is available in case you are prepared to do the formatting, but for the present the editor is content to do this.

*Copyright:* it is the contributor's responsibility to be reasonably sure that copyright permissions, if required, are obtained.

*Illustrations* (pictures, short music examples) are welcome, but *please ensure* they are pertinent, cued into the text, and have captions.

### **Presentation of written text:**

*Subheadings:* longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

*Dates:* use the form 2 June 1857. Decades: 1930s, no apostrophe.

*Plurals:* no apostrophe (CDs not CD's).

*Foreign words:* if well established in English (sic, crescendo) in Roman, otherwise italics.

*Numbers:* spell out up to and including twenty, then 21 (etc.) in figures.

*Quotations:* in 'single quotes' as standard. Double quotes for quotes within quotes.

*Longer quotations* in a separate paragraph, *not* in italic, *not* in quotes; please leave a blank line before and after.

*Emphasis:* ensure emphasis is attributed as '[original emphasis]' or '[my emphasis]'. Emphasized text *italic*.

*References:* Please position footnote markers *after* punctuation – wherever possible at the end of a sentence.

*In footnotes*, please adhere as far as possible to these forms (more fully expounded in the longer version of these notes):

Books: Author, *Title* (Place of publication: Publisher, year of publication), page[s]. Thus: Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1993), 199.

Periodicals: Author, 'Title of article', *Title of periodical*, issue number and date sufficient to identify, page[s]. Thus: Michael Allis, 'Elgar, Lytton, and the Piano Quintet, Op. 84', *Music & Letters*, 85 (May 2004), 198.

*Titles* that are 'generic' in Roman: e.g. Violin Concerto. Others in *italics*. Units within a longer work in single quotes, e.g. 'Sanctus fortis' from *The Dream of Gerontius*.

# The Third 'E': Elgar and Englishness<sup>1</sup>

Nalini Ghuman

## ***Little Englishness***

I turned on the radio one morning recently just in time to hear the astonishing claim that Elgar is not a great composer.<sup>2</sup> Norman Lebrecht later explained, with reference to the removal of Elgar's portrait from the 20 pound note, that:

Elgar's interest rate is plainly falling. In a multicultural age, he represents a country we no longer recognise except by way of apology. His replacement on the currency, the Scottish economist Adam Smith, signifies a more inclusive, pluralistic, unselfconscious nationhood than Elgar's antediluvian Little Englishness.<sup>3</sup>

I find it ironic that I, a passionate advocate and living embodiment of multiculturalism and pluralism, should find this conclusion untenable. What it more it reflects the perils of a long tradition of prescribing what we can – or should – hear in Elgar's music which can make it difficult to separate appreciation of his work from its vainglorious reception. Surely, the little Englishness that Lebrecht so vehemently protests about is not Elgar's, but rather that of those commentators who have interpreted his work in their image for nearly a century.

In 1916, Ernest Newman declared a new Elgar work to be 'in truth, the very voice of England'; and, after the composer's death, he told *Sunday Times* readers that his music was expressive of 'the very soul of our race'.<sup>4</sup> Lovers of Elgar ever since have nurtured a potent nexus of nationalistic myths (pastoral, spiritual, nostalgic, racial) which have dominated interpretations and even influenced performances. In 1976,

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1 This piece is essentially *The Essay* presented on BBC Radio 3 (7 June 2007) as part of the BBC's celebrations of Elgar's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. My thanks to the producer, Andrew Lyle.

2 Norman Lebrecht and Julian Lloyd Webber were guests on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, 5 April 2007.

3 Lebrecht, 'Who says he's Elgar the Great?' 11 April 2007 in *The Lebrecht Weekly*, <<http://www.scena.org/columns/lebrecht/070411-NL-elgar.html>>

4 Ernest Newman, first in the *Musical Times* 57 (No 879), 1 May 1916, 239, and later in the *Sunday Times*, 25 February 1934; the latter is quoted by Jeremy Crump, 'The Identity of English Music: the Reception of Elgar 1898-1935', in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds.) (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 180.

Yehudi Menuhin marvelled at ‘the collective soul of a race, set in its own climate and landscape’ that listeners could recognize in the ‘Enigma’ Variations.<sup>5</sup> Even today Nicholas Kenyon claims that ‘we all acknowledge that there is something essentially English in Elgar’.<sup>6</sup> ‘*We all?*’ ‘*Our race?*’ Who is this imagined community to whom these commentaries are addressed? Poor Edward Elgar! He simply can’t escape that third ‘E’ – ‘Englishness’.

‘Englishness’ is a construction fraught with baggage: it arose to counter the schisms and dissent bred by British imperial expansion. The obsession with identifying in Elgar’s music an essential Englishness has not only confined the music within national boundaries, but also serves to bolster the dream of an imagined rural idyll and nostalgia for the imperial past. It is a past epitomized by the honours’ lists which elevate strings of people to various levels of the Order of the British Empire, or by the flag-waving Last Night of the Proms which re-inscribes that invidious colonial call when ‘Rule Britannia’ is sung alongside ‘Land of Hope and Glory’, the latter to the strains of Elgar’s first *Pomp and Circumstance March*.

None of this ideology is unequivocally inscribed into Elgar’s music, any more than are the Malvern Hills or the soul of ‘the English’. Fifty years ago Donald Mitchell warned: ‘To find Elgar to-day specifically English in flavour is to expose oneself as a victim of a type of collective hallucination’.<sup>7</sup> And that is still true. But Sir Edward is no innocent victim of nationalist interpretations: he clearly cultivated the character and outdoor pursuits of the perfect English gentleman, enjoyed the official honours bestowed upon him, and took up ‘The Composer’s Burden’ in his marches and odes with all the gusto that Kipling could have wished the White Man to show.<sup>8</sup> Could he have imagined, though, that nostalgic perceptions of ‘this benighted country’ (as he called it) would be so rigidly inscribed in his music to its detriment a century later?<sup>9</sup> Though it may not have surprised his publisher and friend August Jaeger, who warned Elgar that ‘England ruins all artists’!<sup>10</sup>

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5 Yehudi Menuhin, ‘Foreword’, in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Elgar Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), xv.

6 Nicholas Kenyon, ‘Introduction’, in *Elgar: An Anniversary Portrait* (London: Continuum, 2007), vii. An edited extract entitled ‘Elgar the Englishman’ appeared prior to the book’s publication in the *Daily Telegraph*, 14 May 2007.

7 Donald Mitchell, ‘Some Thoughts on Elgar (1857-1934)’, *Music and Letters* 38 (April 1957), 119.

8 See Kipling’s poem ‘The White Man’s Burden: The United States & The Philippine Islands, 1899’, in *Rudyard Kipling’s Verse: Definitive Edition* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1929).

9 Elgar, letter to Jaeger, 3 Jan 1902, in Jerrold Northrop Moore (ed.), *Elgar and His Publishers: Letters of a Creative Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 323.

10 Jaeger, letter to Elgar, 8 Jan 1905, quoted in Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 452.

## **Elgar Abroad**<sup>11</sup>

For the past decade I have studied and worked in the San Francisco Bay Area, where I have noticed Elgar's absence from the cultural consciousness of the USA – performances of the Variations and Cello Concerto notwithstanding. This is not just my impression: it is corroborated by major orchestral concert listings for the seasons from 2006–2008, a recent monograph, and by the opinions of several scholars of English music across the country.<sup>12</sup> There are exceptions, such as Leonard Slatkin's work in St Louis and Washington DC, and Andrew Litton's with the Dallas Symphony; but this only emphasises the point that it is largely by individual efforts that knowledge of Elgar's music is kept alive in the States. The reconstructed *Third Symphony* was performed by a number of American orchestras, but once only, as a curiosity, and *The Dream of Gerontius* went through a spirited little centennial a few years back. But these surges of interest in Elgar tend to be connected with historical celebrations which reinforce the perceived ties between Elgar and his times, rather than reflecting an increase in his cultural capital. This was vividly illustrated by a review of the San Francisco Symphony's performance of *Gerontius* during its centenary: 'Elgar's work is most aptly placed in a Victorian (and Edwardian) world from which it never really escapes'.<sup>13</sup>

The dearth of interest in Elgar outside England is lamented by one of his senior biographers, Michael Kennedy: 'Shakespeare's reputation is worldwide; Elgar's is not', and 'since 1919 his reputation abroad has been tenuous ... celebrations on the weekend of his anniversary are an English phenomenon'. Kennedy is puzzled that the composer is shunned in Italy, France, and Germany, as well as largely in the USA, and offers no explanation.<sup>14</sup> It may not have helped that, unlike Vaughan Williams, Britten and Tippett, Elgar was not fond of the US: 'I loathe and detest every moment of my life here!' he wrote; 'They asked me what I wd. take to settle in the States & conduct one of the big orchestras – I said nothing in the world would induce me to spend 6 mths here – not \$10,000,000...'.<sup>15</sup>

But this alone cannot account for Elgar's 'tenuous' reputation there – or anywhere else. Rather, it is because he has been constantly drawn upon to define England musically on national occasions, and by historians, film directors, conductors, musicians and philosophers; and this has set the limits on what should, and could, be heard in his music. A National Public Radio producer observed on Elgar's birthday

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11 I am grateful to Nicholas Temperley, Charles Edward McGuire, Alain Frogley, and Byron Adams for sharing with me their expert opinions about, and experience of, Elgar's presence in the USA.

12 Richard Smith in *Elgar in America: Elgar's American connections between 1895 and 1934* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2005) mentions the decline in the general presence of Elgar's music in the USA after World War I.

13 Robert Commanday, editor of the *San Francisco Classical Voice*, summarizes Kristi Brown's review of the San Francisco Symphony's performance of *Gerontius* on 1 Feb 2000. Online at: <[http://www.sfcv.org/main/mainarchives/main\\_2\\_1\\_00.php](http://www.sfcv.org/main/mainarchives/main_2_1_00.php)>.

14 Michael Kennedy, 'Elgar's Magic Formula', *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 May 2007, 1.

15 Elgar to his 'Windflower', April 1911, in Moore (ed.), *The Windflower Letters* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 82-3.

in June, that although the composer is almost unknown in the USA, 'in England, Elgar's music still means something ... [it] embodies all that's good and bad about being British'.<sup>16</sup> Thus as long as it is fettered with the nationalist myths which exert such a hold on this island country, but which have few admirers elsewhere, his music will continue to resonate only here. Meanwhile comparable works by his contemporaries enjoy an international appeal – just contrast the success of Verdi's *Falstaff* and Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* with the fate of *Falstaff*, or of Mahler's symphonies with Elgar's. It's a sad irony that the Cleveland Orchestra celebrated the life and music of Richard Strauss with a performance of *Till Eulenspiegel* on Elgar's birthday, 2 June 2007.

Even when Elgar's music is heard, it rarely escapes consideration within nationalistic terms. This recent review of the Los Angeles Philharmonic from the *Los Angeles Times* is typical:

You've never really heard Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations until you've heard it played by a British orchestra with a British conductor on British soil. They do bring a uniquely nationalistic fervor to it... Yet [Bramwell] Tovey's performance with this American orchestra might have been the next best thing to that... He rampaged exuberantly through the rambunctious variations and pounded out the flag-waving finale...<sup>17</sup>

A different reviewer of the same performance found that, alongside works by Britten and Shostakovich, the Variations 'came off as the weak portion' of the LA program – 'simply droll ... maybe it is too ... British for me'.<sup>18</sup> Further east in Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Symphony's *Enigma*, described as having a 'very British ... plum-pudding richness', alongside the 'universal' quality of Mendelssohn's violin concerto, is another recent instance.<sup>19</sup>

Rambunctious? Droll? Flag-waving! Plum-pudding rich? If these interpretations of the 'Enigma' Variations are the result of keeping that 'third E' inextricably linked to Elgar, is it any wonder that his music is not well-known abroad? I applaud Sakari Oramo, conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, who suggests that Elgar may be ignored everywhere because of the legacy of British conductors who have let their own personalities override his music – 'Sargent's heavy sentimentality, Boult's stoic stodginess or Barbirolli's operatic fury'.<sup>20</sup>

There is, however, an interesting twist in the story of Elgar's overseas significance. Several of his sacred pieces – among them *O Salutaris hostia*, *Ave verum*, and the opening of *The Apostles* – are performed fairly frequently by American Episcopalian choirs. This church's coat of arms is based on St George's

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16 Tom Huizenga, 'Elgar, Misunderstood Man of "Hope and Glory"', 2 June 2007. Online at: <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=10640054>>.

17 Richard S. Ginell, 'Becomingly British', review of Los Angeles Philharmonic under Bramwell Tovey, *Los Angeles Times*, 14 May 2007, Part E, p. 3.

18 *LA Weekly* review of the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Tovey, 11 May 2007.

19 Milwaukee Symphony, Program Description, 4 May 2007; online at: <<http://www.milwaukee-symphony.org/purchasetickets/calendar/view.asp?id=1303>>.

20 Sakari Oramo, 'Stand Up for the Maestro', *The Guardian*, 25 May 2007, 3.

Cross and its congregations have a cultural allegiance to England, thus shoring up Englishness as a form of long-distance identity for the Diaspora. The legacy of such migrants who assimilated conquered lands into the empire and exerted their cultural influence through colonization is felt very strongly in Australia and New Zealand. If Elgar's works are gaining currency in the Anglophone Commonwealth, particularly the Antipodes, then there is a cultural explanation. For instance, in Melbourne, with its strong Victorian legacy, as in Perth, home to more Brits than any other Australian city, Elgar's 'sumptuous English rhetoric' is celebrated as a nostalgic link to the imaginary homeland.<sup>21</sup>

### **Broadening the Contexts**

Broadening the contexts in which listeners hear Elgar's music can allow for both fresh interpretations of well-known works, and the rediscovery of pieces that sit awkwardly with the constructed Elgar-Englishness equation (or with the traditional progress narrative of music history). The most extensive celebration of the composer this year – The Bard Festival in up-state New York – was, after all, inspired by stumbling upon a fresh look at Elgar, Englishness and Empire, and sought to reassess the composer. Perhaps this answers Oramo's call for the music to be freed from the burden of British performance traditions. He urges us to listen to recordings of Elgar conducting his own music which are 'revelatory' – 'fleet and flowing ... subtle in colours, impulsive and elusive' – and from which a different picture of the music emerges.<sup>22</sup> Elgar's style reveals a wide inspiration with roots in a variety of traditions – and not just the acceptable Teutonic one, which might attract to Elgar's music the attention currently enjoyed by Zemlinsky and Korngold.

French models have been suggested for his chamber music;<sup>23</sup> John Butt proposes that in Elgar's church and organ music 'part of the very Englishness with which Elgar is so often yoked perhaps had its roots in that aspect of his background which was most "foreign" at that time, namely his loyalty to the Pope and the heritage of St Gregory'.<sup>24</sup> Listen closely to the 'March of the Mogul Emperors' of 1912 (a piece Elgar loved, by the way), and you will hear a brilliantly conceived Polonaise in the tradition of Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakov and Musorgsky.<sup>25</sup> Not, as we have long been

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21 Perth Concert Hall, West Australian Symphony Orchestra: 4/5 May 2007. Online at: <<http://www.waso.com.au/EventDetail.aspx?ProductID=643>>.

22 Oramo, 'Stand Up for the Maestro', 3.

23 See Daniel M. Grimley's excellent discussion in which he argues that 'Elgar's chamber music demands to be heard in a broader European context and not simply within a narrow nationalist domain'; "A Smiling with a sigh": the chamber music and works for strings' in Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 129-38.

24 John Butt, 'Roman Catholicism and being musically English: Elgar's church and organ music', in *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, 108.

25 See my discussion of this piece (in the context of Elgar's *Crown of India* masque and orchestral suite) in 'Elgar and the British Raj: Can the Mughals March?', in Byron Adams (ed.) *Elgar and His World* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 2007), 265-72.



**Fig. 1. The author at Carreg Bica on the coast at Llangrannog ('had Elgar experienced the freezing gale, he would have written an Arctic Symphony, not Introduction and Allegro!')**

told, 'the worst' product of Elgar's 'barbarian' mind that, like his other 'imperialist' works, remains 'a clog on the endearing place Elgar holds in our imagination!'<sup>26</sup>

Elgar delighted in his 'first touch with Asia' on a Mediterranean cruise – he visited Greece and Turkey, was enthralled by music he heard in a mosque in Izmir, and used it as the basis for his *In Smyrna*.<sup>27</sup> Ian Parrott, concurring that 'the "Enigma" was a tune and not the Malvern Hills', has suggested that 'its solution is a Nocturne in G minor by Chopin, for which Elgar showed his fondness later in [the symphonic prelude] Polonia.'<sup>28</sup> And a stay in Llangrannog on the Cardiganshire coast inspired the *Introduction and Allegro* (see fig. 1). Elgar's own account of the visit, included in the programme-note for the London premiere in 1905, is evocative:

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26 Quotations from: Cecil Gray, *A Survey of Contemporary Music* (London: Oxford University Press: 1924), 78-79, and A. J. Sheldon, *Edward Elgar* (London: Office of Musical Opinion, 1932), 16.

27 Moore's 'Introduction' in the score of *In Smyrna* (Novello & Co. Ltd, 1976) includes an extract from the diary Elgar kept during his Mediterranean cruise.

28 Ian Parrott, 'Enigma Solution?', letter to *The Musical Times* 80 (No. 1152, February 1939), 135.

Some three years ago in Cardiganshire, I thought of writing a brilliant piece for string orchestra. On the cliff, between blue sea and blue sky, thinking out my theme, there came up to me the sound of singing...

...one point common to all [the songs] was impressed upon me, and led me to think, perhaps wrongly, that it was a real Welsh idiom – I mean the fall of a third –

Fitting the need of the moment, I made the tune which appears in the Introduction (as a link) and in the *Coda* of this work ... there may be (and I hope there is) a Welsh feeling in the one theme – to quote Shakespeare again: 'All the water in the Wye cannot wash the Welsh blood out of its body'.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, phrases from the Welsh national anthem, *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau* ('Land of my Fathers'), played by solo viola are set off in remarkable relief in the first section (six bars after fig. 2), and return in the *Coda* (at fig. 30).<sup>30</sup> While sequential falling thirds are a feature of several of Wales's best-known folk songs, including *Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn* and *Ar Lan y Môr*, either or both of which the composer may have heard in Llangrannog, Elgar seems to have drawn on the national anthem's second melodic line, which also returns as the final phrase:

**Ex.1: Hen wlad fy nhadau, final phrase**

Tra môr yn fur Tr bur hoff bau, O byd ded i'r hen iaith bar-hau

(As long as the sea protects the land so pure, O may the ancient language endure).

**Ex.2: Elgar Introduction and Allegro, Cardiganshire coast theme**

*p dolce*

*f ff < dim. f ff < >*

29 Programme note for the premiere at the Queen's Hall, 8 March 1905, held at the Elgar Birthplace Museum; Grimley reproduces the passage in full ("A Smiling with a sigh", 124-5) and states that 'Elgar evidently read and approved the programme note before it went to print' (ibid., 232, n.7). John Horton also cites Elgar's description, as quoted by Mrs Richard Powell in the second edition of *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947); see Horton, 'Two Possible Elgarian Allusions', in the *Musical Times* 101 (No 1410, August 1960), 490-2.

30 Parrott suggested *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau* as a possible source in *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1971), 59; Horton suggested *Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn* ('Two Possible Elgarian Allusions', 491).

The idea that this moment in Elgar's celebrated string writing was inspired by the land, and song, of 'dark, ugly, pugnacious little trolls' (to quote an infamous insult) has perhaps been as uncomfortable for some as the appearance of a Lutheran chorale in the second movement of Debussy's *En Blanc et Noir* during World War One!<sup>31</sup>

By pursuing Welsh roots in one particular work, though, I do not wish to replace one nationalist discourse with another – you will hear the undulations of the glorious Ceredigion coast in the piece only if you are told they are there. But this musical occurrence is suggestive of the variety of cultural meanings we might find in Elgar's music, if our ears are open to hearing them.

Finally, it is an irony that some of his works which contribute magnificently to English performing traditions are rarely marked out for 'Englishness' – his part-songs, for instance, which celebrate the amateur choral tradition and reveal the composer's close affinity with the English poetry he set, but not the narrow, *ad hoc* nationalist musical ideals (noble string melodies, and so on) that, we have been told, exude the composer's ineffable Englishness.

Elgar's music does have the capacity to mean different things to different people, but restricting interpretation, stifling the imagination, or coercing listeners into a single way of hearing continues to have negative consequences, both politically and culturally. There is room for Elgar in the international canon – it is not his music that should be jettisoned but, rather, the nationalist rhetoric, with its inherent nostalgia and pretension. Elgar's music in all its richness can barely be heard above the noise! And the losers are not only Elgar himself – but us, his audiences, as well.

*Nalini Ghuman, professor of music at Mills College, California, is a graduate of The Queen's College, Oxford and King's College, London. She received her PhD from the University of California at Berkeley where she was a fellow of the Townsend Center for Humanities. She presents her work internationally, and has contributed chapters to Elgar and His World (Princeton University Press, 2007) and Western Music and Race (Cambridge University Press, 2007). She is now preparing a book, India in the English Musical Imagination, 1890-1940.*

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31 The quotation is from A.A. Gill, *Sunday Times*, 14 Sept 1997.

# 'When I was at the Lunatic Asylum...': Elgar at Powick, 1879–1884

Andrew Lyle

If you travel north from Malvern on the A449, you pass through the village of Powick. A right turn at the traffic lights into Hospital Lane brings you to a handsome Victorian villa, set in a rather less handsome modern housing estate. The villa is currently the headquarters of Lazer, a local computer company, but was formerly the residence of the Superintendent of Powick Asylum; all that is now left of an institution which at its height housed over one thousand patients (see figs. 1 and 2).<sup>1</sup>

Just over a decade ago, Barry Collett wrote a pioneering article on the music Elgar wrote during his time as bandmaster at the Asylum, and later recorded the music with the Rutland Sinfonia (see fig. 3).<sup>2</sup> However, close examination of the records of the Asylum reveals a number of details about the organisation of music and entertainments there that have hitherto been overlooked or misreported, and which illuminate the characters involved. Furthermore, the recent discovery of new sources for this music, and study of the sketch and performance materials, have a bearing on the performance of this repertoire.

**Fig. 1. The Superintendent's house, Powick Asylum**



1 Photographs of the old Asylum buildings and grounds can be found at <http://countyasylums.com>.

2 'A Strange Apprenticeship: Elgar at Powick', this Journal, 9/6 (November 1996), 284–95. 'Music for Powick Asylum', Rutland Sinfonia, British Music Label BML 028.

## **Origins of Powick Asylum**

Powick was one of a series of county asylums built in response to the Lunatic Asylums Act of 1845. The Act made it mandatory for all counties and boroughs to provide adequate asylum accommodation, at public expense and within three years, for its pauper lunatic population; by 1847, 36 of the 52 counties had complied. Powick's full title was 'County and City of Worcester Pauper Lunatic Asylum' ('pauper' was later dropped).<sup>3</sup> 'County' before 'City' reflects the higher proportion of county rates which paid for it, and the higher proportion of Visitors (management committee) elected by the county (11) and the city (4). The asylum opened in August 1852 with the declared purpose of 'alleviating the sufferings of the unfortunate individuals who may require our protection and care', and 'providing the means of effecting their cure in a very large proportion and thereby restoring them to their families and friends'.

Powick Asylum was situated in a new building on the site of 'White Chimneys', a country estate acquired from Mr Stallard for £2800 (equivalent to c.£174,000 today).<sup>4</sup> The name 'White Chimneys' still appeared on the death certificates of those who died at Powick well into the twentieth century, to avoid any perceived stigma attached to death in an asylum. The founding committee stipulated that the asylum building should be within five miles of Worcester, accessible by a good road, in an open and airy situation, on gravel or rocky sub-soil, and with a constant supply of good water (but see below!). The design by Hamilton and Medland allowed the Superintendent to visit all the wards without once retracing his steps, though whether this walk amounted to the six miles that the characters paced in the fictional asylum featured in Sebastian Foulkes' 2006 novel *Human traces* is doubtful. The asylum cost nearly £60,000 (c. £4.8 million) to build, and it is a tribute to our Victorian forebears that such substantial sums were spent in building and running such institutions.

## **Music at Powick**

Music-making at the asylum began during the years when Dr James Sherlock was Superintendent. He was only the second holder of the post, appointed after the unfortunate demise of his predecessor, Dr I.R. Grahamsley.<sup>5</sup> Grahamsley came to Powick in 1852 from Royal Morningside Asylum, Edinburgh: his salary was £350 (c. £28,000) per year. In July 1854 he committed suicide, perhaps precipitated

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3 Many sources – including *The New Grove Dictionary* – transpose 'county' and 'city'.

4 Conversion to modern values from <http://www.measuringworth.com>.

5 See Dr Peter Hall, 'A History of Powick Lunatic Asylum', Worcester County Record Office HOq 942.4438. A broader summary of Powick's history is Robert Ashworth's 'Mad, Bad – or just unwanted?' <http://web.archive.org/web/2001055182122/web.ukonline.co.uk/thornbury/powick>. For a wider perspective still, though with no specific reference to Powick, see Kathleen Jones, *A history of the mental health services* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1972). Details of the financial and other arrangements come from Annual Reports, Visitors' Minutes, Servants Records, and Salaries and Wages books, all held at WCRO.



**Fig. 2. The Asylum buildings**



**Fig. 3. Concert in Powick Asylum Chapel, 23 September 1988, by the Rutland Sinfonia, conducted by Barry Collett. The chapel closed soon afterwards. Our thanks to Barry for supplying all three Powick pictures.**

by the controversy caused by the appointment of his sister-in-law as matron. Very shortly afterwards, Dr Sherlock was appointed, and remained 25 years until his death (from natural causes).

The first challenge Sherlock faced was a cholera outbreak two months after his arrival; the provision of an adequate, clean water supply, together with persistent overcrowding, were ongoing problems for the Asylum over the coming years. Sherlock's regime built on the humane culture established during Grahamsley's brief tenure. Patients were seldom restrained, fish tanks and bird-cages were introduced to the wards, and flowering shrubs, chairs, tables, rabbits, doves, and games to the airing courts. By 1861, sofas, easy chairs, and bookcases had been provided, framed magazine pictures decorated the walls, and the contents of the library, previously 'almost exclusively religious in nature', had been supplemented by 'more secular books and weekly publications'. Summer picnics and excursions for patients were introduced. One of these was reported in detail in *The Illustrated London News*,<sup>6</sup> where 'Cuthbert Bede' wrote of an excursion to Leigh Court in 1856. His account is worth quoting at length since it provides a number of clues as to the origins of music at the asylum, how the music was organised, and the repertoire that was played.

After walking round the church yard, they returned to the meadow, where the brass band of the institution had now commenced playing. The band is not only a significant feature in the government of a lunatic asylum conducted on humane and enlightened principles, but it is also an evidence of what may be done by perseverance and good instruction. It is entirely composed of the warders of the institution, who, notwithstanding that their hours of practice are necessarily limited, have, in the short space of eight months, become a most efficient band. This is due to the judicious tuition and untiring exertions of Mr. Langdon of Worcester, who has had their sole training, and has devoted no little time and talent to the furtherance of this really important work; - we say really important, because the introduction of music into the asylum has been marked with the happiest effect on the patients. The band plays at the institution on certain evenings in the week, and on Fridays the patients have a dance. Mr Langdon having taken his place at the head of his pupils, and being joined by Mr Hume, the steward, who is an excellent musician, the national airs of France and England were played in fine style. To these a country dance succeeded, and to the lively measure of its music the majority of patients were soon tripping, their nurses and attendants mixing with them. We were informed that so much had the pleasures of today been anticipated that the patients had devoted the previous evening to unceasing 'ball practice', and the preparation of polkas for the next day's performance; and they certainly proved themselves to be admirably proficient in those mazy steps, to obtain a due knowledge of which we are accustomed to place ourselves under the instruction of a [Eugene] Coulon or a [James Harvey] D'Egville.

.....[The] Patients' unvarying demeanour throughout the day was a sufficient evidence of the beneficial results that have been accomplished in laying aside the terrors of chains and whips and darkened cells for bright rooms, kind words, and humane treatment.

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6 ILN 28 June 1856, Vol. 808. 'Bede' was a pseudonym for Edward Bradley, author of the popular rite-of-passage novel, *The Adventures of Mr Verdant Green* (1853-1857).

....it was nearly eight o'clock before the pic-nic [sic] party left the ground, taking with them, as we may hope, many sunny fancies wherewith to cheer less happier moments.

From this it seems that the band was founded in late 1855 (since by June 1856 it had been in existence for eight months) as a *brass band*. The Annual Report for 1856 confirms this by mentioning that 'on the recommendation of Dr Sherlock, instruments for a brass band have been provided at a cost of £33/16/- [c. £2,100] (the performers being the attendants) for the amusement of the patients, the beneficial effects of which will be detailed in Dr Sherlock's report'.<sup>7</sup> In his report, Dr Sherlock mentions a singing class, and the effect of this on music in church services. Of the band he says:

A band of brass instruments has been formed amongst some of the officers and attendants: they have already advanced sufficiently to enable them to entertain the Patients on the evening of their balls, and in the summer evenings it will be found a great acquisition in inducing the Patients to march regularly in the grounds. Great difficulty has hitherto been experienced in obtaining musical assistance on account of the distance of the Asylum from Worcester, but we are now in a great measure independent of foreign aid.

Among other non-medical treatments, Sherlock details weekly excursions into the surrounding countryside (along the lines reported by Cuthbert Bede), games of cricket, walking and reading (the library contained 300 volumes), and continues:

The weekly balls have been continued regularly during the greater part of the year, when Patients of both sexes are brought together for some hours. Dancing, singing, recitations, an occasional farce acted in character, and the performances of the band, generally form the basis of the entertainment, which is varied from night to night by omitting some and rendering others of the elements more prominent.

Sherlock continues by enumerating the benefits of these activities:

The amount of discipline and self-control which these reunions exercise on the patients is productive of the happiest effects, and they have dispelled the gloom and cheered the breast of many miserable sufferers; many, under the influence of deep melancholy and despair, look on in delight, or even take part in these meetings, from which not a few have dated their first signs of convalescence. Patients who have been for a time unable to attend these meetings on account of restlessness and excitement, frequently make strong efforts to control their passions, so as to regain their admission, while many look upon no infliction so seriously as that of depriving them of this privilege.

The following year (1857), he was rather more succinct:

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7 Trade catalogues indicate that this sum would be more than adequate to acquire (say) a couple of cornets, a euphonium and a bombardon. See Arnold Myers, 'Instruments and Instrumentation of British Brass Bands', in Trevor Herbert (ed.), *The British Brass Band: a Musical and Social History* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 155–186.

Instruction in sacred and secular music has been continued to the patients on two evenings of the week. The weekly amusements have been continued as heretofore, and with the same beneficial results: *no other means of recreation have been observed capable of realising a similar curative influence*, and their value is enhanced by the large proportion of the Patients who can participate in them [my emphasis].

Thus within five years of Powick Asylum opening its doors, this form of music therapy was well established, and its benefits appreciated. The Friday evening dance for the patients was a regular feature, and these entertainments were still in existence nearly 40 years later. Two half-printed, half-handwritten programmes from Powick survive from 1895 detailing a mixed programme of instrumental and vocal music, though neither of them features any of Elgar's compositions. The performers were attendants, and in the late 1850s the bandmaster appears not to have been paid. From 1870, a Band Instructor was appointed at an annual salary of £8, rising five years later to £10; John Roberts held the post as well as his other official position of Carpenter Attendant, until ill-health prevented him in 1884. He received a superannuation allowance of £30 per year until his death in June 1887. His replacement Henry William Leek, a Painter Attendant, is described as brass band instructor from 1886, and was paid a mere £7 per year. This is a typical and not unreasonable pattern in Asylum wages: a new appointee was paid less than his/her predecessor.

The Annual Reports make regular references to the weekly dances, and occasional references to the Band, from which it appears that the number of players varied between fourteen and sixteen.<sup>8</sup> This tallies well with the forces at Elgar's disposal: two or three woodwind (piccolo, flute, clarinet), three or four brass (two cornets, euphonium, brass bass), up to eight violins, occasional viola, string bass and cello, plus piano.

Within a couple of decades, when Elgar first played at Powick in 1877, the hospital had been enlarged and the Malvern/Worcester road had been realigned to make space for a cheap extension, built with unplastered walls. Other music took place in the chapel. There was a choirmaster, Oliver Millward; a new piano had been acquired at a cost of £45; a new recreation hall had been built; and a new

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8 A selection of comments: 1857: '... The Band has made considerable proficiency, and its services are much esteemed during the summer evenings in the airing courts, and also at the weekly parties' [Dr Sherlock's report]. 1864: '... the hall is used three or four times a week, and an efficient band of 14 instruments has been formed among the attendants. Last night [11 December 1863] there were dancing, singing and the performance of a farce in the recently arranged theatre at the end of the hall, which is fitted with appropriate scenery, and where a magic lantern is also frequently exhibited, the number of patients present being 240. Nearly as many, it seems, attend the entertainments regularly, which on special occasions, more than 350 take part' [Commissioners in Lunacy Report]. 1869: '...singing classes, including about 20 patients, the same number of Attendants and 10 officers meet on Monday and Saturday, and the Brass Band of 16 performers, 2 or 3 being patients, practise twice a week' [Commissioners in Lunacy Report]. 1874: 'For the amusement of the patients, there is a brass band, consisting of 14 attendants. In the large hall were acted at Christmas, two farces. The last concert was on Thursday. About 400 patients attend the weekly dance' [Commissioners in Lunacy Report].

harmonium had been provided for the chapel at a cost of £15.<sup>9</sup>

On 28 May 1881, Dr Sherlock died. His successor, moving from his previous post as Superintendent of Wiltshire County Hospital in Devizes, was the 29-year-old Dr (later Sir) Edward Marriott-Cooke, who held the post for seventeen years before becoming a national Commissioner in Lunacy. He continued Sherlock's good work, stressing the importance of occupational therapy, the provision of recreation and amusements, and the maintenance of a good band and a well-trained choir. His qualities were acknowledged by the Visitors, who reckoned that in Dr Marriott-Cooke they 'possessed a Superintendent second to none in the Kingdom', and added £300 to his salary. He was the last Superintendent under whom Elgar served.

The story of Powick after Marriott-Cooke's departure in 1898 is less happy; successive Superintendents ran a very tight ship, with much overcrowding, little investment in new building, and little improvement in the older structures. The asylum was not lit by electricity until as late as 1932. It was even boasted that Powick was the cheapest mental hospital in the country. One of the Superintendents, Dr Fenton, was an extremely moral character, to the extent that he patrolled the grounds armed with a rolled umbrella to discourage hanky-panky in the shrubberies. Things looked up in the 1950s under Dr Arthur Spence, who with Ron Sandison pioneered the use of LSD to treat mental disorders, 'enabling the patient to recover his early childhood memories which are often the cause of nervous disturbances in later life'. Schizophrenia was treated with thioridazine. A damaging exposé of the poor amenities and overcrowding at Powick in Granada TV's 'World in Action' (20 May 1968) spelled the beginning of the end for the hospital, which admitted no new patients after 5 December 1978, and was closed in 1989.

### ***Elgar at Powick***

Elgar was Bandmaster at Powick from January 1879 to late 1884. His duties involved teaching the players their instruments, writing dance music for the weekly entertainments at the asylum, and conducting the band on those occasions. He succeeded his violin teacher Frederick Spray, who had been the Bandmaster at Powick for at least the previous two years; Spray first appears in the accounts in January 1877. Elgar's first engagement at the Asylum came later that same year when on 7 February he and Spray played first violin, his father second violin, and his uncle H. Elgar harmonium (along with others) in a mixed vocal and instrumental concert.<sup>10</sup>

In his six years at Powick, Elgar composed music for the Asylum Band to be performed at the Friday dances. The part-books held at the Birthplace Museum contain four sets of quadrilles, as follows (dates from the part books or sketch score):

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- 9 Visitors' Minutes, 4 December 1876; Annual Report 1864; Visitors' Minutes 9 April 1877. The Commissioners in Lunacy Report of 12/13 October 1877 confirms: 'A harmonium has been purchased for the chapel, and a new and very good piano for the recreation hall. The piano formerly there is now placed in one of the wards'.
- 10 Programme preserved at Elgar Birthplace Museum.

<i>Die junge Kokette</i>	19.V.79
<i>L'Assommoir</i>	11.IX.79
<i>La Brunette</i>	21.IX.79
<i>Paris</i>	Oct 1880

There is also a set of Lancers:

<i>Valentine</i>	14.II.80
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and a set of five polkas

<i>Maud</i>	30.V.80
<i>Nelly</i>	Oct 1881
<i>La Blonde</i>	Oct. 15.82
<i>Helcia</i>	Oct. 7 1883
<i>Blumine</i>	May 22.84

There is sketch material for some of these dances in the British Library, as well as a full score of an apprentice piece for the Powick Band (Menuetto in B flat). Since Barry Collett wrote about and performed this repertoire in 1996, two more of Elgar's sketches have come to light.<sup>11</sup> One is a dated sketch score for *La Brunette*, which places these dances later than previously thought. The other is a sketch score of a set of previously unknown dances, *A Singing Quadrille*; much of the melodic material is based on nursery rhymes or popular songs, including 'Oh dear, what can the matter be', 'Boys and girls come out to play', 'Baa baa black sheep', and 'Little Bo Peep'. Elgar used tunes other than his own in another set of *Quadrilles: Paris (introducing French songs)* was written after a visit to the French capital with his brother-in-law Charlie Pipe in 1880. The *Singing Quadrille* sketch is undated, but a number of factors – the clumsy mis-transposition of the bombardon part in the first quadrille and the marginal notes referring to quadrille models that Elgar was expected to follow<sup>12</sup> – suggests these dances were written early in Elgar's association with the asylum, while he was learning his craft. A further tantalising fragment is a single clarinet part at the Elgar Birthplace for a set of five quadrilles, which does not correspond in key structure to any of the known Powick sets. It includes a pencilled note from Elgar: 'July 16 1880 Dear Sir, Please bring this (your solo) down at a quarter to 3, E.W. Elgar'. One wonders how many other quadrilles have been lost!

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11 Manuscripts at the Elgar Birthplace Museum, MS 212 and 213.

12 *Quadrilles* were written in groups of five which retained the names of the contredanses that originally made up a standard quadrille: 'Le Pantalon', 'L'Été', 'La Poule', 'La Pastourelle', and 'Finale'. In the margin of the short score of *A Singing Quadrille*, Elgar notes 'L'Été, La Poule, Pantalon, Finale'.

## Players in the band

Before, during, and after Elgar's bandmastership, a small sum of money was put aside each winter to reward contributors to the patients' amusement. The Visitors' Minutes entry for December 1878 is typical: 'A gratuity of £20 [c.£1300] to be placed at Dr Sherlock's hand as a gratuity to be distributed among the Attendants, who contribute to the amusements of the Patients'. I have tried to discover the identity of the players in the Band who may have benefited from this remuneration. Some of the part-books bear faint pencilled names or initials as follows:

<i>Die junge Kokette</i>	Violin 2 (EB 741.3) Pountney; Violin 2 (EB 741.4) Corny
<i>Maud</i>	Violin 1 (EB 741.1) G. Jenkins
<i>Paris</i>	Violin 1 (EB 741.1) Ed. Elgar; Violin 1 (EB 741.2) Leader (which implies that for these dances at least, Elgar did not lead from the first violin)
<i>Helcia</i>	Violin 1 (EB 741.1) SJ; Violin 2 (EB 741.4) Hadley; Bass (EB 741.6) Davenport
<i>La Blonde</i>	Violin 1 (EB 741.1) HJW (cover and title page), FJ; Violin 1 (EB 741.2) JBP

There are two Pountneys mentioned in the Powick Servants' Record, 1878–83. John Pountney was employed as Farm Bailiff at £62 per year, signing for his quarterly payment of £15.10.00 with a signature very similar to his son John B. Pountney (JBP), who from 1878–1881 was the Superintendent's Clerk; his salary started at £41.12.00 per year, rising to £50. At the start of 1882 JBP dropped in salary to £42 when he took over from Edgar P. Smith as Storekeeper, though he had regained his former salary level by the end of the following year. In 2 November 1885, the Visitors' Minutes Book records: 'A gratuity of £2/2/- allowed to Mr Pountney (storekeeper) for extra service during his father (the late bailiff's) illness'. John Pountney senior died on 9 July 1886, and a gratuity of £25 was paid to his widow, followed by a pension of £52 per year. In the September 1886 Visitors' Minutes, his son thanked the Visitors and asked for a fortnight's leave. He left the employment of the asylum to move to Norfolk Asylum in September 1888.

G. Jenkins was George Jenkins, Clerk of the Asylum, who at £200 per year was the third highest quarterly-paid member of the Asylum staff after the Superintendent and the Chaplain. Elgar dedicated his set of Quadrilles *La Brunette* to 'Geo. Jenkins with every feeling of regard and esteem'. John Greenfield Hadley was engaged on 19 December 1881 aged 17 as Superintendent's Clerk (supplanting John B. Pountney) at a salary of £26 per year, and succeeded Pountney as Storekeeper in September 1888.

John Davenport was one of the monthly-paid attendants. His daughter Sophia (their signatures have a very similar flourish to the final letters) was also an attendant until she left the asylum in March 1883. The Visitors' Minutes record three occasions when Davenport was fined for drunkenness, and on another occasion for leaving an open razor in the Attendants' Room with no-one in charge.<sup>13</sup> He seems to have

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13 6 Aug 1877 – 'fined 10/- for being drunk in the Asylum, after having been previously warned', 2 August 1880 – 'fined 10/- for drunkenness' and 5 May 1884 – 'again for intoxication fined £2 and severely reprimanded' and threatened with dismissal next

mended his ways somewhat and by the late 1890s was the senior Attendant, coming first in the monthly accounts.

HJW was Helen Jessie Weaver, Elgar's one-time fiancée, to whom the polka *La Blonde* is specifically dedicated, if only in pencil on the bass part. Two other polkas bear Elgar's pet names for Helen: *Nelly* and *Helcia*. Corny, FJ and SJ are unidentified as yet; there are no monthly- or quarterly-paid staff with this name or these initials in the Asylum's financial records, nor in the programmes of concerts given at the Asylum under Elgar's direction. It is always possible that these pencilled additions were added after Elgar had resigned the Asylum position, and refer to other players altogether. Miss J. Holloway was the dedicatee of two sets of Quadrilles (*Die junge Kokette* and *Paris*). According to several biographers, Jessie Holloway was the Asylum pianist, though she does not appear officially as such in the Asylum's accounts, either monthly or quarterly-paid, until 1886.<sup>14</sup> She was the daughter of William Holloway, the Asylum Engineer. The Chaplain in the Annual Report of 1880 includes this compliment to Jessie Holloway: '...the Choir, aided as they have been by the instrumental skills of our Engineer's daughter [Miss Holloway]'. Jessie Holloway was paid occasional gratuities of £4 and £5 in 1881 and 1882 'for past services rendered at the harmonium in the chapel ... and in other ways in connection with the recreations'. When an organ was installed in the chapel in 1886, Jessie was appointed organist, initially at a salary of £10 rising to £22 by the mid-1890s.

Another musical attendant is mentioned in Visitors' Minutes for 2 October 1876, though without indicating the instrument he played or voice he sang: 'The wages of George Turberville Second Attendant Hospital Ward, who has been here 6 months and is a very useful Attendant *and Musician*, to be increased from £25 to £28 on the special application of Dr Sherlock [my emphasis]'.

What is striking, reading these reports and accounts, is the real dedication the staff and attendants gave to their tasks. Many of them stayed at Powick for the whole of their working lives.<sup>15</sup> In addition to these players, Elgar doubtless drew on his wide range of local contacts in the Worcester Glee Club and Worcester Amateur Instrumental Society. Concert programmes preserved at the Elgar Birthplace indicate that the Glee Club gave a concert at the asylum on Wednesday 17 March 1880, and W.A.I.S. appeared twice during Elgar's bandmastership: on Tuesday 14 March 1882 when Elgar led the orchestra and fixed the band, and on Wednesday 13 February 1884 when Elgar conducted. This latter concert was favourably reviewed in *Berrowe's Journal*: 'The Band which comprised nearly 30 instrumentalists, was under the able direction of Mr. Edward Elgar, who, it may be mentioned, conducted throughout without the score'.

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time! The razor incident is in minutes for 11 April 1887, when Davenport was fined a further £2.

14 Jerrold Northrop Moore suggests that Elgar may not have been insensible to the charms of Jessie Holloway; see *Elgar: a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 87. See also Michael Kennedy, *The Life of Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 22; Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: J.M. Dent, 1993), 11.

15 Indeed one commentator has remarked that in a way the staff were more institutionalised than the patients (Frank Crompton – private communication).

## Elgar's Salary

Accounts of Elgar's employment at Powick repeat the assertion that he was paid £30 or £32 per year, with 5/- extra for each dance or set of dances he wrote for the band; that he was paid 1/6 for each Christy Minstrel arrangement; and that the Visitors economised by paying him £4 less than his predecessor on account of his inexperience.<sup>16</sup> Several of these assertions need challenging. We have already seen that it was standard practice for new appointees to be paid less than their predecessors.

A search of the records of Powick Asylum is a frustrating experience. For an institution which invested so generously in music and entertainment, and which declared its therapeutic value so publicly, there are no records of the appointment of choirmaster or bandmaster, no expressions of thanks or regret when the musicians moved on or left, and little detail of the daily rates they were paid, beyond a gross quarterly amount. There is certainly nothing as formal as a contract. The succession of postholders appears to have been master to pupil (Spray to Elgar) or kept within families (P. Quarterman to A. Quarterman). Alone among the quarterly-paid staff, only the choir master and band master have no annual salary specified; rather they were paid varying amounts per quarter. The only annually salaried member of the musical staff was John Roberts, a carpenter attendant, who collected 16/8 per month for his Band Instructor duties in addition to £3/6/8 for wielding carpentry equipment (Percy M. Young asserts that Roberts's duties involved putting out the music stands, and coaching some of the players).<sup>17</sup>

By simple addition of the four quarterly accounts in each year, and in the absence of more detailed accounts, all we can say for certain is that *on average*, Spray, Elgar and his two successors (P. and A. Quarterman) earned the following:

F. Spray (2½ years)	£30/12/08
E. Elgar (6 years)	£33/04/10
P. Quarterman (2½ years)	£33/15/00
A. Quarterman (in the next 2½ years)	£32/00/00

Further historical accounting is needed to ascertain Elgar's actual daily rate of pay; whether he was paid extra for organising and conducting concerts other than the Friday dances; and whether there are payments to non-asylum players for those dances. It would be most interesting to discover whether there are compositions of his for which he was paid but which have not survived. Tantalisingly, more detailed records survive in the Asylum Salaries and Wages Book for the years after Elgar left (1884–1898), which specify rates of pay per visit as follows: Oliver Milward (Choirmaster), 13/6 per visit until he stopped in the summer of 1893; and Arthur Quarterman, 12/- per visit as Bandmaster, 8/- per visit when he took over

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16 E. Wulstan Atkins is typical: see *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (London: David & Charles, 1984), 475. See also Anderson, *Elgar*, 11; Kennedy, *The Life of Elgar*, 22; Moore, *Elgar*, 82; Robert J. Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: The Bodley Head, 1904), 21; Diana M. McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His life and music* (London: Dent, 1955), 10.

17 Percy M. Young, *Elgar. O.M.* (London: White Lion Publishers, 1973), 47.

Choirmaster duties as well. The Salaries and Wages book also mentions a 10/6 per entertainment, and fees of a guinea per (imported?) player for the annual ball at Christmas. There is a single mention of 10/- for 'music for band' in the July to September 1894 quarter.

We can confidently dismiss the idea of an extra 1/6 paid to Elgar for Christy Minstrel arrangements. One of the earliest articles about Elgar in the national press is a profile published in the *Musical Times* for October 1900.<sup>18</sup> The papers of the editor, F.G. Edwards, are preserved at the British Library and include a proof copy of this article, together with a unique manuscript full score in Elgar's hand of twelve bars of the first of the *L'Assommoir* quadrilles.<sup>19</sup> Elgar has added marginal notes in pencil to the proof of the article in which he writes 'The songs were for an amateur "troupe", not the Asylum' [Elgar's emphasis]. The Commissioners in Lunacy Report of 1879 confirms that: 'Several Musical Societies of the City of Worcester have, as formerly, attended at the Asylum gratuitously, and afforded much pleasure to our inmates by their clever performances of vocal and instrumental music, while the Amateur Christy Minstrels in connection with the Volunteer Artillery add thereto much humorous and laughter-provoking acting'.

Elgar's day-per-week at Powick was not the only job he had at this period. He was also giving violin lessons, playing in numerous local orchestras (where his fee was £2/2/0 to lead, £1/11/6 rank and file).<sup>20</sup> And he was organising, teaching and performing at the Worcester Amateur Instrumental Society, playing for the Worcester Glee Club, playing the organ at St George's Catholic Church, and attending occasional concerts in London.

### **The Music**

Barry Collett's article gives a good description of the Powick music, and I do not intend to add to that here. For Elgar work at Powick was invaluable in honing his skills, particularly in orchestration, learning his craft from the inside, and gaining conducting experience. It would be good to report that the Powick music includes undiscovered masterpieces, but in all honesty this is not the case. Elgar was constrained by the rigid 8-bar structures of Quadrilles, Lancers and Polkas, and within these limits wrote tuneful, attractive music of great charm, but no great sophistication. As a rule, woodwind, first cornet and violins play the melody lines, with a bass provided by cello and double bass, and the pianist's left hand (plus brass bass where indicated), and rhythmic and harmonic filling from second violin (plus viola in one dance) and second cornet. The euphonium fulfils a number of roles: doubling the tune, reinforcing the bass, joining second cornet to accompany or adding an independent contrapuntal line. Dance music such as this contains many repeats, and Elgar took the opportunity to vary the scoring subtly in repeated passages.<sup>21</sup>

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18 *The Musical Times*, 1 October 1900, esp. 643-4.

19 BL Eg. 3079A

20 Ralph Hill, 'When Elgar played for £2-12-6', *Radio Times*, 19 November 1937, 15.

21 In a note on the MS short score of *La Brunette*, Elgar reminds himself that '8 times

Elgar's writing is occasionally very demanding for individual instruments. For example, his violin writing ascends very high and at speed in the coda of *La Blonde*. He must have had a good first cornet player; a lot of the melodic material is allocated to this instrument. A couple of the tunes Elgar used again in later works: No. 5 of *L'Assommoir* was re-worked for 'Wild Bears' in *The Wand of Youth*, and the chord sequence at the end of *Helcia* (bars 97–101) became the germ of the introduction to 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' (*Sea Pictures*). Elgar seems to have submitted a Menuetto in B flat scored for the asylum forces, dated 21 December 1878, as a kind of test piece prior to his appointment as bandmaster.<sup>22</sup> Elgar provides moments of special interest for each player, even the bombardon at bar 33, and the Trio is delicately scored, predominantly for woodwind (flute and clarinet) and strings. In the British Library sketchbook, this same Menuetto appears scored for flute and string quartet, with pencilled annotations enabling it to be played by the wind quintet (two flutes, oboe, clarinet and bassoon) for which Elgar was writing original music during this same period.

With the exception of one 8-bar fragment of *L'Assommoir* No. 1, a piano reduction of which Elgar labels 'Quadrille for an Eccentric Orchestra', none of Elgar's Powick music has appeared in print.<sup>23</sup> The performance material exists in the handsomely-bound manuscript part-books on loan to the Elgar Birthplace (EB 741.1–13). These are predominantly in Elgar's own handwriting, with the exception of some of the piccolo and bass parts, and the second violin for one dance. These non-Elgar manuscripts contain many more scribal errors than in parts Elgar himself wrote out. I suspect that the part-books may be incomplete. There are very few tempo indications, and no metronome marks in the part books or sketches.

Since the Friday dances at Powick were private affairs for the entertainment of the patients, their performances were not reported in the local press. I have examined all the editions of *Berrowe's Journal* (the journal of record for Worcester) for the years 1879–1884, and come across no mention of the Friday dances, though other entertainments open to the public at the Asylum, both dramatic and musical, were reviewed. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ken Russell's television film 'Elgar' featured a performance in uniform of part of the polka *Nelly*, and there are some shots of the old asylum building, long since demolished.<sup>24</sup>

### **Performing the Powick Music**

Two particular issues face performers of this repertoire. First the bombardon question. Many references to Elgar's work at Powick mention the instrument (a bass tuba), those dance sets that have survived in sketch score (*La Brunette*, *L'Assommoir*

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when 16 bars + trio, 6 times when 24 + trio'. It is a pity that Collett's recording does not observe all repeats, thus depriving us of the opportunity to enjoy Elgar's varied scoring of similar passages.

- 22 B.L. Add. MS. 63148 ff.23v.-22v. – which includes one of Elgar's amusing line drawings in the margin.
- 23 *The Musical Times*, 1 October 1900, 644; also W.H. Reed, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1939), 14.
- 24 First broadcast on 'Monitor' (BBC Television), 11 November 1962, now on DVD BFIVD 524.

and *A Singing Quadrille*) have a line for the instrument, and the two full scores (the aforementioned Menuetto and twelve bars of *L'Assommoir* No.1) also include it. Yet there is no Bombardon part-book. Either it is lost, or the player sat alongside other bass-line players and shared their music; the bass part-book does not specify *string* bass. With treble line instruments numbering up to eight (piccolo, flute, clarinet, cornet 1, four first violins), the ensemble could easily sound top-heavy. Against this are just the bass strings (cello and double bass) and the piano's left hand, so a brass bass addition would be welcome on balance grounds alone. Two of the later dances (*Nelly* and *Helcia*) include a brass bass part-book (exact instrument unspecified). *La Blonde* uniquely employs a trombone. *Maud* and *Paris* have a bass clef part with the instrument unspecified, and for the other dances, Elgar's terms are quirkily vague: baßso [sic], baßi or baßees! So for virtually all these dances, we have some indication from scores or surviving parts that a brass bass instrument was employed. The Asylum Band's origins as a brass band make it unlikely that a large and expensive bass brass instrument would have been left unused unless no suitable player was available.

Last year, the *Elgar Society News* published a photograph of the Settle Band, showing an instrumental combination very similar to Powick's: five violins, cello, bass, two cornets, euphonium, trombone, clarinet, and a very visible bassoon, an instrument Elgar was playing regularly in a wind quintet at this time.<sup>25</sup> The wind 'section' at Powick is the only one with no bass instrument: could it be that Elgar's vague description of the bass part allowed it to encompass performance on any bass instrument, including bassoon?

Three of the piano parts are variously described as 'pianoforte arrangement' (*Die junge Kokette*), 'arrangement for piano' (*L'Assommoir*), and 'for pianoforte or orchestra' (*Maud*), which invites the question of how literally the piano part should be played when performing with the rest of the 'eccentric orchestra'. Two additional pieces of evidence may be useful. There is an extra piano part for *Die junge Kokette* (BL Add MS 49973A ff70v-72v) which contains figuration, particularly in the left hand, that is easier to play.<sup>26</sup> Then there is the full score fragment of *L'Assommoir* No. 1, in which the piano staves are mainly empty, but with the instruction 'wie oben' ('as above'); in other words, 'play what you can'. Since most of the players in the Band were amateurs with the distinct possibility that not all of them would necessarily be present on any particular occasion, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the piano would have filled in missing parts – hence the fullness of the piano 'arrangements' and the inclusion of additional staves with instrumental cues in the piano parts.

The sketch scores I've referred to are very much concerned with laying out the architecture of these dances and indicating the basic scoring; there are no piano staves. In the single example (*L'Assommoir*) where we have surviving dated sketch score (30.VIII.79) and dated part books (11.IX.79, the time lapse between sketch and parts is eleven days. I conjecture that the compositional sequence went: initial melodic ideas (some in BL), sketch score, piano part (including some indication of extra counterpoint), and finally other parts

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25 *Elgar Society News*, No.28 (March 2006), 35.

26 Four of the quadrilles are complete in this source, the fifth stops at bar 16.

## ***Elgar's Reaction***

Elgar's reactions to his curious surroundings have been recorded by various friends and associates, but his own voice speaks rarely. The proof copy of that same *Musical Times* article includes Elgar's marginal note (perhaps with a degree of false modesty): 'I fear that my tunes did little to ameliorate the condition of the unfortunate inmates'. There is a single reference to his Powick work in his correspondence of the time, in a letter to his friend Dr Buck in Settle:

Worcester February 25 1884

.... I hope things are going on all right – we had a good performance at the Lunatic Asylum – sent you a programme some time back...

Elgar's work at the asylum was appreciated and the local journalist who admired his conducting of the February 1884 concert (referred to in his letter to Dr Buck) also reported of the audience response:

However much their mental powers might be damaged in other respects it was apparent that those of the unfortunate inmates of the institution who were able to be present had not lost the faculty of enjoyment, and they were not the least hearty with their applause.

Much later, according to Percy Young, Elgar liked to deflate affectation on the part of sycophantic visitors by beginning a conversation with 'when I was at the Lunatic Asylum...'.<sup>27</sup> Elgar wrote to Ernest Newman in June 1917:

A lunatic asylum is, after the first shock, not entirely sad; so few of the patients are aware of the strangeness of their situation; most of them are placid & foolishly calm; but the horror of the fallen intellect – knowing what it once was & knowing what it has become – is beyond words frightful'.<sup>28</sup>

A final word from W.H. Reed:

These *Quadrilles*, polkas, marches [sic.] etc, were of course in manuscript, and in manuscript they remained, which from many points of view is a pity, as they might have revealed more interesting facts invaluable to an observant student seeking the steps on the ladder Elgar scaled between these quadrilles and *The Dream of Gerontius* or the symphonies'.<sup>29</sup>

When these dances are published in the Elgar Complete Edition, we shall be able to see Elgar's steps up that ladder for ourselves.

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27 Young, *Elgar O.M.*, 46.

28 Michael Kennedy, *The Life of Elgar*, 23.

29 W.H. Reed, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1939), 14.

## Appendix

### Band/Choir master earnings at Powick Asylum

	F. Spray (Band Master)	O. Millward (Choir Master)	E.W. Elgar (Band Master)	P. Quarterman (Band Master)
1876	£ 17.03.00	£ 24.01.03		
1877	£ 38.01.06	£ 16.04.00		
1878	£ 36.13.06	£ 23.09.06		
1879		£ 29.09.06	£ 33.07.00	
1880		£ 30.12.09	£ 36.02.00	
1881		£ 23.13.03	£ 34.08.06	
1882		£ 28.11.00	£ 32.11.00	
1883		£ 20.18.06	£ 29.06.00	
1884		£ 20.18.06	£ 21.07.00	£ 2.08.00
1885		£ 20.18.06	£ 3.05.00	£ 25.16.00
1886		£ 20.08.00		£ 33.18.06
1887		£ 21.13.00		£ 36.11.09
1888		£ 21.12.06		£ 19.14.09 (6 mth)
				Arthur Quarterman
				£ 11.10.00 (6 mth)
1889		£ 20.19.00		£ 31.12.00
1890		£ 19.18.06		£ 35.17.00
1891		£ 20.12.00		£ 33.02.00
1892		£ 17.11.00		£ 30.09.00
1893		£ 11.09.06 (retired June)		£ 37.06.00 (band and choir from Oct)

*Andrew Lyle was an Editor for BBC Radio 3, and now manages St Mary's Church in Ealing. He was a boy chorister at Canterbury Cathedral and Music Scholar at The King's School Canterbury, before reading Biochemistry at University College Oxford. His interest in Elgar goes back as far as he can remember, and in the Powick Music to a visit to the Birthplace when he was a junior producer for BBC Schools Radio. He is editing the Powick music for the Elgar Complete Edition.*

# Clarity for Muriel

**Charles A. Hooley**

When I wrote about Muriel Foster, Elgar's favourite singer, in this Journal, I did so confident that all available information was at hand.<sup>1</sup> How wrong I was! In the very next issue Richard Smith, in a letter to the editor, kindly filled in gaps and corrected the segment dealing with Foster's second and third visits to America.<sup>2</sup> At least in labelling my story 'Muriel the Gorgeous', I was on target. In January 1906 she was cashing in on her early success by modelling for John William Waterhouse (1849-1917; see fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> Gazing at her photos we can see why; she was a stunning beauty and posing represented a means of paying tuition fees (see fig. 2).

Muriel Foster and her twin sister Hilda were born in 1877 at 20 Saint Bede's Terrace, Bishopwearmouth, Sunderland, in industrial North-East England, their parents being Robert Foster, an iron ship builder at the port facility, and Anne Hides Foster (née Ferry). I stated that Muriel and Hilda entertained their parents and sister Winifred 'in time', but in fact Annie Winifred had been on the scene for three years when the twins arrived.

Census reports for 1881, 1891 and 1901 throw light on the development of the Foster family, and that of Muriel's eventual husband, the Goetzes. In 1881 the tabulators arrived at the Foster home in Sunderland to find no sign of the adults; but the girls were on hand in the care of Emily, their 25-year-old governess. As for 11-year-old Ludovic(o) Godfrey Goetz, he was found in a prosperous part of London at 66 Gloucester Gardens, Paddington with his father, the prominent Frankfurt-born merchant Edward L. Goetz, his mother Angelina (age 49), his sisters Alice (15) and Evelyn (13), and his brother Charles (8). In 1891, Anne Foster and her three young daughters were still domiciled at the Sunderland address, but where was Robert? In London, census gatherers searching for the Goetzes now came across them living in even more affluent quarters at 18 Hyde Park Terrace, but only the girls and Charles were present. Presumably Edward had died while mother Angelina and Ludovic, now head of household, were travelling.

With the passage of another decade, Ludovic and his 68-year-old mother were still living in splendour at Hyde Park attended by a domestic staff of seven, but the

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1 'Muriel the Gorgeous', this Journal, 13/1 (March 2003), 10-24.

2 This Journal, 13/2 (July 2003), 54.

3 Barkway-Newsells village website (<http://www.barkway-newsells.org.uk>); Waterhouse site (<http://jwwaterhouse.com>), both consulted 15 August 2007 (ed.).



**Fig. 1 (above). Muriel Foster. Sketch by Waterhouse.**



**Fig. 2 (right). Muriel Foster. Photograph.**

girls and Charles had presumably gone out on their own. Nor were Muriel or her family at home on census day (31 March 1901), for she was thousands of miles away in America, with her studies at an end and engagements piling up. Possibly she took her mother and sisters along, thus explaining their absence from the census. Unfortunately upon her return, Muriel became seriously ill.

Three years later she set foot in America a second time, the event that prompted Richard Smith's letter. With Walter Gericke conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Muriel sang 'In Haven' from Elgar's *Sea Pictures* in Brooklyn on 18 March 1904, and three days later repeated it in Hartford. Then she received word she was needed in New York to replace an ailing Janet Spencer as Mary Magdalene to sing in the second performance in America of Elgar's *The Apostles*. So, on 24 March at Carnegie Hall, the audience settled in to enjoy the role's creator and probably came away enthralled. Then she continued on to Toronto, Chicago and Cincinnati as outlined in my earlier article. Richard Smith also pointed out that early in January 1905 Muriel returned to America a third time to repeat *Sea Pictures* at a number of eastern venues, again with Gericke and the Boston Symphony. Apparently she was scheduled to sing at the 1906 Cincinnati Summer Festival but she was unwell again that year, and it appears that she could not fulfil that engagement.<sup>4</sup>

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4 Her place was taken by Louise Homer. Thanks to Bill Russell who located a copy of the festival programme in the Master's thesis by Austin D. Padgett, *Elgar in Cincinnati: Mysticism, Britishness, and Modernity* (University of Cincinnati, 2006).

Prior to 1906, Muriel Foster came to live at The Cottage, Newsells, close to Barkway in Hertfordshire, about 45 miles north of London. According to the village website (see note 3), she was 'giving her voice a rest after a severe attack of influenza'. Her travel plans were shelved, however, when Ludovic Goetz became part of her life. On 21 November 1906 she married this 36-year-old bachelor 'of independent means' in the parish church of Barkway, with her sisters Winifred Stephens and Hilda Bramwell lending support. Presumably both spouses Derek Stephens and Frederick Bramwell were present, but if Muriel's mother Anne was there she did not participate in signing the wedding certificate. Ludovic's sister Alice and brother Charles were also present. Afterwards the newlyweds took up residence at the lavish Goetz manor.<sup>5</sup>

I previously wrote that Muriel was 'absent in 1907, presumably to tend her newborn.', but that too was off the mark. Her son Ludovic Anthony Goetz was born at home, just as Muriel herself had been, on 26 December 1908 at 18 Hyde Park Terrace.

### ***Does her voice survive?***

In accepting existing wisdom that Muriel made no records, I thought 'What a shame that not a single note of her voice remains, while so much does of Clara Butt, her exact contemporary'. In fact, however, she did record for HMV on 23 June 1904, but she did so tentatively with a few less than consequential songs:

- 5425b a) Each rose; b) Happy song (del Riego)
- 5426b Mélisande in the wood (Alma Goetz)
- 5427b Chanson destr
- 5428b A June morning destr
- 5429b Each rose destr

Alas, the session must have gone poorly for 'destr[oyed]' surely means three were junked outright. But what of the others? Wouldn't it be grand if they surfaced, or if we could turn back the clock to urge that technician: 'Waste not ... they're precious!'

With a frail and shaking hand, Muriel signed her last will and testament on 12 January 1934. She bequeathed to her wealthy husband 'any motor car that may belong to me', to Hilda her 'diamond and ruby watch', and to Anthony 'other watches, jewels, trinkets and personal ornaments, my sable furs and my books and all articles of furniture, household effects, music and wearing apparel belonging to me'. Anthony's wife Pamela was to inherit her precious 'real lace and Spanish shawls'. Sister Winifred would receive money, securities and property, and in the event she predeceased Muriel, her son Richard Stephens then became beneficiary.

As trustees and executors of her will, Muriel named her husband Ludovic Godfrey Foster, her son Ludovic Anthony Foster, and her brother-in-law Frederick C. Bramwell. At the time Anthony, an underwriter for Lloyd's, and Pamela were living

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5 In the early days of World War I as anti-German attitudes intensified, Ludovic Goetz decided it would be propitious if henceforth the family would be known as 'Foster'.

in Porchester Terrace, another fashionable area of London. As for the Bramwells, they resided in Laggun Lodge in Bowmore on Islay. In fact only the Fosters signed the document. Muriel herself was living at 16 Dorset Square in the Borough of St Marylebone, a smart central area of London near the previous residence in Hyde Park, when with her husband of 32 years at her side she died on 23 December 1937 of pneumonia and disseminated sclerosis. She was 60 years of age.

As surviving executors, Anthony and Ludovic oversaw probate on 18 February 1938. Ludovic was listed as 'without occupation'. So how did he spend the years and his time after Muriel died?

*Acknowledgements:*

Thanks to Paul Campion in London for researching the family histories; to Richard Smith for his observations; to Alan Kelly in Sheffield for revealing Foster's previously unknown recording activity; to Denham Ford for confirming the Bramwell location; and to the editor for identifying John William Waterhouse.

*Charles A. Hooey lives in Canada. He has a passionate interest in singers of the early part of the twentieth century. He contributed a chapter on the singer Charles Mott to Oh, my Horses! (ed. Lewis Foreman, Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2001).*

# The Fifteenth Variation: A portrait of Edward Elgar

Transcript of a BBC Broadcast (12 May 1957)<sup>1</sup>

Announcer: We present 'The Fifteenth Variation' – a portrait of Edward Elgar, as remembered in this centenary year of his birth by those who knew him. The programme is presented by Alec Robertson.

AR: The headmaster asked the 11-year-old boy his name. He replied, 'Edward Elgar'. 'Say, Sir': and he replied, 'Sir Edward Elgar'. That's the story of how the young Elgar anticipated, all unknowingly, the knighthood he was to receive in 1904, thirty-six years later, and the year of the Elgar Festival at Covent Garden. It was then England, prompted by admiring voices from Germany (including that of Richard Strauss), at last realised that she had a great composer in her midst. But this isn't a biographical programme, nor a revaluation or a survey of Elgar's music. The fourteenth of the *Enigma* Variations is a self-portrait of the composer and this is a 'Fifteenth Variation' with Elgar as its portrait. Memories of a man and his music by some of those alive today, who knew him, worked with him and loved him, and saw him in many different ways. He was indeed a many-sided personality. His daughter Carice Elgar Blake and May Grafton, his favourite niece and for some years his secretary, would have nothing of Elgar as a depressed and soured individual as he is sometimes depicted. They recall one of his 'japes' (that was one of his pet words) and 'japes' covered many things including some of his hobbies – chemical experiments, for example.

CEB: He nearly poisoned my mother! Do you remember an evening when we were down in the basement? The house was perfectly uniform, there was a basement, another room and my mother's room was on the second floor and the same chimney served the lot. We were down in this basement till very late at night and suddenly down the back stairs came a little voice which said 'Darling, what is this terrible smell?' – because he's making chlorine gas and, not realising that the fireplace wasn't blocked up, it was going up the house.

MG: It was going up straight into her bedroom and nearly suffocated her!

AR: Do tell us something about Brinkwells, where the Quintet was done, because this is very much in our minds at the present time.

CEB: Oh, that was a lovely spot. You went to Fittleworth Station and you just walked and walked until you got there. It was all woods all round and the whole thing was entirely lonely, you could wander in the woods at will. And we had the most wonderful view to the South Downs from the lawn; and it was a tiny little house – I think only my mother could have made it habitable.

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1 Thanks to Geoffrey Hodgkins for sending us this transcript. He in turn thanks Mrs Jean Deudney for transcribing the conversation from a recording of the broadcast.

AR: And Lady Elgar, she was such a tower of strength to him. It would be very interesting to hear something about her from you both.

MG: Oh yes. She was a wonderful little soul, she really was.

CEB: Oh, yes.

AR: She was small, was she?

CEB: Yes, quite small. She could look smaller and smaller if she was depressed. The most indomitable will; you might almost call her ruthless where my father was concerned, don't you think?

MG: I think so.

CEB: Everything had to give way to what was right for him or what he wanted.

MG: But she had a marvellous brain, and she was a great help to him, wasn't she?

CEB: I can remember when we were at Birchwood House. She used to take the parcels of manuscript down to the post office, pouring with rain, a mile and a half walk, rather than trust anybody else.

AR: Now, Mrs Blake, if I can put it this way: living with father, a great composer, can't always have been easy.

CEB: No, I wouldn't say it was always easy. After all, being the only child I was somewhat sacrificed to the moods and needs of the moment; but still there was always this atmosphere of gaiety and fun about it. The only time I think that the household routine was at all disturbed was when he was writing the really serious works like *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, which took it out of him so tremendously. There were late nights and times when he shut himself up in his study and was not to be disturbed. But on the whole I should say ours was a very normal household.

AR: When he had completed this stretch did he then play it over to you?

CEB: Oh yes. I can remember his coming back from America – I don't know if you can remember that, May? – And I'd been ill, and I was downstairs for almost the first time. And the proofs of the Second Symphony had come and the first thing was to rush down. He had hardly got into the house before he began playing these. I can remember that so well because I'd been shut away from everything, you see.

AR: Yes, exactly.

MG: Of course, my time was really *The Kingdom*. I lived all through that, every little bit from the beginning. And the *Introduction & Allegro* – and the First Symphony; I think I listened to all that growing and gradually – Doctor Richter coming down and going through it with him – and before the first performance – and dear old Richter still walking along and stomping: 'How go the trumpets? Pom, pom, pom, pom. It is a great work. It is a great work'. Those were my three that I really lived through.

AR: 'The greatest symphony of modern times', he [Richter] used to call the First Symphony, 'by the greatest modern composer', adding, 'and not only in this country'.

Sir Percy Hull, known to all his friends as 'PC', was organist for many years of Hereford Cathedral and closely associated with Elgar in the Three Choirs Festival. He has many memories to share with Julius Harrison. Mr Harrison, composer and

conductor and a native of Worcestershire, the county in which Elgar was born and which he loved so much, has memories that go back even further.

JH: I think of Little Malvern. I think of that wonderful scene from where he is buried which stretches right across the Severn Valley. Time and time again the spirit of that, I feel, is in his music and then other Worcestershire memories which bring me back to what he had written in answer to a letter of mine – ‘I am glad you smell the Severn in my *Nursery Suite*’. And years before that, this too (I think it was in 1920): ‘I think you are, as I am, very much in love with our old county’. I think, PC, your memories perhaps cover the same ground more or less about the time of the Three Choirs Festival.

PH: One can only go back really to the rather later years of his life, and I so often watched him standing in Hereford Cathedral listening to one of the performances, his tall figure outlined against a pillar, alone, withdrawn; and yet what a feeling of power seemed to emanate from him!

JH: But to most of the then young generation, those of us who turned to music, Elgar was really a god. His new style chucked so much of the academic overboard, exchanged harmonies, mystical mood, brilliantly novel orchestration, just held us spell-bound. I feel, and you must feel with me, so strongly that when he came along he completely revolutionised the orchestra in the treatment of the instruments from the old days of the earlier Victorian composers.

PH: I always remember too when he was conducting, he was very *very* particular about dotted notes. It's a small thing but he always said: ‘Try to imagine that you're half as tall again and then you'll get the right link to your dot’. Another thing is ‘For heaven's sake do not starve the quavers’. Another point was, ‘Do use your bow links’.

JH: That accounts, I suppose, for that wonderful resonance and sonority you get in the *Introduction and Allegro* for strings.

PH: Well there are other reminiscences. May I go back a little? When he came to Hereford from time to time to visit Dr Sinclair, he brought over parts of *The Apostles*, and so on, and on one occasion he stayed two or three days; he was given a small room in which to retire and to get on with his work and on the outside of the door he wrote this: ‘Incubator now at work. Do not disturb the old hen’. And then in 1930 he wrote a most charming letter asking if he might be allowed to dedicate No. 5 *Pomp and Circumstance* March to me. That of course raises a little issue there because *Pomp and Circumstance* – the ‘P & C’ [as] I'm always known and have been known, since I can remember anything.

[*Pomp & Circumstance* No 5: the beginning to 2 bars before fig. 8]

AR: That snatch of *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 5 brings to my mind something that Parry said. It was this: ‘In his popular music, Elgar reached the hearts of the people’; and Constant Lambert later on wrote that Elgar was ‘the last serious composer to have done this’. Elgar himself was proud of his popular music and he considered the famous trio of the first *Pomp and Circumstance* March a ‘damned good tune’, as indeed it is.

Towards the end of his life, Elgar came to know Sir Barry Jackson well, at Malvern. At this time he was filled with the idea of writing an opera, and in Sir Barry – a man of the theatre – he found a truly understanding friend.

BJ: Although I was among the listeners at the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*, I never had the pleasure of meeting Sir Edward Elgar until the years of the Malvern Festival; and it was through my friend George Bernard Shaw that we eventually did meet. Later on when I got to know Sir Edward rather better, when he wanted an afternoon out with his dogs for a walk on the hills, he used to come up to me and spend perhaps an afternoon; and it was during that time that he told me of two things which rather, not exactly worried him, but in which he was keenly interested. One was the maintenance of the house in which he was born at Broadheath; and the other one was that he had an idea at the back of his head that he must compose an opera. So, naturally I fell for the suggestion of the opera, having a rather theatrical mind, and asked him what subject he proposed to take – because the libretto of an opera is really all-important. Well, Elgar told me that he wanted to write something that was thoroughly and very typically English (roast beef and beer) and could think of nothing better than one of the plays of Ben Jonson. So I knew the perhaps better-known plays of Jonson so, ‘Which one do you fancy?’ and he said, ‘Well, *The Devil is an Ass*’. This play was a complete stranger to me. I said to him, ‘Well, as it’s a sort of adventure, for goodness’ sake don’t lay on too heavily’, because I thought the chances of its production would be very *very* rare if it was made into a very *very* elaborate spectacle, and so forth, with very large orchestra. Oh, but Sir Edward would have none of that at all. He said, ‘No, if I write an opera it is going to be a grand opera, and it’s going to be very grand and it’s going to out-Meistersinger the *Meistersinger*’. So, well, he set to work and he made some sketches and we often went over to Marl Bank and went through these sketches on the piano and he was obviously very pleased with what was happening. He talked about it a great deal. He wrote me a number of letters on the subject and then came a commission from the BBC to compose a symphony. The opera had to be laid aside, never to be resumed, because fate decreed that before any more work could be done to it, poor Sir Edward had passed. You know, during those latter days – which were extremely sad to me, it was very poignant – I was allowed from time to time to go in to see him; and one day, when he was very *very* weak, he imagined he was staying with me at my house on the hills, and he said: ‘You know, I think it’s awfully good of you to let me come and stay with you. It’s so quiet here and away from the people and I appreciate it so much’. And then, at last, one day he said to me ‘If ever you hear anyone whistling this little tune’ – and he rather feebly whistled an air from the Cello Concerto – ‘If ever you’re walking on the hills and you hear that, it’s only me, don’t be frightened’.

[Cello Concerto: first movement, figs 2 to 4]

AR: Someone once asked Elgar the meaning of his Cello Concerto and he replied, ‘A man’s attitude to life’. He refused to write his autobiography and he never read anyone else’s biography of him. He felt, as Dr Percy Young hints in his biography of the composer, he felt that all of him that needed to be known was in his music.

We now come to a group of artists who sang and played Elgar’s music under his direction. The memories of Astra Desmond and Sir Stuart Wilson are especially

concerned with *The Dream of Gerontius*. Both of them were distinguished interpreters of their parts in this work.

SW: First time I did a performance with him was in 1927, Royal Choral, and I asked him if he could give me a piano rehearsal. When we got to the end of the 'Sanctus Fortis' he looked rather pleased with himself and said with a good air, 'That's a good tune, you know: Verdi would have been glad to write that'. I thought, that's a very good 'one-in-the-eye' for the people who talk about the kind of sanctimonious *Gerontius*.

AD: Oh yes, but Elgar was a most human person. I always admired his sincerity in that he really loved his own tunes and the music that he had written, and there was no sort of false modesty about not liking it. Do you remember how, during the performance, he would very often look down and wag his head and say, 'That's a good tune'.

SW: The thing that I remember most about him was that kind of feeling that you caught up from this – his mysterious way of conducting, because technically he was a bad conductor, but emotionally he managed to make everybody give the best performance of their lives.

AD: Of course, for one thing you had to be terrifically on the *qui vive*, because he never conducted quite the same.

SW: Do you remember in the memorial concert after his death in 1934? – it was a Royal Choral – how they had two orchestras which he'd always wanted to fill the Albert Hall? Do you remember, you and I were both looking at that appalling array of trombones and horns, the whole orchestra seemed nothing but brass? I can remember Adrian Boult saying, 'Shall we keep 'em down?', and I think you or I said, 'No, let 'em go, the old man would have loved this'. And how they went too! Four harps, if you remember. He had a great difficulty to get one while he was on earth, but in heaven he got all four harps.

AD: On the other hand we got some of the most exquisite *pianissimos* that I've ever heard from an orchestra.

SW: I remember feeling – do you remember the memorial service to Elgar in the Cathedral at Worcester? I was sitting right at the back of the cathedral, and, practically speaking, under the pillar where Elgar always used to stand to listen to all the works, and it's on that pillar now that his little memorial tablet is placed. He used to stand by here listening to the music. And I felt, and I still feel when I go back, that it's one of the most remarkable personalities that I ever came across in music or otherwise. Very complex – not at all easy to understand – everybody said that. But if you ever worked with him it just made the whole difference to standing by and seeing him. That's why Willie Reed knew him better than anybody else, because you felt that magic there was in him.

AD: That memorial service was, I think, the most moving thing that I have ever known in my life; and to have to sing the 'Angel's Farewell'.... a good 'Farewell, brother dear'.

[*Gerontius*: Angel's Farewell, 4th bar of fig. 130 to 134]

AR: Here in my hands is Elgar's autographed score of *The Dream of Gerontius*. And I would like to read to you, familiar as it may be, what Elgar has written on the last page of it. 'This is the best of me; for the rest I ate and drank and slept and loved and hated like another. But this I saw and knew. This, if anything of mine, is worth your memory'. The Fathers of the Birmingham Oratory very kindly lent me this score – one of their greatest treasures. And the extract played was from the most recent recording of *The Dream of Gerontius*. Now *The Dream of Gerontius* was followed by the two oratorios, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, and when Elgar was composing *The Kingdom* he had in mind the glorious soprano voice of Agnes Nicholls, Lady Hamilton Harty.

AN: I think it was 1906 that I knew I was engaged for the forthcoming new production of *The Kingdom* at the Birmingham Festival. The proof score came in two parts, and I remember we were staying in Devon at the village of Combe Martin. I had been swimming in the morning and it was not till after lunch that we went through the part, and came upon a wonderful solo, 'The Sun Goeth Down'. After we had gone through it twice my husband turned from the piano and said, 'You know, that is just exactly you, for your voice and what you can do best'. I was thrilled. I worked at it until it literally got into my blood. The first rehearsal was in London, and Edward Elgar seemed very moved. The next rehearsal was the final one in the Town Hall, Birmingham. John Coates was the tenor, and I remember he came over to me on the platform, tears in his eyes, to say how beautiful it was.

AR: And what did Elgar, himself, say to you at rehearsal?

AN: He said nothing. He just looked at me. But the tears were running down his face.

AR: And how did everything go at the performance?

AN: Oh, it went wonderfully – all things considered, I think. But, you know, I remember really very little about it. I can see the Birmingham Town Hall now today – but that is about all I do remember; I can't remember anything of what I did.

AR: I suppose that's the sheer excitement. You felt very tired, I expect?

AN: Oh, afterwards I was literally exhausted, but it wasn't so much the singing. I think it really was that the melodies of both *The Kingdom* and *The Apostles* – and we had done *The Apostles* the night before – had simply sort of overwhelmed me; they never went out of my head. I couldn't sleep at all. I never forgot it. Don't today, though I can't really remember it, but it's still there. One thing is that if I try all the things today, as I sometimes do, and if I do it at night I still can't sing.

[*The Kingdom*: Prelude, from fig. 6 to four bars after fig. 7]

AR: They are indeed haunting, these melodies. Elgar was so many different people. So I went on to ask Lady Harty what she felt about him.

AN: He was curious, very curious. I thought he was, very often, sort of very disappointed in life and with himself generally. He always used to say that nobody wanted him: he used to tell me that.

AR: Even when he was so successful?

AN: Even when he was the great Sir Edward Elgar. And because I used to say to him,

'You've no right to say that!'

AR: It was perhaps the feeling that no one wanted oratorios any more that prevented Elgar – in spite of W.H. Reed's continual efforts and the sketches that existed – prevented him ever getting seriously to work on the third part of the trilogy. It was to have dealt with the Last Judgement. Elgar was very sensitive to public reaction; and this feeling, that his music wasn't wanted, persisted from this time to nearly the end of his life. But in 1932 his heart was warmed by his friendship with a sixteen-year-old violinist. He wrote to Bernard Shaw, 'I am recording the Violin Concerto tomorrow with Yehudi Menuhin, wonderful boy'. Menuhin remembers vividly their meeting.

YM: It was my first meeting with the great man, and the first time I had undertaken to play a contemporary concerto, and I met a most loveable warm-hearted man whom never in my childish imagination could I have imagined to be a composer. And, indeed, when I first played the opening bars of the concerto for him, with Ivor Newton at the piano, on that warm summer's afternoon, he stopped me, after perhaps a minute with the words, 'I'm sure that will be fine, and there's no need to proceed any further: it's such a lovely day, I must go off to the races'. And I did not see him after that until the actual recording session.

AR: Yes. You're too modest, if I may say so, in what Elgar actually said after those thirty bars or so of the concerto. What he said was, 'I can add nothing, I cannot think it could be better done' – which was a wonderful tribute.

YM: Well, I don't know at that time he probably felt inclined to be sympathetic; but I could not help being convinced at the moment that his desire for the races was also quite genuine.

AR: Then you played it again in Paris, didn't you, with him?

YM: Yes, I knew that he was very worried about this performance for he did not feel that his music was particularly close to the French.

AR: No, I remember he wrote to your father, didn't he, saying he felt sure that his presence there would prejudice your success.

YM: Well there was no question of that. Of course it didn't. On the contrary, the audience realised how much I loved the work, how sincere the performance was, and what an actually great work it is. It is not that they misjudged the quality of the work, or the workmanship, or the orchestration, or the melodic inventiveness; it is simply that emotionally, I think, the music is not part of their make up.

AR: What other impressions remain with you of Elgar as a man?

YM: I remember him eating onion soup for breakfast on three or four successive days in Paris when he used to come to our home in Ville de Frey where my family lived at the time; and he would spend many hours with us and always the quality, that loveable, warm quality, was what I, as a child, associated with him and have always since associated with his work.

AR: And the work itself, after these twenty-four years; how do you feel towards it now?

YM: Well, I feel about it as I do about Elgar. First of all the music itself, from the very first moment I heard the orchestration at the recording studio as I hadn't heard it

before, I was struck by the wonderful sound, by the opulence of the work, and of course, the wonderful violin part which allows the performer such full range and scope in his interpretation.

[Violin Concerto: 2 bars before fig. 9 to 11]

AR: That was the actual recording made by Menuhin and Elgar. 'It's good', Elgar had written some many years earlier, about the Violin Concerto. 'It's awfully emotional, too emotional, but I love it. These are times for composition'. That's the way it was with him, one day music was off and indeed once, sickened with the box-office, he could even go so far as to say he cursed the power that gave him gifts, and loathed them now and forever. But then a few months later he could say about the First Symphony, 'I'm writing heavenly music'.

In the quiet and peaceful surroundings of Brinkwells, the house at Fittleworth, which Mrs Elgar Blake described earlier on, Elgar wrote his three chamber works, including the fine Piano Quintet, whose merits, I think, have yet to be fully recognised. Harriet Cohen, whose art he much admired, became very friendly with him and, with the Stratton Quartet, played the piano part in the Quintet when it was recorded. This recording (which we will hear in a moment) gave Elgar great joy in the last weeks of his life, and he had the slow movement played to him again and again.

[Piano Quintet: 2nd movement, beginning to fig. 30]

HC: You know it was the greatest thing in my life, as an artist, to know that my recording of his slow movement was played to him in those last days of his life. Elgar was so tender and kind with young people. I remember meeting him at Landon Ronald's first of all, and almost from the first moment he was calling me Harrietinachen. Of course, we used to discuss everything, and I learnt so much about all composers. At the Malvern Festival we were all staying with Barry Jackson, and it was there that he taught me to love Berlioz; and I remember once discussing with T. E. Lawrence (who was there) about Elgar's music, and we were talking about the Second Symphony, and I said that 'This is music that never began and never will end; it's like it goes on in the spheres, and I feel the end of the last movement is like a sort of Blake Angel in a golden blaze of light'. I think Lawrence thought that was perhaps a bit romantic, but he said he felt nothing at all could come after it, and that everything had to stop after the symphony, they didn't want to hear any more music.

AR: It makes a tremendous impression.

HC: Oh, we had wonderful days. A little later that summer we were all at Hereford – he had taken a house called The Priory and he had these wonderful tea parties in the garden every afternoon. I used to go and photograph everybody. I've got some marvellous photographs of him sitting with Shaw. Well, Shaw was at his most modest and most humble. You know, Shaw once wrote about him – I think it was about *Falstaff* – 'All the other geniuses whom I venture to admire, let me down at one time or another, but you never fail'.

AR: Earlier on, Sir Steuart Wilson said something about Elgar as a conductor. Now Sir Adrian Boult, the foremost living conductor of Elgar's music, and Bernard Shore, leader of the violas of the BBC Symphony Orchestra from its inception and for many years

afterwards, had naturally special opportunities for observing him in this capacity.

ABO: Well, Elgar as a conductor was a curious paradox. He was not a good conductor, but at the same time he was responsible for some of the finest performances, of his own work at any rate; and I'm not sure that I wouldn't broaden it a little on that, but anyhow, some of the finest performances of his own work that anyone's ever heard. He had a wonderful understanding of the orchestra and of the choir, and I think there's a great deal to be said for the way he writes for the instruments. Don't you feel that?

BS: Oh, I couldn't agree with you more, Adrian. The orchestra, of course, always had a most wonderful admiration for him; he was always looked upon as the country squire. Really, because I think that he looked the part and he had that lovely manner which the orchestra very much appreciated – a certain amount of courtliness, you know, it goes down rather a long way with us toughs in the orchestra. And, of course, our great joy with him was not only [that] we liked working with him; but, of course, he had the secret of writing for the instruments. I don't think any composer before or since has ever quite done that to the same extent. You see, before his arrival Stanford and Parry were looked upon as the great composers, but there the players never really had an opportunity to exploit their instruments and they weren't stretched. Now with Elgar, every player is stretched to capacity and that is a vital factor in the health of any orchestra; and I remember one particular case that he would turn round to the second violins: 'Now, second violins, I wrote that passage particularly for you; you're so often left out in the cold'. Then another particular case in the Rondo of the Second Symphony – at that wonderful passage where the percussion department seems to go mad – Elgar invariably told us: 'Now, I want you to – you in the percussion – to start as softly as you can and then gradually put on every bit of power and hammering you can get into it. I want you to feel it as if it's a man in a fever, a terrible hammering in the brain which cuts out everything else and all you other instruments – strings, brass, woodwind – don't worry if you get overwhelmed, I want you to be completely overwhelmed by the whole percussion department'.

[Second Symphony: 3rd movement, from fig. 120 to 5 bars before 122]

ABO: Oh yes, it's very interesting that he should have this wonderful understanding of the orchestra. You know, there's a story that Hans Richter said to him that he was the only composer, except Richard Strauss, who could write a score in the way that it was meant to be played. That's to say he wrote each part of the score for the benefit of the player who was handling it. On the other hand, most composers, Brahms and so on, put their expression marks in from the point of view of the listener, from the point of view of the conductor if you like, and the conductor has got to adapt it. Brahms, it's said, used never to allow a score of his to be printed until he had heard the work at least once. On the other hand, Elgar – and a good deal of Elgar's work was actually engraved before the first performance – and he told somebody I know that he never had altered a thing after he had heard it; he was perfectly satisfied with it.

BS: Sounds amazing to me, that when you think of the thousands of scores, he never seemed to alter anything?

ABO: Yes. Actually the day I first met him he had got hold of the newly engraved score

of *The Kingdom* and he was extraordinarily proud of it. Of course he said the music 'didn't matter much'; but the point was that the semiquaver in the piccolo part was exactly the same distance from the bar line as a semiquaver in the double bass part; whatever it was; it was so beautifully engraved. And *The Kingdom* makes me think also of a rather nice occasion – well, a rather nerve-racking occasion which was very exciting – at Worcester Festival, when things had not been going so frightfully well, and Elgar had rather lost interest, and he was driving the thing very fast. Suddenly we came to the point, the end of the fourth scene, you will remember it, when Agnes Nicholls, who was then pretty well in retirement but had taken up the part at short notice, again the part that was written for [her] and the part that she loved, I think, more than anything in the world perhaps, except *Isolde*. She got up and began singing 'The Sun Goeth Down' and as she did it one felt the whole orchestra once spring to life and then Elgar took interest: and from then on it was a really splendid performance. It's the only occasion I know when a conductor – whose job it is sometimes to pull difficult situations together – was himself pulled together by a soprano soloist.

AR: Sir Compton Mackenzie met Elgar in one of his 'music is off' times and apparently in rather a formidable mood.

CM: Of course it was a stock remark to say that Elgar looked like a colonel, but he really did. When, some time in the autumn of 1923, he came up to me at the old Savile Club in Piccadilly and said gruffly, 'I hear you've just started a paper called *The Gramophone*': I felt like a subaltern who'd committed some breach of regimental etiquette. 'I suppose all your clever young critics will be deciding I'm a back number. It doesn't worry me: I take no more interest in music'. He returned on several occasions to this notion of his that he took no more interest in music. 'You'll find when you're my age' (he was then in his mid-sixties) 'writing will have no more interest for you. Take my advice and get interested in something else now; now, diatoms for instance'. Diatoms? 'You know what a diatom is?' The colonel's eye was on me and I hadn't the courage to say that I wasn't perfectly sure. 'These marvellous patterns of infinitely minute ocean-life you could enter through the microscope into a world of absolute beauty, consoles me for everything'. And one more remark: 'I told my mother once, when I was young, that I wouldn't be content until I received a letter from abroad addressed to Edward Elgar, England'. Yes, I think England will be remembering his bi-centenary in 2057.

AR: That was Sir Compton Mackenzie's view of Elgar. Sir Arthur Bliss, as you will hear, had a very different view of him. He only met Elgar long after he had fallen in love with his music as a schoolboy.

ABL: It was some time during the First World War; through mutual friends I visited the Elgars when they were at Severn House in Hampstead. I remember very well going up the hill there, entering this large house, and Lady Elgar being very kind – and hearing Elgar upstairs playing some phrase over and over again on the piano. He soon stopped and came down and there he was, the first time I met him; aloof, shy, speaking to me in his soft Worcestershire voice, and taking me in with his rather curious blinking eyes, I remember. We became quite friendly and he wrote to me when I was out in France; and one of my prize possessions is a score of *Cockaigne*, that he sent me out there, that is covered with the mud of the trenches, still. But

then after the war he invited me to go up to Severn House to hear the run-through of his Violin Sonata which he'd just written; and W.H. Reed played the violin and Elgar himself played the piano part, and I stood, or sat beside him, turning over for him. Then a year later came the meeting with Elgar in his club – one of his London clubs – to discuss a new work for one of the Three Choirs Festivals. That, I remember, was late 1920. Goossens was there and Bax was there, and we didn't really know why we had been invited, and it came as a very pleasant surprise to hear Elgar inviting us to contribute a work to the Festival in Gloucester in 1922.

AR: What was the work you wrote?

ABL: Well, I wrote my *Colour Symphony* for that, and shortly afterwards I left for America and I didn't see Elgar for a number of years.

AR: Would you consider that, in your earlier works, that his style influenced yours?

ABL: Oh, I think so. I mean Elgar was a man I consider of inspired musical personality. He wrote because he was compelled to do so. It wasn't a mental activity, it was something that welled out of him and he had, of course, the mastery to express what he felt. I thought that he was a man of great imagination. I don't agree with the description of his personality as one often comes across in books; I don't see him at all as the typical countryman surrounded by dogs and horses; nor do I see him at his best when he's all dressed up in a magnificence of robes and orders; that's just one small part of him.

AR: What's your view of him?

ABL: Well, I think he was a very sensitive, highly imaginative, often harassed human being and whenever I hear the slow movement from the First Symphony I see the man – especially do I see a clear-cut image of him in the final bars.

[First Symphony: 3rd Movement, fig. 107 to the end]

AR: Richter, in his broken English, said of the slow movement from the First Symphony that it was, 'Such a one as Beethoven would 'ave wrote'. It's filled too with a wistful note so often sounded in Elgar's music. In his sixty-fourth year he wrote to Sir Sidney Colvin: 'I'm still at heart the dreamy child who used to be found in the reeds by Severnside with a sheet of paper, trying to fix the sounds and longing for something very great – source, texture and all else unknown. I'm still looking for this'. Surely he had found it and, indeed, more than once in the finest of his works.

And now these memories on The Fifteenth Variation come to an end with some characteristic reflections on Elgar and his music by Dr Vaughan Williams.

RVW: My first knowledge of Elgar's music was a performance shortly before 1900 of the Variations. I had been advised by a friend to go to a Richter concert and hear a work by Dohnányi, of all people, so I went. The Dohnányi was all right: but the Variations! Here was something new, yet old; strange, yet familiar; universal, yet typically original, and at the same time typically English. Well, having heard the Variations I was pining to find out more, and I journeyed to Birmingham to hear the first performance of *Gerontius*: and I have to confess, perhaps to my shame, that at first I was bitterly disappointed. I now know that I was wrong; not that I have yet reconciled to the opening or to the Demons, in spite of their virtuosity, but

that the beauty of the rest more than outweighs those places. Stanford was wiser than me, and on the strength of *Gerontius* obtained an honorary degree for Elgar at Cambridge, and travelled up to Leeds to press for a performance at the next festival. The first time I ever addressed Elgar personally was not by word of mouth but by a 'Dear Sir' letter early in the 1900s, when I wrote and asked him to give me some lessons in composition. I received a polite answer from Lady Elgar saying that her husband was too busy at the moment and advising me to apply to Bantock. The first time I think that I actually had a conversation with Elgar was at a performance of his Violoncello Concerto when he approached me rather truculently and said, 'I am surprised, Dr Vaughan Williams, that you care to listen to this vulgar stuff'. The truth was, I think, that he was feeling sore over an accusation of vulgarity made against him by a well-known musicologist who Elgar probably knew was a friend of mine. I did not meet Elgar again for some years, and then he was always gracious and friendly. He came to hear a performance of my *Sancta Civitas* and gave it generous praise, and he told me that he had once thought of setting those words himself. 'But I shall never do so now', he said. To this, I could only answer that this made me sorry that I had ever attempted to set the words myself. Now I will, if I may, finish off with a tactical point. In the introduction to Elgar's First Symphony the melody is given to fairly heavy woodwind and violas. The violoncellos and double basses play the bass *détaché* while the inner harmony is left to two soft muted horns. Well, I think, if a student had brought that score in to any composition tutor, he'd have put his blue pencil through it, and said, 'This will not be heard'. And to my mind, when I look at it still, it looks all wrong but it sounds all right. Here indeed, we have a mystery and a miracle.

[First Symphony: First Movement, bar 3 to 3 before fig. 3]

AR: 'There is no programme', Elgar wrote to Walford Davies about the First Symphony, 'No programme beyond a wide experience of human life, with a great charity (love) and a massive hope in the future'. That hope seemed to be dimmed, almost extinguished, in the years following his wife's death. But, in sending the manuscript of part of the Adagio of the third uncompleted Symphony to Ernest Newman, he wrote, 'I send you my stately sorrow. Naturally what follows brings hope'. A revival perhaps of that massive hope we hear in the triumphant outburst in the magnificent tune of the First Symphony by this great composer, and great Englishman.

[First Symphony: continuation from previous extract to fig. 5]

Announcer: 'The Fifteenth Variation – a Portrait of Edward Elgar', was devised and presented by Alec Robertson from the reminiscences of Carice Elgar Blake and May Grafton; Julius Harrison and Sir Percy Hull; Sir Barry Jackson; Astra Desmond and Sir Steuart Wilson; Lady Hamilton Harty; Yehudi Menuhin; Harriet Cohen; Sir Adrian Boult and Bernard Shore; Sir Compton Mackenzie; Sir Arthur Bliss; and Dr Ralph Vaughan Williams. The programme, which was recorded, was produced by Charles Parker. The extracts from Elgar's First Symphony were taken from the recording of the performance conducted by the composer.

# Revisiting ‘The Hut’<sup>1</sup>

David McBrien

*Corrigendum:* p. 11, line 3: for 1914 read 1915, and delete ‘working on his *Starlight Express* music’. Elgar visited ‘The Hut’ between 3 and 7 November 1915, and did not receive the invitation to compose the music until 9 November, after his return home.

*Addendum.* Jerrold Northrop Moore has suggested that the photographs in my article said to have been taken on 26 June 1927 (Figures 4–6) might have been taken on 31 August 1919. There are several reasons for this suggestion. The informality of the clothing may have been inappropriate for the 1927 birthday concert; Elgar looks slimmer than he would have done in 1927; and, especially, Lady Elgar’s diary records a visit by Elgar to ‘The Hut’ in 1919:

30 August E. to the Hut ... Heard E was all well D.G. in evening congenial party B. Shaw [Francis] Toye &c

31 August E. enjoying the Hut – B. Shaw, Brit. Museum? man, Mr and Mrs Toye, Sir H. Hadow &c &c – later Mr Rothenstein to draw E. & Mr and Mrs Newman

Dr Moore suggests that the young man in fig. 5, seated at the base of the sundial between Elgar and Shaw, may be Francis Toye. In that case Toye, Hadow, Newman, and Shaw were all present in 1919, and feature in figs 4 and 5. Salmond and Reed might have been among the ‘&c &c’. Dr Moore adds that at this time (mid-1919) Elgar was seeing more of Felix Salmond than before or since, and that in fig. 4 he looks exactly as he does in the photo at Brinkwells two months earlier. He also points out that, in fig. 6, W.H. Reed is less grey than in the photos taken in 1922 at the Gloucester festival (see the photograph in Moore’s *Elgar. A Life in Photographs*, on p. 88).

I have followed up Dr Moore’s suggestion with a little further research. Salmond and Toye were certainly present at the concert in 1927; the Birthplace has a ticket for the concert naming Salmond as one of the performers. Moreover Carice’s diary mentions Salmond’s presence, and Toye wrote a review of the concert for the *Morning Post*. However, I have investigated the Shaw Archive which is held in the library of the London School of Economics, and which includes Shaw’s engagement

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1 See the author’s ‘A Visit to “The Hut”’, this Journal, 15/2 (July 2007), 718. We are grateful to Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore for his contribution.



diaries. The entry for 31/8/19 says 'Bray', but the entry for 26/6/27 has a small indecipherable word which is certainly not 'Bray' nor 'Elgar' nor 'Schuster' nor any other possibly relevant word. Moreover the dresses worn by the ladies in fig. 5 appear more in the fashion of the Great War than the late 1920s. So I agree with Dr Moore that the photographs in Figs 4–6 are more likely to be from 1919 than 1927. In the same group of photographs at the Birthplace are two of Elgar and Shaw standing in the courtyard of the almshouses in Bray village known as the Jesus Hospital (fig. 1), and one of Elgar and Shaw seated in the sundial garden reading (fig. 2), all of which seem to have been taken on the same occasion.

**Fig. 1 (left). Elgar and G.B. Shaw at the Alms Houses.**

**Fig. 2 (below). Elgar and GBS by the sundial.**



# REPORTS ON MEETINGS

## ***The Bard Festival***

The Bard Festival was founded in 1990 and is based on campus at Bard College, an independent, non-sectarian, residential, co-educational college offering a programme in the liberal arts and sciences in upstate New York on the banks of the Hudson river. The setting is very beautiful, the jewel in the crown being the visually striking Richard B. Fisher performing arts centre designed by Frank Gehry. The Festival is uniquely structured, taking place on two consecutive weekends (Friday to Sunday) in August followed by a third in October, when the area is popular with visitors viewing the leaf-fall in this thickly wooded countryside. As it is only a 90-mile drive from New York, many city dwellers escape here either as commuters, second-home owners, or to enjoy retirement. It is a well-heeled community which inhabits the 30-mile or so stretch from the FDR (Roosevelt) library and mansion at Hyde Park up to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge at Olana, the river bank sprinkled with more mansions, such as those once owned by the Vanderbilt and Mills families and now in state ownership. The festival is themed with a composer 'and his world'; this year it was Elgar, the first British composer chosen by Bard. It features the American Symphony Orchestra, a choral group of freelance professionals, various chamber music groups of differing shapes and sizes, and musicologists (and academics from other fields) who provide panel discussions and give pre-concert talks. From the UK came Diana McVeagh, Andrew Porter, Christina Bashford, Sophie Fuller, and myself as speakers, with pianist Kenneth Hamilton and singer Jane Irwin; while Piers Lane featured as resident solo pianist, and Byron Adams (University of California, Riverside) was the scholar in residence.

A triumvirate of Leon Botstein, Christopher Gibbs, and Robert Martin had put a very enterprising programme together. In August we heard, among many of the small-scale chamber and vocal works, the 'Enigma' variations, the Second Symphony, *The Dream of Gerontius*, *Falstaff*, the Piano Quintet, the *Severn Suite*, the *Introduction and Allegro*, the Serenade, *In the South*, the *Concert Allegro*, *The Crown of India*, and three extracts from *The Kingdom*. The third group over the last weekend in October includes *The Sanguine Fan* and the First Symphony. While Elgar was the featured composer of these thirteen programmes, the contextual references to others – from Dowland to Bridge, Walmisley to Somervell, and Sterndale Bennett to Walton – were vital components. These composers included Parry (his Symphonic Variations and first piano trio), Stanford (Nonet, Violin concerto, and Variations on *Down among the dead men*), and a host of others such as Ethel Smyth, Maude Valerie White, Granville Bantock, John Ireland, Richard Strauss, Fauré, Grainger, Mendelssohn and Sullivan.

The comprehensive coverage of Elgar in the Festival is reflected by the titles allocated to each programme, which included 'From Autodidact to Master of the King's Musick', 'Music in the era of Queen Victoria', 'Elgar and the Victorian Spirit', 'Elgar and the Musical Renaissance', 'Imperial Pomp and Pastoral Nostalgia', 'Elgar

and the Salon', 'Victorian and Edwardian Popular Song in America and Britain', 'The Great War and Modern Music', 'Elgar, the Imperial Self-portrait', 'Elgar and Modernism', 'The Culture of Religion', 'Absolute and Programme Music: English Music at the turn of the Century', 'Anglophilia and Imperialism', and 'Elgar and the next Generation'. Subjects for panel discussion included 'Elgar: the Man and his Worlds', 'Das Land ohne Musik? Views of British Music in the 19<sup>th</sup> century', 'Charles Darwin and Cardinal Newman: Religion, Science and Technology in the Elgarian Era', 'Constructions of Masculinity from Dorian Gray to Father Brown', and 'Anglophilia and Imperialism'. There was also a showing of Ken Russell's 1962 film biography of the composer.<sup>1</sup>

Christopher Fifield

### ***Elgar Study Day (Royal College of Music, 10 May 2007)***

'I cannot describe it; it must be heard'. So said Elgar; but was the enigmatic Elgar being evasive about what Julian Rushton called 'the technical and aesthetic aspects of orchestration and his own expressive dimension'? Not deliberately so, we're sure. Elgar the creative artist who, like others of similar ilk, drew on himself sub-consciously; and like others, he wasn't always aware of what he had put into his music. It is for performers and listeners to probe the subject-matter and its significance, as Elgar was probably suggesting; and his remark formed an imaginative title for a Study Day in his honour.

The celebration ought to have drawn a large crowd. In fact, Thursday 10 May 2007 came perilously close to being cancelled. Not even the imprimatur of such august bodies as the Royal Philharmonic Society (represented on the day by the Chairman, Graham Sheffield, the General Administrator, Rosemary Johnson, and the Project Co-ordinator, Tom Hutchinson), the Elgar Society (represented by the Chairman, Andrew Neill, and the Hon. Secretary, Helen Petchey) and the Royal College of Music – which hosted the occasion – could initially attract more than 30 out of a required minimum of 100. Happily, though, enough people in the end supported this painstakingly organised seminar. While it was a part of 2007, The Year of Elgar, it wasn't only for Elgarians; it was for anyone genuinely interested and immersed in music. It could not have been otherwise because no composer is an island. One 'begets' another. Vaughan Williams freely admitted that he was 'a cribber'. Brahms, Richard Strauss, and Wagner have their entrances and exits in Elgar, as does Schumann whom he described as 'my ideal'. After the welcome by Graham Sheffield, the talks by David Owen Norris, Julian Rushton, and Andrew Lyle reflected both the personal and the eclectic side of Elgar, as did the panel discussion just before the close.

Perhaps the most adventurously educational aspect of a most enriching day occurred after lunch when composer Anthony Payne led a workshop with RCM students Solfa Carlile, Danquan Yu, Neil Luck and Louis Mander. They had been

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<sup>1</sup> A book, *Elgar and his World*, edited by Byron Adams, is available from Princeton University Press. A review will appear in a future issue of this Journal (ed.).

assigned the task of orchestrating *In Smyrna*; and that afternoon each version was premiered by the RCM Ensemble conducted by Graham Ross. One thing was for sure: every contribution was the creation of a genuinely budding composer. But hard choices had to be made, and Danquan Yu (who had distributed copies of his score to the delegates) won the first prize of £200 while the others were each awarded £100. In a sense the odd man out was Neil Luck (who had also distributed copies of his score) because rather than an orchestration, he produced a composition of his own – *Teneramente* – inspired by a motif from *In Smyrna* but orchestrated in the style of Elgar.

You would be right to feel that so much erudition (with a sandwich lunch and tea/coffee thrown in) was worth every penny of the £30 fee. But the Study Day didn't stop there. Also included in the price was an evening concert given by the RCM Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andrew Litton, where the premiere of Julia Kny's *Papir iz Doch Vays* (about which I'm not qualified to report) was followed by a concerto and a symphony. The choice of concerto regrettably turned out to be an opportunity missed. Rather than Schumann's almost totally neglected Violin Concerto, written in 1853 but not published until 1936 because it had been suppressed by Joseph Joachim and his heirs, Brahms's Violin Concerto was preferred. The soloist Haik Kazazian performed the work as most virtuosos of today perform it – with an ease that underplayed much of Brahms's edgy, even awkward phrasing (as in bars 348 to 361 of a cadenza-like passage before the reprise of the first movement) and obscured the asperities inherent in the music. Despite considerable sensitivity of intent, the ultimate impression was of much gloss but little grain.

Elgar's Second Symphony filled the second half. Plenty of grain here; and no gloss from Litton. Earlier in the day he had made a welcome appearance at the study session and, naturally, the delegates seized the opportunity to question him about his experiences of conducting Elgar, especially in the USA. Litton was unequivocal; American orchestras didn't have the right approach to Elgar, and restricted rehearsal time made change virtually impossible. So the 'Elgar sound' eluded them. It would have been instructive to know if the pitch these ensembles tuned to, mostly higher than that of European counterparts, was a contributory factor. But Litton didn't touch on this. Instead, by also citing the example of a Scandinavian band that could not get beyond turning Elgar into bad Strauss, he explained that the sound he strove for was only possible through a capacity 'to melt into the notes'; and commended 'the kids' of the RCMSO (doubtless all under 25) for having the capacity to do just that.

They did more. This was an interpretation of the Second Symphony that hammered against the psyches of its listeners, an experience way beyond Elgar's description of 'high pure joy'. Characteristically he left unsaid the personal recesses he had also searched, leaving them for others to reach. And Litton left hardly a stone unturned in his quest to do so. From the darkest moments of the slow movement to the climax of the third that erupted with shattering force, 'the kids' gave Litton their all, making irrelevant the errors and the odd moments of raggedness in execution. At the end, a member of Southern branch beside me who introduced herself as Val, softly exclaimed, 'My word'.

Nalen Anthoni

## ***Elgar Day at Gregynog Hall, 24 June 2007***

An especially happy celebration of Elgar's 150th anniversary year was the concluding 'Elgar Day' at the Gregynog Festival. An imposing 'Victorian Tudor' mansion, Gregynog Hall also came into existence a century and a half ago, in the delightful wilds of Powys. The Misses Gwendoline and Margaret Davies bought it in 1920 and made it a centre for music, international conferences, and fine printing. It is set in extensive landscaped grounds, where one can wander between events in the big house. The visitors' book shows Elgar staying at Gregynog on 27 June 1924 (to rest after conducting engagements in Wales), and other musical visitors between the wars included Holst, Vaughan Williams, and Walford Davies. Gregynog was subsequently bequeathed to the University of Wales, and still serves the arts in mid-Wales.

The Elgar Day began with Diana McVeagh examining the change in attitudes towards the composer over the last 50 years, as reflected in Elgar biographies and essays. She took issue with recently espoused views that Elgar was a careful manipulator of others' opinions of him, socialized and agitated for his own advancement, and married for money. Admittedly, Elgar had some wealthy and influential friends, but it needed to be acknowledged that these were all men who loved music and, in some cases, were deeply knowledgeable about, and proficient in, the art. McVeagh doubted that Elgar's representation of himself as a victimized, melancholic outsider was calculated, although she agreed that he put too much emphasis on his social background. His efforts for recognition among the Establishment should, in her view, be seen in the light of his clear belief that he was standing up for the musical profession (which, within his own lifetime, had been shamefully undervalued). For McVeagh the real enigma of Elgar's life was that his wife saw genius in him before it was apparent in his music. Elgar's earlier engagements had clearly not been for money, and the attraction to Elgar of a woman who understood, valued, and actively encouraged his artistic efforts must have been considerable and of far greater import than her bank balance.

Amanda Huntley then introduced the brief Elgar film archive and some historical film of Sir Henry Wood conducting Grainger's *Shepherd's Hey* in 1936, Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the closing bars of Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* in Powell and Pressburger's 1951 film, and Ethel Hook (one of the several singing sisters of Clara Butt) singing 'Land of Hope and Glory' in an early 'talkie'. Diana McVeagh then signed copies of her new book, *Elgar: the Music Maker* [reviewed below].

The audience was then treated to performances of Elgar's Violin Sonata, String Quartet, and Piano Quintet by the Sacconi Quartet and pianist Gary Matthewman. The technical facility of these young ex-RCM musicians was startling. One could have wished for more attention to the dramatic and heartfelt passages in the music, but it was an enjoyable and fitting conclusion to a memorable day.

Michael Trott

# REVIEWS OF MUSIC

## **Edward Elgar: Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra. Royal College of Music London MS 402. Facsimile.**

The national and international reputation of Elgar's cello concerto has steadily grown over the past half-century, and that a German publisher should issue a facsimile of the autograph full score should occasion no surprise. It comes with a brief foreword by a leading cellist, Stephen Isserlis, and an introduction by Jonathan Del Mar. These are in English and German. The translator isn't above making 'improvements': Isserlis, being a musician, uses rhetorical repetition ('at the ghastly conclusion of a ghastly war'), but the German ('am grauenvollen Ende eines entsetzlichen Krieges') takes two stabs at 'ghastly' (the second seems better).

The facsimile is beautifully presented in colour, and by modern standards is not exorbitantly priced. Nevertheless it seems pertinent to enquire what this kind of publication is for. Given the existence of two scholarly editions, what is the *musical* value of the composer's handwriting? – for it's a mistake to consider the autograph a document of more intrinsic authority than a printed score issued in close collaboration with, and proof-read by, the composer. Performances can continue with a good conscience to be based on the revised published scores.<sup>1</sup> The composition history of the work is far more complicated than a carefully 'koppid' score, intended for the publisher, can tell us.<sup>2</sup> The value of autographs lies mainly in things that never made it into print; not mistakes (which may be interesting, as Freud reminds us) so much as changes of mind. Insight may also be obtained from the care the composer took in prescribing the design of the score, and attending to practical questions of phrasing and expression. On the first page the names of instruments and directions to the engraver about brackets at the start of each musical system, precisely as they appear in the printed score, are in Elgar's hand. He altered the title page by deleting 'composed'; but a later addition, 'in E minor' between 'Concerto' and 'Violoncello', was not printed (not that the key is in doubt).



Kassel:  
Bärenreiter, 2007.

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- 1 Elgar Complete Edition vol. 32, *The Concertos*, ed. Robert Anderson and Jerrold Northrop Moore (London: Novello, 1988); Cello Concerto, ed. Jonathan Del Mar (Kassel: Bärenreiter, Urtext edition, 2005), reviewed below.
  - 2 See John Pickard, 'Japing up the Cello Concerto. the first draft examined', in J.P.E. Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton (eds), *Elgar Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 238–269.

In his introduction, Del Mar points to a few of the musical changes, without attempting a comprehensive list. Inconsiderately, he directs us to these points not by referring to the rehearsal figures, carefully entered by the composer and circled in red, but by bar numbers. These, of course, are not added to the pages of the facsimile, nor are they in the original printed edition which many still use. Del Mar could easily have added page numbers in his introduction. So that those with the original score need not count far, I take an example of changes from the slow movement. On p. 69 of the autograph, which begins at fig. 35, Elgar deleted *espress.* (bar 9). Why? did he consider it tautological, given the earlier '*molto espressivo*', or was the expressive nature of this arching phrase self-evident? Del Mar points out that two slurs in bars 9–10 were originally replicated for the same notes in bars 11–12; Elgar deleted the slurs and replaced them by short lines over each note (so-called *tenuto* markings) – a characteristic example of his thoughtful, expressively driven, attitude to articulation. In addition, and perhaps at the same time, he removed a slur on the octave C#s and another (fig. 36) between the high B and C. Referring only to bars 11–12, Del Mar points out that the change came too late to be altered on all the engraved plates: 'the original version ... survives in ... the first edition of the Solo Violoncello part, or ... the first edition of Elgar's own arrangement for cello and piano, published in 1919'. He also reminds us that the Cello Concerto is unusual among Elgar's greater symphonic works in that the full score was not published until some time after the first performance.

Del Mar's 'About the Autograph' forms only a short final section to his introduction, which gives us the biographical and musical context for the concerto, and follows recent critical opinion (unacknowledged, perhaps because so widespread) that it mainly embodies feelings of unhappiness and nostalgia. Isserlis's Foreword is subtitled 'a Poem of Regret', and Del Mar even says 'tragedy', while pointing out the precedent, for the late intervention of aching reminiscence, in the finale of Dvořák's cello concerto. He continues: 'with typical irreverence, Elgar sweeps all oppression out of the window with a brisk, no-nonsense gesture'. So much depends on performance: that ending could be quite savage, but it could also be a pulling together to face the future with determination, even confidence. It is too easy to read things with the benefit of hindsight; if Alice had not died, Elgar might have finished his piano concerto, or some other great work, and the Cello Concerto would no longer be a heartfelt farewell to composition. As we all know, among its most original features is a fleet-footed and witty scherzo, while the finale contains music that is jovial, or perhaps more accurately Falstaffian: another example of Elgar's ability to bear the weight of alternative interpretations (in performance and critical response).

Attention is focused on the ending by the inclusion in this

facsimile of four pages, with a title-page (not in Elgar's hand) reading 'pages 131 to 134 of the [autograph] score. Signed and dated "Brinkwells, July 1919"'. These pages are neither mentioned in the introduction, nor listed on the contents page. Elgar gave them with an inscription to Edward Speyer, but certainly didn't copy them for that purpose; and no explanation is offered for their existence. They are, however, clearly an earlier version of the ending, a passage in which Elgar changed his mind about numerous details. In the 'Speyer' pages, at fig. 73, orchestral cellos are in unison with the basses, not pizzicato; violins and violas rest for four bars; second flute and clarinet partly double the firsts; and the oboe figure (four bars before fig. 74) lacks the upper octave. The more agitated solo rhythm is doubled by violas: at fig. 74 the solo rests, instead of playing with the tutti (for the first time, as Del Mar remarks). Five bars from the end, three solo notes (e', g', b'') are an octave lower.

The number of bars is the same, but the revisions have considerable impact (and not quite all appear on these pages). The obvious conclusion is that Elgar decided that the last four pages (two leaves) were a mess, and to avoid a half-used leaf in his complete autograph, he 'recopied' (his word, on the dedication to Speyer) from three bars before fig. 72. But is that the whole story? These last two leaves are the only ones using paper with printed names of instruments, including some (cor anglais, harp, side drum) that Elgar wasn't using, and which he crossed out. Throughout the complete score, he (or, mainly, Lady Elgar) diligently labelled the instruments by hand. The appearance of paper with pre-printed instrumentation, and 26 staves instead of twenty, for the last two leaves only, and precisely for the bars Elgar revised and recopied, is undeniably odd. The MS is noted in the Complete Edition, but not fully described, although the third page (p. 133) is illustrated.<sup>3</sup> But were there perhaps other pages (up to 130!) on paper of this type, making the entire score a second autograph? If so, where are they?

The reader is left with a mystery, or wondering whether the intended destination of this beautiful facsimile was not just a highbrow coffee-table. There are some appropriate illustrations – Brinkwells, Salmond, the Queen's Hall, the first programme – well reproduced and captioned; but the cellist depicted on the cover is not identified (is it perhaps Stephen Isserlis?).

Julian Rushton

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3 In the Complete Edition, the illustration on p. xix contradicts the statement on p. xxxiii that the paper has twenty staves, 25 are visible, but the piccolo staff at the top has been cut off. The edition reproduces the variants in the solo line, but not those in the orchestral parts.

**Elgar: Concerto in E minor for Violoncello and Orchestra,  
Op. 85**

Bärenreiter Urtext

Full orchestral score (BA 9040)

Critical commentary (BA 9040)

Arrangement by the composer for Violoncello and Piano (BA 9040A)

‘The last word in authentic text’ proclaims the back cover of these handsome new volumes from Bärenreiter. No doubt it helps shift copies, but it is a bold, perhaps a foolish, and certainly an unscholarly boast. As I am sure the editor, Jonathan Del Mar, would be the first to agree, there is no ‘last word’ in authenticity when it comes to editing Elgar (or pretty much any other composer). Multiple, sometimes conflicting, manuscript and printed sources frequently occur and, while editorial problems are relatively modest compared with, say, the works of Bruckner, continuous study of these sources throws up new insights and questions. Sometimes controversies cannot be definitively resolved, and the best an editor can do is represent competing claims as fairly as possible.

When the Elgar Complete Edition of the string concertos was published in 1988 (Vol. 32, currently out of print), the issues seemed clear cut: there existed a manuscript full score, housed at the Royal College of Music (see above); a printed score, published in 1921; a wildly inaccurate set of printed orchestral parts that hardly seemed worth consulting; a couple of drafts of the cello and piano arrangement in the British Library; a few other bits and pieces dotted around ... and that was about it: no sketches; no compositional draft.

Recent studies carried out, independently (but with mutual respect) by Jonathan Del Mar and myself have revealed a more complex and puzzling picture of how the work we know and love today has come down to us. Del Mar’s magisterial new edition lists at least nineteen separate sources. Admittedly, some are lost, at least one is putative, and two are sound recordings which, according to the editor, have not influenced his edition, although they do corroborate one variant reading in the second movement. Del Mar brings to Elgar the same scrupulous attention to detail and clarity of exposition that he did to his well-known edition of Beethoven’s symphonies. To help guide us through the Elgarian labyrinth, Bärenreiter has printed his extensive Sources and Commentary in a lavishly produced separate volume. With astute commercial nous, they have ensured its interest to the performer and general reader as well as the scholar through the inclusion of 22 beautifully clear photographic plates, seventeen in colour.

The coloured plates comprise a facsimile of the entire solo part as written out by Elgar, with multi-coloured amendments and fingerings and bowings agreed by the composer and Felix Salmond, the concerto's first interpreter. This gives the modern performer direct access to one of the work's crucial but long-neglected primary sources without having to make a trip to the British Library. The volume is worth having just for that, but the plates also include a real curiosity: the first page of the copy owned by Beatrice Harrison, the concerto's most famous early interpreter, who recorded it twice under Elgar's direction. It includes various exhortations, some surely stemming from the composer: 'don't rush'; 'not too quick'; 'tone full'; 'don't hurry'; and, startlingly, in block capitals about the title, 'LOVE JOY – POWER KNOWLEDGE'. The sources section suggests that only the faintness of some inscriptions prevented its complete reproduction in this volume, so the commentary does the next best thing, providing a comprehensive list of Harrison's annotations.

Critical commentaries are murder to write and often worse to read. Precision is all; a degree of pedantry is inevitable if one is to fulfil the core functions of documentation and interpretation. Del Mar strikes just the right tone, combining meticulousness and erudition with pleasant informality where appropriate (and even a cheeky suggestion as to how Elgar might have improved his abandoned effort at an alternative ending for the slow movement – though heaven only knows why the composer even agreed to contemplate the idea in the first place).

Central to the editor's task is the pressing need to reconcile the details of the solo part, as printed in the copy from which the soloist normally plays, with the same part as it appears in the full orchestral score. The many discrepancies probably need not trouble listeners, but for over 80 years they have been the bane of generations of hard-pressed conductors and soloists who have watched precious minutes of rehearsal time tick away as they try to iron them out (I write from personal experience). In 2004 the Novello edition of the cello and piano arrangement resolved many of these issues, but this is the first time an integrated version of the score, part and piano arrangement has been achieved. Of course the crucial problem lies in determining exactly *which* text of the solo part is authoritative: MS or printed copy, score or part? Happily, annotations to the MS sources make it clear that the solo part Elgar wrote out for Salmond is the true copy text; and Del Mar uses this as his starting-point, while taking due account of alternative readings. This is indeed the closest we shall probably come to an 'authentic text' of the solo part. Where conflicts cannot readily be resolved the options are thoroughly explained.

Some sources previously assumed lost are now accounted

for. One of the drafts of the piano 'arrangement' held at the British Library is now established beyond question as the missing compositional draft, its Finale probably partly concocted from some of the otherwise vanished sketches. Devastatingly, Del Mar reveals that although Novello issued a revised set of orchestral parts a few years after publication of the faulty first edition, these were soon overlooked, and all subsequent reprints have used the inferior first edition instead. Lacunae remain: no proofs seem to survive of scores or parts, so discrepancies between manuscript and printed sources are sometimes hard to identify as printing errors or alterations made at the proof stage. Intriguingly, Del Mar proposes a possible missing source where one was not previously suspected: an intervening stage between the compositional draft and the fair copy of the piano arrangement. The rationale is compelling and, if correct, leaves us marvelling afresh at Elgar's extraordinary industry.

While wholeheartedly welcoming this new edition, it remains to remark that the full score and piano arrangement (the latter including a separate cello part) are both produced to exemplary standards. The full score is large enough to conduct from, while compact enough for a study score. One may perhaps regret the lack of a broader contextual note on the work's genesis and early reception (Robert Anderson's introduction to ECE Vol. 32 remains the most authoritative guide), but this is a minor quibble in the face of such a comprehensive and hugely impressive achievement.

John Pickard

# BOOK REVIEWS

## **Elgar, An Extraordinary Life**

by J.P.E. Harper-Scott

With his *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, J.P.E. Harper-Scott has already established himself in the forefront of the younger generation of Elgar scholars and biographers.<sup>1</sup> But with this shorter book, he is likely to reach a wider public. He has written an informative, witty, provocative, and occasionally irreverent account of Elgar's life. There are no new revelations, but the familiar ground is traversed with a freshness and piquancy that engage the reader from the first page.

The six main chapters are divided by what one might call intermezzi. The titles of these are a clue to their nature: 'An extraordinary moustache', 'In his spare time', 'An un-Edwardian erotic life', and 'A man in short trousers'. The moustache interlude is a brilliant way of dealing with the question of Elgar's imperialism. Harper-Scott belongs to a left-wing generation which sees only the down side of the Empire and overlooks its better aspects. But he is fair in his assessment of how Englishmen of the second half of the nineteenth century would have regarded it. Elgar he describes as an 'uxorious and tweed-deep' imperialist, adopting the image of a country squire or retired colonel (hence the luxurious moustache) to justify the faith shown in him by his upper-middle-class wife (an Indian Army general's daughter) in the face of her family's opposition to her marriage. All his 'imperial' music is occasional music – Diamond Jubilee, Boer War, Coronations, Delhi Durbar, Wembley Empire Exhibition. He had the knack of writing ceremonial music to capture a mood. Had he felt deeply about empire, Harper-Scott says, he would have produced at least one masterpiece inspired by it. Well, the *Coronation Ode* and the 1911 *Coronation March* (almost anti-imperialist) strike me as masterpieces, but perhaps they are not classified as imperialist music anymore than *The Spirit of England*.

Harper-Scott is good on Elgar's women, and he deals fairly and squarely with the homoerotic theories propounded by Byron Adams. I like (and share) his verdict on the brief engagement to the Worcester violinist Helen Weaver. Some, on rather tenuous evidence, believe that he carried a torch for her for the next 50 years and that his heart was broken. If so, he soon consoled himself with Miss E.E. of Inverness, and he courted two other women



London:  
Associated Board  
of the Royal  
Schools of Music,  
2007  
vi + 154 pages

1 See Relf Clark's review in this Journal, 15/1 (March 2007), 53-5.

before Alice Roberts netted him with her unshakable belief that he was a genius. There is no questioning his genuine love for Alice Stuart-Wortley, whether it was consummated (doubtful) or not, and at the end of his life for Vera Hockman. Helen broke off the engagement either for religious reasons (unlikely), or because she thought he had little prospect of a successful career (much more likely). Harper-Scott writes that the failure of the engagement 'scorched his pride, leaving a mark that lingered for years'. This is believable, and it probably explains Elgar's insecurity and his cultivation of a self-pitying grumpiness which led someone to describe him brilliantly as the Eeyore of English music – so many Tiggers bounced on the thistles he was saving for his birthday.

The picture of Elgar from 1903 to 1913 as a modernist – I prefer Strauss's word *progressivist* – is naturally a feature of Harper-Scott's book. Sensibly he explains his belief as depending on 'whether one thinks new methods are necessary for communicating new thoughts – for instance that the only way to write a revolutionary manifesto is to use a computer'. Elgar's modernism, he says,

is audible to anyone who has been tipped off to listen in a way only slightly different from usual. It hinges largely on the order in which he presents his themes, what effect they have on the listener as they are heard, and what the listener thinks the tone of the music or the choice of theme at the end of the work communicates. That is, it is the music's *meaning*, insofar as that can be grasped from a sensitive (but not necessarily technical) listening that makes it modernist.

He then gives examples from *In the South*, *Introduction and Allegro*, and other works up to *Falstaff*. He is extremely pertinent about these works and especially about the symphonies and the Violin Concerto. This, for example, about the return of the concerto's opening theme at the end of the cadenza in the finale: 'If the Windflower has her soul enshrined here, the happiness she offered Elgar is denied as a realistic possibility'. One of his beliefs is that few of Elgar's works end hopefully or happily, and agreement or otherwise with this will of course vary from listener to listener. My sole disappointment is that he says so little about *The Music Makers*, merely directing us to someone else's defence of this masterpiece.<sup>2</sup> He is insightful about *The Starlight Express* and the chamber music and memorably describes the Cello Concerto as 'an anatomy of melancholy'. The sketches of the Third Symphony 'preserve some of the most consummate music he ever wrote and show no evidence of a dwindling

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2 The reference is to Aidan J. Thomson, 'Unmasking *The Music Makers*', in Harper-Scott and Rushton (eds.), *Elgar Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 99–134.

musical intellect or ambition'. I told you he could be provocative.

The abiding merit of this splendid book is that Harper-Scott challenges received opinion (always a sensible course) with wit, in a racy style, and always with understanding of the other point of view. He loves Elgar's music as much as any of us and is irritated by and indulgent of Elgar the man's quirks, as most of us are. He is also accurate – the only slip I have detected is 1933 instead of 1932 as the date of the Menuhin recording of the Violin Concerto. I am old-fashioned and find the typographical lay-out of the book unpleasing and the author certainly deserved better reproduction of his well-chosen illustrations. But no matter how much your shelves are groaning under the weight of books on Elgar, you have to add this bottle of biographical champagne to them.

Michael Kennedy

### **Elgar, the Music Maker**

by Diana McVeagh

It isn't given to many to write two books on any subject half a century apart. Diana McVeagh's second book on Elgar follows her first by a little more than that. Her *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music* (1955) is a classic, and would have graced Dent's Master Musicians series, for which it was inexplicably not used. And it was a timely reminder of Elgar's greatness such as is now hardly needed, with books on Elgar of various shapes, sizes, and intellectual ambitions flowing from the presses. And not only books, but journal articles and reviews, equally varied in length, ambition, sensitivity, and intelligence, not to say knowledge of their subject. I need hardly say that all McVeagh's work, which in the meantime has included several such shorter, but never insubstantial, items, are both sensitive and learned; and the book under review has been greeted with deserved warmth by reviewers before me. If, therefore, in concurring with the praise she has received, I mumble a few reservations, her high claim among Elgar's commentators to being read, and re-read, must be borne in mind.

The book is on Elgar's music, not his life. If it may be considered a little short on length and ambition, it can hardly be faulted on completeness of coverage, and it may well prove a treasure-trove for future writers of programme-notes, CD inserts, or introductions to broadcasts. The life is there, in short paragraphs that connect longer sections on the music, and these serve to remind us of the context for a work or group of works, and convey essential information. Otherwise the book consists of sections on individual works, grouped into chapters but still in something like chronological order.



Boydell & Brewer,  
2007  
x + 240 pp.

Inevitably the book begins in the disputed area of Elgar's juvenilia. McVeagh accepts Elgar's dating of the tune he labelled 'Broadheath, 1867', and his account of the origins of *The Wand of Youth*. Such dates have been challenged because they lack documentary evidence; but reasonable ground for challenge does not make them wrong. However, Elgar, as McVeagh admits elsewhere, was as capable of myth-making as several of his peers (though not evidently mendacious, like Wagner), and I might have expected some acknowledgement that these dates may have resulted from wishful thinking. But this quibble in no way undermines the precision of McVeagh's observation that 'by no means all the *Wand of Youth* music, in its final form, is emotionally simple', and the typical shrewdness with which she develops this thought (p. 116) is particularly well-placed before discussion of the symphonies.

I like the early emphasis on Elgar as the kind of composer one of our leading Mozart scholars has called, accurately if inelegantly, 'a working stiff'.<sup>3</sup> Elgar preferred making reference to sources of inspiration – woodland, hope, experience of life – than to musical technique, but with his 'hands-on apprenticeship' (p. 7) he learned the stuff of music-making from the best masters, and his technical brilliance (and I mean in all aspects of music, not just orchestration) was acquired by brainwork. For this very reason, I think it a pity that constraints of space (probably) contributed to there being rather fewer music examples than I would like to see. The early works are not among Elgar's greatest or best-known, but remain foundations of his later mastery. We could do with more of the short but pertinent examples (it takes only two bars from the opening of *King Olaf* to demonstrate on p. 26 that 'Many of Elgar's best themes are more than a single line') that clarify points about technical features.

McVeagh's critical method intertwines description and comment, and it serves her, and the reader, well. But pressure of space, maybe, sometimes leads to allusiveness or remarks too harshly dismissive (McVeagh is no uncritical worshiper). Examples from *Caractacus* (p. 41): 'the Druid maidens ('Tread the measure') might belong to Bunthorne (1881)'. Will all her younger readers know who Bunthorne is (and of whom he was a caricature)? And will they realise that Eigen's meeting with 'the tiresome Druid prophetess' (p. 42) brings forth rather good music? (It seems hard, in any case, to call a character 'tiresome' when she neither appears before us, nor sings.) McVeagh mentions that in 1955 she had had no chance to hear the early cantatas. Hearing them seems to have left an impression of unevenness which does, I think, slightly

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3 Neal Zaslaw, 'Mozart as a working stiff', in James M. Morris (ed.), *On Mozart* (Woodrow Wilson Center and Cambridge University Press, 1994), 102.

impair her enthusiasm for what in them is fresh and original.

After 1900, McVeagh's critical enthusiasm is fully engaged, and as an introduction to *The Apostles* project this (pp. 96–111) could hardly be bettered. Her touch is secure on larger and smaller works of Elgar's glory years (I was glad to have two pages on *Grania and Diarmid*). The solo songs and part-songs are grouped for discussion in each period. Happily McVeagh seems to have revised one dismissive opinion ('Elgar wrote no excellent and not a few bad solo songs': 1955, p. 137). In a fine chapter on 'The Symphonist', she is particularly good on the reasons for Elgar's delay in tackling any symphonic movement longer than an overture. She says 'It is unlikely that Elgar, like Brahms, felt overshadowed by a past great compatriot: there was no comparable Beethoven in English musical life' (p. 119). True enough, but Elgar may have felt no less inhibited by great predecessors (Beethoven, Brahms), who were foreign, but whose music was widely performed in Britain. And a passing mention of a first attempt at the First Symphony's scherzo as a quartet doesn't account for Elgar's caution in relation to the symphony. The quartet was no less freighted with heavy precedents (and the relevant draft foreshadows rather more of the slow movement of the symphony). Had Elgar been in an economic position to do so, he might have written chamber music earlier in his career, as a preparation for symphonic writing, like Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, or Strauss. Had he been a Stanford pupil, he would have had to turn out a graduation exercise somewhat in Brahms's style, something that in no way inhibited the later individuality of, say, Vaughan Williams or Ireland.

It is much to McVeagh's credit (and her publisher's) that the title evokes *The Music Makers* (on which she writes excellently) rather than the Variations. Her first chapter, 'The Making of an Enigma', refers to the man, not the work, which is treated in the second chapter, headed 'To the Greater Glory of God'. That Elgar may have had himself in mind in labelling the theme of Op. 36 'enigma' is a widely held explanation, if not a 'solution', to what may be a spurious mystery. But as man or as musician, was he, is he, an enigma? Undoubtedly, as McVeagh among others has helped us understand, Elgar was a complex and to some extent a divided personality. Her commentary on the major works contains abundant evidence of their capacity for revealing those complexities; and perhaps it is time to banish the word 'enigma' for a generation, except where it is absolutely necessary, and admit that we probably know, and at least potentially understand, as much about Elgar as it is reasonable to expect with a man who left no verbal autobiography other than his letters, and whose personality is at its most radiantly human in ineffable works of music.

Julian Rushton



Chichester:  
Phillimore & Co.,  
2007. 202 pp.

## **Elgar, Vicat Cole and the Ghosts of Brinkwells**

by Carol Fitzgerald and Brian W. Harvey

Elgar's compositions of c.1917–21 have traditionally been viewed as a distinctive subgroup within his *oeuvre*, characterized as 'introspective', 'autumnal', or containing 'muted colours'. Although the Cello Concerto retains pride of place within the performing canon of Elgar's compositions, the chamber works (Violin Sonata, Piano Quintet, String Quartet) have often been labelled as somehow 'problematic'. Leafing through the Elgar literature, writers such as Edward Dent and Thomas Dunhill have viewed all three works as 'dry and academic' or as a 'disappointment'; others have questioned the piano writing, the 'excess of repetition', and the opposition of piano and strings and even the standard of material in the 'uneven' Quintet, or suggested that the Quartet lacks variety in its exposition, or the Violin Sonata has a thin texture – its 'only attractiveness' (according to John Porte) lying in 'a certain thoughtful romanticism'. There has been disagreement over the respective merits of these pieces; Porte, H.C. Colles and A.F. Sheldon all favour the Piano Quintet, while Michael Kennedy and Diana McVeagh prefer to promote the 'rare subtlety', 'consummate craftsmanship', and 'intimacy' of the Quartet. Perhaps not surprisingly, a plethora of suggestions has been put forward to help listeners appreciate particular subtleties in this music: Elgar's wartime experiences, the influence of Algernon Blackwood, the novels of Edward Bulwer Lytton, and, of course, the particular environment of Brinkwells, the ancient cottage in rural Sussex where they were composed.

Given these various complexities, this new book, which explores the world of Brinkwells in the early decades of the twentieth century, is particularly welcome. Juxtaposing the work of the landscape painter Rex Vicat Cole (1870-1940) with Elgar's compositions, and exploring the composer's creative environment, results in an evocative portrait of country life and the landscape which inspired some of Elgar's most thought-provoking works.

As the head-tenant of Brinkwells, having taken out a 21-year lease in 1905, Cole allowed the Elgars to rent the cottage between May 1917 and August 1921. Cole studied at Eton, and subsequently trained at the St John's Wood School of Art, exhibiting in London from 1890 onwards. In demand as a teacher of landscape drawing, he was appointed to King's College London, and later set up a school of art with Byam Shaw. His primary significance for Elgarians, however, lies in the fact that it was the Brinkwells landscape which frequently inspired his work. Cole completed several paintings of the local scenery in his studio at

the cottage (which Elgar later converted into a music room); these, together with illustrations for his writings *British Trees* (1907) and *The Artistic Anatomy of Trees* (1913), give us a fascinating artistic perspective on the cottage and its environs. Of Cole's paintings reproduced in this book, the most evocative are *Down the Green Lane* (1906), which provides details of some of the Brinkwells outbuildings, *Brinkwells Garden* (1916), and *From Gardens Gay to Distant View* – a suggestion of what Elgar's view from his music room would have been as he worked. Just as striking are studies showing the play of light within nature scenes, such as *Study of Broken Sunlight* and *A Young Girl in a Bluebell Wood*. These canvases are supplemented by reproductions from Cole's collection of photographs, taken in 1910 – a group of fascinating documents which capture the approach to the cottage (titled 'The Track Down to Brinkwells'), several interiors, including a close-up of the studio, and views of the garden.

Cole's additional sketches and prose descriptions in *British Trees* and *The Artistic Anatomy of Trees* are particularly arresting in their meticulous detail and impact. Of the well-chosen illustrations reproduced here, *Bole of an Old Oak*, *Trees Hanging over a Bank*, and *The Twisted Limb of an Old Holly* suggest Cole's fascination with complex, dramatic shapes. The prose that Cole used to accompany these illustrations, as Fitzgerald and Harvey show, embodies a passion for his subject, an interest in the historical and mythological, and a penchant for the dramatic:

They [ancient oaks] are just records of time and the stress of life – gaunt fantastic skeletons, survivors of time past; and they are seen at their best under a thunderstorm such as they have for centuries defied, or in the mystery of nightfall when an owl startles the silence and the nightjar flaps ghostly with a warning cry. (quoted on p.99)

Given the potential influences on the Piano Quintet, it is a shame that Cole's suggestion of 'the almost uncanny analogy between the limbs of a tree and those of a human figure', or the 'weird imaginings' suggested by forests – both highlighted by the authors – is not explored further. These visual and artistic 'accounts' of Brinkwells in the early twentieth century are augmented by a reproduction of an Ordnance Survey map from 1914, which helps orientate the reader, plus contemporary writings by Rhoda Leigh, E.V. Lucas, and Lady Maxse. While some descriptions by Elgar, Alice, and their social circle, of landscape and the Brinkwells routine (involving 'violent' gardening, home improvements, and Elgar revelling in his role as a woodsman) will be familiar to some readers, their collection in one place provides a useful

focus; details of practical considerations, such as finding suitable domestic help or local sources of food, recreate the colourful atmosphere of country living. Similarly, an overview of the various guests at Brinkwells, who included Lady Vandervelde, W.H. Reed, Alice Stuart-Wortley, and Blackwood, really comes to life when placed in the context of pony cart journeys from the railway station, or Elgar's worries over suitable amenities at the cottage ('I dread his "delicate" ways & I think our living wd. shock him', Elgar wrote in relation to Landon Ronald's impending visit).

Minor reservations relate to three specific areas. The book aims to be accessible to the 'non-specialist reader', and although it manages successfully to distil much recent scholarship in relation to Elgar reception, some of the discussions would inevitably have benefited from a little more focus. This is particularly evident in Chapter 2, 'Elgar in Context', with rather sketchy suggestions of the 'Two Elgars' theory (failing to mention Frank Howes), reception problems surrounding *The Music Makers*, the significance of Elgar's own interpretations of his music, perceptions of Elgar's 'vulgarity' or musical 'emotionalism', and the musical implications of Elgar being self-taught. The second area involves the description of some of Elgar's music. Although several of the main musical signposts are identified, there is a tendency to simplify some of the musical gestures of the chamber works (and indeed, the Cello Concerto), and to view these pieces simply as a stylistic retreat following the complexities of the two symphonies and *Falstaff*. No mention is made, for example, of the eerie arpeggiations in the first movement of the Violin Sonata, the abortive attempts to revive the main theme in the Quartet slow movement, or the precise way in which the finale of the Cello Concerto gradually makes covert references to the slow movement more overt. Again one might argue that this should not matter too much, given the target audience of the book. However, for the juxtaposition of Cole's drawings and paintings with Elgar's music to be fully appreciated, the details of Elgar's musical narrative need to be considered more fully.

This leads to the overall question of balance in relation to the central theme of the book. The way in which it is organized allows Cole briefly to appear and disappear, and readers may find themselves constantly flitting between chapters to really get a sense of his significance. There is a danger of losing focus. This issue is connected to what for many will be the book's potential significance: the general nature of the link between Elgar's music and the Brinkwells landscape; in particular, Cole's visual representation of elements of that landscape; and, ultimately, how to interpret any parallels between Cole's art and Elgar's music. One possibility is simply to view Cole's work as providing a contemporary artistic account of a dwelling and landscape close to

Elgar's heart, and to view this juxtaposition as nothing more than supplementary documentation. Another is the possibility of finding significant resonances in biographical parallels: both Elgar and Cole viewed Brinkwells as an escape, revelled in the remoteness of the cottage, and had in common several local acquaintances, such as the handyman Mark Holden. Additional questions highlighted in the book include how far the effects of the war were felt or integrated within their respective arts. Cole's destruction of some of his earlier canvases around the end of the war years, for example, is seen as a suggestive, and out-of-character, response. However, given that both Elgar and Cole were influenced by the Brinkwells landscape, more detailed parallels of artistic works linked with that landscape surely merit further consideration.

Certainly, Chapter 8, 'The trees are singing my music', suggests connections between Elgar's music and landscape in general, and would have done well to refer to Matthew Riley's recent exploration of this area.<sup>4</sup> Riley notes the importance of the listener in relation to any perceived connections, questions whether Elgar's statements about his music can be taken at face value, suggests a useful distinction in Elgar's music between music 'representing' particular landscapes, and music being 'inspired' by particular landscapes, and focuses on specific passages in Elgar's compositions which demonstrate the composer's exploration of specific nature imagery. This is, of course, a complex area, made more so by the tendency of writers to associate Elgar with the countryside, as part of an attempt from the early 1930s to brand Elgar as a pastoral composer.

However, this book potentially represents an opportunity to consider Cole's significance as a landscape artist in terms of an appreciation of Elgar's music, and one comes away with a feeling that the authors could have been slightly more speculative. Although one might agree that the temptation 'to play up the consequences of this fortuitous synchronicity . . . would be unjustified' (p. 2), the fact that Elgar composed the Brinkwells works surrounded by some of Cole's canvases and sketches surely merits closer consideration of this relationship. Just to take one example, in terms of the Piano Quintet and the much-quoted narrative of the Spanish monks (their indulging in black magic rituals, and transformation into a group of trees at Bedham Copse), Fitzgerald and Harvey concur with Michael Pope's researches, that no trace of the legend could be found locally (although they suggest that 'some legends . . . may have evaporated'), and conclude that Blackwood is probably the source (Blackwood's early story *Secret Worship*, for

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4 Matthew Riley, 'Rustling Reeds and Lofty Pines: Elgar and the Music of Nature' (*19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 26:2, 2002), 155–77.

example, is cited as potentially significant). The issue of whether Cole's *British Trees* might also be influential is not really explored with absolute clarity. Although it is not clear whether Elgar was able to view the text of this book at Brinkwells, some of Cole's illustrations were available, and admired by the composer. While the authors discount this as a specific influence, they tantalisingly suggest that Vol. 1 of Cole's study includes a description of the 'Spanish Chestnut' (a species common in the Bedham area) as often assuming 'grotesque forms'. This is not expanded upon, and readers are left to 'come to their own conclusions'; it is significant that much of this discussion is relegated to an Appendix.

Given Cole's specific interest in sketching and painting trees, Elgar's apparent admiration for Cole's work, and the evocative prose which Cole used in his publications, suggesting ghostly landscapes, or even associations with human figures, it might not be too far-fetched to suggest that Cole's work may have been one of several catalysts to inspire the particular mood and sequence of events in the Quintet. Some may approve the authors' caution, however, and prefer to pursue potential connections between Cole and Elgar in private; and all this should not detract from the striking nature of this book, which is beautifully presented, with ten colour plates and 57 monochrome illustrations, making available evocative visual materials and reassessing Cole's status in the process. This is a book that all lovers of Elgar's music will enjoy.

Michael Allis



### **Classic FM: The Friendly Guide to Elgar**

by Tim Lihoreau and Darren Henley

Hodder Arnold  
210pp

Instinctively I look more than a little askance at biographical media for which sweeping claims are made by those involved in producing it. Last year we had Aled Jones telling us that the half-hour programme he was presenting on the Cello Concerto would be some sort of *dernier cri* as far as the life of Elgar was concerned, since we would learn 'everything' about him. Now along comes Classic FM's 'Friendly Guide'; a book which, according to the publisher's blurb, '... tells you everything you ever wanted to know about Elgar and his music...'

Well, although it doesn't do that (we must look elsewhere even for an attempt at such things), it makes a jolly good stab at it. As accessible introductions to Elgar's life go, this is mainly very good, once past the publisher's 'puff' that tells us, among other things, that the composer was the original 'Cool Britannia', and

that this 'is the book about Elgar which is right for you, even if you wouldn't normally consider buying a book about classical music'. The authors see their joint effort as 'a celebration of a man who must surely rank as England's greatest composer'. Such statements are always heart-warming, though one wonders where this leaves those who would like to put Purcell or Britten (not to mention Vaughan Williams) into the running. Elgar's 'Englishness' is played up picturesquely at the beginning: 'These days it can sometimes be seen as unfashionable to be thought of as being quintessentially English. Yet Sir Edward Elgar was as English as warm beer, cricket on the village green or cucumber sandwiches with the crusts cut off'. Pints of lukewarm ale and trimmed afternoon tit-bits aside, Messrs Lihoreau and Henley also draw attention to Elgar's international appeal, noting 'an almost complete dearth of any great English composers' before him, apart from Sullivan and Purcell. There was of course Handel – whom, the writers say, we 'borrowed' from the Germans, which brings a pleasing image to mind of the composer of *Messiah* being issued, like a library book, to the English nation.

There is talk of Elgar's 'most popular hits' (e.g. the Cello Concerto), but although this tone grates at first, I find an underlying, not to say endearingly un-fussy, integrity to this book. It appeals to the reader, as does the sense of celebration of our man: 'It is all too easy for Elgar's detractors to accuse him of writing music that merely plays to the lowest common denominator, stirring up those listening into a frenzy of jingoism. But he was no rabble-rouser. A thoughtful, intelligent, hard-working man, he was capable of writing tunes that connected with ordinary listeners. They are memorable: sometimes fun; sometimes rumbustious; sometimes achingly beautiful; sometimes deeply melancholic'.

One of the book's first sections is about what else was happening in the world at large when Elgar composing; this opens up all sorts of ideas for pub or social quizzes, if such things happen when Elgarians meet together (perhaps at a future AGM). The authors themselves note contemporaneous occurrences, such as *Cockaigne* coinciding with Picasso's 'Blue Period', while elsewhere there are some other interesting chronological bedfellows (*Froissart* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*), and parallels between different heroes-in-chains (*Caractacus* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* both appeared in 1898). Elsewhere the year of *Falstaff* saw the birth of what was to become one of Elgar's favourite hobbies, the crossword puzzle (invented by Arthur Wynne). And *The Spirit of England* trilogy was completed in the year Mata Hari was executed, an event of which Elgar must have been aware.

Timelines aside, this story of Elgar has a 'Cast List': the 'Major Roles' are those of Elgar himself, Alice, Jaeger, the 'Windflower',

and Pollie; 'Minor Roles' belong to William and Ann Elgar; cameos are made of Menuhin and Strauss. One is forced to wonder where other notables in the story of Elgar come, such as W.H. Reed, Ivor Atkins, 'Dorabella', and Vera Hockman, all with claims to appear in this cast list, in major or minor roles. Once we get into the biography proper, the story of Elgar is laid out in the fashion of 'When Elgar was two..'. ...or three, ...or thirty, and so on. Biographical commentary is swift and often jocular, in keeping with the style of the book. Much is made of influences on the composer. As a young boy, Elgar would go through the leafy Worcestershire countryside with his father – idyllic journeys – 'a beautiful influence on the young Elgar which can't be underestimated' [sic: presumably they mean 'over-estimated']. Such idylls were shattered by what happened in Elgar's boyhood, such as the death of Harry, and not long after that of young Jo. 'This early encounter with the spectre of death and family bereavement may mean that, into the mix of music and nature, was thrown melancholy – a trio of influences that would often prove a potent blend'. This mixture was made even more potent, the writers tell us, when the priest from St George's in Worcester gave him a small engraving of St Joseph with a quotation from *The Dream of Gerontius* on it: thenceforth religion was added to the blend.

There is sympathetic treatment of Helen Weaver and other early loves, and, following leads from David Owen Norris and others, note is poignantly made of the fact that, although the written dedication of *Though the Long Days* was to 'Miss Roberts', 'the words appear to be more a paean to Helen Weaver'. The identification of particular music with Alice Elgar is of course definite in the Variations, in which she 'gets pole position', like some Formula One racing driver. The authors also identify elements of the 'domestic goddess' to her variation, so much so that 'it's easy to imagine her as Elgar's own Mrs Beeton'. Perhaps 'domestic goddess' makes her more Nigella Lawson than the authoress of *Household Cookery*; nevertheless, the image I have of Lady Elgar will never be the same.

Interspersed in the main narrative are blocks of background texts printed with a grey tint on various subjects such as golf, anagrams, Alice, Nimrod, the viola concerto, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (I had forgotten that Alice had to send this 1902 Christmas gift away as Elgar would spend too much time turning its revolving case around, an incident which tells us much about their marriage), and even a section on 'How To Compose Like Elgar'. I also liked the way that specific quotations – for example from Elgar's letters or conversations, or from other sources – are presented in a larger italic typeface so that the reader does not miss such tit-bits as this, at the time of the Elgar Festival in 1904: 'Dr Hans Richter, having with his Manchester Orchestra

and Chorus, devoted special attention to Dr Elgar's works, a perfect assemblage may be anticipated'. But sometimes the tone of the book indicates Elgar was not just a D.Mus. but also a modern fiddler of folk-musician style, for at fifteen he was 'doing his first violin gig' (the venue being the Union Workhouse on Tallow Hill in Worcester, which has apparently long since been demolished, and is now the site of flats called Byfield Rise). By Chapter 5 he has even become 'Edward Elgar: Superstar'.

Chapter 7 is a useful 'Elgar Map of Britain', where much is made of the 'nomadic' streak in Elgar, from his first appearance at The Firs at Broadheath, to his exit at Marl Bank; while taking in various rented houses and flats, friends' homes, and the place of his honeymoon on the Isle of Wight. I was less taken by the 'Elgar Mood Chart' at the end of the book, where various pieces of music appear in a spectrum which runs from 'Dead Calm' through to 'Red Hot'. Should the Second Symphony be somewhere on the same mood plane as the Serenade for Strings (i.e. 'Steady as She Goes' through to 'Picking up')? Is the Demons' Chorus from *Gerontius* partly 'Flag waving'? Chapter 8 is entitled 'Have a Listen Yourself, Part 1: The Enigma Variations'. Space is set aside for examining the various contenders for the 'hidden theme'. These appear in a table, with the authors' 'very own, highly personal view on their suitability, plus an Estimated Likelihood and Grading and Rating number – our ELGAR factor'. If you have groans about word-play, shed them there. Unfortunately the miserly CD included with the book gives mere excerpts from the Variations. Even with bits of other works (such as *Salut d'amour* and *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 4), the disc only amounts to c. 45 minutes, so space was available for the Variations to be presented complete.

Another economy is the absence of photographs, while the cover portrait of Elgar is hallucinogenic. If there is a second edition, the publishers would do well to change it. Elgar was a strikingly handsome man from his early days through to old age, and it seems a shame not to have a more representative image, rather than the yellow-faced visage we have here. But although I have reservations about the style of the book, and some of its content, I think this would make an admirably approachable and informative gift to those wanting to explore Elgar.

Dominic Guyver



Naxos Historical  
8.111260

## CD REVIEWS

### **Symphony No. 2 in E flat, op. 63**

London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Elgar

### **Cello Concerto in E minor, op. 85**

Beatrice Harrison

New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Elgar

This is a disc that sells itself, for who could resist the chance to acquire a bargain recording of Elgar conducting definitive versions of major works? Yet 'definitive' must be used with care because, in an age of 'authenticity', when conductors and scholars go back to primary sources to tease out a composer's intentions in his scores, it seems ironic that we should have the privilege of hearing Elgar ignore some of his own written indications to an extent that would be dismissed as wilful if attempted by anyone else. Recorded in 1927 as a seventieth birthday tribute to the composer, this version of the Second Symphony is, according to Michael Kennedy, 'less mercurial' than Elgar's previous acoustic recording of 1924. It is, however, a powerful reading, and it shares with the cello concerto an urgency of momentum: its outer movements in total are over five minutes shorter than Vernon Handley's superb 1981 recording. Elgar takes all the movements faster than Handley, very much like Hickox and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales a couple of years back.<sup>1</sup>

I was new to these composer/conductor recordings and so was delighted with the differences between the tempi and moods I was generally used to and Elgar's own. In the first movement, with no impression of rushing, he refuses to linger on the second group of themes; yet throughout there are genuine rubatos, making up the time he loses in passages he dwells over. Some listeners may deplore the portamentos that were the norm in early twentieth-century performance, just as they may deplore the inevitable background hiss and the odd technical slip; but I found none of these tiresome, even after repeated hearings. All this is not to say that this interpretation excludes all others. The 'malign influence' cello theme between figs. 20 and 22 could, to these ears, be relished more, and there were other times when some more air could be given to the music; but Elgar chooses the end of the development and parts of the recapitulation to offer slower playing of music already familiar.

The second movement is spacious, with finally judged approaches to the climaxes that make them more effective when

1 Chandos, CHSA 5038.

they arrive. The drawing out of counter-melodic lines is particularly noticeable and, given the different scoring at repeats of passages, particularly effective. Naxos gives us an insight into the making of the disc by providing the chance to hear both the first take of the opening of the third movement (March, released for the birthday), and the final take recorded in July and released as definitive. Gaisberg and Elgar were pleased to have the opportunity to correct some faulty passagework. The finale is a fitting end to this fine recording: flexible in tempo, with beautifully judged climaxes, the inner parts brought out and the mood full of proud resignation.

The recording of the cello concerto is curious, for Harrison is a somewhat ordinary soloist to my ears; yet Elgar was enthusiastic about her and she was chosen for his first broadcast performance, in May 1924 at the Central Hall, Westminster. Michael Kennedy mentions the 'revelatory' impression of the recording, having quoted Elgar's advice to the soloist to 'Give it 'em, Beatrice, give it 'em. Don't mind about the notes or anything. Give 'em the spirit'. The spirit is most certainly there; from the opening declamation, Elgar shapes the orchestra's phrasing most sensitively to herald the relaxed main theme, and there are lovely nuances from the orchestra throughout the work. It is a fast reading, four minutes faster than Daniel Müller-Schott and two minutes faster than Casals, both reviewed here over the past year.

Harrison rightly follows Elgar's markings in playing the first movement's upward rushing climactic scale differently on its two appearances: first with a bravura allargando at the top, but accelerating at the repeat when so many of her successors broaden it even more for 'effect'. Her portamento is not excessive, although it is more apparent than with more recent soloists. (Kennedy hears it differently but quotably: 'Beatrice Harrison's portamenti are rivalled in emotional unreticence by Elgar's orchestral rubato, especially in the second movement'.) There is also the unscored contrabassoon that makes itself heard to strengthen the bass, particularly at the recapitulation and at the end of the first movement.

Only in the third movement is the speed a drawback, and to me it is the weakest part of the performance, nowhere near Kennedy's 'soulful reverie'. Harrison eschews nostalgia or feyness for a strongly assertive and direct statement of the theme, driving the music even faster than Elgar. It lacks both the close connection with the orchestra and with the spirit of the movement. This onward push continues into the finale, where it becomes a crowning virtue. The orchestral introduction sets an uncompromisingly fast pace and the soloist vies with them for speed. While the extensive ritardandos mostly manage to circumvent any impression of rushing, the unison passage of the soloist and the cello section leads to an almost reckless charge that is magically reversed when the music falls back into the restatement of the slow movement's theme, ironically

played here with a sensitivity missing in the third movement itself.

This is an indispensable disc that should deservedly fly off the shelves for, as Ian Julier writes in his sleeve notes, 'What a privilege that, after nearly a century, we can still learn from the composer's own realisations of two of his most challenging and personally revealing works'.

Steven Halls



**Frank Bridge: *Oration***

**Elgar: *Cello Concerto***

**Holst: *Invocation***

Raphael Wallfisch (cello)

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Richard Dickins

Nimbus (NI 5763)

In his posthumously published *Conducting Elgar* (O.U.P. 1998), Norman Del Mar described the Cello Concerto as 'a four-movement concerto not particularly noteworthy for its profundity'. To those of us whose perception of the work has been conditioned by the legacy of Jacqueline du Pré, this may seem a startling, even shocking assessment. Such was the strength of personality transmitted through her performances (and, it must be admitted, by the inevitable associations with her tragic illness) that a long shadow has been indelibly cast across all subsequent interpretations.

Emulation is of course an imaginatively inferior solution, but even today it happens with depressing regularity. No-one could accuse Raphael Wallfisch of lack of imagination and this fine interpretation takes a fresh and unsentimental look at the work. He is aided in this approach by Jonathan Del Mar's new critical edition. This is its first recording. Wallfisch, Richard Dickins, and the RLPO form a united front in their commitment to an exemplary new text. This includes correcting a 'wrong note' in the second movement's cadenza, where for decades a flat of dubious provenance has been added to the bottom note of a chord. In the 2004 Novello edition, Robert Anderson and I noted the discrepancy in our brief critical commentary, but retained the note in the score. I now believe we were wrong to do so; the evidence against is overwhelming. In a note on the recording, Del Mar describes the modification as all but inaudible, but I disagree. To those who know the work well, it significantly alters their perception of the underlying harmonic sequence. It will certainly make a difference to cellists - the corrected chord is much harder to play!

While the recording successfully represents the new printed edition, it seeks to go further and incorporate some striking

features of the 1928 recording made by Beatrice Harrison with Elgar conducting. This raises difficult questions. First, where does one draw the line? From works he recorded twice, it is clear that Elgar retained a flexible attitude to interpretation, so which bits, if any, should a modern interpreter adopt? If one is aiming 'to reflect more closely Elgar's own intentions and expectation' should one not, for example, include all those string *portamenti*? In several important cases the adoption of Elgar and Harrison's idiosyncrasies seems to me timid. For example, the 1928 accelerations at fig. 38 in the slow movement and fig. 61 in the finale take off like the proverbial rocket (the latter injecting a dose of venom the like of which I have never heard in any subsequent performance). For all its virtues, this new recording doesn't even begin to approach the audacity of Elgar's own. And in at least one important case, the performance noticeably departs from both sources in musical details: the quaver upbeats five bars before figs 23 and 28 in the second movement are clearly played as crotchets. Some rhetorical licence is usual (and appropriate) here, but this is absolutely in tempo and absolutely not what Elgar wrote or Harrison played. So how is that reconciled with claims to authenticity?

Technically, the recording is good; but the soloist is perhaps placed a little too far forward and the woodwind a little too far back, resulting in some loss of linear continuity in their exchanges in the middle of the first movement. However, the tutti sound is full-blooded, and Wallfisch's wiry tone brings an impressive steeliness to the assertive music, but with no loss of tenderness in the more withdrawn passages.

Bridge's *Oration* is even more impressive. This extraordinarily powerful, war-torn score is one of the greatest masterpieces of British music from the inter-war years, and its neglect is nothing short of a national scandal. As far I know, this is only the third commercial recording in its 77-year history, and it was an immensely intelligent idea to couple it with the Elgar. Though Bridge was a generation younger than Elgar, the works have much in common, from the circumstantial (they were written just 40 miles from each other in rural Sussex), to the profound (both are deeply-felt reactions to the Great War by composers who fixed their sights on contemporary continental music in periods when this was viewed with deep suspicion). In its dissonance, and uncompromising grimness, the Bridge is certainly the tougher proposition, but it is a work of huge emotional force, its redemptive close one of the most moving in all British music. Wallfisch, Dickins and the Liverpool Orchestra plumb its depths with passion and authority. With Holst's early *Invocation* a generous makeweight, this is a fascinating, thought-provoking and warmly recommended release.

John Pickard



LPO – 0016–0020

## London Philharmonic Orchestra

Various conductors (five CDs)

1. First Symphony (Georg Solti); Variations ('Enigma') (Charles Mackerras)
2. Cello Concerto (Paul Tortelier, Adrian Boult); *Chansons de nuit / de matin* Op. 15 (Boult); *Elegy* Op. 58 (Elgar), *Cockaigne* (Solti), *Froissart* (Elgar), 'Contrasts' from *Three Characteristic Pieces*, Op. 10 (Elgar)
3. *Imperial March* (Mackerras), *In the South* (Solti), *Serenade* (Elgar), *Coronation March* (Landon Ronald), *Introduction and Allegro* (Boult), *The Sanguine Fan* (Boult)
4. Violin Concerto (Campoli, Boult), *Falstaff* (Boult)
5. Second Symphony (Handley), *Sea Pictures* (Baker, Handley)

This is a generous tribute to the composer and a bargain for the purchaser. But instead of one conductor we have a cornucopia of Elgar performers extending from the composer himself, through some of his finest past interpreters, to some happily still active. And all in a neat box (no cracking plastic). Many readers will possess some, if not all, of these performances, but for those that do not, this is a collection to buy; and even those with established collections may find refreshment from different performers alongside some of those most familiar from the last half-century.

Elgar's wonderful reading of the *Elegy* was made within a few months of his death, and *Froissart* was recorded only a little earlier. These products of his own conducting – so well evoked by the living memories of participants in the BBC programme printed elsewhere in this issue – hardly require comment here. Apart from the march from Landon Ronald, the conductors are otherwise those comfortably within living memory. Most of the recordings, indeed, are from the 1970s. The newest is Mackerras (*Variations*, 1985), and CD5 is all from the early 1980s. The 'early modern' age is represented by Boult on CD4 (Violin Concerto, 1954; *Falstaff*, 1956).

The combination of pieces occasions interesting juxtapositions. When Mackerras's *Imperial March* (1975) is followed by Solti's *In the South* (1979), there seems to be a considerable improvement in sound-quality, perhaps because of the move to Kingsway Hall, perhaps because there were different producers and engineers involved. Mackerras emphasizes the lyrical elements in this March (so much more likable than the *Coronation*, as heavily delivered here by Landon Ronald); Solti, fiery by reputation, is exquisite in the gentlest music, but is somewhat Bruckner-like, all strings and brass. Interestingly, however, this does not apply to his inspired performance of the First Symphony, which raises questions,

impossible even to consider here, about how intrinsically English Elgar's music really is, evoking, as it splendidly does, models as diverse as Wagner and Chaikovsky. The woodwind detail in one passage (slow movement, from fig. 96) is actually too clear: the flute triplets should surely colour the sustained melody in the strings, rather than the reverse. Solti's outer movements are very close to Elgar's own in length, but his third movement is slower, a fashion for relishing the Elgar Adagio that also affects Mackerras's four-minute 'Nimrod'. The theme and first variation, too, are on the slow side, but overall this is a sensitive and enjoyable performance of the Variations, well capturing the quicksilver changes of mood.

Another classic is Tortelier in the Cello Concerto. His sensitive brilliance brings out the extraordinary qualities of the work with a subtlety that remind us again of how well Elgar worked with musicians from continental Europe. This has always been a personal favourite, du Pré and others notwithstanding. Boult is the ever-reliable conductor, and he also directs what may not become a favourite performance of the violin concerto (new to me). Alfredo Campoli is recorded very much in the foreground and the tutti, when the orchestra breaks out of the box, is somewhat harsh. Campoli at the height of his powers makes a very few traditional simplifications, but his fingerwork is of terrifying accuracy and his lyrical expressiveness and regard for Elgar's directions inspire admiration. Boult's *Falstaff*, however, is splendid, pulling no punches in this most 'progressivist' of all Elgar's scores. There are some difficulties of balance – the percussion in the Gloucestershire interlude is decidedly too loud – and while the sound quality is not bad, the age of the recording allows less detail to be heard. But it is a performance with tremendous verve and tenderness by turns, and a suitably wide dynamic range, something often lost on apparently more sophisticated recordings.

With disc 5, there is again little to add to what we all know: that Vernon Handley is one of our greatest conductors (and not only of British music), in Elgar a true successor to Boult, and the only conductor represented here who hasn't been knighted. And Janet Baker is her inimitable self in *Sea Pictures*. Many of us will possess these recordings already; those that don't would do well to rush out and get this bargain box, and those that do might find replacing them saves shelf-space.

The presentation generally offers all that one requires. Most welcome are the cues, no fewer than twelve, for *The Sanguine Fan*, enabling one to follow the story with unusual clarity. Cues are supplied within *Introduction and Allegro*, but not *In the South*, which is longer. One oddity calls for comment: crediting the organist in *Cockaigne* with the same prominence as the soloists in the string concertos, though the organ part is *ad lib*. No organist is listed for the Variations, but the *ad lib*. organ is used to such effect that

one wonders why Elgar dropped it, apart from a pedal note, eight bars from the end; the orchestra suddenly sounds bereft. But what is really strange is the accreditation of an organist in the Second Symphony, which as far as I know doesn't require the instrument.

Incidentally, the *BBC Music Magazine's* October issue features the LPO on its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The tracks include the same performance of the *Elegy* conducted by Elgar, and Boult's rousing performance of the Bach Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, along with splendid performances of Chabrier, Mahler (*Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* sung by Thomas Hampson), and Chaikovsky. Well worth acquiring, and the magazine is sometimes fun as well.

Julian Rushton



CBSO CD003

***The Holly and the Ivy, 'Enigma' Variations, The Dream of Gerontius***

Jane Irwin (mezzo-soprano), Justin Lavender (tenor), Peter Rose (bass)

City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Sakari Oramo

It's amazing how often comparisons of recordings of *The Dream of Gerontius* draw the same conclusion – a preference for the first of all, conducted by Sargent in 1945 with Heddle Nash. Among modern recordings it's nearly always the Barbirolli (1965) which is recommended, despite almost universal reservations about the bass soloist. Many Elgarians would say that the definitive modern recording is yet to be made, that in every version there are fatal weaknesses – in the performance, the performers or the recording.

This new version has an interesting history. The Birmingham forces were due to record it last year for Warner Classics, but then the company decided to cease making new classical records. With commendable enterprise it was decided to go ahead and bring it out on their own label. As the work is longer than a single CD, the 2-disc set also contains the Variations and the first ever recording of Elgar's 1898 arrangement of *The Holly and the Ivy*: the price, around £20, is considerably less than a normal 2-CD set, and the recording quality is revelatory. The Symphony Hall acoustic allows every part to be clearly heard, yet the total sound is rich, full, and satisfying. The orchestra is outstanding, as is the chorus.

Justin Lavender is an experienced singer of opera and oratorio, which bodes well for his singing in the title role. He uses slightly too much vibrato for my taste (like Pears on the Britten recording), but his diction is first-rate and his top notes are beautifully delivered. His phrasing is fine, and the opening of 'Take me away' is staggering; Oramo slows down tremendously

yet Lavender still has enough breath! Interpretively, however, he rather disappointed me. The opening 'Jesu, Maria' – *p espressivo* – is too loud, and 'Thou art calling me' sounds almost petulant, as if he is annoyed at being summoned for lunch. He isn't helped here by Oramo, who decides to accelerate, although the bar is actually marked *largamente*. Generally there is too little dynamic variety, light and shade in Lavender's singing. 'Sanctus fortis' is a good example: Elgar gives the soloist a clear idea of what he wants, but Lavender fails to convince (this listener anyway). The final reprise of 'Sanctus fortis' at figure 53 is marked *pp piangendo* (as quiet as possible, weeping), but is far too loud, as is 'Mary, pray for me' (fig. 65). It reminded me that Boult had to ask Robert Tear to sing more quietly during the recording of *The Apostles* in 1973: 'There are a great many things that are marked *piano* sung *fortissimo*'.<sup>2</sup> Soloists know that a *pianissimo* sung at less than a *mezzo forte* in the Albert Hall wouldn't be heard in the gallery; they perhaps forget, as Tear presumably did, that on a recording the engineers can make the necessary adjustments. In spite of the above remarks, I enjoyed much of Lavender's interpretation.

Jane Irwin is the most successful of the soloists. She has an extremely pleasing voice, a true mezzo. She sings her top A ('Alleluia! Praise to His name') with great facility, yet she is entirely comfortable below the stave, for instance, at 'for we are come into the veiled presence of our God'. She strikes the right balance between the grandeur of a heavenly being and total sympathy towards the soul in 'his' care; and she sings with great expression – 'Alleluia, from earth to heaven' (fig. 15) is magical, as is the Farewell, among other places. For me Irwin is the most convincing Angel since Janet Baker (and there have been several other fine interpreters). The one caveat is a slight tendency to flatness, the worst example being 'It is the voice of friends around thy bed' (4th bar of 103). I found Peter Rose's voice rather harsh and throaty, though he sings confidently and with clear diction. The Priest commends the soul to God *solenne e con elevazione* – 'solemnly and with exaltation (exhilaration)'. It is therefore a blessing, but can sound like a spiritual sergeant-major bawling out a recruit. Rose doesn't go to that extreme, but for me his interpretation lacks warmth. He is more successful as the Angel of the Agony in Part II.

It is hard to fault the choral singers – diction, attack, expression, balance, intonation, are all faultless. They are superb in the great chorus 'Be merciful, be gracious' (fig. 35); there is a nervous tension, a pleading with the Almighty, absent from many other versions. They achieve a most impressive *ppp* at 'Be merciful, O Lord' (fig. 115). For me the only (minor) blemish is a need for more venom in the Demons' Chorus (they lengthen 'Ha! Ha!')

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2 See this Journal, 6/3 (September 1989), 15.

into 'Hah! Hah!', but they may have been instructed to do so).

It is wonderful to have Oramo's interpretation of a work which he clearly rates very highly. In the accompanying booklet he writes that the performances he has given 'have been among the biggest highlights of my career to date'. He is a conductor who usually likes to keep the music moving; if you like your Elgar grand and expansive, you may have difficulty with parts of this recording. The opening is not so much too fast as too loud, and lacking that 'mistico' the composer asks for. Tempos are a little hurried, but at fig. 9, the thundering metamorphosis of the 'Prayer' theme really takes off. Crotchet = 92 becomes 108 and the sense of 'horror and dismay' this passage should surely convey is greatly reduced. However, the 'Committal' theme which follows is wonderfully realised and beautifully played. Oramo's interpretation is certainly idiosyncratic in places. He often dwells a long time (too long?) on pauses, for instance at 'Jesu, have mercy! Mary, pray for me!' just before fig 24. The penultimate bar of the opening 'Kyrie eleison' is sung *staccato* for some reason; and then in the following chorus – 'Holy Mary, pray for him' – the choir is accompanied by just violas and celli, who are instructed to play *legato*. For some reason Oramo ignores that marking, and the resulting *marcato* accompaniment I found intrusive and off-putting. These are minor faults: in general Part I is convincingly done, and the final section (from the 'Proficiscere') is music-making of the highest order.

Oramo begins Part II with lovely controlled string playing, and Lavender responds with some of his finest singing, although he still tends to be too loud and loses the effect of wonderment at his new surroundings (you'd never guess that 'though I fain would know a maze of things' should be sung *piano*). His dialogue with the Angel, which can sometimes go off the boil, is very effective, and the Demons' Chorus rattles along at breakneck speed. Irwin's solo ('There was a mortal...') reminds one of Baker; but once the angelic chorus takes centre stage the tempo begins to pick up. 'To us His elder race' (fig. 63) is taken at 104, whereas it is marked at 84: there is a loss of dignity and the (female) angels sound as if they're chattering! The approach to the 'Great Blaze' of Angelicals is well done, but at the *Allegro molto* (fig. 75, 'O loving wisdom of our God') the race starts again. Dotted minim at 72 becomes 104, and it sounds rushed. The reprise of 'Praise to the Holiest' (fig. 88) is fine, but then the double chorus at fig. 89 (marked *animato*) opens the traps again: crotchet 108 becomes 126 or even 132 in places. It becomes a frenetic gallop, and the section peaks too early: the impact of the last great chord on 'ways' is lost. Oramo takes 5' 27" over this chorus: in comparison, Elgar himself took 6' 23", Rattle 6' 55", Handley 7' 23", Boult 7' 57", and Barbirolli 8' 34". From there until the end the performance is superb. So what could have been one of the great recordings has (for me) a fatal flaw, although

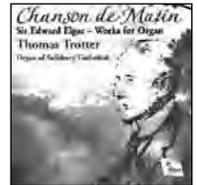
as the reader will have gathered there is much to admire and enjoy.

I doubt whether members will buy this set for the Variations, so I crave their pardon for lack of a detailed review. However, Oramo's reading can stand comparison with the best; again aided by the recording sound and the impeccable playing, he really brings the work alive. My only gripe was a slight lack of expansiveness in those wonderful final pages. Enthusiastic Elgarians may want to acquire this set for *The Holly and the Ivy*. This is not the familiar English tune; the words are set to a French tune, and very haunting it is. The arrangement was for the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society and first performed in 1898. For long presumed lost, it was discovered in a parcel of music in an antiques shop in 1970. Elgar's masterly orchestration keeps the interest despite the melodic repetitiveness over the six verses. A delightful piece.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

### **'Chanson de matin': Elgar's organ works**

Thomas Trotter on the organ of Salisbury Cathedral



Regent REGCD256

In 1894-6 the history of the organs of Worcester Cathedral took a curious and unexpected turn, and not until 2008, when Kenneth Tickell completes the new organ currently taking shape in the chancel, will it again be back on a completely normal path. There was therefore no possibility, in this anniversary year, of releasing a new recording of Elgar's organ music from Worcester, for that would have meant using either the much-rebuilt Hope-Jones of 1896, which had not for some years been equal to the task (and has now been removed), or the electronic instrument currently impersonating an organ, which would not have been *pukka*. Thomas Trotter has gone instead to Salisbury Cathedral, where in 1876 Henry Willis completed an organ widely regarded as among his finest. In the 1930s it was worked on by Willis's grandson, but under the careful supervision of the excellent incumbent organist Walter Alcock, who ensured that the organ remained in substantially its original condition (even now, many of the pipes have to be tuned in the old-fashioned way, with a cone rather than with a knife). Thus it is that this recording's electrifying first chords (for example) have that beguiling ferocity one associates with British organ-building before a passion for weight and smoothness took hold. It is not quite the organ-tone Elgar experienced in 1875, when hearing S.S. Wesley playing Bach on the Hill organ in the south transept of Worcester Cathedral, or in 1895, when Hugh Blair played the Organ Sonata in G, Op. 28, on the same instrument, for Hill organs do not have the brassiness or vulgarity of Willis's. The Salisbury Willis is however much nearer to the Worcester Hill

than the organs we have come to associate with this repertoire.

The programme comprises the sonatas, *Vesper Voluntaries*, *Cantique* Op. 3, and a clutch of transcriptions: *Chanson de Matin*, *Nimrod*, and the fourth *Pomp and Circumstance* march. For all its felicities, Elgar's organ music does not lie well on the instrument, and all these pieces, not just the transcriptions, pose knotty problems of organ management; but Trotter surmounts them with ease, and the fast movements, particularly the finale of Op. 28, are rendered in an astonishingly sprightly fashion. I have never heard an organist bring off that movement in quite the way it comes across in the Gordon Jacob transcription, but I think that Trotter comes as near to it as anyone is ever likely to.

I should be surprised to learn of an Elgarian without at least one recording of each of the works heard here, but this is an essential addition to one's collection. The wonderful organ sonority is much nearer to Elgar's time than what one hears at, say, King's College, Cambridge (John Butt), or at Yale (Thomas Murray), and Trotter's playing is a combination of impeccable musicianship and superb organ management that no other recording, to my ears, quite presents. There are helpful liner notes by David Gammie. The stop-list implies that the Tierce is an 1876 voice; that apart, the minefield has been traversed successfully.

Relf Clark



Chandos CHSA  
5049

**Symphony No. 1, Organ Sonata (transcribed by Gordon Jacob)**

BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by Richard Hickox

It isn't surprising that what John Butt calls 'one of the most successful "organ symphonies" of the late nineteenth century' (the Organ Sonata in G) should be counted among Elgar's major symphonic works, and put to the test of orchestral transcription.<sup>3</sup> Given his magnificent effort with Bach's *Fantasia and Fugue in C minor*, not to mention his acquiescence in the reverse transcription by Ivor Atkins of the *Severn Suite* into a second organ sonata, Elgar could hardly complain. Gordon Jacob, besides his considerable moustache, shared with Elgar a skill in orchestration that makes this version of the Sonata hugely enjoyable. I personally prefer the transcription for a wind group by Geoffrey Emerson, which as far as I know hasn't been recorded. For the organ is a wind instrument; but a group of live wind players can take long and

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3 John Butt, 'Tip of the Iceberg', in *Choir and Organ*, July/August 2007, 21 (see also the *Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, 115).

short breaths, inhale, exhale, phrase with dynamic nuances beyond the reach of a swell pedal, in short do what Elgar's orchestra can do, minus the percussion of which Jacob, like Elgar, makes a good deal in his transcription, and minus the strings, of which an organ can only make a rudimentary and unconvincing imitation. Well performed as it is here, the orchestral version is an exhilarating experience; the delicate passages and thematic details are beautiful and to my doubtless inadequate ears less confusing in sound than they tend to be on the organ, if only because the 'king of instruments' is usually situated in a too resonant ambience.

Berlioz, indeed, wondered if the organ should not be considered the pope, with the orchestra the emperor of music. To the latter Elgar might have consented, for his orchestral writing is imperial (in no pejorative sense) by its breadth, variety, and mastery. Hickox's performance of the First Symphony is generally idiomatic, and, a few reservations aside, it forms a more than acceptable addition to the work's already considerable presence among recordings. Near the beginning I was unhappy with the stodgy texture of the *ff* repeat of the motto, and the climax of the movement, with that high trumpet, didn't quite thrill as it should. The other three movements, however, make the most of the extreme contrasts Elgar demands. The Scherzo is really brisk, even ferocious, and we are hardly allowed to linger by the river, while the slow movement is deeply felt, with barely audible pianissimo enhancing its moods of near-withdrawal from the world. There is some fine woodwind here, notably the cor anglais, bass clarinet, and bassoons who contribute more than one usually hears and remind one why this instrument was thought fit by Elgar, a couple of years later, for its own 'Romance'. The finale's internal contrasts are well made, and the *stringendo* at fig. 150 threatens to run out of sight. Hickox reaches the final goal of the symphony in a such way that the terrifying dangers are only just overcome. Which is very much as it should sound. A highly recommendable CD, therefore, though from the point of view of my collection, such as it is, the most valuable element is perhaps the energy and beauty of the playing in the transfigured organ sonata.

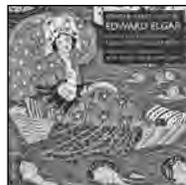
Julian Rushton

### **Songs and Piano Music**

Amanda Pitt (soprano), Mark Wilde (tenor), Peter Savidge (baritone), David Owen Norris (piano) (2 CDs)

The solo songs with piano are probably Elgar's least regarded compositions. Having accompanied most of them with a variety of singers over the last forty years, and recorded quite a few of them,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 'The Unknown Elgar'. Pearl SHE 9635.



Avie AV 2129

I think I know them pretty well, and believe them to be a far better corpus of work than is generally acknowledged. I was, therefore, looking forward with more than usual pleasure to welcoming this double CD into the rather meagre ranks of Elgar song records. But I regret to say there are far too many disappointments for me to do other than offer a muted, and guarded, welcome. The first problem is the piano. The front cover proudly advertises the fact that the entire programme is played on Elgar's own 1844 Broadwood square piano. While it might have been interesting to have one song with it, and the rest on a modern instrument, I'm afraid its interminable tinkling and lack of sonority make for tiresome listening. This is a great pity, as it does the songs no favours at all, despite Norris's attentive and accomplished playing. This may have been the instrument at Birchwood while Elgar was composing *Caractacus* and *The Dream of Gerontius*, but I doubt whether he expected future recitals on it, any more than Beethoven would have wished for his sonatas to be heard on his clapped-out Broadwood.

Secondly, the lion's share of the work goes to the soprano Amanda Pitt. I'm sorry to say that I just do not like her overblown interpretations and hard tone. The tenor and baritone are better. Mark Wilde's mellifluous voice and impeccable diction are heard to good effect in *In the Dawn* and *Speak Music* – this latter boasting Elgar's only use of a fifteen-eight time signature. Peter Savidge is properly beefy in *A War Song*, and it is always good to hear *Fringes of the Fleet*, which he sings very well indeed, although it makes nowhere near its effect without Elgar's wonderful orchestral sonorities.<sup>5</sup> It is also very pleasing to hear such rarities as *As I laye a-thynkyng* and *Arabian Serenade*, neither of which deserve their obscurity. Elgar's last, incomplete song, *XTC*, is here edited for performance and makes its first appearance on disc. It adds nothing new to our appreciation of the composer, but is really rather good. *Sea Pictures*, on the other hand, strikes me as being disastrous in this performance. Amanda Pitt's over-the-top performance in the high keys of Elgar's original thoughts, plus that piano, makes for uncomfortable listening. If these were indeed the composer's original ideas, it just proves how right he was to lower them to mezzo pitch and orchestrate them.

The solo piano pieces added nothing to my pleasure. The theme from the Cello Concerto and Prelude and Angel's Farewell are about the last pieces anyone would want to hear on any piano, and poor old *Salut d'amour* loses all its charm and freshness in this lack-lustre performance. I could have done without all these for the sake of a few more songs.

Avie's recording is excellent, and David Owen Norris provides informative programme notes. His enthusiasm for this piano

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5 'Elgar War Music'. Pearl SHE 9602.

is obvious, although I find such statements as ‘The end of *Sea Pictures* is simply thrilling’ and ‘the climaxes of *Gerontius* come across with the same effect as in the orchestral version’ almost laughable. I suggest anyone seeking a recital of Elgar songs should turn to the collection of 23 winningly sung by Catherine Wynn-Rogers, Neil Mackie and Christopher Maltman, with pianist Malcolm Martineau.<sup>6</sup> I also understand that the complete songs are to be issued in Holland in the autumn, with Amanda Roocroft among the singers. That should be worth waiting for.

Barry Collett

**‘Enigma’ Variations, Op. 36, Introduction and Allegro, Op. 47**  
London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Colin Davis



LSO0109

Here we have the latest in the LSO Live recordings of their Colin Davis Elgar cycle. Their versions of the symphonies were superb, and the performances on this disc are hardly less so. The LSO has long been associated with this music, but there is never a sense of over-familiarity. Although Davis follows Elgar’s score markings carefully, there is genuine flexibility throughout, and much to delight the ear; as far as possible, especially in his reading of the Variations, one sensed hearing this familiar music in a new way.

From the start the orchestra shows its mettle. The theme itself is presented without fuss, with lovely string and woodwind, and a real sonority in the bass after fig. 1. The entry of C.A.E. is beautifully achieved, and in the *ff* before fig. 4 there is real strength. Each new chapter in this picture-book of friends brings new delights, while the more boisterous movements are never hectic: the music which depicts William Baker reading out the day’s plans to his house-guests is not the tirade we are sometimes presented with – rather, this is a man who knows his own mind, and says what is to be done firmly and precisely. Similarly Troyte’s variation is not that of a skittling ninepin, but a man of great strength of character. Gentler movements are so beautifully done that criticism is really redundant: just listen to the woodwind playing in ‘W.N.’, so intoxicatingly beautiful that we have no difficulty in summoning up for ourselves a vision of a truly elegant, pastoral haven. The anticipatory hush before Nimrod – a real *pp* – is a promise fulfilled in a reading in which there is no hint of the funereal – rather, a solemn celebration of a deep friendship. Portamento is just and discreet throughout, and it would be hard to over-praise the playing in this movement, indeed in the whole performance.

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6 Somm CD 220, recorded with the support of the Elgar Society.

'Nimrod' is a hard act to follow, but here the muted viola solo in 'Dorabella' is superbly controlled. And after *that* hard act, Davis brings out the humour in 'G.R.S.' with gruff bass and oboe after fig. 49. Dan in this version is very dogged in his determination to get back onto dry land, with a resounding bark of achievement at the end. There is beautiful sonority in the cellos after they pick up from the solo instrument in 'B.G.N.', as is the case in the unison singing of the theme after fig. 54. The 'Romanza' initiates a real change of atmosphere with gentle and fresh sea winds before the sense of mystery in the Mendelssohn quotation. But there is no lingering before 'E.D.U.' comes marching triumphantly to crown the work. A true *grandioso* brings in the 'Nimrod' citation after fig. 68, and with it – like the 'C.A.E.' motif recalled at fig. 73 – the two most important people in Elgar's life are brought to the fore again. It is a slight shame that the *ad lib* organ was not added, but then it isn't much missed when there is such quality of playing. As the jubilant fanfare brings the performance to a close, one senses that although it must have been scrupulously prepared and is paced so judiciously, it feels fresh and alive.

Davis's reading of *Introduction and Allegro* was recorded a year earlier than the Variations. From the start there is a real depth of sonority to the strings, with the 'Welsh' tune sounding mutedly beautiful at its first appearance, which is appropriate given Elgar's account of its origins. Davis makes a rather pointed *rallentando* before figs. 10 and 25, but that doesn't detract from the overall sense of enjoyment at this performance. Time and again one marvels at the mastery Elgar brought to bear in composing this work, and the way the LSO's strings reveal it, such as in the shimmering cascade of string at four bars before fig. 12 and the *a tempo* presentation of the 'Welsh' tune at fig. 30. The final pizzicato chord leaves you in no doubt that this is a performance imbued with a strong sense of the work being the LSO's very own, it having given the first performance in 1905; and its reading here sees the orchestra at a peak.

As with all the LSO's recordings on its own label, the disc is very attractively presented – here in imperial purple, as befits Davis's regal reading of these two orchestral masterpieces.

Dominic Guyver

# LETTERS

## **From Jerrold Northrop Moore**

It is with great regret that I have resigned my Vice-Presidency of the Elgar Society. I join in the resignation of Dr Robert Anderson. Dr Anderson does not wish to damage the Society by writing to its members. But I feel the need to give some explanation of why I have given up the position with which the membership honoured me many years ago. Dr Anderson has agreed to this citing of his own resignation alongside mine, because our reasons for resigning are nearly identical.

During the past eighteen months, we have increasingly lost faith in the wish or ability of the Society's current very long-standing Executive to manage the Society for the benefit of its members. More than a year and a half ago, the Chairman appealed for my private help in trying to remedy trouble besetting his Chairmanship. At that time his troubles centred on a deep and growing dissatisfaction, among the editors and would-be producers of the Society's great Critical Edition of Elgar's music, that the production of new and already subscribed-for volumes under the current Chairman's committee had virtually ceased. It is beyond my energies to rehearse here the painful process by which the Elgar Edition was re-started by removing from the control of this committee.

Yet this solution, protracted and damaging as it was to the morale of everyone concerned, only revealed a further problem, more fundamental still, and thus with power to cause the Society further damage. But unlike the Edition problem created by executive neglect, this newer problem has been caused by executive action. I refer to the new Society Constitution.

This document – in the view of Dr Anderson, of Michael Pope (former Chairman and a current Vice-President), and of me – has been badly drafted, badly timed, and badly promulgated. A new Constitution should never be made at the very end of an old Executive's term of office. The proper promulgation of any new Constitution requires a consultation period with the membership before any vote is called, to permit exchanges of views. This period should in my view have extended over at least two issues of the Elgar Society Journal.

Instead, the new document was sent out – without the courtesy of a copy of the old Constitution to compare against it – with instructions to return a simple yes or no vote in the following month. And this in the Elgar anniversary year, with the deadline right up against the birthday itself, when attention was certain to be turned on celebration. It has been stated that there was a big majority of votes in favour. That result may reflect a simple trust of Society members in their Executive. Yet the number of votes recorded altogether totalled less than a quarter of the Society's membership.

Had even this minority truly considered and understood what they were voting for? It seems unlikely, because the new Constitution strips the Society's branches – always the life-blood of the Society – of all direct representation on the Council. Moreover, the new Constitution reduces Council numbers to twelve, four of whom are *ex-officio* Executives. This and many other provisions in the new Constitution strike me as concentrating power in the hands of a potentially over-mighty Executive, while sharply reducing any recourse by the membership.

Not satisfied with this, the new Constitution seeks in several ways to extend the influence of the current Executive over successor Executives by limiting their options.

One example must suffice. Article 10, clause 2, of the new document obligates the Society to continue its charitable status. (I note that the Society was first brought into charitable status by the then Treasurer, David Morris, now the Society's Vice-Chairman.) Yet the Society's charitable status is a matter which must surely be available for constant review. It has been stated by the promulgators of the new Constitution that a need for the new document has been created in part by recent changes in the Charity Commission law. But the Government has yet to define the new law's workings in key areas. It seems idle to a degree to attempt to anticipate what is not yet defined.

The true motive behind writing such a provision into a new Society Constitution, I have come gradually to think, is to perpetuate the influence of the Society's current 'lame-duck' Executive beyond its already over-long term. I note that the Vice-Chairman is determined to offer himself for re-election to his office in June 2008, even after his Chairman has resigned. Now, it is the Vice-Chairman who must be regarded as the basic author of the new Constitution. For he himself has written in a letter of 6 May to me: 'The document has to be regarded as primarily my creature'.

Against this current Executive, my colleagues and I have one complaint before all others. It is the complaint of a very apparent imbalance of influence between the Chairman and his Vice-Chairman. This has now become so pronounced as to raise questions in my mind about the Chairman's will to perform the duties of his office for the benefit of the Society. I will not weary members with details of all the ways in which my fellow Vice-Presidents and I have, over the past eighteen months, tried to persuade the Chairman to set his house in order. All our attempts have failed, basically I think because the Executive has routinely sabotaged them.

The most recent sabotage occurred after a meeting called in Oxford with the stated purpose of attempting to pass the Vice-Presidents' united objections to the new Constitution on to the Society's Council *ex post facto*. After this meeting the Executive sent its own draft minutes to *all* Council members before showing them to the Vice-Presidents for our consultation and comment. When copies were sent afterwards to us, we were told to keep our observations 'to matters of substance only'. To this I had to answer: 'The entire procedure is so outrageous that I will have nothing whatever to do with these notes.'

This example could be multiplied many times. After eighteen months of such treatment, I have come to the end of energies to suggest how to remedy a situation which seems to me now to threaten the Society's very existence, by discouraging members from taking interest in what they have less and less power to control, or even to be heard.

Thus my potential use to the Society as one of its Vice-Presidents is clearly at an end. That is the reason for my very regretful resignation from the office with which the membership honoured me long ago. I will retain ordinary membership in the Society in hopes of living long enough to see better times.

### ***From the Chairman, Andrew Neill***

It is with the greatest regret that I must respond to the letter from Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore. Members of the Society, particularly those who attended this year's AGM, will be aware of Dr Moore's strong concerns about the Society's constitution which is to take

effect on 1 January 2008. Three members of the Society's Executive (the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary) met Dr Moore and two other Vice-Presidents, Professor Robert Anderson and the former Society Chairman Michael Pope, in Oxford on 2 September. It is naturally a matter of great sadness that, subsequently, both Professor Anderson and Dr Moore felt obliged to resign their Vice-Presidencies.

On 6 October the Society's Council met and, *inter alia*, discussed at considerable length and depth matters relating to their criticisms. I shall respond to most of Dr Moore's points in the order he raised them.

He refers to the Society's long-standing Executive and the loss of faith in it by the three Vice-Presidents. But over the last 15 months, the Executive has had a 50% change in membership, with a new Secretary and Treasurer; and there has also been an additional appointed representative of the Branch Chairmen's Committee. The Executive produces minutes of all its meetings and circulates these to all the members of the Council, which has had the opportunity at each meeting to question the Executive on its proceedings.

Dr Moore underestimates his assistance to me with regard to the future of the Complete Edition; and although the path was not smooth, the fact that the Edition is now functioning successfully is due, in part, to the his involvement and his advice and help so generously given. For the avoidance of doubt I should point out that the Edition was always a separate organisation that is only connected to the Society by its aims.

As for the Society's new Constitution, I can write with the authority of the Council which has considered the wording over a long period, at times to the exclusion of other matters. The document was considered once more by the Council on 6 October and the amendments proposed by the three Vice-Presidents were put to the vote. The Society's Executive only involved itself in the wording as work on the Constitution progressed. The basic wording was drafted by a working party led by John Norris, of which Carl Newton and Michael Trott were also members. Once they had completed their work the document was handed to the 'Governance Working Group' which ensured that the document complied with the recently agreed changes in the Governance of the Society. At the end of 2005 the membership of the Society was advised of the likely changes that would be introduced.

With the benefit of hindsight I acknowledge that more time for consideration of the document would have been desirable and the new wording sent to members alongside the existing constitution. Dr Moore is concerned at the small number of votes cast either for or against the new wording, 286 members voted. In comparison with other similar organisations and voting numbers this is a reasonable number, even higher than might have been expected. It is impossible for us to quantify the extent of the understanding of members of the new wording but the issue of the size of the Council under the new constitution and the way the Branches are represented was discussed once more at the meeting of the Council on 6 October. The existing Council expressed itself happy with the arrangements. Indeed, with the Branch Chairmen meeting regularly and their representative attending Executive meetings, there is little chance that the Branches will be ignored.

As for Charitable status, the Council keeps an eye on changes to legislation and how these might affect the Society. One point to bear in mind is that, should we ever wish to abandon our charitable status, the Society would have to be wound up first

and the balance of its funds distributed in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution. I think we are all mystified by Dr Moore's link between issues relating to our charitable status and what he calls 'the influence of the Society's lame-duck Executive beyond its over-long term'. As already explained, the Executive evolves, and will change once more in 2008 when a new Chairman takes over at the 2008 Annual General Meeting.

Dr Moore goes on to state that the Vice-Chairman 'must be regarded as the basic author of the new Constitution'. This, as explained above, is not the case. The Vice-Chairman did not serve on the Constitution committee which drafted the document and although he was chairman of the Governance committee (which did in the end pull the threads together for distribution to the membership) the other members of that committee, particularly Ken Adey the Chairman of West Midlands branch, had a major input into the process. The Constitutional changes have not been created by the Vice-Chairman who has already made it clear that if re-elected in 2008 he has no intention of serving beyond the 2009 AGM. His motivation for that decision is purely the thought that his presence for a 12 months period would be helpful to the new Chairman who will be elected next year.

Dr Moore then refers to 'questions in my mind about the Chairman's will to perform the duties of his office for the benefit of the Society'. Members will want to know that matters relating to this were discussed at length in Council on 6 October. In view of the serious nature of the criticism brought against the Vice-Chairman and myself, members should know that we offered to resign our positions with effect from 31 December if Council felt this appropriate. After much discussion and a vote the Council expressed confidence in us and asked us to complete our elected terms. This episode partly arose out of the allegations made against the Vice-Chairman at the aforementioned meeting in Oxford. I have never been present when matters of such seriousness were presented without prior warning. Frankly, as officers as well as individuals, we felt out of our depth and deeply shocked. We felt we had no alternative but to advise the remainder of the Council of the nature of these allegations and seek the advice of members and others as to how we responded to what had been said. The draft minutes were copied to the three Vice-Presidents for their comments and corrections.

For the record members should know that I, along with others, have attempted to establish the truth behind these allegations and have not found them to be substantiated. The matter was again discussed at length at the Council meeting on 6 October and the Vice-Chairman exonerated.

I am deeply saddened that Dr Moore feels that his advice and offers of help have been rejected or ignored. I do not believe this to be the case. Dr Moore's views have been considered carefully, coming as they do from someone who has the deep respect of the Council and myself personally. However, in the matter of the Constitution the Council feels it has taken his advice as far as it can. At the meeting on 6 October the Council determined its response to the meeting in Oxford and, although the resignation of two Vice-Presidents is highly regrettable, there is a feeling that the Society must move forward and attend to the events that remain in this 'Year of Elgar'. In the light of the considerable thought and discussion that has taken place within the Council I know I speak on behalf of all its members in expressing the hope that Dr Moore will reconsider his decision to resign his Vice-Presidency.

### **From Meinhard Saremba**

In addition to Richard Redmile's contribution in the July issue of this Journal, p. 83, it may be interesting to take into consideration that for several years now Roger Norrington has guided the Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart to a playing style which resembles original 19th/early 20<sup>th</sup>-century performances. The orchestra uses modern instruments but they stick to the original platform planning (1st/2nd violins left and right etc. – see website [www.swr.de/swr2/faszination-musik/orchester/rso/index.html](http://www.swr.de/swr2/faszination-musik/orchester/rso/index.html)), and plays without vibrato, emphasizing phrasing and playing techniques of the time (as they can be found e.g. in Joachim's *Violinschule* and similar publications). Norrington is sure that modern symphony orchestras can aim at an historically informed playing style. The RSO Stuttgart recordings under Norrington's baton focus on this new approach to the standard repertoire (especially interesting are the Beethoven, Berlioz, Mahler, and Elgar CDs). Last June Elgar's violin concerto in Stuttgart with Hilary Hahn and the RSO/Norrington was a perfect match, I think.

It appears from the new schedule that I have just received that Sir Roger Norrington's schedule for the next season with the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra includes Rossini, Haydn and Elgar at a Promenade concert in London on 22 July 2008 – the Elgar probably the cello concerto, which will be played in Stuttgart in July (9, 10, and 11), and probably on a tour in France from 16 to 20 July.

### **From Philip L. Scowcroft**

I was much interested by Geoffrey Hodgkins's article (July 2007) on the BBC and the Elgar centenary, as I have long felt that the BBC's Elgar broadcasts in the summer of 1957 played a significant part in the 'Elgar revival' as well as the Russell film and the du Pré recording mentioned by Geoffrey.

I was an Elgar addict from when my mother taught me to sing his best-known tune at a time in the last war when this country was a land more of hope than glory. From that time until around 1960 I was scarcely aware *at the time* that his reputation was, we are told, in a trough. The radio was one of the principal ways of getting to know music and, as has I believe been shown, the BBC in the period 1930–1960 remained faithful to Elgar in its broadcasts of his music (did Boult have something to do with that?). Until 1959 I lived in Sheffield which musically usually meant Barbirolli and the Hallé; and they, great Elgar exponents, saw to it that the city heard plenty of his music (*Gerontius* was performed almost every year around Easter and I heard many these performances). Has the 'trough' in his reputation been properly demonstrated? Should we not examine this with detailed supporting evidence rather than simply asserting that it existed? It may have done; but the question needs examination.

To return to the BBC and summer 1957, I recall it was an opportunity for me to hear not only the well-loved pieces but also – for the first time – the three chamber works and the superb *Grania and Diarmid* march. For me personally it was a landmark in Elgar appreciation.

Regarding the final paragraph of Paul Adrian Rooke's review of the Stanford symphonies (Journal, July 2007, 80), is it possible that the conductor, composer, and arranger Stanford Robinson, generally known as 'Robbie', was called after the composer?

### **From Robin Self**

I was delighted to read Geoffrey Hodgkins's review of the CD of Sir Malcolm Sargent's 1964 live recording of the Second Symphony. I was fortunate enough to spot this on W.H. Smith's shelves before they sold out, and whereas I had heard the performance before (the BBC broadcast it in 1995 as part of the commemoration of the centenary of Sargent's birth), it was still a great pleasure to hear this magnificent performance again.

I agree with most of what Geoffrey said, although I do have one advantage over him. Having been an ardent 'Prommer' in the 1960s, I heard Sargent conduct not only Elgar but many other composers over 100 times from 1958 to 1966. I heard him conduct four of Elgar's major works: *Gerontius* in 1966, the 'Enigma' Variations in 1962 and 1966, the Cello Concerto with Jacqueline du Pré in 1964 & 1965, and above all, the Second Symphony, three times, in 1964 (seven months after the BBC recording and my first experience of this great work), 1965, and 1966.

I disagree with one of David Nice's comments in the CD liner notes. In my days, Sir Malcolm was not known as 'Flash Harry'. This epithet was, I believe, attributed to Beecham, who on learning that Sargent was on a conducting tour in the Far East, said it was 'Flash in Japan'. But for his many admirers, the name did not stick, even though it would appear to have done so today.

Sargent was not known for a vast repertoire, but on looking back through my programmes for that period, I see that he conducted an enormous number of works ranging from Bach to Britten. However, I would contend that he was at his very best in Elgar, Sibelius, and Sullivan, in all of whom he had no peers. As Geoffrey says, EMI favoured both Barbirolli and Boult, but what we do have of Sargent's recordings are valuable, especially those of Elgar. I have most of the CDs that Geoffrey mentions, but had not realised that he had also recorded the *Wand of Youth*. There are, of course, recordings of the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches Nos. 1 and 4 (originally Decca, now Beulah IPD13), but there are also at least two other live recordings: the 'Enigma' Variations (August 1966 Prom) released some time ago on a now deleted BBC disc with Holst's *Planets*, and *The Music Makers* with Marjorie Thomas (Royal Albert Hall in April 1965) and the Cello Concerto (Jacqueline du Pré, RAH 1963) both on deleted 'Intaglio' CDs.

Unfortunately much of the general public does not know what it is missing. It is only because I was there that I know what an outstanding talent he was, but even more, he introduced so many young people, like myself, to great music. I was greatly saddened when he died suddenly on my birthday in 1967, only two and a half weeks after he made that very courageous appearance on the platform at the Last Night of the Proms when he was mortally ill. Being there, I will never forget that and it will give me much pleasure to commemorate that event again this year, 40 years to the day when he left us.

### **From R.P. Taylor**

It is only a tiny enigma, but it might as well be solved. Many readers will know the story told by Rosa Burley:

The fame which was soon won by the Variations cast a certain reflected glory on the subjects, some of whom exasperated him by the airs they began to assume

in consequence. I remember that at a party at the Hydes' shortly after the Variations had been produced and the initialled headings were still being discussed, one of the 'variants' came to me and said:

'Well, Miss Burley, I'm a variation. Are you?'

'No', I answered gravely. 'I'm not a variation. I'm the theme'.

Even Michael Kennedy finds her remark puzzling.<sup>1</sup>

Allow me to explain, though since I have no evidence I shall have to make do with imagination. Some years ago, at another party, I found myself stuck with a man whose sole subject of conversation was cars: those he had owned, the large amounts of money they had cost, their top speeds; their acceleration; how long it had taken him to drive in them to Rome or Rabat or San Marino. I do not drive and I recognize cars, if at all, by their colour. All that interests me about them is whether they will allow me to stretch my legs in comfort and reach the end of my journey alive. The voice in front of me droned on. The head jutted. The blue eyes bored into me. The blond hair was cut *en brosse*, a style that particularly irritates me. From time to time I asked a question. Invariably it was ignored. Like Elgar, but I suspect even more like Rosa, I began to be 'exasperated'. It was time to put on my magic helmet and turn into a monster.

'Do you do the driving *yourself*?' I asked. The blue eyes blinked. The eyebrows narrowed. The mouth opened and closed and opened. 'I don't follow', said the voice at last. 'You don't have a *chauffeur*?' 'No. No, I don't.' 'Really! I'd be lost without mine!' The right arm slowly held up an empty glass, and the voice muttered something about the need for a 'top-up'. 'Of course, I said, as 'gravely' as Rosa and moving away towards a plate where a tongue sandwich would go to waste unless I ate it ... So now, unless you believe that I *did* have a chauffeur, you know what Rosa 'meant'.

### **From Ian Woolf**

I would like to add to Ian Beresford Gleaves's examples of Elgar-Wagner connections. I'm convinced that near the end of his polka 'La Blonde', Elgar introduces a direct quotation, in the strings, from the overture to *Tannhäuser*.<sup>2</sup> According to Barry Collett's notes for his Rutland S.O. recording, this polka was linked to Helen Weaver. Doubtless she would have enjoyed the reference because it seems that they heard *Tannhäuser* together in Leipzig in the autumn of 1882.



1 Michael Kennedy, *The Life of Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, date), 62.

2 The music example prepared by the editor on the basis of notation supplied by Mr Woolf, in the case of the Elgar taken down aurally. In both extracts the string figuration quoted is combined with a strong theme played on the brass.

### **From Ernest Blamires**

Within Christopher Fifield's excellent CD review in the July, 2007 Journal, there is a small error which I feel is worth a correction. He states that the British composer Edgar Bainton gave the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* in Australia in 1936. But this is not the case. One only has to read the glowing report in the book written by Sir Henry Coward entitled *Round the World on Wings of Song* (second edition, dated 1933), in which he records the sweep through the British Dominions of the superb Sheffield Choir, in which they performed *Gerontius* in most major cities, conducted by him. Their performance in Sydney took place in the Town Hall on the evening of 25 June 1911. Sir Henry described the Town Hall which, then as now, could seat 5,000 people, as 'a magnificent building with fine acoustics'. Their performances received overwhelming praise not only in Sydney, but later in Melbourne and Adelaide.

However, early as this splendid performance was, it was *not* the first performance of *Gerontius* in Australia. To uncover this we must go further back, to 1903, the year in which the United States first heard the work (in Chicago and New York), and even before any London choral society had produced it. A special musical event took place in Sydney on the evening of 21 December 1903, as part of celebrations accompanying the golden jubilee of the ordination as priest of Cardinal Patrick Francis Moran (1839-1911), Archbishop of Sydney. The decision had been taken by his admirers to include a first performance of the yet unheard *Dream of Gerontius* by the relatively unknown English composer, Edward Elgar. The large choir was that of St Mary's Catholic Cathedral, augmented by choirs from throughout the Sydney area. The full-sized orchestra was a well trained assembly of Sydney's professional players, and the conductor was the gifted John Albert Delany.

Delany, London born, was an outstanding musician – a professional violinist, church organist, choir master, orchestra trainer and conductor. The Australian Dictionary of Biography records that both Dame Nellie Melba and Ada Crossley made their Sydney debuts under his direction and, on the inauguration of the Commonwealth in 1901, it was Delany who conducted the massed choirs in Sydney's Centennial Park. The biography goes on to say that 'His greatest achievement was the presentation of the Australian premiere of Sir Edward Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* in Sydney'. The concert attracted a vast crowd to Sydney's Town Hall and the reporter from the prestigious *Sydney Morning Herald* was particularly impressed by the hundreds of concert goers he saw carrying copies of August Jaeger's analytical and descriptive notes into the concert. Cardinal Moran, who attended the concert, was so impressed by the results of Delany's achievement that he personally presented him with a special papal medallion.

It would seem, therefore, that Australia and Sydney can lay claim to being the third overseas country to hear *Gerontius*, after Germany and America, and almost certainly the first country in the southern hemisphere to do so. For a country less than three years old – the Australian Federation was created 1 January 1901 – this was indeed a great and memorable musical achievement.

## 100 YEARS AGO...

A few days after returning from their Welsh holiday the Elgars stayed for a week at Schuster's home. The Hut. John Coates, Henry Wood, and Julia Worthington were among the other guests. They were in London on 4 September for the premiere of the fourth *Pomp & Circumstance* March, conducted by Wood. The next day Elgar attended rehearsals for the two great oratorios, which were to be given at the Three Choirs. He and Alice went to Gloucester on the 9th: the Festival began the following day. There was a performance of *The Apostles* in the evening, and *The Kingdom* the next morning – the first time they had been given in this way. 'Most beautiful performance – immense & devout audience' Alice wrote. Other works given that year were Horatio Parker's Organ Concerto; Parry's *Sinfonia Sacra*; and Brewer's *Emmaus* (which Elgar had orchestrated for the 1901 Festival).

Back home in Hereford on 14 September, Elgar worked on the completion of his *Wand of Youth* music. He went to London on the 20th for a rehearsal of *The Kingdom*, which was to be given at the Leeds Festival. In Hereford again, he began to correct proofs of *The Wand of Youth*, before leaving on 23rd for the Cardiff Festival where he conducted *The Kingdom* on the 26th. Another work given there was Parry's *A Vision of Life*: Elgar was so impressed by it that he suggested to Ivor Atkins and Nicholas Kilburn that they consider performing it.

The Elgars planned to go to Italy for the winter, where Edward could complete his long-awaited symphony: Plas Gwyn was let for four months to a Captain Inglefield and his wife. *The Kingdom* was given to great acclaim at Leeds on 11 October and at Hanley four days later. In Birmingham on the 16th they met up with Richter. Alice noted: 'Fervent appeal to E. to finish the Sinfonie – dear noble old man'. But ten days later her diary reads: 'E. wrote IVt'. It appears likely that this was the music later used in the central movements of the First Symphony.

The Elgars left for Italy on 5 November, accompanied by Carice and May Grafton. They travelled by train via Paris and Genoa, arriving in Rome two days later, and found a flat in the Via Gregoriana which they took for five months. Elgar loved Rome, writing to Schuster: 'Here is my Mecca & I love it *all* – Note the fact that I am pagan not Xtian at present'. Yet later in the same letter he wrote: 'I am trying to write music but the bitterness is that it pays not at all & I must write & arrange what my soul loathes to permit me to write what *you* like & I like'. Novello were pushing him to compose some short pieces which would sell. There were two marching songs – one called *Marching Song*, the other *The Reveille*. Edwards of the *Musical Times* sent some hymn-like words which Elgar set as *How Calmly the Evening*. There was also a request from Sinclair for a Christmas piece for his cathedral choir: Elgar set some words of Alice's entitled *A Christmas Greeting*, which contrast Christmas in Italy and Hereford. But towards the end of the year he composed four large part-songs, his Opus 53: *There is Sweet Music*, *Deep in My Soul*, *O Wild West Wind*, and *Owls*. These were not commissioned so far as we know, and yet Elgar took time off from his work on the symphony to write them. They are dated 'December 1907', the last bearing the date '31 December'.

The Elgars met the composers Giovanni Sgambati – whom they had first met earlier in the year – and the young American John Alden Carpenter. The latter came from a wealthy Chicago family and was recommended to Elgar as a pupil by the widow of Theodore Thomas. No doubt Carpenter's willingness to pay for lessons in composition was a factor in Elgar's agreeing to take him on! Carpenter later referred to Elgar as 'a fine man but a poor teacher'.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

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