

The Elgar Society

# Journal



MARCH 2008 Vol. 15, No. 4

# The Elgar Society

Founded 1951

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# The Elgar Society Journal

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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: Postcard portrait of Elgar (see Editorial)*

**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.

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*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.

End a footnote with a full stop, please, and never put a comma before a parenthesis.

*Titles* that are 'generic' in Roman: e.g. Violin Concerto. Others in *italics* (e.g. *Sea Pictures*; the *Musical Times*). Units within a longer work in single quotes, e.g. 'Sanctus fortis' from *The Dream of Gerontius*.

## EDITORIAL

This season has brought in an interesting crop of letters – where Nalini Ghuman's article in the November issue is concerned, both for and against. Writing in response to Michael Kennedy's review (November 2007) of J.P.E. Harper-Scott's *Elgar: an Extraordinary Life*, Ernest Parkin revives the debate about Elgar's moustache. Recent analysis of Elgar's life and personality, and of the society and cultural context in which he moved, has implied that the moustache may be camouflage: removing it reveals a sensitive artist with the attendant possibility of a perceived effeminacy (roughly the point Harper-Scott made in the first place). Harper-Scott's writing also comes under fire, although to my ear it seems closer to P.G. Wodehouse than affected by current journalistic argot. Its freedom from post-modern jargon is not only welcome, but less likely to deter the intended readership of the series to which the book belongs: having written a companion volume on Mozart, I can safely say that the 'extraordinary' lives published by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music are aimed in part at a young readership. Surely those still taking exams deserve something bright and stimulating to accompany the drudgery.

Neither Dr Ghuman nor Dr Harper-Scott felt it necessary to respond to these criticisms; but I owe the former an apology for mis-spelling her name on the table of contents of the November issue. The good news is that the appalling decision of the U.S. immigration to exclude her from her place of employment in California has been rescinded.

None of us is infallible, but I seem in November to have been more fallible than I trust is usual. More apologies are due. In my efforts to compress a review of the excellent LPO boxed set of Elgar – an economy necessary in view of the length of some other reviews – I created the misleading impression that the entire box consisted of reissues. *Mea culpa*. While what little I said about the performance of *Sea Pictures* stands, I do apologise, particularly to the inimitable Janet Baker, for passing so swiftly over what is in fact a recording not previously issued (see Andrew Keener's letter on this subject, and also Andrew Neill's remarks below, p. 15).

A major topic of 2007, the 'year of Elgar', proved to be his reception abroad. I am pleased to include further reports on activities in the U.S.A.; we are privileged to have the views of the distinguished critic Andrew Porter, as well as our Chairman and Diana McVeagh, and the report from Byron Adams on the celebration of Elgar at Oberlin College. Diana writes to me: 'I had a useful talk with the orchestra leader. She told me they really hadn't much of a clue what *Falstaff* was about. She also said most of them had never played or heard *Gerontius* but were so impressed they were all trying to get hold of the words to read'. Frank Beck informs me of a successful *Gerontius* in Boston under Colin Davis, with the splendid tenor Ben Heppner in the title-role. This was on 25 January 2008, and thus *not* in the 'year of Elgar', but more

recent: a hopeful sign that interest will not die down with the change of date. Barry Collett's letter contains a similarly hopeful prognosis.

I was expecting to have to apologise further for having written most of this issue myself. Happily I need not do so, thanks in large part to Tom Kelly; I am most grateful to him for expediting his article on Herbert Thompson and Elgar. The issue is otherwise well filled with letters, CD reviews, and a review of what is nearly the most recent volume in the Complete Edition; *King Olaf* has come out since then, and I hope to carry a review of that major undertaking in the next issue.

Some important books have been assigned to reviewers, including Byron Adams (ed.), *Elgar and his World*; Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*; and a set of essays introduced by (now Sir) Nicholas Kenyon, *Elgar: an Anniversary Portrait*. And Cambridge has now published *Elgar Studies* (apologies to Raymond Monk for appropriating his title: but this is part of a series so there was no alternative).

'Solutions' to the 'Enigma' keep up with the general productivity of work on Elgar. I still hope not to publish any during my tenure as editor, but am not afraid to draw readers' attention to the current issue of *The Musical Times*, since Clive McClelland's ingenious theory has made it to the local and even national press. A book has reached me with yet another theory ... but I hope someone will review that, too. As a professed agnostic on the matter, I am prepared to agree that because all the theories cannot possibly be true, it does not follow that none of them can be true.

Finally, a note on our cover picture, also reproduced within (on p. 14). This, I am informed, has been scanned from a postcard, in Australia. It comes by courtesy of Frank Beck; and readers are invited to contribute any information they may possess about its date and provenance, which so far, it appears, are unknown.

Julian Rushton

## The Bard Festival: a Personal Postscript

Andrew Porter

A personal, perhaps over-personal, postscript to Christopher Fifield's account (which appeared in the November issue of the *Journal*) of the Bard Summer Festival, devoted this year to Edward Elgar. 'Elgar and His World' merits much attention. It was the eighteenth of Bard College's annual composer celebrations, and the first to feature a British composer. (Brahms was the subject of the first; Haydn and Beethoven, Schumann and Brahms, Mahler and Schoenberg, Debussy and Janáček, Ives and Copland have figured; last year it was Liszt, and next year it will be Prokofiev.) In Britain, commemoration of Elgar's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary has been spread across the country and throughout the year. Bard offered concentration: two August weekends and a third in October, Friday to Sunday, filled with concerts, recitals, talks, and discussions. The events were packed and were eagerly acclaimed.

Elgar in America? When Yale University bestowed an honorary doctorate on him, in 1905, he was saluted as a composer 'honored for genius' in an art that 'voices the profoundest spiritual emotions and the deepest longings of the heart ... Commanding the homage of the musicians of Germany, of France, and of America, he is heartily welcomed among us'. The following year at the Cincinnati Festival he conducted *The Apostles*, *In the South*, *Introduction and Allegro*, and *Gerontius*. But during the twenty years I spent as the music critic of the *New Yorker* (1972–92), I was given little occasion to write about Elgar. I remember two New York performances of the 'Enigma' Variations; Alexander Gibson and the Scottish National Orchestra brought it to Carnegie Hall in 1975, and Leonard Bernstein conducted an incandescent performance with the New York Philharmonic in 1982. Bernstein was a committed but controversial Elgarian: the slow movements very slow, the fast movements furious. I thought it wonderful; but the programme-note seemed to be a pronouncement about the work from America's most influential critic, Virgil Thomson: 'an academic effort, mostly a pretext for orchestration, a pretty pretext and a graceful one, not without charm and a modicum of sincerity, but a pretext for fancywork all the same'. Otherwise I heard a single First Symphony, Yo Yo Ma in the Cello Concerto, and a stirring *The Light of Life* in Washington; and I hailed the appearance of Jerrold Northrop Moore's great book in 1984. (Rutland Boughton's *The Immortal Hour* was playing in New York at the time.)

Slim pickings over twenty years. At Bard we had a feast. In the big concerts the crack American Symphony Orchestra was conducted by Leon Botstein, President of the College, 'Renaissance man', thinker, writer, organizer, editor, and musician extraordinary. It was fascinating to hear his freshly thought accounts of familiar

works. Raised largely on Boult, also Sargent and Barbirolli, I'm no scorner of 'tradition'; but 'Nimrod without the Cenotaph' was Diana McVeagh's phrase for an 'Enigma' that made one listen to the music anew and admire it afresh. Ditto with *In the South* and *Falstaff*. The *Gerontius* reminded one that Newman's brother had suggested to him that he should write an Aeschylean drama on a Christian theme; and also that Parry's *Prometheus Unbound*, scenes from Shelley's Aeschylean drama, had appeared at the Three Choirs Festival in 1880. Elgar did not call his work an oratorio. The Bard performance was an unusually coherent musical drama (Handel's term for his *Saul* and *Solomon*); an Attic drama with the traditional protagonist, two other soloists, choruses and semi-choruses. Vinson Cole, the *Gerontius*, wore not evening dress but a white shift suggesting the deathbed in Act 1, and a robe in Act 2. He sang fervently and fully, with careful attention to the detailed markings. Jane Irwin was a serene Angel, with beautiful tone. John Hancock was a fine Priest and Angel of the Agony. The professional chorus, eighty strong, trained by James Bagwell, was remarkable: clear words, exact tuning; the best I've ever heard.

Other highlights: the Piano Quintet with Piers Lane as pianist and the young Daedalus Quartet; among the related events, Scott Williamson's singing of songs by Ivor Gurney and George Butterworth; Kenneth Hamilton's exuberant championship of Percy Grainger; Ethel Smyth's inventive trio *Variations on 'Bonny Sweet Robin'*. The *Crown of India* suite seemed to me better music than commentators had led me to expect. A concert that juxtaposed Parry's once-celebrated *Symphonic Variations* (1897), Stanford's *Concert Variations on 'Down Among the Dead Men'* (1899) and the 'Enigma' provided a striking demonstration of the distance between good composers, worth hearing, and a great one.

*Andrew Porter is a critic, and translator and director of opera. Over c.55 years he has written for several British newspapers; he was editor of The Musical Times for seven years from 1960, during which it was modernized and greatly enhanced; in his 20 years in America (see above) he also lectured, and he was instrumental in the rediscovery and revival of the original French form of Verdi's Don Carlos.*

## The Bard Festival 'Elgar and his World' (part 2) – 26 & 27 October 2007

### Andrew Neill

The Bard Festival in 2007 was undoubtedly among the most remarkable tributes to Elgar held anywhere at any time; it is not difficult to agree with Diana McVeagh that this was the greatest celebration of Elgar and his music since the Covent Garden Festival of 1904. There are three very obvious areas that stand out, even at a cursory glance. First, the President of Bard College, Leon Botstein, has led a great fundraising campaign and has allowed the funds raised to be spent wisely and originally. Secondly, Botstein with his fellow Artistic Directors, Christopher H. Gibbs and Robert Martin (with the Festival's Scholar in Residence, Byron Adams) created as comprehensive review of Elgar's music as could be expected, and laid out perceptively and sensitively the world in which Elgar composed. Thirdly, the Festival programme book is one of the most beautifully produced I have ever seen. Colour reproductions abound and some byways of English art (such as drawings by Stella Langdale) add to our understanding of Elgar and his contemporaries as well as such works as *The Dream of Gerontius*.

With Helen Petchey and Arthur Reynolds I attended the second part of the Festival in October. Bard University is situated to the north of the small town of Rhinebeck in the Hudson Valley in New York State. It is about a 2½ hour drive north of New York City. In contrast to the glorious August weather, it rained incessantly while we there, and it was not until the Sunday morning (when we left) that the beauty of the countryside, the Catskill Mountains and fall colours could be seen and admired.

This was very much a 'parergon' to the main festival held in August, about which Diana McVeagh has written enthusiastically and to which she contributed so nobly (see below). The August Festival was a 'sell out' and much of what we attended was also well supported. Even then, the music played was different, allowing us to hear the Stanford Violin Concerto and, above all, *The Sanguine Fan*. The programme included the following sessions:

1: Programme 1, 'Grandeur and Intimacy: Elgar and English music at the turn of the Century'. A pre-concert talk by Byron Adams and a concert by Shawn Patrick Moore (violin) and American Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leon Botstein. The programme included *Pomp & Circumstance* March No. 1 in D, *The Sanguine Fan*, Stanford's Violin Concerto in D Op. 74, and Elgar's First Symphony.

2. A two-hour discussion entitled Anglophilia and Imperialism, with Leon Botstein, Ian Baruma, Deirdre d'Albertis, and Byron Adams (moderator). This discussion could have

been twice as long. It was intelligent, in no way 'anti-British', and enabled those there, in my view, to appreciate the depth of the cultural links of Britain and the United States and covered the creation of the state of Israel as well as more obvious Imperial areas.

3. Programme 2. 'Elgar & the next generation'. This was a chamber concert given by students and staff of the college and the tenor Rufus Müller, with a pre-concert talk by Peter Laki. The programme comprised Frank Bridge's First String Quartet ('Bologna'); Vaughan Williams, *On Wenlock Edge*; John Ireland, *A Grecian Lad* and *Island Spell*; and Elgar's Piano Quintet.

While at Bard we were given the opportunity to display (and sell) a range of books and CDs produced by the Society, and a large number of membership application forms were taken as well as order forms for the books and CDs. Although Arthur Reynolds had to leave before the end, Helen and I were able to talk at length to members of the Society who were present, including Professor & Mrs Harold Diamond and Dr Peter Mudge from Long Island. We also had a discussion with Byron Adams about what happens next and how we might build on the success of the Festival.

*Diana McVeagh* writes: The celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Elgar's birth have been spread over the whole of this country and the whole of 2007. Some people have been critical of that, believing there should have been some concentrated bringing-together of performances and scholarship. But though it would have been good to have had *King Olaf* or *Caractacus* in London and broadcast, Elgar is after all securely established here. Things are different in the United States ...

A programme of Edwardian music hall song was a bit staid to anyone who remembered the old Paddington Metropole; some gin and cigarette smoke, though un-p-c, might have helped. Parry's admirable and worthy *Symphonic Variations*, and Stanford's fluent, brilliant, but empty Variations on 'Down among the dead men', preceded 'Enigma' in the same concert, demonstrating better than words could ever do why Elgar's work achieved international status. 'Enigma' was played without the accumulated tradition we are accustomed to – 'Nimrod' without the Cenotaph, as it were; at first that was disconcerting, but it was after all how it would have sounded that June evening in 1899. ... The American Symphony Orchestra gave a note-perfect but uncommunicative performance (their first) of *Falstaff*, whereas it was obvious they knew and loved the Second Symphony.

A few personal highlights: the tenor Scott Williamson in Gurney songs, Ethel Smyth's 'Bonny sweet Robin' variations, Timothy Barringer from Yale talking on Elgar and landscape, the exuberance of the pianist Kenneth Hamilton, Byron Adams moved and moving on the Great War, Piers Lane with young American players in Elgar's Quintet; and the realization that Elgar himself had stayed quite near Bard, in Julia Worthington's now demolished country home.

All in all, it seemed to me the greatest Elgar celebration since the three-day Covent Garden Festival of 1904, proof that his music, given a wide and sympathetic context, travels as easily the composer himself did.

*Reproduced in part, with the author's permission, from Bristol University Music Department's CHOMBEC News 4 (Winter 2007), 15.*

## Oberlin Elgar Festival: In Celebration of Elgar's Sesquicentennial

Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, Oberlin, Ohio, U.S.A. (8–9 December 2007)

### Byron Adams

By American standards, Oberlin College is a venerable institution. Founded in 1833 by two Protestant clergymen devoted to the abolitionist cause, it has a long history of being a shining beacon of liberalism in the otherwise drearily conservative environs of the Midwest. Indeed, Oberlin College was the first institution in the United States to admit African American students, doing so in 1835 when slavery was still blighting American life and institutions. The College admitted women to its student body in 1837, and was a leader in offering educational opportunities for women. In the years preceding the Civil War, Oberlin – both village and college – was an important stop on the Underground Railroad that spirited runaway slaves from the South to freedom in Canada.

The enlightened musical traditions at Oberlin College are as venerable as its political ones: along with Bard College, it is one of the few American liberal arts colleges to support a magnificent and highly selective Conservatory of Music. The Oberlin College Conservatory is consistently ranked among the top American musical institutions, and is considered the peer of such schools as the Eastman School of Music (Rochester, NY), and the Juilliard School in New York City. Unlike those two institutions, however, the Oberlin College Conservatory had the wit to celebrate Elgar's sesquicentennial with a splendid two-day festival of his music, organized by the distinguished American musicologist Charles Edward McGuire.

Dr McGuire, who, as most of the readers of this Journal know already, is a superb scholar of Elgar's life and work, designed two fascinating concerts as well as inviting a speaker to give an hour-long lecture on Elgar's aesthetics. The first concert was held in the intimate Kulas Recital Hall within the Conservatory; it consisted of seven of Elgar's songs, sung sensitively by four talented young artists. While all the singers were excellent, Meghan Brook's performance of 'Queen Mary's Song' was outstanding for its elegance and insight. This program concluded with the youthful Jace Quartet giving a valiant and heartfelt performance of Elgar's String Quartet. The hall was packed with Oberlin students and faculty who proved to be a very enthusiastic audience.

I cannot report on the lecture, as I was the lecturer, other than to mention that when I learned that Dr McGuire had scheduled my talk for 3.15 p.m. on a Saturday

afternoon near the end of the notoriously busy fall term, I assumed that I would be speaking to him, some of his colleagues and a smattering of students. Imagine my surprise and delight on arriving to a large room so full that quite a few students had to sit on the floor. Their questions were highly intelligent and the discussion period after my lecture was lively in the happiest sense of the word.

The climax of the festival came on Sunday 9 December, with an all-Elgar choral and orchestral concert given in historic Finney Chapel by the Oberlin Orchestra, conducted by Bridget-Michaele Reischl, with the participation of the Oberlin Musical Union, a spirited chorus trained by Hugh Ferguson Floyd. The programme began with a vivacious performance of *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 1, and continued with a stirring, revelatory interpretation of *The Music Makers*. I must particularly commend Meghan Brooks for singing the solo parts with eloquence and power. (*The Music Makers* is very rarely performed in the United States and this must have been the first performance of the piece here in a very long time.) After intermission, the excellent Oberlin Orchestra gave a lovely, heart-warming performance of the *Enigma* Variations; Prof. Reischl conducted the entire programme with a deep sympathy and understanding of Elgar's style, but attained a particular height in 'Nimrod'. As might be expected, Dr McGuire's programme notes were exemplary in their accuracy, elegance and organization, and, most important, were a joy to read. This concert was also well-attended, and I should mention that all of the events of this festival were open and free to the public.

One moment that I will always remember occurred as I was listening to a choral rehearsal of *The Music Makers*, just as the orchestra was arriving to take the stage with the chorus. As the chorus sang the opening lines of Elgar's score, a student trumpet player walked past where I was sitting, and sang cheerfully with them 'We are the music makers'. This vignette encapsulates of the great success of this festival, especially in the ways in which it introduced Elgar's music to a new generation of gifted American singers and players.

*Byron Adams teaches at the University of California, Riverside. He is a well-known scholar of 20<sup>th</sup>-century British music in general, and Elgar in particular, and he is the editor of the volume of essays Elgar and his World associated with the Bard Festival (on which see above).*

## Elgar and Musical Modernism

Gresham College, 14 December 2007

### Julian Rushton

Modernism and Elgar, quite often associated in his own lifetime, at least up to c.1914, have only recently become reconnected. A study day viewing this conjunction from various angles was bound to be revealing, if not conclusive. What did seem conclusive was a demonstration of the excellence of the Piano Quintet, in the performance by the Alea String Quartet and Daniel Smith (a virtuoso of page-turning as well as covering the notes). I heard this from very close range, and was again struck by Elgar's skill in achieving instrumental balance; where other fine works in this medium sound like piano sonatas with backing, Elgar's quintet is a lucid discussion for five players, with much of importance to be heard from the inner as well as outer strings. The quartet had previously been joined by the harpist Daniel de Fry in Bax's Quintet of 1919. The contrast was telling: Bax's modernism showed more affinity than Elgar's to, say, the modernism of 1899 (the year of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*); Elgar's leaner textures, mainly though not only at the opening, anticipate the new clarity of the 1920s.

But what *is* – or *was* – modernism? The first address, by Matthew Riley of Birmingham University, valuably clarified some of the issues. Modern thinking (at least in English) has been clouded by a widely circulated mistranslation in Carl Dahlhaus's 1980 study of nineteenth-century Music.<sup>1</sup> When Dahlhaus wrote 'moderne Musik', 'modern' implied progressive, evolutionary; whereas 'modernism' implies a modernising programme, a tendency to reject the past. Dr Riley said we should abandon the too common uncritical acceptance of Dahlhaus, and reconsider the terms of modernism in England around 1900.<sup>2</sup> Compared to slightly older contemporaries such as Parry and Stanford, Elgar, when Strauss included him among 'progressivists', was in the vanguard of evolutionary development, and his music was often perceived as 'difficult'; we were reminded by the third speaker, Charles Edward McGuire of Oberlin College, how dreadfully hard the 1900 choir

1 Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (*Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft*, 7): Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1980, translated by J. Bradford Robinson as *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989).

2 A considerable resource is the presentation by Aidan J. Thomson of contemporary press reports: 'Early Reviews of *The Apostles* in British Periodicals', and 'Elgar's Critical Critics', both in Byron Adams (ed.), *Edward Elgar and his World* (Princeton University Press, 2007), 127–172 and 193–222.

found *Gerontius*, in marked contrast to the younger Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha* at the same Birmingham festival. McGuire summarized some contrary opinions of today – Elgar, modernist, or pre-Raphaelite Romantic? – and wisely suggested that these positions are not mutually exclusive, just as some of Elgar's endings can be interpreted in more than one way. The second speaker, Christopher Mark of Surrey University, tends to the view that the Second Symphony's ending is less recessional than a 'luminous ceremonial'. Much of his address responded to J.P.E. Harper-Scott's analysis; Dr Mark agrees with nearly all the detail, while remaining sceptical about broader issues, including the effectiveness of Schenker's analytical methods over such an immense time-span.<sup>3</sup> Since the first two papers were concentrated musicological discourses, it was perhaps with some relief that the audience heard McGuire discuss contemporary criticism of Elgar, some of it astonishingly vituperative as well as indicative of at least a perceived modernism. The following discussion laid one question to rest: a member of the audience suggested that Elgar might have been a miniaturist who engaged only reluctantly with large formal schemes, but the panel agreed that there is nothing incompatible between being an inspired miniaturist of genius, and a master of the symphony, concerto, and oratorio.

After lunch, Dr Raphael D. Thöne of Hannover presented a paper on Elgar's influence on Malcolm Arnold. He delightfully represented at the keyboard how *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 2 could morph into an Arnold march.<sup>4</sup> Even the admittedly less 'progressivist' music of Elgar's marches includes elements highly original within this functional genre. Elgar thus imposed himself on an existing tradition and created it anew. The link between Elgar and Arnold, as Byron Adams pointed out from the floor, is Walton; and David Owen Norris went to the piano to deliver a strain of Coates's *Dam Busters*. Norris, a former Gresham's Professor, then delivered a characteristically glittering account of 'Elgar's Pianistic Iconoclasm', discussing the important link between improvisation and composition, and giving many examples of Elgar's careful notation, especially pedal and staccato markings, which led to effects that have been considered 'unpianistic' from a traditional viewpoint, but which, like his other instrumental writing, vividly exploit the potential of the instrument and greatly reward pianists willing to take the trouble to observe them.<sup>5</sup>

The keynote address was given by Byron Adams (University of California, Riverside), Resident Scholar at the recent Bard Festival and one of our age's leading writers on 20<sup>th</sup>-century British music. His topic was the cultural connection an unexpected but revealing juxtaposition: 'A far country: Elgar and Marcel Proust'. Elgar's 'essential modernity' was shattered by the 1914 war, whereas Proust up to that time had published only the first volume of his 'Roman fleuve', *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*). Consequently, though he died in 1922,

3 J.P.E. Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's deconstruction of the *belle époque*: interlace structures and the Second Symphony', in Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton (eds), *Elgar Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 172–219.

4 This was an unpublished work intended for a film of *The Three Musketeers*.

5 One revelation was that the equal semiquavers notated at the start of *In Smyrna* should be unmeasured tremolo, allowing a properly Elgarian flexibility for the melody.

Proust belongs chronologically with modernist literature whereas Elgar seemed inconsequential to the newer musical modernisms (Schoenberg's and Stravinsky's) prevailing in the 1920s. Elgar and Proust are hardly known to have been aware of each other, but a common factor was their acquaintance with Gabriel Fauré, in Elgar's case by way of Frank Schuster; Adams drew a pointed connection between the opening of Fauré's first piano quartet and the finale of Elgar's Second Symphony. To the overlapping of social circles one could add shared interests between Elgar and the equally (or still more) hypersensitive novelist: attitudes to high society, hypochondria, connections to decadence (a word with no pejorative implication in this context), an interest in science, and above all, the narcissism that enriched their art. By gathering his images of French society into a single work, which the author is about to start writing when the novel ends, Proust's work embodies a kind of redemption missing from Elgar's. But their methods, including reference to Wagner's leitmotif, the importance of memory, and the retrieval of childhood, show marked analogies. This richly illustrated essay deserves the widest circulation and can be accessed (as can the whole day) on the Gresham College website (search for Gresham College and follow the links). Among its themes is the handling of time itself; and among its sharpest aperçus, referring to Elgar as 'an unnervingly intelligent boy' (as was Proust), and as one with the golden touch, transforming the ordinary into the highest art. But then, in reply to a question, Adams observed 'it's an old-fashioned thing to say, but he was a genius'.

The meeting was organized by Daniel M. Grimley and J.P.E. Harper-Scott; and as Matthew Riley observed, it was a pity that neither of these excellent scholars was addressing the gathering. Had they done so, there might have been less scope for a particularly valuable element – internationalism, with two speakers from the U.S.A. and one from Germany. In addition to Gresham College itself, the event was under the auspices of London University's Institute of Musical Research (the director, Professor Katharine Ellis, was present), and the Royal College of Music (which supplied the splendid performing musicians). Hospitality and the music were funded by the John Coffin Fund of the University of London.



Postcard portrait of Elgar (see Editorial)

## Dame Janet Baker's *Sea Pictures* from 1984

**Andrew Neill**

In the last issue of the Journal (November 2007), the editor reviewed the boxed set of Elgar recordings by the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO). This reminded me that it was about time that the record should be put straight on a number of matters relating to the performance of *Sea Pictures* included in the set and, more generally, to the concert from which this recording was extracted.

This live performance was at the heart of a concert in the Royal Festival Hall on 23 February 1984, organised by this Society to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Elgar's death. The Society's Executive then consisted of Michael Pope (Chairman), Trevor Fenimore-Jones (Vice-Chairman), John Knowles (Treasurer), the late Ronald Taylor (Journal Editor) and me (Secretary). We were determined that this anniversary should be marked by a concert in the capital's leading concert hall and, well in advance (about two years), we established that the LPO was performing that night. Happily orchestra's management immediately went along with our ideas and engaged the leading Elgar conductor, Vernon Handley, who was to become a Vice-President later in the year.

Naturally, we all had our own ideas as to what the programme should be; but this, to some extent, depended on which soloist was available that evening. We felt that a prominent Elgar interpreter should be engaged, if at all possible. In other words, would we have the Violin or Cello concerto or, as it turned out, *Sea Pictures* at the heart of the programme? Happily, Dame Janet Baker was available and this settled the matter. The next task was to drum up sponsorship. This we found from the Hogg Robinson Group, a leading firm of insurance brokers in the City of London. Hogg Robinson went along with our plans with enthusiasm, agreeing to hold a reception after the concert. We also felt that the event should be patronised by Royalty if possible, and we were all delighted when the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester agreed to attend. Working with the orchestra, we designed the programme and asked four leading Elgar scholars to contribute to the programme notes, each writing about one work as follows: Diana McVeagh (*Grania & Diarmid*), Michael Kennedy (*Sea Pictures*), Jerrold Northrop Moore (*The Wand of Youth Suite No. 2*) and Percy Young (First Symphony). We also asked our president, Yehudi Menuhin, to write a forward.

After the concert (which was sold out), the Duke of Gloucester presented a painting of the Birthplace by David Birtwhistle to the Chairman of Hogg Robinson as

a token of thanks from the Society.<sup>1</sup> However, long before this, we had approached the BBC to ask if they would broadcast the concert live. This the Corporation declined to do, preferring to broadcast a concert of Nielsen's music from Birmingham instead. This was very disappointing and, more in desperation than in hope, we contacted the leading commercial radio station in London, Capital Radio, which in those days recorded a concert during the week and broadcast it the following Sunday as part of their series 'The Capital Collection'. Capital Radio was delighted to accede to our request and threw themselves into the arrangements with enthusiasm. So on the evening of Sunday 26 February I set my ancient 7½ ips reel-to-reel tape recorder to record the concert. A strong hum pervaded the *Grania and Diarmid* music and the *Wand of Youth* Suite but cleared by the time Dame Janet came on to sing.

Early in 2006 the management of the LPO contacted a number of Elgarians (of which I was one) to assist in the production of a boxed set of their recordings and broadcasts. In the event only one broadcast performance was used, that of *Sea Pictures*; and, having heard my recording of the performance, the team at Knifedge who managed the production of the set contacted Capital Radio and asked to borrow the master tape of the concert. Eventually the station admitted it could not be found, but was sure it had been lodged at the British Library where it had been sent for archiving. Unfortunately it could not be traced there either. So we came to the conclusion that my rough recording was all that there was and that it would have to be used! The wonderful resulting sound is a tribute to the work of Roger Beazley, who produced a bloom and depth to the performance that I had not thought possible. Roger was also responsible for improving the sound of the recordings issued last year by the Society as 'The Leech Collection'.

As a result of this happy association with the orchestra we invited its Managing Director, Stephen Crabtree, to be our guest at a dinner we held in Malvern that summer. Vernon Handley was our guest of honour and we obtained a commitment there and then that, if the Society could find the money, 'Tod' would record *King Olaf* with the orchestra. Eighteen months later, that recording took place; but that is another story.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 Although Aon of America bought Hogg Robinson over a decade ago I checked recently and can confirm that the painting is still hanging in a meeting room.
  - 2 See my article, 'The Saga of the recording of *King Olaf*', this Journal, January 1987.

## Yorkshire Light on the First Symphony

Tom Kelly

Who would not envy the man fortunate enough to be at the premiere of Elgar's First Symphony, and then hear no fewer than eight more performances in the following year? Such a one was Herbert Thompson, and one of the lesser-known but most consistent enthusiasts for Elgar's music.

### *The Yorkshire Critic*

Thompson (1856-1945) was very close in age to Elgar. Although trained as a barrister at Cambridge and the Inner Temple in London, he asked for and was given the job of music critic with the *Yorkshire Post* in 1886, and continued in that job (and from seven years later as art critic) until 1936. Over that long period he was prodigiously energetic in travelling to festivals, concerts, and opera performances, as well attending many art exhibitions, throughout England and later abroad. But he remained a man of Yorkshire and lived in Leeds, having married in 1897 Edith Sparks, the daughter of a local printer-publisher who was also secretary to the Leeds Musical Festival.<sup>1</sup>

Thompson was a punctilious man of steady habits and strong loyalty to Elgar and his music. He was one of the Novello set, contributing regularly to the *Musical Times*, and (with rather reluctant co-operation from Elgar), he wrote the programme-book analysis of *Caractacus* (1898).<sup>2</sup> As the material in the Brotherton Library reveals (see note 1), Thompson corresponded with Elgar on and off until 1913. He regularly attended Three Choirs Festivals at which Elgar conducted before and after the First World War. He knew and spoke to the Elgars at concerts and festivals.

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- 1 The main source for this paper is the substantial archive donated by Thompson and his wife to the Brotherton Library of the University of Leeds. His personal papers including a manuscript autobiography, diaries, correspondence, and cuttings of all he wrote for the *Yorkshire Post* (henceforth YP) are held in the Library's Special Collections (henceforth BLSC). The catalogue can be viewed online by going to <http://lib.leeds.ac.uk/search/> and entering Herbert Thompson in the search box. I am grateful to Chris Sheppard and staff in the Special Collections for assistance in researching this material.
  - 2 There are five letters from Elgar to Thompson dating from 26 June to 29 August 1898 on the subject of his analysis of *Caractacus* (BLSC, MS 361, nos. 85-9). The 'Book of Words' was published by Novello, as later were Jaeger's analyses of *Gerontius*, *The Apostles*, and *The Kingdom*.



**Figure 1: Photograph of Herbert Thompson and his wife in the Diary for 1909**

Thompson's diaries record his amazingly busy itinerary around Yorkshire and major music festivals elsewhere. Each opens with a snapshot photo of Thompson and his wife (fig. 1), and contains timings of many performances he heard, concluding with a penny-perfect summary of his personal accounts (income and expenditure) for the year. There is much to be gleaned from these meticulous records about his involvement in the Yorkshire musical and art scene of his day, and about the lifestyle and finances of a very busy provincial journalist. The preoccupation with daily newspaper deadlines meant lots of column inches in the *Yorkshire Post* which have been cut and pasted into the cuttings books.

### **Premiere of the First Symphony**

Thompson's busy itinerary inevitably led to some mishaps. In his review of the very first performance of Elgar's First Symphony, he commended the decision to publish a miniature score of the work before it had been played.<sup>3</sup> He had good reasons to say this was a 'new and welcome precedent', for, as his unpublished autobiographical notes reveal, he had 'missed the whole first movement'.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson's copy of the miniature score of the First Symphony, and his copies of the published scores of other works of Elgar, are in the Brotherton Library at M780.265 ELG.

My train (was) delayed by an intense fog so that I was sitting in the train looking at my watch and grinding my teeth as I realised how the audience would be arriving, the conductor taking his place and the opening bars of the symphony being heard. However I managed to rush to the Hall for the second movement . . .<sup>4</sup>

His diary reveals more of this sad story. He had taken the 6.00 p.m. express from Leeds, but it ran 45 minutes late; despite taking a Hansom cab to the Free Trade Hall, he arrived at 8.05 p.m., 'in the middle of the Scherzo'. Thompson recovered himself sufficiently to join 'Elgar, Richter, Brodsky, RH Wilson, Kalisch, and Simpsall' in the Green Room on its completion, which he helpfully noted was at 8.39 p.m., and then rushed out to secure a room at the Mosley Hotel, and to telegraph his review from the GPO. According to his unpublished notes, Thompson's 'wrath was assuaged' within a month, as he heard the 'entire symphony' conducted for the first time by Elgar himself at the Queen's Hall in London on 1 January. Over the rest of 1909 he attended seven more performances, all conducted by Richter or Elgar.

It is easy to sympathise with Thompson's heartfelt regret for missing so much of the premiere. As in many concerts then, but unlike today, the Symphony, as the main work, was played in the first half, following an overture. At the second performance Thompson heard, the Symphony was played in the second half, as the place of honour before the interval went to Marie Hall playing Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto conducted by Henry Wood. On that occasion the critic of the *Daily Telegraph* complained that this was 'a most unwelcome change from the old order'. How glad might Thompson have been if the new order had been adopted for the Manchester premiere!

### **The Critic's schedule**

Of course, there is no mention of his late arrival in his 'notice' of the Manchester premiere, published in the *Yorkshire Post* on 4 December 1908. That week Thompson had been rushing about Yorkshire by train, despite unpleasantly foggy weather, to produce his quick fire output of reviews. On Monday he was in Scarborough for a local Philharmonic Society performance of Berlioz's *Faust* and on Tuesday he went from there to Beverley to give a lecture on British painting. By Wednesday he was in Hull for a concert by the Hull Symphony Orchestra, and he then returned to Leeds where Richter and the Hallé Orchestra were performing at a subscription concert which included Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations. On the day of the first Symphony premiere – Thursday 3 December – he was at home, working from the score of the new symphony for his 'notice'. But he also had to work on – and deliver – the fifth of a series of lectures he was giving in Leeds. No wonder he cut it too fine in taking the train to Manchester!

His working week was not over even then. By Friday Thompson was back in Leeds and went to review an organ accompanied performance of the Brahms Requiem. On the Saturday he was off again to York for a children's concert of songs, but returned to Leeds for yet another 7.30 p.m. orchestral concert. For both of these he wrote reviews. Perhaps today Thompson would use a 'blog' rather than a newspaper column to record all this hectic activity.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Thompson, 'Autobiography', BLSC, MS78, 45.

### Performances of the First Symphony

Thompson has left an invaluable record of the performances he heard during what Elgar described as the symphony's 'wild career' in its first year of performances. Most notable were performances of the symphony in Leeds on successive nights, conducted by Richter (2 November 1908 with the Hallé Orchestra for the Philharmonic Society) and by Elgar (3 November with the Queen's Hall Orchestra in the first of two concerts of his own music for the Leeds Choral Union).

Certainly this caught the imagination of the local press and the Yorkshire Evening Post published on 4 November 1909 sketches of both the conductors (Figs 2 and 3).

It is not explained in Thompson's records why Leeds went nearly a year with no performances of the symphony but then had two on successive nights. By then Thompson had already heard it performed by Elgar in Doncaster, and by Richter in Bradford.

Figs 2 and 3: Cartoon Sketches of Richter and Elgar conducting the First Symphony in Leeds in November 1909 (from *Yorkshire Evening Post*).

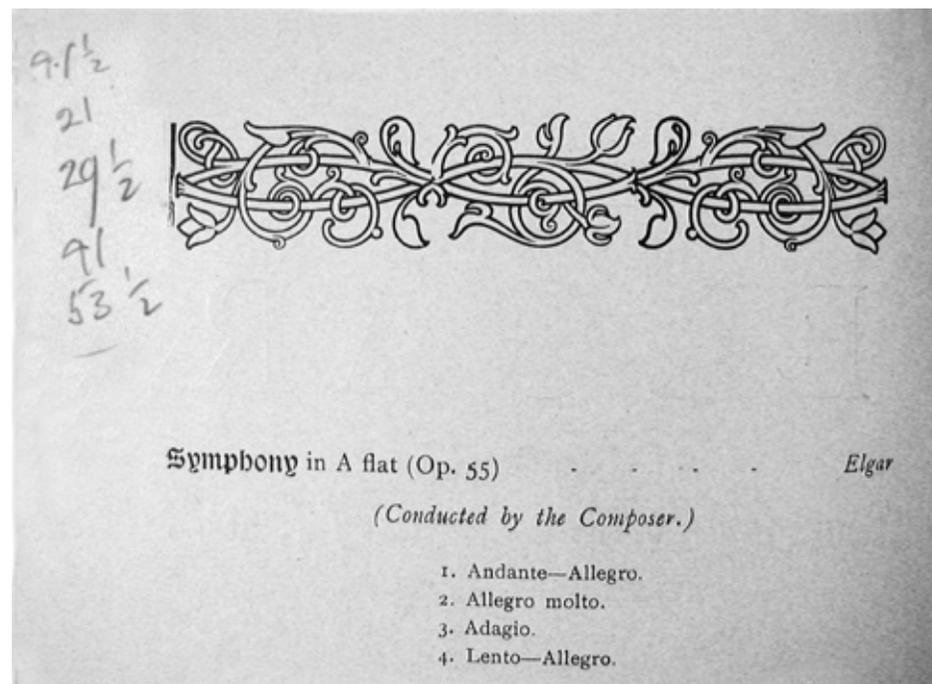


Figure 4: Thompson's pencil markings on the programme for first performance conducted by Elgar himself on 1 January 1909

### Thompson's Timings

Thompson's habit of jotting down the timings of works in his diary and then in his copy of the miniature scores was remarked by David Lloyd Jones.<sup>5</sup> In his autobiographical notes, Thompson explains that he had started to do this when attending concerts in London before ever he became a music critic. Just how he timed performances is revealed by his pencil notes on the programme for the Elgar performance of the Symphony at Queen's Hall on 1 January 1909. He noted down – presumably from his pocket watch – the time at which music started and ended to the nearest half minute, worked out the playing time of each movement and the total for the whole work to the nearest half minute, and recorded these in daily entries in his diary and/or his miniature score of the work (fig. 4).

So for the first complete performance he heard, the performance started at 1½ minutes past and ended at 53½ minutes past 4 o'clock. Thompson then calculated and noted down the playing time of the four individual movements as 19½ + 8½ + 11½ + 12½ minutes and the overall duration as 52 minutes. Of course this is not as exact as the minutes and seconds per track we are used to for timings of recordings

5 Interview with David Lloyd-Jones in *Elgar Society News* 21 (November 2003), 15.

on modern CDs. Apart from roundings to the nearest half-minute, reading a watch can be difficult in the lowered lighting of an auditorium. Live performances also have the vagaries of pauses for retuning and applause in the interval between movements, or the absence of breaks between movements as for the middle two movements of the Elgar First Symphony.

Thompson later regarded his practice of noting down timings as part of his apprenticeship as a critic and seems to have continued it out of habit. Thompson does say he received frequent requests for timings from conductors preparing concert programmes and that they 'reveal idiosyncrasies of certain conductors'. But he does not appear to have analysed or compared the timings of performances he so carefully listed. So far I have come across only two references to relative pacing of different performances of the same works by Elgar – one is the unusually quick pace of the Finale of the First Symphony at Gloucester in 1925<sup>6</sup> – and in neither does he mention or quote his timings.

### **Timings of the First Symphony**

With due allowance for factors indicated above, what emerges from Thompson's timings for the performances he heard conducted by Elgar is a surprise. Only once – at Gloucester in 1925 – is the playing time substantially less than 50 minutes. On this evidence, Elgar's studio recording of 1930 is untypically brisk, not just compared with his early performances but those in the post-war years too.

### **Thompson timings for Elgar's own performances**

*(Including, for comparison, timings of Elgar recording for HMV)*

Date	City	I	II	III	IV	Total
1 January 1909	London	19½	8½	11½	12½	52
9 September 1909	Hereford	19	7½	12	11½	50
22 October 1909	Newcastle	19	7	12	11½	49½
28 October 1909	Doncaster	19	8	13	12½	52½
3 November 1909	Leeds	18½	7½	12	12	50
7 September 1910	Gloucester	19	7½	11½	12½	50½
9 September 1925	Gloucester	18	7	12	10	47
10 September 1930	Hereford	19½	8½	11	11½	50½
20-22 November 1930	Studio	17½	7½	10½	11	46½
7 September 1932	Worcester	20	8	13	12	53

The timings previously found by Arthur Walker for three movements provide a possible cross-check for Thompson's timings of the 3 November 1909 performance by Elgar in Leeds.<sup>7</sup> Walker's copy recorded 19 + 6 + 12 (totalling 37 minutes)

6 BLSC 164, cutting from YP, Thursday 10 Sept 1925.

7 Arthur D. Walker, 'Symphony No. 1 – A Paper Trail to its Past', *Elgar Society Journal* 12/

compared with Thompson's 18½ + 7½ + 12 (38 minutes). There is a substantial difference between their timings of the second movement – a scurry of 6 minutes in the Walker timing but 7½ as noted by Thompson. Since we know how Thompson recorded his timings, and that he had a miniature score to confirm the point of transition between the middle movements, it seems reasonable to suppose that his timings are more accurate.

Thompson also recorded the timings of three Richter performances, which were appreciably slower than Elgar's. These are shown below, with the anonymous timings discovered by Arthur Walker as a comparison for the March 1909 Bradford performance.

### **Thompson timings for Richter's performances**

*(Including in italics anonymous timings for Bradford performance)*

Date	Location	I	II	III	IV	Total
3 March 1909	Bradford	19½	8½	11½	13½	53
<i>3 March 1909</i>	<i>Bradford</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>7½</i>	<i>10½</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>51</i>
5 October 1909	Birmingham	20	8½	12	13½	54
2 November 1909	Leeds	20	8	11½	13	52½

Interestingly, the divide between brisker and slower performance – between what one might call the Boult and Barbirolli performing traditions of fifty years later – goes all the way back to 1909, and continues to this day. Vive la difference!

I could find no record of Thompson having heard and timed one of the many performances by Thomas Beecham and his New Symphony Orchestra in 1909. We know of Beecham's cuts from the famous slap down of Havergal Brian in the *Musical Times* (a criticism which Thompson supported in the *Yorkshire Post*),<sup>8</sup> but very little of the character or pace either of his truncated version or his performance of the whole work ('with all the repeats' as Beecham is supposed to have told his orchestra). Nor is there any Thompson review or timings for the legendary Nikisch performance with the LSO in June 1909.

### **Thompson's view of the Symphony**

Thompson's reviews of all these performance for the *Yorkshire Post* are not as enlightening as one would hope on the interpretative differences between Elgar and Richter. Inevitably some of the differences in 1909 will be accounted for by the orchestras rather than their conductors. Thompson heard performances conducted by Richter only with the Hallé Orchestra, but by Elgar with either the Queen's Hall Orchestra or London Symphony Orchestra (in its own name or as 'The Orchestra' at the Hereford Festival of 1909).

In reviewing Richter's performance in Leeds, Thompson felt that his 'especial

4 (July 2002), 209-10.

8 BLSC MS 164, cutting from YP, Friday 3 December 1909.

power' was to achieve 'cohesion' and to 'make the music move along irresistibly', particularly in the first and last movements. By contrast, he noted Elgar's Leeds performance had 'nervous' and 'fiery energy' which 'carried one away' in the Finale 'but did not give it the sustained dignity which one seems to require here'. However he did regard the Elgar performance as a whole to be 'exceedingly fine' and thought the Adagio 'could rarely if ever had a more finished rendering'.<sup>9</sup> Generally he has more to say about the effect of the venue on the performance than the interpretative quirks of the conductor or the playing of the orchestra. Thompson certainly felt the work gained from performance in the big space – and absence of applause – of the Three Choirs Cathedrals. He took issue with an apology in the programme note for the 1909 Hereford performance for giving a symphony in a cathedral (although the same note and apology were repeated in the programme book for Hereford in 1930).<sup>10</sup>

Thompson's short review of the performance at the 1925 Gloucester Festival well sums up his assessment of the middle movements. He says that the Scherzo is 'brilliant if occasionally feverish' and the Adagio 'suggests a pure and abiding faith – one of the noblest things [Elgar] has ever given us'. There are very similar comments in the reviews of earlier performances, and his admiration for the Adagio was warm indeed from the outset. By contrast, he struggled to find great enthusiasm for either the first movement Allegro or the Finale. In the Gloucester review he uses again his favourite adjective – 'strenuous' – for the first Allegro. On the Finale he had previously suggested concern as to its 'angularity' or 'patchiness', although he says of the Gloucester performance that Elgar 'took it at a quicker tempo than he used to', and its 'intentional roughness was less in evidence'.<sup>11</sup>

His view was that the Symphony 'demands and repays frequent hearing'. This led Thompson to a moment of critical loftiness, doubting 'whether it was wise to offer so ingenuous an audience' – at Doncaster in October 1909 – 'such a complicated and exacting work'. He softened his panning of an audience 'accustomed to lighter fare' by acknowledging that Elgar 'is too thoroughly human a musician not to appeal to a far wider circle of the public'.<sup>12</sup> But one can imagine how a review in which *Leeds critic slams Doncaster audience* (as a tabloid sub-editor would put it) would go down today.

Thompson remained a sceptic as to the composer's intention or meaning in this work, believing that the composer had given no clues on this score. One might find jarring his conclusion that 'an intentional vagueness leaves the listener to supply his own interpretation' as to the 'feelings', 'programme or pictorial idea' which Elgar may have had in mind. But is that not very close to Elgar's own – too little quoted – preference for 'the listener to draw what he can from the music he hears' and 'to identify his own experiences with the music as he hears it unfold'?<sup>13</sup>

9 The same, cuttings from YP, Wednesday 3 and Thursday 4 November 1909.

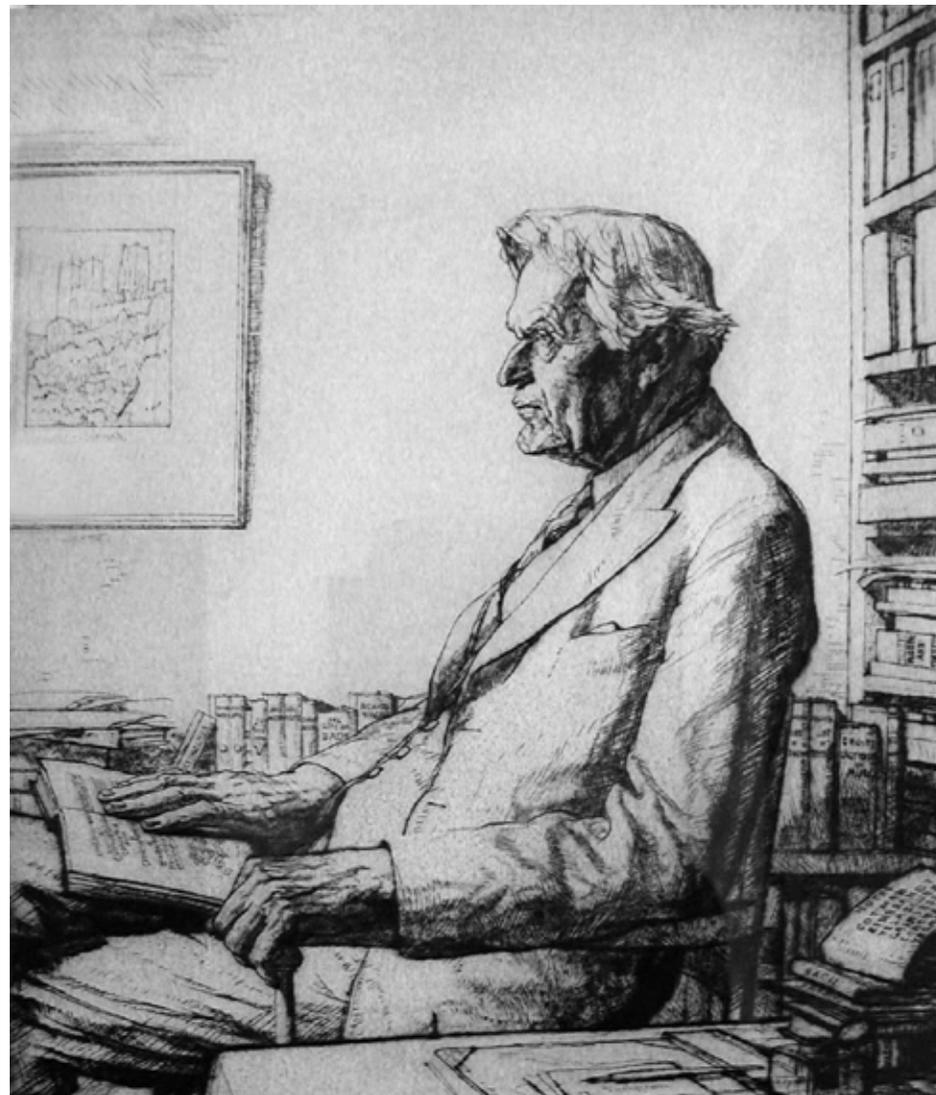
10 The same, cutting from YP, Friday 10 September 1909.

11 The same, cutting from YP, Thursday 10 September 1925.

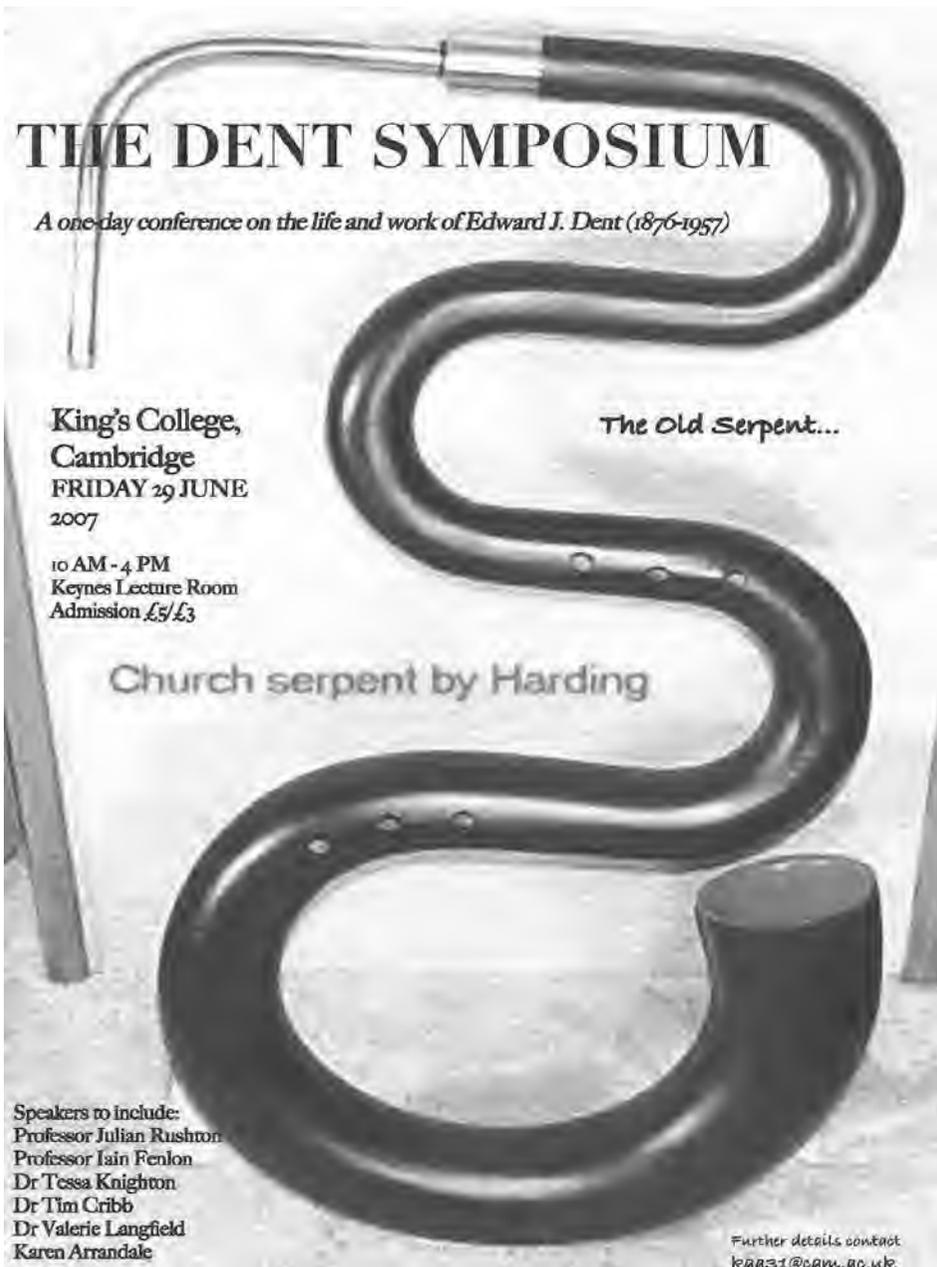
12 The same, cutting from YP, Friday 29 October 1909.

13 Elgar's letter of 4 November 1908 to Ernest Newman, in Jerrold Northrop Moore (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford University Press, 1990), 200.

Figure 5: Cartoon of Herbert Thompson in his study in 1936 (Brotherton Library)



Tom Kelly is retired and lives in Edinburgh where he and his wife Maureen are active members of the Scottish Branch of the Elgar Society. He is a newly elected member of the Society's Council, and edits replies to the 'You asked' section of the Society's website (<http://www.elgar.org/1queries.htm>).



Poster for the Dent Symposium in Cambridge, 29 June 2007, reminding us that Dent was known as 'The Old Serpent'

## Elgar and Academe (1): Dent, Forsyth, and what is English Music?

Julian Rushton<sup>1</sup>

'For Elgar's ears, English music was too unemotional and too rarely ran the risk of vulgarity'.

Nobody, so far as I know, has ever made the above assertion. However, many readers of the *Journal* will recognize my inversion of a sentence in Edward J. Dent's contribution to Guido Adler's *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* ('Handbook of Music History'), first published in 1924 (naturally in German). Dent's essay was updated for the second edition of 1930, but his comments on Elgar remain unaltered – not surprisingly, given that Elgar had composed very little in the meantime.<sup>2</sup> The whole paragraph is worth reproducing.

Elgar came on the musical scene later than the others [of his generation: Parry, Stanford, Mackenzie, Cowen], and startled listeners by the unusual brilliance of his orchestration and his music's red-hot emotion. Like Mackenzie, he was a violinist by calling, and he studied Liszt's works, which disgusted conservative musical academics. On top of this, he was a Catholic; and he was more or less self-taught, lacking most of the literary education of Parry and Stanford. He first came to attention in the 1890s; a cantata *Caractacus* was performed in Leeds in 1898, and in 1900 he produced *The Dream of Gerontius*, a setting based on Cardinal Newman's semi-dramatic poem about death and purgatory. Then came another two oratorios, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. For English ears, Elgar's music is over-emotional and not entirely free from vulgarity. His orchestral works – variations, two symphonies, concertos for violin and violoncello, and several overtures – are lively in colour, but pompous in style and with

- 1 These thoughts are partly adapted from one of four 'essays' with which BBC Radio 3 celebrated Elgar's 150th anniversary, recorded on 26 May 2007 and broadcast on 4 June at 11.00 p.m. In an earlier issue (November 2007) we printed another of these essays, by Nalini Ghuman. The others, by David Cannadine and Stephen Hough, are related to their chapters in the multi-authored *Elgar, an Anniversary Portrait* (London: Continuum, 2007).
- 2 Edward J. Dent, 'Engländer', part of a multi-author chapter 'Moderne', in Guido Adler (ed.), *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Berlin: Max Hesses Verlag, 1930), 1044–57. Alterations include the date of Charles Wood's death – important for Dent who succeeded him as Professor of Music at Cambridge – and comments on recent works by various composers, up to 1929.

an affected chivalry in expression. His best orchestral work is the symphonic poem *Falstaff*, even though it is weakened by too close a dependence on the programme; nevertheless, it is a work of great originality and strength. His chamber music (Violin sonata, String quartet and Piano quintet) is dry and academic.<sup>3</sup>

Elgar's friends and admirers in England apparently came across this curious text only with the second edition. As Brian Trowell has pointed out, in 1924 Dent was working as an independent scholar and journalist who had published fine books on Alessandro Scarlatti and on Mozart's operas. Had his comments become known at that time, they might have caused less of a furore; but by 1930 Dent occupied one of the most prestigious of educational positions, Professor of Music at Cambridge, in close succession to Charles Villiers Stanford.<sup>4</sup> Dent was also a leader – arguably the leader – of British musicology, in his role as President of the Musical Association from 1928–1935.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he was committed to the promotion of new music in a third role, the presidency of the International Society for Contemporary Music. His international connections were also with scholars, and in 1931 he was elected president of the International Musicological Society. His role in the development of British musicology would be hard to overestimate.

Nevertheless, Dent's chapter, buried within 1200 pages of smallish print in Adler's *Handbuch*, was probably dashed off without much thought as to likely reactions in Britain. In order to explain British music to a German readership, he found it necessary to divide recent history into periods. He first discussed briefly the perceived low state of British music since Purcell, a condition disputed in modern scholarship that places more emphasis on musical culture in general – which was booming in Britain all the time – and less emphasis on the production of great composers, in which Britain did only a little better than nowadays with tennis players. Dent's attitude would have been widely shared at the time, if it not universally, for Britain where art music is concerned was (as Dent noted) much affected by xenophilia – not only importing foreign performers, but unresistingly accepting the dominant influence of successive visiting composers (Haydn, Mendelssohn, Spohr, Gounod). And over the previous 200 years there brooded the shadow of the German who came and stayed; Handel's oratorios remained the staple fare of the great choral festivals and magnificent venues such as the Crystal Palace and Royal Albert Hall.

In Dent's essay, a passing mention of William Sterndale Bennett rounds off the first paragraph. He then divides his comments into the periods 1880–1900 ('early renaissance'), 1900–1915 (a distinctively English style is developed under the

3 Dent, op. cit., p. 1047; my translation. Prior analysis of this paragraph is in Brian Trowell, 'Elgar's Use of Literature', in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Edward Elgar. Music and Literature* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993, 182–326, see 182–6); see also Aidan Thomson, 'Elgar's Critical Critics', in Byron Adams (Ed.), *Elgar and his World* (Princeton University Press, 2007), 193–222.

4 Stanford's former student and direct successor, Charles Wood, occupied the chair only from 1924–1926. Both had previously been Dent's teachers. Stanford, incidentally, is the most recent Cambridge professor of music to be knighted.

5 Founded in 1874, and now the Royal Musical Association, this was the second national musicological society to be founded, preceded only by that in Holland.

influence of folk music), and 1915–1929. With the benefit of hindsight these lines seem more arbitrary than they may have appeared at the time. Dent accepted the notion of a musical renaissance in Britain, but for the benefit of a German readership he identified its first period as one in which English music came most strongly under the influence of Brahms and Wagner, partially displacing Mendelssohn and Spohr among the moderns.<sup>6</sup> After naming several German musicians prominent in British musical life, Dent composed a panegyric for two of the senior British composers of the time. Dent called Parry 'leader of the musical renaissance' in England, but he also considered Stanford in detail. The section on these two composers occupies some two and a half pages (the paragraph on Elgar is about one third of a page).<sup>7</sup>

In a purely chronological – or biological – sense, Dent was not wrong to regard Elgar (b. 1857) as a contemporary of Parry (b. 1848) and Stanford (b. 1852). In grouping these together with Alexander Mackenzie (b. 1847), and Frederic Cowen (b. 1852), Dent followed the *History of Music* by Stanford and Cecil Forsyth, published a few years earlier.<sup>8</sup> It was Forsyth who wrote the section on contemporary British composers, included in 'Nationalism. Modern Schools', but Stanford no doubt read and approved it.<sup>9</sup> Forsyth begins the section on English [sic] music by mentioning Purcell, and the recent renaissance (his italics): 'but ... England has no Glinka'. An account of English philistinism follows that Elgar might have applauded. Then Forsyth proceeds to list recent composers with a few comments on each, the method later adopted by Dent. The war may account for Forsyth's belittling the importance of various composers' studies in Germany (the footnote on p. 314, 'Elgar did some work at Leipzig', is vague and essentially untrue). The 'group' under consideration is diverse, rather than a tightly-knit unit like the Russian 'five' described in Forsyth's previous section, and includes Sullivan, Mackenzie, Parry, Thomas, Stanford, and Cowen ('a West Indian Jew'), as well as Elgar.<sup>10</sup> Stanford is hailed as 'the man of

6 Schumann and other German musicians were also prominent in British musical life. Elgar certainly knew Schumann's music before his visit to Leipzig, when Schumann became, at least for a while, his 'ideal'. The English discovery of Schubert took place across this period (see Leanne Langley: 'New Thoughts on Schubert in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century England', *The Schubertian*, No. 58 (January 2008), 8–16; G.B. Shaw placed Hermann Goetz 'securely above all other German composers of the last hundred years, saving only Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, and Wagner' (pointedly omitting Schubert and Brahms: see Dan H. Laurence, ed., *Shaw's Music* (London: The Bodley Head, 1981), iii, 39), but his works are not among those Peter Dennison lists as heard by Elgar (Dennison, 'Elgar's Musical Apprenticeship', in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Elgar Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 1–34).

7 To be precise: Parry and Stanford together have 94 lines, with another fifteen on Stanford in a section on opera. The main entries on Delius, Holst, and Vaughan Williams are respectively 22, 15, and 24 lines; Elgar gets 16 lines.

8 Charles Villiers Stanford and Cecil Forsyth, *A History of Music* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1916).

9 Op. cit., chapter XVI, 303–354; the English section 313–22. Forsyth went to America in 1914, so it seems likely that Stanford played a role in seeing the work through the press.

10 In the light of this nasty epithet, and Stanford's association with the History, it is worth

widest achievement in this group' (p. 316) – which may only mean that Stanford was the only one whose career as both symphonist and composer of opera had an international dimension. On Elgar he writes as follows:

Elgar, the youngest of this group, reaped where the others had sowed. Cut off from his contemporaries by the circumstances of his religion and his want of regular academic training, he was lucky enough to enter the field and find the preliminary ploughing already done. His early works, such as *The Black Knight*, *King Olaf*, and *Caractacus*, had no great success; but with the appearance of the *Enigma Variations*, the *Sea Pictures*, and the beautiful oratorio *Gerontius* he established a European reputation. Since then he has published among other works the overtures *In the South* and *Cockaigne*, the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches, and the *Violin Concerto*. Neither of his two enormous symphonies has been genuinely successful. Nor can his later oratorios *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* be said to rival *Gerontius*. Elgar is a master of orchestral decoration. His subjects, suavely indefinite, often lack distinction; but his treatment of them is strongly personal. A certain Aristidian air, a want of humour, and an inability to interest himself in English music as a part of music [sic] have combined to isolate him somewhat in the minds of his fellow-workers.<sup>11</sup>

It will not escape notice that the only composition actually praised is *Gerontius* ('beautiful': the word 'Catholic' is not mentioned, but note the earlier implication that Elgar adhered to the wrong religion). Forsyth makes no mention of *Falstaff*, the work Dent, unusually for the period, singled out as Elgar's best. Dent's view finds supporters today, who might or might not dispute his remark about dependence on the programme. Forsyth managed to miss humour in *The Wand of Youth*; and wit in the *Variations*. If this disgraceful paragraph was drafted before 1913, when *Falstaff* appeared, it will occasion no surprise that Stanford failed to update material on a composer with whom he was not on good terms, and who at the period of publication (1916) was undertaking useful war work such as *Polonia* and *The Spirit of England*. Surely Forsyth did not expect, from Elgar, the elaborate donnish humour of Stanford's *Ode to Discord*; he may have been thinking of some of his teacher's lighter (and charming) songs, such as 'The Crow' and 'Daddy Long Legs' from *Cushendall*, or Suckling's 'Why so pale and wan, fond lover?', admirably set by both Parry and Stanford.<sup>12</sup> But in such concise historical accounts, songs are barely considered worthy of mention, which perhaps explains Forsyth's failure to name Maude Valerie White (b. 1855) and Liza Lehmann (b. 1862).<sup>13</sup>

That Elgar 'reaped where others had sowed' hardly merits comment when the same can be said of Purcell, Bach, Mozart, Brahms, and others. Of the benefit of academic training, moreover, there may be more than one opinion; before and after

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mentioning that Paul Rodmell shows evidence that Stanford, at least, was not anti-Semitic. Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 348.

11 Stanford and Forsyth, *A History of Music*, 316–7.

12 *Cushendall* Op. 118 (1910). The settings of 'Why so pale ...' are available in *Musica Britannica*, edited by Geoffrey Bush (Parry, xlix (1982), 39; Stanford, lii (1986), 19).

13 Dent ignores these composers too, and says of Quilter only that he 'has written many charming songs [entzückende Lieder]' (Dent, *ibid.*, 1052).

Elgar, Berlioz and Schoenberg were 'essentially' self-taught, and Dent says as much of Delius. Perhaps the most astounding observation in Forsyth's brief account is that 'Neither of his two enormous symphonies has been genuinely successful'. In what way, one might ask, was the enormous success of Elgar's first symphony not genuine? What speaks in this comment, all too clearly, is the committed Stanford pupil. Paul Rodmell agrees with Lewis Foreman that Stanford's remarkably concise Seventh Symphony, completed in 1912, was 'a reaction to the self-indulgence and blatancy, as Stanford saw it [sic], of Elgar's symphonies', while rightly pointing out that Stanford's characteristic structural inventiveness is hardly explained that way.<sup>14</sup> If the post-Brahmsian structure of Elgar's symphonies may have given them a superficially old-fashioned air, their musical content should surely have precluded such a criticism.

Forsyth follows with an observation of the kind Stravinsky might have labelled 'reptilian': 'Elgar is a master of orchestral decoration'.<sup>15</sup> 'Decorative' in this period is not a word of unmixed approval. Forsyth's apparent dismissal of that aspect of Elgar's art seems only a little at odds with the limited use he made of Elgar in his more important work, the treatise on orchestration published in 1914.<sup>16</sup> Stanford might have applauded his pupil's final paragraph, with its reference to a 'certain Aristidian air ... and an inability to interest himself in English music'. 'Aristidian', absent from the Oxford English Dictionary, is another reptilian snap at Elgar's lack of a classical education.<sup>17</sup> We may agree that Elgar's treatment of his themes is personal, but Forsyth does not add that it is resourceful and effective. And the ideas themselves, surely, are strongly personal. Were it not so, Anthony Payne could hardly have performed his rescue work on the Third Symphony. There may be some truth in the implication that Elgar was somewhat isolated from his 'fellow-workers', but only if that is taken to mean fellow composers, from whom his isolation was perhaps deliberate; he remained close to a large number of other musicians. Any such isolation was surely exacerbated in his widowhood, and thus by the time (perhaps c.1922) Dent wrote his article for Adler.

When Forsyth moves from Elgar to Delius, we have advance warning, as it were, of Dent's chronological separation of these contemporaries whom hindsight connects by their deaths in the same year. Forsyth dubs Delius the first of 'the second group – almost all pupils of the first group' (which Delius, of course, was not). It is hardly an excuse that he gives Delius's date of birth as 1863 rather than 1862.<sup>18</sup>

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14 Rodmell, *op. cit.*, 269–71.

15 'Chef d'oeuvre is characteristically reptilian': Stravinsky's comment on a critique of his own work by Paul Henry Lang (lightly disguised as 'Langweilich'), which called a complex but short work 'the new chef d'oeuvre'. Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* (New York, Doubleday, 1959), 175. This section is not included in the English edition because of the difference in libel laws.

16 Cecil Forsyth, *Orchestration* (London: Macmillan and Stainer and Bell: 1914).

17 Aristides, known as 'the Just', the Athenian general and statesman who fought at Marathon and Salamis, was of an aloof and militarily conservative disposition.

18 The level of accuracy leaves something to be desired in other parts of Forsyth's chapter. That Delius 'is English by birth, but Dutch–German–French by heredity, taste, and

Yet Forsyth proceeded more randomly than a grouping by decade of birth seems to suggest. After speeding rapidly through Delius, Granville Bantock, and Hamish MacCunn to William Wallace and Edward German, he reaches 'Miss E.M. Smyth ... the amazingly Teutonic and forceful composer of the operas *Fantasio*, *Der Wald*, and *The Wreckers*'. Smyth, of course, was less than a year younger than Elgar, and had major works performed in London well before him.<sup>19</sup> His disingenuous view of Smyth as no contemporary of Mackenzie, Cowen, Parry, and Stanford, and his failure to include her among those who studied in Germany, was probably to do with her being female. Dent notes that she studied in Leipzig, but discusses her only in his section on opera.

Dent follows Forsyth in bending biological chronology to suit an overall pattern affected by a genuine admiration for Parry and Stanford that may have seemed strikingly out of date by 1930. Dent wrote that 'Elgar entered the musical scene later than' Parry, Stanford, Mackenzie, and Cowen. In fact he was nearer in age to Delius than to Stanford (although Dent like Forsyth assumes Delius was born in 1863): Delius, after all, produced several highly characteristic works in the 1890s – *Koanga*, *Appalachia*, *Paris* – the decade in which Dent agrees that Elgar first came to prominence. It would be more justifiable to consider Elgar as belonging, with Delius, to a distinctly younger and musically more progressive generation than Mackenzie, Parry, and Stanford. And it would be more helpful, and historically intelligible, to group composers by the period in which they produced their major works, in which case Elgar should be included among those who flourished in the period 1900–1915 period, alongside Delius – and, in European terms, alongside Mahler and Strauss – rather than with Parry and Stanford who were heavily involved in the musical life of London while Elgar was still struggling to teach the violin to beginners in Malvern.

[to be continued]

## MUSIC REVIEW

### **Elgar Complete Edition Vol. 37: Music for Violin**

Elgar Society Edition (2007)

Edited by Clive Brown

ISBN 1-904856-37-3

The Elgar Society Edition is making steady progress in its attempts to complete Novello's original scheme for an Elgar Complete Edition. Volume 37 of the 43-volume project, with its handsome red imitation leather binding and gold embossed lettering, represents the collection's most complex musicological endeavour yet. It fills a long-standing need for a critically edited musical text of Elgar's extensive output for violin/violin and piano, many examples of which are better known in arrangements for a variety of other instrumental combinations.

Comprising more than 350 pages, this publication is among the largest of the project's seventeen volumes that have appeared to date. It incorporates scholarly editions of the Violin Sonata and 26 miniatures, including the popular *Salut d'Amour* op.12, *La Capricieuse* op.17, *Chanson de Nuit* op.15 no.1, and *Chanson de Matin* op.15 no.2; and lesser-known pieces such as Elgar's first completed work, *Reminiscences*; the *Romance* op.1; *Une Idylle (esquisse facile)* op.4 no.1; *Bizarrerie* op.13 no.1; and the original, technically challenging version of the *Gavotte*. It embraces, too, works that have become more familiar in orchestral guise or other authorised arrangements, such as *Canto Popolare* (from *In the South*) and *Sospiri* op.70. Elgar's arrangements for violin and piano also form part of the package, including versions of Kreutzer's Studies nos. 2, 8 and 13, along with nine studies (taking in the five *Études Caractéristiques* op.24) and fifteen exercises for solo violin. Thirty-one sketches and unfinished drafts are accommodated as an appendix. Significantly, too, the volume identifies much material hitherto unknown, including a previously unrecorded autograph of the *Sérénade Lyrique*, corrects many long-standing textual errors and publishes Elgar's violin exercises and incomplete pieces for the first time.

Clive Brown has cast his editor's net widely for source materials. His thorough investigations have taken particular account of the printed and manuscript holdings of the British Library and the Elgar Birthplace Museum, but have also included materials housed in numerous other libraries in Britain and abroad. As his intensive searches have uncovered surprisingly few copies of early editions of Elgar's violin music in public collections, Brown warns that 'it remains uncertain whether all printed sources issued during Elgar's lifetime, which may have had direct input from the composer, have been located'. He has therefore taken pains to provide full details of the title pages of all early editions identified, in each case referencing them to a particular copy (or copies) of which the provenance is recorded. The locations of known sketches, fair copies and corrected proofs of published works have also been listed, as far as possible, in chronological order.

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residence' (317) hardly passes muster. Worse, Forsyth distinguishes Tschaiakowsky [sic] from the other Russians: 'He had Jewish blood in him and was not so strictly national a composer as Rimsky-Korsakoff or Moussorgsky [sic twice more] ... to Russia he was semi-foreign' (311).

19 Smyth had works performed at the Crystal Palace in 1890, and at the Royal Albert Hall (Mass in D) in 1893.

In the course of his authoritative evaluation and interpretation of the sources, Brown has uncovered what appears to be another Elgarian 'enigma'. It has long been believed that *Salut d'amour* enjoyed enormous popularity in its first edition, published by Schott in 1889. Indeed, Elgar recorded in a letter (1897) to the publisher Novello that '3000 copies were sold in the month of January alone'. The absence of the first edition from all the major copyright libraries in England and abroad suggests, however, that it may not have been as successful as its composer implied. Only a single copy appears to have survived, one presented by Elgar to the piece's dedicatee, his wife, on her birthday in 1892. The piece's second edition of 1899, however, was undoubtedly a huge success in its numerous arrangements.

Brown introduces the volume with an informative foreword, in which he establishes the historical context, genesis and premiere of the works under his microscope. Interestingly, he confirms Elgar's insistence that the violin, rather than the piano, was his instrument, but points out that no recordings or ear-witness accounts of his violin playing are known. Furthermore, while Elgar was intensely preoccupied with violin playing and teaching in the early part of his career, he appears to have allowed the violin gradually to take second place to composition from about the mid 1880s, giving up the instrument almost entirely in the early 1900s after he had gained national recognition as a composer.

The early part of Elgar's career was richly productive in miniatures for the instrument, with or without piano accompaniment, even if his involvement then with what Brown calls 'more serious forms' included only sketches (for example, some impressive sonata movement fragments from 1878 and 1887). Brown has classified these short compositions broadly into categories of 'pedagogic', 'virtuoso', and 'light'; and he rightly claims that they 'illuminate ... an important aspect of Elgar's art and personality, and are crucial for understanding his development as a composer'.

The one major work in the 'more serious forms' is, of course, Elgar's last and finest for violin and piano, the Sonata in E minor op. 82, of which the numerous available sketches, drafts, manuscript fair copies and printed scores/parts have been painstakingly examined. Brown even consulted a recording of the work made in 1935 by Albert (Brown erroneously calls him Alfred in one reference) Sammons and William Murdoch, both of whom were prominent musicians in Elgar's circle, to provide 'a further perspective on a number of problematic passages'.

Brown explains his methodology with the utmost clarity and detail. He applies it consistently and scrupulously, taking his editorial role as an all-embracing one. He describes his sources in full and discusses their classification and use, incorporating some sample pages in facsimile to confirm the context. He explains and defends his choice of readings in the critical apparatus, noting religiously all relevant discrepancies between the various sources and justifying the interpretative thinking that led to his decisions. Evidence is rarely (if ever) misrepresented or left ambiguous without comment.

The musical texts of pieces from *La Capricieuse* onwards presented Brown with few problems other than the rectification of minor errors or inconsistencies. However, he has approached with some caution those of the violin pieces that were published in Elgar's years of obscurity as a composer, as many of these texts were later reissued with revisions when Elgar became better known.

Regrettably, the reviser's identity is in many cases unknown and it is impossible to confirm whether this role was undertaken by Elgar himself, an anonymous editor, or a combination of the composer and a third party. The scant availability of early editions in public collections and the paucity of available evidence in publishers' archives have added to this editorial problem, which Brown has overcome in such instances by providing both versions of the musical text.

Brown's edition irons out various confusions about Elgar's designated opus numbers, largely for some of his early works, and it is also valuable for its discussion of performance practices in the composer's time. Although detailed descriptions of Elgar's violin playing are sparse, Brown draws helpful conclusions about aspects of the composer's playing style, using Elgar's sometimes irregular annotations of bowings and fingerings as a guide. Furthermore, for the sake of clarity or completeness, he has supplemented Elgar's fingerings and bowings as necessary in conformance with period style, the composer's other performance annotations, or from reference to contemporary recordings. His sensible recommendations, tried and tested in his own performances, will be of immense practical value, even though they occasionally result in an over-cluttered text.

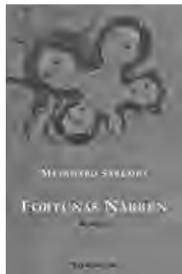
In discussing the two modes of arpeggio indication employed in Elgar's manuscripts and some of the early editions, Brown has no reason to believe any difference of execution is implied; however, he emphasises the importance of 'a substantial amount of freely interpolated arpeggiation and anticipation of bass notes' in recreating the playing style of the period. He also highlights the various forms of up- and down-bow markings, warning against confusing the inverted up-bow marking with the indication for an accent. In considering Elgar's own attitudes towards vibrato and portamento, Brown opines that the composer was trained in an older tradition. Surviving fingerings imply that he used vibrato selectively and sparingly, but that a frequent and pronounced portamento, sometimes involving successive sliding both up and down (and often to or from a harmonic), was integral to his style of playing.

All in all, this is a fine and handsome edition. The fruit of meticulous scholarly research and scrupulous attention to detail, it employs the highest critical editorial principles and provides substantially accurate musical texts for both scholarly and practical use. Numerous inconsistencies have been ironed out and few questions have remained elusive. Although errors or discrepancies are almost inevitable in a project of this scale, these are few and far between, and users will certainly feel able to consider themselves in possession of the best available knowledge about this most enjoyable music.

Robin Stowell

*Robin Stowell is Professor and Head of the School of Music at Cardiff University. Among his publications are Violin Technique and Performance Practice in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries (Cambridge University Press, 1985) and the Cambridge Music Handbook on Beethoven's Violin Concerto. He has also edited the Cambridge Companions to the Cello, the Violin, and the String Quartet and is now working on a monograph, The Violin, for Yale University Press.*

## BOOK REVIEW



### **Meinhard Saremba: Fortunas Narren, a novel**

Schweinfurt: Wiesenburg-Verlag, 2007

A young German radio journalist, Laura Wilmar, is an Elgar enthusiast, and also a warm admirer of Jacqueline du Pré whose death takes place during the action of this novel. Laura is in England in the course of preparing a programme on Elgar. She has teamed up with Robert Gerson, a fellow journalist who is researching the life of his musician grandfather. The latter had emigrated from Germany in 1933, changing his name to Jack Rosen. One of the enjoyable aspects of the novel is that through their contacts in Britain they meet a variety of other people interested in Elgar; it isn't often that one reads a novel in which the protagonists, and several other characters, are musicologists and music journalists.

The most important of these contacts is, however, a shady apothecary, delightfully named Artemis Pye. He has developed a remarkable obsession with Lady Elgar, being convinced he can prove that her death came about by slow poisoning: Alice was murdered by Edward because of 'five women, money, and freedom'. Pye is (understandably) at odds with the Elgar Society and most of the other characters, but his theories are so convincingly expressed that they almost persuade Laura. Pye's obsession leads to an exciting denouement when he secretly digs up Alice's body – but perhaps, as this book depends a good deal on suspense, it would be wrong to give away more twists in the plot. Other cameo roles are a member of the Elgar Society (Fiona Wortley), who helps Laura, and Donald Summers, a bearded amateur archivist who in one of the novel's key moments unexpectedly produces a recording of Rosen playing the Elgar violin sonata with the composer. This confirms Robert's hope that his grandfather knew the great composer and had become a musical success in Britain. Alas, however, it is a fake. Ironically, evidence that they did indeed know each other emerges at the end, but Robert by this time is dead, and his developing and loving relationship with Laura is cruelly extinguished.

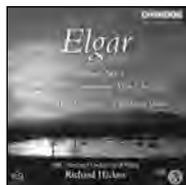
Readers of the Elgar Society Journal will no doubt view all this in the spirit in which it is intended: an enjoyable thriller rather than a historical novel. Truth to history isn't relevant; the theories and discoveries serve a dramatic imperative and are not intended to solve any genuine historical mysteries. (Nor

should we worry too much about minor slips in certain names.) Saremba's prose is sometimes verbosely rhapsodic, but also dryly humorous, with some effective details of characterization. The general tone is somewhat heavy, and the dialogues sometimes sound a little as if lifted from textbooks: Saremba is unable to resist peppering his prose with erudite morsels, managing within the space of a few pages to demonstrate his intimate technical knowledge of such diverse subjects as cacti, organs, tea, and dinosaurs, not to mention biographical information about Alice. Despite these reservations, I did enjoy the novel very much. Although we get somewhat bogged down in Laura's difficult family relationships, the plot line is filled with titillating details and it is particularly interesting to look at the English characters through the eyes of the German protagonists; while the 'revelations' about the enigmatic composer are highly entertaining.

Edward Rushton

*Edward Rushton is a free-lance composer living in Zürich. His most recent opera, Im Schatten des Maulbeerbaums, was premiered at the Zürich Opera House on 27 January 2008.*

## CD REVIEWS



Chandos  
CHSA 5057

**Elgar/Payne: Symphony No. 3; Pomp and Circumstance March No. 6; Queen Alexandra's Memorial Ode**  
BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Richard Hickox

This is the fourth recording of the Elgar/Payne Third Symphony, following the premiere recording by Andrew Davis and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Colin Davis and the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO Live), and Paul Daniel and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (Naxos). I understand that a fifth is expected from Montreal. Hickox is an experienced Elgar conductor and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales an excellent Elgarian orchestra, so this recording doesn't disappoint. I have a soft spot for Andrew Davis's CD, recorded shortly after the BBC gave the world premiere of the symphony. It has a grandeur and nobility that is very moving. I also like the Naxos version: the leaner sounding Bournemouth strings and the urgency of Daniel's conducting give the work an edge and bite that is most compelling. Hickox falls midway between the two. His first movement is kept moving, and that astonishing opening is launched with dramatic verve. The orchestra is excellent throughout, helped by Chandos's rich but clear recording. To my mind the second movement (Scherzo) is the least convincing, lacking the depth and heft of the similar movement in the two completed symphonies, but perhaps it does add some relief before the anguish of the third movement. The Naxos scherzo is fleeter and has an airier feel to the textures, but Hickox and his orchestra are fine in the slow movement, and in the pageantry of the finale. The wind-down to the enigmatic coda is beautifully gauged. I don't think that anyone would be disappointed with any of the recordings, and this disc certainly complements Hickox's versions of the first two symphonies in fine style.

What may tip the balance for some listeners is the fact that this is the only disc to include extra music. In this case it is Anthony Payne's completion of *Pomp and Circumstance* March No. 6, and his orchestration of the *Queen Alexandra Memorial Ode*. I can't quite make up my mind about P&C No. 6; we know Elgar originally intended to write six marches, and this one has a distant affinity with No. 3, but with its references to the piano improvisations and a blatant crib from the *Empire March* I feel it is a thing of shreds and patches. Still, better to have it than not, I suppose, and the performance is fine. On the

other hand, *Queen Alexandra's Memorial Ode* ('So Many True Princesses Who Have Gone') is a miniature masterpiece. Written in 1932 for the unveiling of a memorial to the late consort of King Edward VII, it was performed by choir and military band, conducted by the composer (the young David Willcocks was a chorister). The band parts have disappeared, leaving only the choral parts and Elgar's original piano score. Anthony Payne has now orchestrated it with that uncanny feeling he has for Elgar's orchestral textures, and it is to be hoped that it will restore the work to more frequent performance. It is a fine example of Elgar's noble melancholy which here surfaces for one final time.

Barry Collett

**Violin Concerto in B minor, op. 61**  
**Serenade for Strings, op. 20**

James Ehnes

Philharmonia Orchestra/Andrew Davis

This recording pairs the young Canadian James Ehnes (30 at the time of the recording) with a masterly Elgarian, Andrew Davis. It was recorded live in May 2007 over two performances at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. The spontaneity of live recording is captured perfectly but, to this reviewer's relief, the intonation is impeccable, making the task of repeated listening an unadulterated pleasure.

Surprisingly, it is Davis's first recording of the concerto, and he maintains that, of all the violinists with whom he has performed it over the years, Ehnes is the finest. It was trailed in November 2007's *Elgar Society News*, with Ehnes recalling that he was unimpressed with the work when young: 'The first couple of times I heard the piece, I just couldn't get through it – just couldn't keep awake ... I've changed now!' And how! This disc is irresistible.

The orchestral introduction is shaped beautifully by Davis and the Philharmonia, and I was struck by the similarity of effect to that of the *Meditation* in *The Light of Life*: each could be shaped and performed as a satisfying and expressive miniature, but its impact is even greater as the prelude to something larger. Just as the quiet entry of the chorus in the earlier work is both the end to the *Meditation* and the start of the drama, so when the violin makes its first entry, it quietly but emphatically draws a line under the exposition and anticipates the highly charged, emotional adventure to follow. So, from the first notes, the stage is set for a deeply thoughtful account. Ehnes's tone when playing the 'Ex Marsick' Stradivarius of 1715 is astonishingly sweet and lyrical. He



ONYX 4025

and the orchestra are well balanced, making the interplay between them deeply satisfying. It is not an heroic reading, but sensitive and wistful; Ehnes takes the first movement unhurriedly, bringing out the nuances without losing sight of the overall shape. As Davis says, 'he actually plays what Elgar wrote – and so musically!' Nevertheless, dwelling on each detail doesn't make the movement drag; the virtuoso fireworks are tossed off with technique to spare, and the ending is thrilling. In fact, comparing this with three or four other recordings, including the fine 1984 Kennedy/LPO/Handley account, I was surprised to note that Ehnes is at least a minute shorter in each movement than the others, and the third movement is two and a half minutes shorter than Kennedy's.

There is a quietly rapturous feel to the second movement, and the Philharmonia matches the sweetness of Ehnes's tone perfectly. Davis (and the recording team) bring out the inner parts to emphasise the subfusc colouring of the movement, and it unfolds with an unforced inevitability that is as satisfying as it is beautiful. The last movement maintains the sensitivity evidenced throughout. With soloist and conductor unafraid occasionally to bring the momentum almost to a halt, each section is relished and yet, as in the first movement, there is no suggestion that the reading is piecemeal, nor do we lose sight of the complex architecture. The orchestra, in the fast sections, matches the soloist for unforced virtuosity; in the slow, it vies with Ehnes in sheer beauty of sound and transforms itself with glacial effect just before the cadenza. The latter is the profound meditation it is meant to be, Ehnes contemplating the themes and ideas of the whole work. The final coda is a fittingly magnificent peroration to a performance outstanding in every way.

Generously, Onyx add the *Serenade*, its direct appeal contrasting with (and acting as an antidote to) the emotional complexity of the Concerto. Capturing the poignancy and wistfulness of the work, the orchestra doesn't quite scale the heights of its playing in the concerto. Nevertheless, it acts as an apposite 'encore' for Davis and the orchestra, who relish the beauty of this score, one of my favourites in the Elgar canon.

Steven Halls

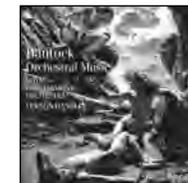
**Granville Bantock**  
**Orchestral works (6 CDs)**

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/ Vernon Handley

Writing in 1915, H. Ormond Anderton suggested that if a foreigner were asked 'to name the largest personalities in the musical world of England . . . the answer would come without hesitation – Elgar and Bantock'. This juxtaposition is interesting. Many Elgarians will be familiar with biographical links between the two men – the fact that Bantock conducted the Worcestershire Philharmonic in 1902 after Elgar suddenly withdrew, that he succeeded Elgar as Professor of Music at Birmingham, that his symphonic poem *Dante and Beatrice* appeared alongside Elgar's Second Symphony at its premiere in 1911, and that he was the dedicatee of Elgar's second *Pomp and Circumstance* march. Bantock was also an active promoter of several of Elgar's compositions (and indeed those of many other British composers), inviting him to give the second performance of the 'Enigma' Variations at the Tower, New Brighton, in 1899. Elgar was obviously appreciative of Bantock's musical gifts, and as Master of the King's Musick, Elgar may have helped in the conferral of Bantock's knighthood in 1930.

In musical terms, Anderton and others have often seen Elgar and Bantock as complementary figures exploring different types of musical subject, rhetoric and expression – Christian devotion versus eastern mysticism, abstract idealism versus overt literary representation, ceremony versus protest, nervous excitement versus sensuality. Listeners will also be aware of Bantock's more decorative approach to chromaticism, and, drawing upon the literary inspiration of his chosen subject matter, a more deliberate revelling in the sensual sounds of the orchestra. Although Wagner was an important compositional model (George Bernard Shaw suggested that Bantock 'began Tristanizing and Götterdämmerung heroically' before 'finding himself'), there are additional stylistic echoes in this music, including Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Liszt and Sibelius – hence what has been termed Bantock's 'amalgamated personality'. However, this is a little unfair, and listeners will come away from these recordings with a clear sense of Bantock's individuality – his epic conceptions, his harmonic exoticisms, his ability to reformulate literary imagery in convincing musical terms, and his mastery of orchestral effect.

This six-disc set by Vernon Handley and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra combines a number of recordings previously issued separately, and represents a fascinating overview of Bantock's works. In addition to the first of the projected (and understandably abortive) series of twenty-four symphonic poems based on



Hyperion  
CDS44281/6

Southey's 'The Curse of Kehama' – *Processional* (originally titled *The Funeral*) – it includes the tone poems *Thalaba the Destroyer*, *The Witch of Atlas*, *Fifine at the Fair* and *Dante and Beatrice*; the 'sea poems' *Caristiona* and *The Sea Reivers*; two 'heroic ballads' (*Cuchullan's Lament* and *Kishmul's Galley*); the overtures *Pierrot of the Minute* and *Overture to a Greek Tragedy*; the *Helena Variations*; and Bantock's contributions to the symphonic tradition – *A Hebridean Symphony* (1913), *The Pagan Symphony* (1923-8), *The Cyprian Goddess* (1939) and *A Celtic Symphony* (1940) for string orchestra and six harps. The exoticism of extracts from *Omar Khayyám* and *The Song of Songs* is mirrored in the vocal encore *The Wilderness and the Solitary Place*; an additional pairing of the *Sapphic Poem* for cello and orchestra with the sumptuous *Sappho*, a *Prelude and Nine Fragments* for mezzo-soprano and orchestra, provides the opportunity to compare Bantock's responses to this evocative poetry as a textual setting and as a musical representation.

There are several highlights in this collection. *Fifine at the Fair*, one of Bantock's better-known works, is a virtuosic compositional display which represents a thought-provoking musical commentary upon the complexities of Browning's poem of the same name, and one can also admire the sense of drama in *Dante and Beatrice*, and the gossamer-like orchestral textures of *The Witch of Atlas* (after Shelley). Of the four symphonies, all of which explore a one-movement structure, although the *Pagan* and *The Cyprian Goddess* communicate some striking imagery from the poetry of Horace, it is the *Hebridean* which is the most arresting; based, like the *Celtic Symphony*, on Hebridean folksong, it incorporates some striking harmonic and textural effects. Perhaps the most compelling score of all is *Sappho* (c.1900–07), of particular emotional intensity in the climactic passages of the fourth and fifth fragments, 'Stand face to face, friend' and 'The moon has set'. However, the most interesting work for Elgarians is the *Helena Variations* (1899). Written as a direct response to Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations, Bantock's score contains a number of parallels – the use of an original theme in ternary form, a cumulative finale, and an extra-musical dimension. Rather than portraying 'friends pictured within', however, Bantock concentrates, as the title suggests, upon the moods of one central character – his wife, Helena. The first three notes of the theme (B natural, F, B flat) represent musical equivalents of Helena's initials (HFB) in German notation, and although there are no puzzles of the order of Elgar's to solve here, listeners can enjoy guessing which of Helena's moods lie behind each variation; several tempo and expression markings (*Allegro molto con fuoco*, *Quasi religioso*, *Capriccioso*, *Doloroso*, *Con moto affettuoso*) provide clues. Bantock's

structure of a theme and twelve variations is slightly shorter than Elgar's, and the variations themselves are also less extensive. Apart from the finale, the majority last for less than two minutes each. While there is a mixture of stylistic fingerprints, including a Mendelssohnian religiosity in Variation 4, and several echoes of Tchaikovsky (the balletic textures in Variation 5, the dramatic punctuations in Variation 8), the beautiful harmonic nuances of the theme itself reveal a more individual sense of expression.

These performances are particularly effective in revealing Bantock's flair for orchestral colour, and although several of the works have been recorded elsewhere, as a group the interpretations are uniformly impressive. A comparison with Adrian Leaper's 1989 reading of the *Hebridean Symphony* with the Czechoslovak State Philharmonic Orchestra, for example, highlights the RPO's richer tone, together with Handley's more effective sense of pacing and architecture. Of the remaining competition, one might mention Beecham's 1949 recording of *Fifine at the Fair* as a document of particular interest – not only as an opportunity to hear Jack Brymer in the clarinet cadenza, but owing to the fact that several bars in the section portraying *Fifine* were cut in this version. As an introduction to Bantock's music, however, Handley and the RPO are hard to beat. With their persuasive performances, supported by typically informative notes by Lewis Foreman, these discs are highly recommended.

Michael Allis

### 'Visions of Elgar'

Historic recordings conducted by Adrian Boult, Albert Coates, Anthony Collins, Malcolm Sargent, and Eduard van Beinum (4 CDs)



Beulah 14PD15

At first sight this looks like yet another box of familiar recordings repackaged for 2007. But hidden within is a seam of gold which, in a sense, is newly minted. When I first saw the contents list for CD2 I thought it must have been a mistake. Boult recorded *In the South* with the LPO in 1955 and then again in 1970–71 but not, as far as I was aware, with the BBCSO in 1944. What we have here is a BBC recording taken from a concert in Bedford in March 1944. A set of BBC transcription discs was discovered a few years ago by David Michell and he has transferred them most successfully for this issue. It is a real find. Those who only know Boult's Elgar from his late recordings for HMV may well be surprised by the cut and thrust of this performance. It is

purposeful, dynamic and really alive; and the sound quality is remarkable for its vintage. A few months later Boult made his first recording of the Second Symphony with the same orchestra, and it makes an ideal coupling. However many other recordings of the symphony you have, this is one that should most certainly be on your shelf. The Beulah transfer is at a lower level than EMI's 1990 issue but the overall sound is much smoother with less background and I think much to be preferred.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth CD also has some rarities. Albert Coates usually comes into the Elgar story as the conductor who took too much of the rehearsal time for Scriabin, keeping the composer waiting for his turn with the orchestra in preparation for the premiere of the Cello Concerto. Lady Elgar's diary leaves no doubt as to her feelings: 'an insult to E. from that brutal selfish ill-mannered bouncer Coates ...', and, two days later, '...still furious about rehearsals – shameful. Hope never to speak to that brutal Coates again'.<sup>2</sup> The composer had recorded his transcription of Bach's *Fantasia and Fugue* in April 1926 but although, amazingly, this was issued at the time in France and Italy, it was not to become available in the UK until its transfer to LP in the 1970s. Moore suggests that there was some disappointment with the recording and that the plan was to repeat it.<sup>3</sup> In the end it was Coates and the LSO whom HMV captured at Kingsway Hall in October 1926, followed later that month by Elgar's Handel transcription. The Bach was available briefly in the 1990s on a Koch CD but otherwise this is the first time these recordings have been available since their release in 1929.<sup>4</sup>

There are two other records from the 78 era, both conducted by Sargent. I was intrigued that the booklet describes his recording of *I sing the birth* as its second performance. I had always assumed that it was the work's premiere, as both recording date and premiere date are cited in a number of sources as 10 December 1928.<sup>5</sup> Were there two performances on the same day, I wonder? I have always treasured Isabel Baillie's account of 'The Sun goeth down' and regret that Sargent was never able to record *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, works which he performed often and of which he was a firm advocate. I am less enthusiastic about the transfer here: Dutton's transfer

- 1 EMI CDH 7631342 (no longer available).
- 2 26 and 28 October 1919 quoted in Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford: OUP: 1982), 280.
- 3 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar on Record* (Oxford: OUP:1974), 61.
- 4 Koch 3-7704-2.
- 5 John Knowles, *Elgar's Interpreters on Record* (London: Thames: 1985), 16, 99; Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford: OUP: 1982), 356.

offers a much richer sounder with an altogether firmer bass.<sup>6</sup>

The remaining items are all Decca records from that narrow band of time between the end of the 78 era and the beginning of stereo LPs. When I began buying Elgar LPs as a teenager in the 1960s, these were 'old' mono recordings, by then on the budget Ace of Clubs label, overlooked (by me!) as poor alternatives to the new stereo releases. From the perspective of 2007, these differences are blurred and it has been really good to discover these recordings which, to be honest, I knew about but didn't really know. Coming to them completely fresh, one performance really stands out: *Falstaff* conducted by Anthony Collins in 1954. This is vibrant, exciting and imaginative music-making, full of vivid details that point up the drama of the incidents portrayed. It reproduces well and goes into my short list of great performances of *Falstaff*. Collins also conducts a lively performance of the *Introduction and Allegro*, but here the sound is something of a drawback, with a rather shrill edge and papery quality to the string tone. Both of Barbirolli's 1950s performances sound altogether richer and would be higher up my list of recommended recordings.<sup>7</sup>

Alfredo Campoli's account of the violin concerto with Boult has been another exciting discovery for me. Denis Stevens gave it a very warm welcome in *The Gramophone*: 'Here is a new, thoughtful, original, and eminently valid interpretation of a well-tried classic, though it is only forty-five years old'.<sup>8</sup> The concerto now approaches its centenary and the recording has passed its 50th birthday. Campoli meets all its challenges with a tremendous aplomb that speaks very powerfully. However, just days after listening to this Beulah transfer, I heard the one contained in the LPO anniversary box reviewed in the last issue of the Journal.<sup>9</sup> To be honest, it was hard to believe that they were the same recording. The LPO disc has a much smoother sound with none of the shrill edge in the higher frequencies that typify the Beulah. Different CD players may bring different results but it would be very interesting to know in each case whether the transfer has been made from the master tapes or from vinyl pressings.

In the booklet all of the Decca items have this logo. A note explains:

The brilliance, clarity and presence of these recordings ... spurred the remastering team



- 6 Elgar Society CDLX 7042.
- 7 (1953) [HMV LP] BLP 1049; [EMI CD] CZS 575790-2 & (1956); [Pye LP] GSGC 14137; [Barbirolli Society CD] CDSJB 1017.
- 8 *The Gramophone*, April 1955, 481.
- 9 LPO 0016-20.

... to reproduce on this compact disc a sound which, when played through a single loudspeaker either directly in front of the listener or from a corner reflex cabinet, will propel the listener into the Kingsway Hall with its live acoustic, and the London Symphony Orchestra of the late 1940s and 1950s. They sound pretty good through two speakers, but the advantage of using a single speaker is that you will hear the original balance without any phase problems or side effects.

Decca's version of the Cello Concerto with Anthony Pini appeared soon after the HMV set with Casals. It is a straightforward performance with no eccentricities. The conductor is Eduard van Beinum who made a number of Elgar records for Decca at this time. His version of *Cockaigne* is particularly fine, bright and sparkling, but I doubt that W.R. Anderson's review in *The Gramophone* would escape a 21st-century editor's blue pencil: 'Can a foreigner "produce" this picture of London? Well, Elgar himself was for long foreign to the city, being a provincial. I think this conductor makes a good job of it, though perhaps with a little adventitious fol-de-rol in the flirtatious detail'.<sup>10</sup>

Sargent's association with the music of Elgar dated back to the 1920s. His 1953 account of the 'Enigma' Variations is serviceable but not particularly distinctive and the sound is rather congested in louder passages. It is certainly not in the same league, either sonically or musically, as was produced just five years later by the same amalgam of the LSO, Decca engineers and Kingsway Hall, with Pierre Monteux at the helm, a recording which 50 years on still ranks with the very best. *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches 1 and 4, issued in 1953 to mark the coronation, sound a touch old-fashioned, with final statements of the big tunes rather bloated to modern ears accustomed to the brisker tempi that reflect earlier recordings (such as the composer's). Also from that LP comes an enjoyably snappy *Imperial March* which exudes confidence and pageantry. There are two extracts from Sargent's 1954 *Gerontius*, with Richard Lewis in splendid voice in 'Sanctus fortis'. Hearing this next to the contemporary Decca recordings, it seems to me that the Columbia engineers of that era were producing sounds which are rather more refined and comfortable for extended listening.

The booklet is very thorough with exemplary discographic details as well as good background notes on both the music and the performers. All in all, a fascinating set, valuable especially for the Boult discovery.

John Knowles

10 *The Gramophone*, February 1955, 159.

## First Symphony

*The Kingdom* (Prelude)

Flemish Radio Orchestra/Martyn Brabbins



Glossa GCDSA  
922204

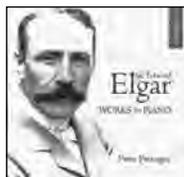
This is an important issue. I have hoped for long enough to hear the great European orchestras playing and recording Elgar on a regular basis. It seems to be slowly happening. The last few years have brought a cracking all-Elgar CD from the Vienna Philharmonic; *In the South* from the orchestra of La Scala, Milan; the Dresden Staatskapelle's First Symphony; a Spanish Violin Concerto from Murcia; and only recently I reviewed in this Journal an excellent *Falstaff* from the Munich Radio Orchestra on the German Orfeo label. Now this issue appears from the Brussels-based Flemish Radio Orchestra. I must confess I had never heard of this ensemble, and Belgium has hardly been in the forefront of the Elgar revival, but any fears I might have had were allayed by the name of the conductor. I have long admired Martyn Brabbins as an Elgarian, and this CD goes to the highest level for recommendations of the Symphony recordings. The Prelude to *The Kingdom* makes an excellent start, with fluid tempi and the most heart-warming playing. One would think that the orchestra had been playing Elgar for ever (perhaps it has!), so assured is the performance. I like too the way that the bass drum has been captured, especially the rich sonorities of the pianissimo strokes. The Symphony is also a confident and dynamic performance. The first movement is swift in a Solti-like way, but has that electric tension and nervous restlessness that was such a feature of the composer's own performances. The awkward rhythmic transitions between duple and triple time (Figs 9 and 17 in the score, for example) are finely managed. Particularly noteworthy in the Scherzo is the airy grace and lightness of the 'down by the river' music, while the slow movement has a rapt intensity that is most moving. The divisi strings play with great warmth and, where necessary, tenderness. The Finale is magnificent, again brisk, but with a striding momentum and nervous energy that sweep all before them, and the final peroration comes home triumphantly, with no trace of the pomposity that can occur in the wrong hands. It was good to hear the complex cross rhythms on the brass just before Fig. 150 properly and clearly articulated, and not the usual scramble. The recording is natural and lifelike, with the brass and percussion slightly recessed. They are prominent enough when they need to be, however, and it makes a change from the many recordings that are too brass-heavy. My only minor quibble is that I would like to hear more of the two harps. Elgar's magical harp writing is not always heard to best

advantage, especially in that wonderful G flat passage in the finale (Fig. 130) where their silvery glitter is so important. But it's a small point. Don't let it put you off investigating this recording. It comes attractively packaged with the notes in five languages. I hope it achieves the success it deserves in those other countries.

For those interested in timings of the four movements, I list some comparisons.<sup>11</sup>

Movement	1	2	3	4
Brabbins	18.02	7.24	11.27	12.10
Otake	20.45	7.05	13.02	12.41
Tate	20.39	7.10	14.16	12.22
C. Davis	21.06	7.52	12.53	12.57
Solti	17.45	7.08	12.12	11.38
Handley	20.27	7.07	11.43	12.37
Barbirolli	20.10	7.06	12.18	13.03

Barry Collett



**Elgar**  
**Works for Piano**  
Peter Pettinger

Chandos  
CHAN 10429X

John McCabe's pioneering recording of Elgar's pianoforte music was published in 1976. Ten years later, Peter Pettinger's recording appeared and contained, in addition to the pieces on McCabe's LP (*Adieu, Chantant, Concert Allegro, Griffinesque, In Smyrna, May Song, Minuet, Serenade, Skizze*, and the *Sonatina*), some pieces which were recorded for the first time: *Carissima, Dream Children, Pastourelle, Presto*, and *Rosemary*. That these recordings, 20 years later, are now digitally remastered and transferred to CD is a case for rejoicing amongst Elgarians.

Of the pieces originally written for piano, *Chantant* was composed when Elgar was about fifteen. It is Schumannesque, the most ambitious of his pieces until the *Concert Allegro* 30 years later. Pettinger plays it well, maintaining a good tempo in the middle section so that it doesn't sag. He was introduced to *Pastourelle* (1881), the curiosity of the collection, by Jerrold Northrop Moore. Written under the pseudonym of Gustav Franke, it was intended to encourage Frank, Elgar's younger brother, in his own creative efforts. Boosey published it in 1903

11 See also Tom Kelly's analysis of Elgar and Richter performances above [ed.].

as Franke's Op. 100. It is a chirpy piece, not without moments of grandeur, and not to be confused with the *Pastourelle*, Op. 4 No. 2 for violin. *Griffinesque* (1884), lasting all of 20 seconds, is again fanciful and Schumannesque – and still unpublished. It is a tantalising miniature, its title as yet unexplained.

The *Sonatina* was composed in January 1889 for Elgar's niece, May Grafton, then eight years old. It was revised in December 1930 for publication the following year. Pettinger was introduced to the early version, again by Jerrold Northrop Moore. The first movement of the early version (*Allegretto*) takes a minute and three quarters and its revised version (*Andante*) an extra three quarters of a minute. Pettinger plays both beautifully and again judges to perfection the speed for the slower version. It is fascinating to compare the two versions of the second movement (*Allegro*). There are a number of revisions and alterations. The young May was instructed to play it 'as fast as you can!'. The *Presto* was composed for Isabel Fitton's 21st birthday on 8 August 1889. It is a jolly and grandiloquent piece, convincingly played. 1897 saw the composition of the relatively substantial *Minuet*, Op. 21, another child's piece written for Paul Kilburn, interesting in its modality and use of pedal points, characteristics which feature so regularly in Elgar's later music. It contains some lovely harmonic surprises, another foretaste. Again the middle section is played at a perfect tempo and the whole piece, lasting nearly five minuetts, is finely judged.

*May Song* survives in a number of versions, but Alice Elgar's diary of 2 March 1901 suggest that it was originally composed for piano: 'finished May Song – & violin art'. It is an absolutely charming piece, its initial theme marked by an ostinato triplet dotted rhythm which forms cross-rhythms with its accompaniment. Pettinger plays this rhythmic trick exquisitely, admirably. *Skizze*, also from 1901, is a quizzical miniature, concentrated in its chromatic and uneasy harmony. Nominally in F major, this tonic becomes convincing only at the delicious end. Never rising above *pp*, this, for me, disquieting piece is beautifully played.

The *Concert Allegro* is another 1901 piece, a problematical work, written in some haste for Fanny Davies to play in her St James's Hall recital on 2 December that year. Elgar later boldly removed many of its repetitions and generally tightened up the work, but he was never satisfied with it and never sought to have it published. As with McCabe (whose 1976 recording was made only seven years after John Ogden's first modern performance of the work, the score having disappeared for many years), Pettinger's performance is of this revised version, though he did admit to being tempted to record both for comparison. I believe that the clue to a convincing performance of this work lies partly in the pianist's playing of the myriads of fiorituri.

They must be delicate, painstakingly neat, but subservient to the main melodic line – they mustn't become the centre of attention. Pettinger does this admirably. He also has a technique well up to the requirements of the more virtuoso passages and the lyrical moments. The other part of a good performance of the work is his shrewd judgment of climaxes; it is too easy in this piece to place them too early or too often. Pettinger times things well, saving his most powerful playing for the final climax. It is a well judged performance of a piece that is difficult to play convincingly.

*In Smyrna*, one of the results of Elgar's 1905 Mediterranean journey, is very dear to my heart. It encompasses in only five minutes a whole world of feeling, from the delicate beginning to the final, brief but powerful climax. Its quiet melancholy is, of course, typical of its composer, as is the rapid descent from that climax to music of wistfulness. Pettinger captures fully the varying moods of this piece. *Serenade* is in altogether lighter vein, a miniature which demonstrates the composer's ability to fabricate a brief piece which inhabits its own perfect world. *Adieu* is a similarly exquisite piece, back in Elgar's regretful vein. In D major, it ends on the dominant minor. Elgar appended a rather unnecessary yet characteristic note to the manuscript: 'I know this does not end in the key it begins in'.

Of the three pieces not originally written for piano, *Rosemary* (1882), *Dream Children* (1902), and *Carissima* (1913) are all beautifully played (*Carissima* with a particularly powerful climax). Indeed, the whole disc is a delight. Pettinger judges all his tempos finely and captures both Elgarian nostalgia and his noble climaxes – short-lived but powerful nonetheless. In an earlier review (this Journal, March 2007, 67–8), I said of Ashley Wass's piano playing that, 'beautiful, scrupulously accurate, and wonderfully voiced' as it was, his 'minute attention to detail' held up 'the overall flow of the music'. This is not the case with Pettinger. He is equally attentive to detail but also judges the pace and overall structure of the music to perfection.

The remastering of this fine CD is well done by Jon Cooper and the recording, made in St Silas's Church (London), has excellent resonance. The booklet notes, by Pettinger himself, are interesting. I heartily recommend this reissue; let us hope also for a CD remastering of McCabe's performances.

Paul Adrian Rooke

**Samuel Coleridge-Taylor**  
**Piano Quintet Op. 1, Ballade in C minor Op. 73, Clarinet**  
**Quintet Op. 10**  
Nash Ensemble



Hyperion  
CSA67590

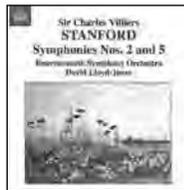
Samuel Coleridge Taylor (1875–1912) died at 37, an age by which Elgar had composed few characteristic works. Younger by several years, he was fortunately precocious; but his musical language never became as adventurous as Elgar's, possibly because, no doubt under economic pressure (and like his teacher Stanford), he wrote too much for his ultimate good. Perhaps, too, Stanford's pupils did better when they distanced themselves from the specifics of their remarkable teacher's musical language (consider the no less prolific Vaughan Williams, for one). Coleridge-Taylor made his strongest mark with *Hiawatha* – a part of Longfellow's output that Elgar did not attempt – and later wrote attractive orchestral scores, including *Symphonic Variations on an African Air*, and a violin concerto that curiously anticipates, in its slow movement, the melody of Parry's *Jerusalem*. His most substantial chamber works are all early. In addition to the quintets recorded here, the other surviving works include a vigorous Nonet for wind, strings, and piano (1893). This trajectory of chamber composition exactly reverses that of Elgar, who meditated a number of chamber works before completing three splendid pieces after the age of 60.

One later work is included here, the *Ballade* for violin and piano (1907), a rhapsodic piece which by that date might have seemed somewhat conventional, with a flavour of the salon. The two quintets are fascinating examples of how to evade the influence of Stanford (as English Brahms) by absorption in Dvořák – although he in turn was much affected by Brahms as well as Beethoven and Schubert. The outcome is music further removed from German models than, say, Brahms's colleague (and Smyth's teacher) Herzogenberg, whose chamber music is nevertheless worth exploring. The Piano Quintet begins passionately and maintains its impetus over nearly nine minutes. Coleridge-Taylor was wise to make his finale considerably shorter; the summation finale is the rock on which too much music of this period founders. The gem is the slow movement, begun by cello, an early example of Coleridge-Taylor's real melodic gift, with a filigree piano accompaniment caressed by Ian Brown. The Scherzo with its jumpy rhythms and harsh dynamic alternations is perhaps still the most original.

The progress evidenced by the Clarinet Quintet is striking. Coleridge-Taylor's melodic gift is much in evidence, with modal flavouring that manages, despite the influence of the Bohemian composer, not actually to sound like Dvořák, who, perhaps,

inspired these open-air textures. Brahms's masterly Clarinet Quintet was much admired in London, and Lionel Harrison's note tells us that Stanford opined that one couldn't write another without submitting to Brahms's influence. Then on seeing Coleridge-Taylor's work, Stanford exclaimed 'You've done it, me bhoy!'. The orthodox ordering of the four movements is like Brahms's, but the content is entirely different. The first movement and finale, with leaping folkloric themes, are this time the most original, and to show his independence of Brahms, Coleridge-Taylor introduces into the finale a reminiscence of his tender slow movement (Brahms recalls the first movement) and ends loudly (Brahms ends in a death-like hush). Richard Hosford's supple clarinet, relishing the many passages in the low register, joins with the strings in a sprightly performance which sounds as if everyone is enjoying the music – as has certainly been the case when I've played this piece. Another thank you to the enterprising Hyperion.

Julian Rushton



Naxos 8.570289

**Stanford**  
**Symphony No. 2 in D minor, 'Elegiac'**  
**Symphony No. 5 in D major, 'L'Allegro ed il Penseroso'**  
 Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/David Lloyd-Jones

As a music student at Cambridge during the 1960s, I soon learned that a love of Elgar's music was not something to be encouraged. It was made quite clear to me by my Director of Studies that my partiality for his music demonstrated an almost inexcusable immaturity. Indeed, my friend Alan Opie and I were forced to indulge in clandestine Elgar listening sessions in each other's rooms in order to satisfy our illicit craving. Considering Elgar's lack of academic training, the view is understandable to a certain extent. Less understandable is the fact that at no time during the university course were we introduced to the music of Stanford. His church music, of course, was often to be heard in college chapels, but his symphonies were neither mentioned nor performed. And, in his case, the reason cannot have been lack of academic credentials: he was an undergraduate at Cambridge and was appointed its Professor of Music at the age of 35. Since Boulez and Stockhausen were all the rage during my time, I suspect that it was that pernicious inverted snobbery of which the English are past masters. But the consequence is a neglect of one's indigenous culture and a deprivation of one's heritage.

Stanford's Second Symphony was first performed at Cambridge

in 1882 and at the Three Choirs Festival in 1883. The next performance, however, did not take place until the 1990s. As I said in my review of Stanford's Fourth and Seventh Symphonies (this Journal, July 2007, 79–80): 'As with all of Stanford's symphonies it is beautifully crafted and immensely charming, yet not without depth of feeling, passion even'. In addition to its 'Elegiac' subtitle, Stanford prefaces the score with verses taken from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, though the work itself has no known memorial function. It is one of the most classical of his symphonies, with two sonata-allegro movements enclosing a slow movement and Scherzo. The first movement opens with an air of anxiety largely caused by its unnerving hemiola rhythms. After a repeated exposition these rhythms form the main part of an agitated development, but lead unexpectedly to an assertive climax just before the recapitulation. The movement ends sombrely. The slow movement has more than a touch of Elgar throughout. Here the subtitle 'Elegiac' is most applicable and, though the return of the main theme is more animated in mood, the atmosphere is generally introspective. This quality is quickly brushed aside by the Scherzo. With initially prominent horns and then an incessant dotted rhythm in 6/8 played by the strings, it has the air of a gallop and, in places, because of the dotted rhythms (especially when they appear briefly on the timpani), more than a nod towards the Scherzo of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The finale begins in Brahmsian (*Tragic Overture*) mood, a little indulgent in its solemnity, but eventually the horns lift us out of this into an airy and light allegro theme which gradually grows in vigour and power. It is the most athletic movement of the symphony, showing real muscle in its themes and working out and, especially, in the coda's triumphant apotheosis.

Verses from each of John Milton's contrasting poems (*L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*) are included in the score of the Fifth Symphony. The first banishes 'loathed Melancholy', invoking Euphrosyne and other allegorical figures of joy and merriment, and extolling the active and cheerful life. The second poem ('Hence, vain deluding joys') depicts a similar day in the countryside spent in contemplation. The first movement of the symphony is certainly ebullient and almost continuously decisive and purposeful, with much rhythmic energy. The second movement, an intermezzo, continues this mood of open air jollity with much terpsichorean activity and a trio of greater energy and more complex rhythms. At the end, the dancers seem to disappear from view and a remarkably captivating coda follows. It is short but, with its palpitating wind chords and quietly rushing string scales, it is unlike any other passage in Stanford's symphonies. The slow movement opens contemplatively. After a brief introduction, an expressive passage

for strings (with a remarkable foretaste of Sibelius) and a poignant oboe melody, there is a rich and vibrant passage for strings and brass. It rises to a powerful climax before subsiding to a short and lighter central section. The introductory theme returns on the brass, while the main theme, whose initial appearance was marked by appealing modulations, now has modulations even more delicious. The movement ends in quiet contemplation tinged with wistfulness and spiced with incidental dissonance. The finale begins hauntingly before finding its Brahmsian feet in an uneasy theme. A brass chorale provides the necessary contrast and leads to the development. The recapitulation rises to a powerfully climactic version of the first theme and then the brass chorale. The coda is wonderful: gradually building to a majestic version of the first theme, its apotheosis is reached in a grand transformation of the chorale, complete with organ:

There let the pealing organ blow  
To the full voic'd quire below,  
In service high, and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.

After this magnificent passage the music gradually dies down and ends with quiet affirmation.

I am delighted to have made the acquaintance of these two works and look forward to hearing the remaining three symphonies in this Naxos series. Elgarians will feel most at home in the slow movement of the second symphony, but all eight movements have so many delights – of melody, rhythm, modulation, subtle dissonance, orchestration – that I heartily recommend these works to those who do not know them. To those who do, I conclude, as before, that the 'Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, under David Lloyd-Jones, plays finely ... The overall recorded sound is excellent and the booklet notes by Richard Whitehouse are informative'.

Paul Adrian Rooke

## Stanford

### **Three Intermezzi Op. 13 and Sonata Op. 129 (clarinet and piano); two *Fantasies* (clarinet and string quartet); Piano Trio No. 3 in A minor Op. 158**

Robert Plane (clarinet), Gould Piano Trio (Lucy Gould, Alice Neary, Benjamin Frith), with Mia Cooper (violin) and David Adams (viola)



Naxos 8.570416

Stanford's works for clarinet span his entire career. The Intermezzi of 1879 form a balanced triptych, and despite stylistic associations with Schumann they hardly seem immature. Stanford's predilection for the instrument led to the composition of a concerto in 1902, intended for Richard Mühlfeld, for whom Brahms composed his late clarinet works, but premiered by Charles Draper. The Sonata of 1911 adheres with some severity to a Brahmsian design; indeed, if Elgar's First Symphony could be called 'Brahms's Fifth', how much more is this 'Brahms's Third' clarinet sonata. The middle movement evokes an Irish lament, but its rhapsodic flourishes owe something to Brahms's Clarinet Quintet; the outer movements reflect Brahms's practice, with quiet endings, but also with an occasional echo of the Brahms sonatas (what Stanford's student Vaughan Williams might have considered a permissible 'crib'). The two Fantasies for clarinet quintet date from 1921 and 1922, but – reflecting, perhaps, Stanford's fading reputation – they were not published until 1996.<sup>12</sup>

Hearing these engaging works in sequence, one might think that Stanford's idiom had hardly changed at all; the Fantasies are only marginally less surprising as music from the early twenties than the late works of Saint-Saëns from the same period (but the French composer was older by seventeen years). They may be associated with the 'Phantasy' promoted by W.W. Cobbett in a competition first won by another Stanford pupil, William Hurlstone (later winners included Frank Bridge, John Ireland, and Herbert Howells; Vaughan Williams and eventually Britten contributed to the genre). The 'Phantasy' displayed the formal freedom of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Phantasy in a modern idiom, and the attractiveness of these works lies in their comparative brevity, which still allows sufficient rein to Stanford's sometimes breathless lyricism, and to his streak of unconventionality in handling form. This latter element, which shows Stanford in a brighter light than his image as professor and pedagogue, also features

<sup>12</sup> The *Revised New Grove*, published in 2001, has them 'unpubd', but the edition by SJ Music of Cambridge, with brief introductions by the late Dame Thea King, is dated 1996.

in the delightful Nonet (Serenade) by which he was represented at the Bard Festival, where the scherzo is a set of variations. (This work was also unpublished until quite recently.) In the slightly longer second Fantasy the finale is a scherzo, based on the main idea of the opening allegretto; the sensitive modulations of the central adagio provide a sufficient contrast. Not music to disturb, but invariably charming, and at moments even roguish.

Robert Plane's clarinet playing is sensitive and brilliant by turns. I could do with more *ping* to the cello pizzicato; otherwise the *ad hoc* ensemble performs admirably. When the Trio of the second Fantasia began more slowly than the Scherzo, the group illustrates a performance convention which generally speaking is without historical justification (unless the composer writes 'meno mosso' or some such direction). In this case, however, it works well; and since Stanford didn't see these pieces to publication, it is possible that the performance directions are not as complete as they might have been. Benjamin Frith, an experienced hand at unfamiliar British music, is undaunted even by the demands of Stanford's third and last Piano Trio, in A minor, which completes the well-filled CD. This trio was composed in 1918 and dedicated to victims of the war.<sup>13</sup> Paul Rodmell calls the trio 'despite its noble aspirations ... curiously emasculated in its emotional voice'.<sup>14</sup> It may not quite stand up to its grand intention, implicit in its subtitle 'per aspera ad astra'. But the fierce opening is impressive, and the slow movement attractive, though Stanford's nostalgia is more conservative in musical expression than Elgar's. The finale is typically based on material used in the first movement, and is perhaps more jolly than transcendent. Vaughan Williams suggested that Stanford was perhaps too fluent for his own good; but the late works recorded suggest no falling off in his skill and genial inventiveness. Cordially recommended.

Julian Rushton

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13 Paul Rodmell provides neither publication nor performance data in his work-list, but unlike the Fantasies, the Trio did at least receive an opus number. Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

14 Rodmell, op. cit., 317.

## LETTERS<sup>1</sup>

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

#### ***The Yorkshire Branch***

I am writing, following the recent meeting of the Society's Council, to acknowledge the work over many years of Dennis Clark and Robert Seager for the Society's Yorkshire Branch and, more widely, for the Society. Now that the branch is being wound up we hope that some of its members will find a new home across the Pennines, in Manchester, which may in due course also lead to changes in the Society's arrangements in the North of England.

On one occasion, it was my privilege to speak to the Branch membership, and I shall not forget the Yorkshire welcome I received! More personally I recall the occasion (about 30 years ago almost to the day) when I first met Dennis and the others who were determined to ensure that a branch of the Society was established in Yorkshire. I reported back to the Committee and the 'go ahead' for formation was given. Inevitably Dennis and Robert were involved, at the start, in the management of the branch and the rest is, as has often been said, history!

May I place on record the gratitude of the membership and wish both Dennis and Robert many happy Elgarian years ahead.

### ***From Stephen Lloyd***

Geoffrey Hodgkins, in his generally sympathetic review of the BBC Music Magazine cover CD of Elgar's Symphony No 2, takes Malcolm Sargent to task for having the third trombone hold his note at the second of those dramatic pauses in the first movement – one of what he calls 'two horrible errors' (the other being a split note). Yet at the same time Hodgkins points out that in the score that note is marked *tenuto*. In fact both first *and* third trombones are marked 'ten.', so why should it be such a horrible error, and why do not more conductors follow this clear marking? Checking three other off-air Sargent recordings shows that this was a characteristic of his interpretation (just as he kept strictly to the printed score, and did not lengthen the trumpet solo in the last movement). Sargent is not alone in this observance: in a 2002 live broadcast by Charles Mackerras the held trombones stand out clearly (if not for quite the length of time that Sargent holds), and Simon Rattle similarly observed the tenuto in a rare broadcast performance in 1985. The classic 'horrible error' (if one is to use such an expression) is surely the two bass drum rolls that Britten extends, through the break, in the prelude to *The Dream of Gerontius* in his Decca recording, robbing the music entirely of the dramatic pauses, if at the same time adding a different sense of drama.

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1 The editor reserves the right not to print letters in full (or indeed not to print them at all), in the interests (inter alia) of space.

### **From Richard Abram**

The competition to crack the Dorabella cipher (Elgar Society News, July 2007, 20) is a splendid idea, but it is not true to say that Elgar's code 'remains unbroken'.

The late Eric Sams published his solution in the *Musical Times* in 1970 (vol. cxi, 151–4). Elgarians may care to visit the excellent website founded in his memory (www.ericams.org), where they can read that article, as well as the pieces on the 'Enigma' that followed. The site has also published for the first time the complete draft cipher table which Sams subsequently inferred, and which he submitted without success to the *Musical Times* (the journal's editor taking the 'the view, quite justifiably, that it would have on his circulation somewhat the effect of a tournament').

### **From Andrew Keener**

Julian Rushton's review of the London Philharmonic Orchestra's boxed set of Elgar performances (Journal, November 2007, 74) has persuaded me that I must not delay acquiring it any longer. I trust, therefore, that he will allow me two observations.

First, the use of an organ towards the end of the Second Symphony in Vernon Handley's 1980 recording, re-issued in the LPO box. A note in the booklet of the first CD reissue of this Classics for Pleasure recording tells us that 'in a lecture given by Sir Adrian Boult at the Royal College of Organists on 3 May 1947 and later printed in the Calendar of The Royal College of Organists 1947–48, Sir Adrian in discussing the last movement comments: "At the summit of the whole range, the 8<sup>th</sup> bar after 165, Elgar would add a 32 or 64 foot organ pedal for 8 bars if it was available"'.

This recording was a constant companion to my first years in London, and when I came to produce Leonard Slatkin's RCA recording of the Symphony with the same orchestra nine years later, I ensured we had an organist standing by to repeat the effect. Although Sir Adrian had added that the use of an organ would be fully effective only in a cathedral setting (we were recording in Walthamstow Town Hall), I suspect that Elgar, fervent recording artist that he was, would have rejoiced in the result on disc.

My second point is prompted by Julian's surprisingly brief mention ('Janet Baker is her inimitable self') of the performance of *Sea Pictures*, followed by his observation that 'many of us will possess these recordings already'. Probably so otherwise, but not in this case. Rather than offering Dame Janet's oft-reissued 1965 EMI taping conducted by Barbirolli (that fine recording is, in any case, with the LSO, not the LPO), the London Philharmonic box preserves a hardly less remarkable 1984 broadcast from a Royal Festival Hall concert conducted by Vernon Handley. The event was co-sponsored by the Elgar Society which, undaunted by the BBC's declining to broadcast it, secured Capital Radio's assurance that it would do so instead. (How many of us remember that this London radio station used to broadcast concerts under the series heading 'The Capital Collection' and boasted its own in-house ensemble, the Wren Orchestra?) The inclusion of this 1984 *Sea Pictures* in the LPO's boxed set, almost twenty years after the famous Barbirolli version, and still revealing Dame Janet in her prime, is thanks to Andrew Neill, whose off-air taping is used in the absence of a Capital Radio archive copy and any surviving tape in the British Library.

### *Julian Rushton replies:*

On the question of *Sea Pictures*, I can only say *mea culpa* (although Dame Janet is, indeed, her inimitable self), and refer to Andrew Neill's article (above). Where the Second Symphony is concerned, I was aware of the licence to include an organ pedal near the end. I assumed this was a response to a once perennial problem of weak bass sound in orchestras, and especially in recordings, that used to give tuba players a lot of extra exercise. To me, in the Handley recording, it sounds like a grand but nevertheless alien intrusion; surely given modern recording technology it is hardly necessary.

But the point I clearly didn't quite get across is not just that the organ pedal in the Second Symphony isn't a requirement. It is that the organist's role is shorter and easier than that of the humblest rank and file orchestral players, let alone (say) the principal trumpet and horn; we are not given *their* names, but only the organist's; and his name is given equivalent typographical prominence to the soloist in the Violin Concerto, which is absurd.

### **From Christopher Hogwood**

A propos your nice review of the LPO Elgar boxed set in the November Journal, Elgar doesn't in fact forget the organ for the last eight bars of the Variations, because there is a full chord on the last note – but it was omitted in all published scores and parts, and I was rather surprised to come across it (and many other differences) while preparing the new Bärenreiter edition.

### *Julian Rushton replies:*

Indeed, a glance at the last bar of the MS of the Variations does have this chord, with B in the treble, a point to interest the analyst. It is remarkable how many eyes can overlook the same thing. I look forward keenly to the new edition!

### **From Carl Newton and John Norris**

We were saddened but not unduly surprised to read the exchange between Dr Moore and the Chairman in the last issue of the Journal. Our hope is that it may bring to a head, and hopefully an end, the increasingly fractious disputes which have riven Council over the past three years, and it is not therefore an exchange into which we are willingly drawn. However, since the Chairman identifies us as 'authors' (with Michael Trott) of the new constitution, we feel obliged to fill certain gaps in his partial account of the handling of the constitutional changes which appear to lie at the centre of the recent exchange.

It is true that, as members of the Constitution Working Group, we took the lead in redrafting the new constitution, which we presented to Council in exactly the manner Dr Moore recommends: parallel texts comparing old and new clauses and an accompanying commentary explaining the underlying rationale for each proposed change. We had envisaged that, after discussion, a version approved by

Council would be issued to members in much the same form. We were therefore somewhat surprised when, a few days ahead of the relevant Council meeting, an anonymous version of the constitution was sent to Council members without our prior knowledge. We are sure most members at first assumed that we had issued the updated version in preparation for the forthcoming meeting. In fact the West Midlands Branch Chairman subsequently admitted to being its author, although Windows identified the Society Vice Chairman as the owner of the electronic document.

In his response to Dr Moore's letter, the Chairman states that the constitution was 'handed over' to the Governance Working Group. In the sense that a victim hands over his or her possessions to a mugger, he is right – we certainly felt we had been mugged. And our attempt to re-introduce our considered version of the draft at the Council meeting was cut short by the Chairman!

Far from limiting themselves to checking that we had correctly interpreted the new governance arrangements, as the Chairman's letter implies, the self-appointed authors took it upon themselves to incorporate, as if agreed, amendments down for discussion at the Council meeting, notably those put forward by the Society Chairman, while at the same time removing others intended to clarify the role of the Executive, the very clauses whose absence Dr Moore bemoans.

Needless to say, without this background, the bogus constitution was readily accepted by an unknowing membership. Our sympathies are very much with Dr Moore and we are grateful to him for drawing these matters to the membership's attention. We now regret that we did not do so sooner. We would in any case not wish to be identified as the 'authors' of a constitution which effectively excludes the heads of the various working groups – those members through whom the Society primarily pursues its objectives – from any form of meaningful forum on how to achieve those aims.

But, with a new Council now in place and a new, and as yet unidentified, Chairman to take office in June, the time has surely come to draw a line under the past and look to the future. After the recent years of decline, the Society should plan to rebuild, but as what? It seems to us that the Society faces an identity crisis; a major cause of the discord of recent years has been a lack of shared strategic vision and purpose, leading to factional bickering.

At a time when attendance at the meetings of most branches has been falling sharply and three – East Anglia, South Wales, and Yorkshire – have recently been forced to close or merge, Council has frequently been told that the branches are the only thing that matter; and branch funding remains by some way the largest single item of expenditure from members' subscriptions. Others have reached a similar conclusion by a different route: with much of Elgar's music regularly performed and with the Elgar Complete Edition now in safe hands, the Society's original aims have been achieved, so why not let the Society abandon the charitable aspirations and revert to being no more than a social organisation?

But this is not a view shared by all. There is admittedly a growing number of works – *Gerontius*, *Enigma*, the symphonies, concertos and overtures – that are now firmly established on the concert platform, at least in Britain. But when did you last hear a live performance of *King Olaf*? Perhaps more to the point, when did an American audience last hear a live performance of *King Olaf*? And yet surely among the greatest pleasures of recent years has been the public rediscovery

after years of neglect of *Froissart* and *The Spirit of England*; the emergence of an appetite for Elgar's music in Japan and Spain; and numerous performances during the anniversary year of works such as *The Black Knight*, *The Banner of St George*, and *Coronation Ode*, which go unheard in other years. Do we have to wait another fifty years before we can hear them performed again? Moreover there is surely a continuing need to promote interest in Elgar both among the young and among serious scholars in disciplines other than music. By so doing we lay the foundations for future dedication and sow seed corn among the shakers and movers, not to mention the fund providers, for generations yet to come.

So surely there is still a proselytising role for the Society, but is the Society equipped for it, or cognisant of it? Manpower has always been a limitation for the Society; for whatever reason, it has always been difficult to encourage more than a small proportion of the membership to take on active roles. The membership took eagerly to each new publication from Elgar Enterprises, but we now have a storeroom full of unsold books for lack of a member to take on the task of selling to a probably equally appreciative general public. And certain leading academics express reservations about submitting their work to the Society Journal because, despite its excellent credentials, we have never sought to promote it more widely and it is therefore taken and read by few outside the Society.

Yet the Society pursues increasingly grander and more expensive goals which are of marginal relevance to any of the strategic aims outlined above. This, it seems to us, is the crux of the matter: are we running the Elgar Society to 'promote Elgar to an ever wider community' (our constitutional objective) or more for our own amusement? The alternatives are not mutually exclusive. Where the Society has been most effective is in providing just sufficient funding to encourage others outside the Society to take the initiative, carry the risk and find the resources. This is how the Dutton *Interpreters* series came about, and how the Elgar-in-Performance group (surely the most successful of the Society's recent initiatives) works. Is this not the template on which the Society should now mould itself? Indeed, is this not the template which the new constitution, which holds the Society's key workers at arms' length, all but commits us to? The new constitutional regime must grasp this nettle, and soon, if the Society is to have any meaningful future. But surely the time has come for the wider membership to make its views heard.

### **From Paul Adrian Rooke**

With regard to the letters from Dr Moore and Andrew Neill (Journal, November 2007, 85–88), I am writing to voice my own grave concerns over the present Executive of the Elgar Society. The following examples will show why.

Some years ago I was relieved of the post of Publicity Officer. I was willing to continue in the post but it appeared that the Executive wished for someone 'more proactive'. It is not for me to say how proactive I had been but, in the intervening years, apart from a brief and illustrious period with Emma Marshall in the post, the Society has had no Publicity Officer, let alone a proactive one – and, above all, no one to promote the Society in 2007.

For the past few years I have been the Society's International Co-ordinator, a role I have sought to fill to the best of my ability despite the Executive's failure to keep me informed on matters of international concern. It recently emerged that, despite having been advised by the organisers some time ago, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman failed to inform the Society of a major international Elgar anniversary festival in the US (the Bard Festival). Their neglect led to a complete lack of formal Society presence throughout the major part of the Festival, a fact which appalled the organisers and at least one of the Society's Vice-Presidents.

As Chief Originator of the Elgar Society Edition from 2004, I became increasingly frustrated at the Board's failure to address the problems facing the Edition: only two new volumes produced in six years under the Chairmanship of Andrew Neill; no attempt was made to expand sales; there was no organised fundraising effort. And yet as soon as control is removed from the Chairman's committee, production has restarted, with two volumes being produced in 2007 and a further volume due in June 2008; sales have increased by around 20%; and sponsorship of £7,000 was raised in a matter of weeks.

But it was during negotiations concerning the future of the Elgar Complete Edition that I was to have my gravest concern when, after an exploratory meeting held in London under the Chairmanship of Dr Robert Anderson, Andrew Neill circulated a confidential record of the meeting to all members of the ESE Board in clear defiance of the Chairman's expressed wishes. Despite being taken to task by Drs Anderson and Moore for this betrayal of confidence, he repeated the offence after the meeting with the Vice-Presidents in Oxford, as described in Dr Moore's letter.

Needless to say, there are other examples of errors of communication and of judgment. Eventually, their accumulation led me and a number of Council colleagues to table a motion of 'No confidence' in the Chairman and Vice-Chairman at the Council meeting on 6 October 2007. The vote was lost, in part because others who might have supported the motion had already resigned from the Council because of their lack of confidence in the Executive. But add to those who have resigned from Council in recent years Dr Moore, Dr Anderson and two other Vice-Presidents who have also voiced grave concerns, and it is clear that something is seriously wrong.

I have, therefore, for the reasons given above, resigned as the Society's International Co-ordinator, and from its 'Elgar in Performance' and 'Elgar in Education' groups. In addition, I have resigned from the Society itself. This is because I have become increasingly concerned at what is, in my view, the Chairman's inappropriate use of Society funds. By this I mean projects put forward by him without a proper budget but with the implication that 'it will not cost the Society a penny' because some other person or group will be paying for it. Yet when the project eventually loses money, it is the Society which is left to foot the bill. I am no longer prepared to see my subscription squandered in this way.

### **From John Hammond**

Nalini Ghuman (see the November, 2007, issue of the Journal) appears to have misunderstood references to the 'Englishness' of Elgar's music. When people assert that his music is 'quintessentially English' they are not usually referring to anything jingoistic or imperialistic but to the correlation between Elgar's music and the English landscape, just as Butterworth's *The Banks of Green Willow* is quintessentially English. Speaking for myself, I cannot listen to the Adagio from the First Symphony, or *Sospiri*, or the slow movement of the Violin Concerto, without being reminded of English scenery with its hills, dales, meadows and streams.

Few would deny that Rimsky-Korsakov's music has a Russian flavour about it, or that Wagner's music has a Germanic flavour. Why then should we deny the Englishness of Elgar's music?

### **From Peter Taylor**

What an extraordinary article you have published by Nalini Ghuman!

Lovers of Elgar ... have nurtured a potent nexus of nationalistic myths (pastoral, spiritual, nostalgic, racial) which have dominated interpretations and even influenced performances ... The obsession of 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 ... that invidious colonial call ... is it any wonder that his work is not well known abroad?

Elgar's 'nationalism' can scarcely be denied, but when he was young musical nationalism was in the very air. At a time when Europe was turning into an armed camp, Elgar was put on the European map by Strauss and others, before he had more than a precarious footing in his own country. Ghuman quotes a cryptic remark by Jaeger; let me quote a quite explicit one, Jaeger's outburst after the failure of *Gerontius* at Birmingham in 1900: 'But it's only an English *musician* (not an actress or a jockey or a batsman) and he is treated like a very ordinary nobody. Oh you unpatriotic creatures!' What is this – a German reproaching the English for not being patriotic enough? How does that square with Ms Ghuman's thesis?

The neglect of Elgar, throughout Europe and in the States, is only part of a greater neglect of British music generally. Britten and Tippett, who as pacifists can scarcely be accused of 'nostalgia for the imperial past', are as neglected as anyone. So where do we go from here? I am going to suggest a totally different explanation. There are several strands to this, and they lead to the proposition that the reasons for Elgar's neglect in Europe and the U.S.A., while mostly the same, also differ in one significant respect. Few people in Britain seem aware of the cultural renaissance that Continental Europe has experienced since the War. It was as if the determination to learn from a horrific recent past had brought its nations together in celebration of their common heritage. And that common heritage is easily capable of accommodating their parallel 'nationalistic' traditions: a German will celebrate what was once the anti-German rhetoric of Smetana, just as Wagner

has been forgiven the way in which he became almost Hitler's figurehead. This is *not* 'multiculturalism;' it has nothing in common with our sententious and hypocritical use of the term, by people who encourage us to turn a blind eye to features of other cultures which we would instantly condemn if we detected them in our own. Europe is a *monoculture* whose separate strands are acknowledged and celebrated in their own right without disrupting the whole. And we were once part of it.

Britain since the War has turned its back on Europe. Secure in the belief that English is the *lingua franca* of the world, we do not bother any longer to learn other languages. Any Briton in Europe will find that almost anyone can address him in English whereas he cannot return the compliment. There are all sorts of little realised, unintended consequences. We are told there are 300,000 French graduates working in Britain, taking jobs that would go to our own if these were a tenth as numerate, or half as literate *in English*, as their competitors. And, while thousands of European students descend on British Universities to sample another country, few of ours make the opposite journey since most would have no idea, with no grasp of the language, how even to begin to live there. No wonder recent surveys have highlighted the fact that European students today feel to have less and less in common with their opposite numbers here. And eventually, since we spurn Europe, Europe has come to spurn us too. Why bother to explore English music when we are so stand-offish and they have such a magnificent heritage themselves?

And the whole thing is compounded by our Philistinism, against which Jaeger railed. Of course there is nothing new in this, and Elgar would certainly have recognised it in his own time, but it gets worse. Elgar suffered from it all his life. If you wish to meet upper-class Edwardian society at its snobbish and Philistine worst, try the satirical short stories of Saki; but even here, you will find schoolgirls who are fluent in colloquial French, and adults who can swear comprehensively in several languages. No more. And while every Head of State or aspiring politician in Continental Europe regards it as part of his job to open art exhibitions or attend a new opera production, the best one will hear from any British (or American) politician is which football (baseball) team he supports or which pop group he favours. Against this background it is no surprise to learn that the City of Hamburg alone has possessed, for 40 years, a bigger budget for the arts than the entire Arts Council of Great Britain. In the Arts we are the poor man of Europe, and the situation is exacerbated by the impecunious state of the support mechanisms that used to be provided by such as the British Council. Foreign conductors can make a living here but, with rare exceptions such as Simon Rattle, there is no return traffic. Ignorance of the language and lack of support combine to render this next to impossible.

Yet we have formidable home-grown talent. God knows how it can succeed in making a living without emigrating, but we have in this country the most promising crop of young string players, for example, that I have ever heard. And this is our great difference from the U.S.A. : that while the pool of talent here is comparable in density to that of Continental Europe, theirs, while just as good where it exists, is more thinly spread. There are high concentrations in a few big centres but elsewhere there may be next to nothing; I have travelled hundreds of miles in the States without meeting anything more culturally uplifting than a broken-down picture-house. The result is a semi-vacuum waiting to be filled. And if you are a

Continental, part of a closely knit circle of enterprising talent, with organisational backing and with the support and confidence that brings, you can fill it, but if you are some lone Briton, you can't. And of course that is where to go; there is little point in jostling for position in this overcrowded isle. So, naturally, conductors and others from Continental Europe who feel the need to explore a wider world go to fill the voids in the U.S.A. , taking their repertoires with them, and equally naturally in the light of the above, those repertoires rarely contain English music. Not surprisingly, they prefer their own nationalisms to ours. Why shouldn't they?

While this is its principal cause, the neglect of British music in the U.S.A. also involves an extra factor which is particularly noticeable in most of the criticisms of Elgar quoted by Ms Ghuman. The U.S.A. has hang-ups on 'that invidious colonial call', real or imagined, that go back to 1776. Most of our problems with respect to Europe could quite quickly be resolved were we to overcome our wretched, isolationist Philistinism.

### **From Barry Collett**

How I agree with Nalini Ghuman's article in the November issue of the Journal, and especially the section headed 'Elgar Abroad'! This year (2007) I have sat through several eulogies extolling Elgar as our 'quintessential English composer' and one who 'typifies our great Imperial past'. No wonder foreigners are put off! I doubt whether Rimsky-Korsakov, when he studied the score of the 'Enigma' Variations and hailed it as the greatest set of variations since Beethoven, gave much thought to Elgar's Imperialism, and nor did his early champions Richter, Butts, and Steinbach. The fact that his music was performed by Rakhmaninov and Siloti in Russia, Richard Strauss, Busoni, Weingartner and Ysaye in Germany, Toscanini in Italy, and Mahler, Damrosch and Theodore Thomas in the U.S.A., as well as being championed by Fauré in France, emphasises the fact that national considerations didn't enter in to it. They simply recognized good music when they saw it.

It was surely after the First World War when our nationalistic 'little Englander' attitude arose, along with our native distrust of foreigners, which led to a silly possessive attitude that only the English could play Elgar. One only has to read the reviews of Toscanini's performances of the 'Enigma' Variations in the 1930s to see that. Thus a whole generation of musicians grew up between the wars to whom Elgar was 'forbidden' territory. As far as I know, not a note of his music was played by Karajan, Klemperer, Kleiber, or Furtwangler, for instance, and others only gave isolated performances. Fortunately in the 1960s a more enlightened attitude prevailed, and much important missionary work was done by Barenboim, Solti, Haitink, Previn, Svetlanov, and Rozhdestvensky, among others. Their work is being carried on to great effect by Sakari Oramo, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Tadaaki Otaka, and Vassily Sinaisky, to name but a few. But we need not be complacent. When will someone persuade Gergiev, Chailly, or Jansons for example (or come to that, Rattle in Berlin) to perform Elgar? Perhaps this is something the Elgar Society could be a good deal more pro-active about.

### **From Edmund M. Green**

In the November 2007 issue, Nalini Ghuman discusses, in rather gloomy terms, the relative absence of performances of Elgar's works in the United States. It seems to me that the relative absence of Elgar's works has little to do with reasons given by Dr Ghuman or her sources. It is not because Elgar did not enjoy his visits to the East Coast, because hardly anyone knows or cares about those events of one hundred years ago. Nor can it be said that his music is too 'British', because *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 1 is quintessentially 'British' and the trio is probably the most frequently played piece of classical music in the United States, having become the unofficial graduation march at most high schools and universities.

It seems to me that the principal reason Elgar's works are played less frequently than we would like is that there are very few champions of his music currently conducting in the United States. The importance of a champion is dramatically illustrated in Los Angeles where Esa-Pekka Salonen is music director. In October, Salonen led the Los Angeles Philharmonic in all seven symphonies of Sibelius plus his *Four Legends*, *Pohjola's Daughter*, and *Finlandia*. No works by Elgar are scheduled for the entire season. In San Francisco, Michael Tilson Thomas, Music Director since 1995 (and in my opinion the finest conductor we have had since the great Pierre Monteux) is a champion of American and other contemporary music. Consequently, with the music of Adams, Duruflé, Francesconi, Kernis, Knussen, Ligeti, Lindberg, Oliver, Prado, Rautavaara, Seeger, Stucky, Turnage, Xenakis, and Chen Yi already scheduled for this year, there isn't much room for Elgar, or for that matter Sibelius, Liszt, and Ravel who are represented by one work each, or Bruckner, Vaughan Williams, and Franck whose works are not being played at all.

Another reason Elgar isn't played as often as we would like is the reluctance of British orchestras to play his works when they are on tour in the United States. For example, in May 2008 the Philharmonia Orchestra, under the direction of Christoph von Dohnanyi, is playing two programs in San Francisco. Instead of Elgar or other English composers, they are playing Mozart, Mahler, Weber, Schumann and Beethoven. If British orchestras won't champion the works of Elgar or other English composers, who will?

If the Elgar Society would persuade English conductors to play Elgar when they, or their orchestras, visited the United States, it would, at least be a start to restoring Elgar's music to its rightful place in the repertory.

### **From Ernest Parkin**

In the November 2007 issue of the Journal Michael Kennedy reviews J.P.E. Harper-Scott's *Elgar: an Extraordinary Life*, and refers to it as 'this splendid book'. I have read it on his recommendation, but would like to express some reservations.

Harper-Scott is one of the new generation of Elgar critics to whom Michael Kennedy is handing on the torch, so it is as well to know the attitude they bring to their subject. This, to me, is conveyed in the book's style and tone in dealing with the life. Elgar and his wife, in particular, are treated consistently as figures of fun – fogies of a vanished age. Take this from p. 37, after quoting Elgar's

'music in the air' remark from the Buckley biography: 'An oddly effusive remark – perhaps he'd got too much sun on the top of his head – but typical of the man'. The parenthetical comment is facetious and redundant, while the rest of the sentence can stand. Perhaps the comment is meant to come under the heading of 'provocative', or even 'wit', two terms Michael Kennedy applies to the book. To me it is gratuitous and demeaning to Elgar whose remark has become definitive.

Much is made of Elgar's upper-lip furniture as cultivating (p. 25) 'the deportment of a gruff old buffer'. Couldn't it also be seen as a feature of the time? I instance the facial hair of Lord Kitchener, Hubert Parry, Mr Balfour, and Sir Adrian Boult. Or, if full sets are required, Lord Salisbury, Charles Darwin, Granville Bantock, Hans Richter, and Bernard Shaw. All experts at disguise. Yes, there was, in Elgar's case, the element of pose and camouflage, but to be put in the context of the fashion of the time. Wasn't it less of a risk for the sensitive artist to adopt the appearance or mask of the military man or country squire rather than that of the Wildean aesthete?

In referring to the music Elgar composed for Binyon's *Arthur*, one encounters the speculation regarding scene viii that 'perhaps it was directionless moping in long-dead chivalrous ideas'. The tone is again facetiously reductive and not to be accepted as a serious critical judgement. It results from a style that Michael Kennedy describes as 'breezy' and 'racy'. I would describe it as crude journalese.

The cumulative effect of this species of prose is the belittlement of Elgar and his wife. Lady Elgar suffers more from the process than her husband. Some examples: on p. 22, Jerrold Northrop Moore's tactful description of Lady Elgar is rendered in these terms: 'Some people today [the author for one!] might describe her as dumpy, plain-looking and with a frumpy hair-do'. On p. 83: '... his wife, who was imperialist to the ends of her toenails', and p. 84: '...give the haute-bourgeoise the taste for medals between her teeth and she will never be sated'. We can be told Lady Elgar was imperialist by birth and background without recourse to intrusive pedicure. Can't she be seen, with imagination, as a product of her times and respect be paid her as her husband's mainstay?

Having dealt with the criticisms I feel due to the book, I end with its positive aspects. It is in Harper-Scott's appraisal of the music and his case for Elgar's modernism as he defines it. Here, I agree with Michael Kennedy, and I have to say that it is in these sections where the prose is more appropriately formal and serious.

### **From Arthur S. Reynolds**

A reading of *Elgar, an Extraordinary Life* by J.P.E. Harper-Scott put me in mind of the traveller lost in rural Ireland who approaches a local person for directions to Dublin. 'I wouldn't start from here' comes the reply. Dr Harper-Scott sets out to enlighten the viewer of Elgar as '...a flatulent man rolling port around his tongue and punctuating bloated silences with the occasional 'Bah''': 'Why do we think of Elgar this way?' he asks.

Who are 'we'? Surely not anyone with a low opinion of the composer, for such an Elgarophobe would be disinclined to take the time and trouble to follow Dr Harper-Scott's labyrinthine explorations into the recesses of Elgar's music and personality. Many of Dr Harper-Scott's findings would be lost on a reader bereft of a high level of

prior knowledge. On page 79, for example, he produces a quotation from an interview the conductor Artur Nikisch gave to a *Musical Times* journalist in praise of the First Symphony. Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore brought the passage to light in *Elgar: A Creative Life*, but Harper-Scott tells us that 'Moore slightly misquotes this and gives the wrong date'. Who but the specialist would find enlightenment in the revelation that footnote 83 on page 548 of *A Creative Life* cites the June 1909 issue of *The Musical Times* as the source of the quotation, when the passage appeared in the July edition?

Dr Harper-Scott's evident delight in identifying the beams in the eyes of others invites the citation of the motes in his own. My cursory examination of his text found two oversights. The caption that accompanies a photograph produced on page 85 reads as follows: 'Elgar timing a friend's billiards shot, probably at Severn House'. Had he consulted *Myself and Others*, Sir Landon Ronald's autobiography, Dr Harper-Scott would know that that the venue is a hotel billiard room at Crowborough, Sussex and the 'friend' is Sir Frederic Cowen. The photograph also appears, correctly captioned, on page 134 of Moore's *Spirit of England*. Dr Harper-Scott misidentifies another photograph on page 142: 'Photograph of Elgar on his death bed at Marl Bank, Worcester in 1933. Photographer unknown'. The photographer is well known as Fred Hampstead, HMV's staff photographer who took this image of Elgar on 12 December 1933, when the composer was undergoing treatment at the South Bank Nursing Home. Elgar did not return to Marl Bank and into the bed in which he died until 3 January 1934.

## 100 YEARS AGO...

Elgar sent his new part-songs to Novello, where they were dealt with by his old friend William McNaught, who received the dedication of *O Wild West Wind*. However, work on the symphony was slow, and not helped by a bad bout of influenza, and also the death of his brother-in-law, Will Grafton, to whom Elgar had been quite close. Furthermore, the central position of their Rome apartment made concentration difficult, as he wrote to Alfred Littleton on 30 January: 'The noises of this place are beyond belief. New York is quiet in comparison'.

Julia Worthington arrived, which cheered them up; but then Alice was laid low by the 'flu in early February. On 16<sup>th</sup> Elgar and 'Pippa' went to a concert conducted by Giuseppe Martucci (he was a friend of Stanford who in 1898 had conducted an all-British programme by Stanford, Sullivan, Mackenzie, Parry and Cowen). For whatever reason, they left at the interval. On 21 February Littleton wrote to say that permission had been given to set O'Shaughnessy's poem 'We are the Music Makers': but it was to be another four years before that particular project came to fruition.

As the weather improved the Elgars were able to go for walks. They visited various places of interest, and attended social occasions, including the singers of the Sistine Chapel at the Hotel Bristol on 13 March. Alice described their singing as 'very trying'. Elgar's only musical achievement of these first weeks of the new year was the correction of proofs of the new part-songs on 28 February.

On 27 March they went with Pippa to Florence for a week, staying at the Hotel New York. On their first full day there they visited the Uffizi Gallery and in the evening attended Bianchi's new opera *Fausta*, which Alice found 'inane'.

Back in Rome the Elgars entertained the Brodsky Quartet (who were giving a series of chamber concerts) and Lord Northampton. On Easter Day (19 April) Alice and Carice attended the Sistine Chapel in the evening. They saw the Pope but Alice was disappointed: 'Miserable places & failure of any beauty or impressiveness[:] came away'. However three days later they went to Tivoli, where they were most impressed by the Villa d'Este and its famous gardens. Alice thought it 'the most beautiful place I ever saw'. The next day they dined with the Sgambatis and were shown some of the musical treasures of Wagner and Berlioz which had been bequeathed by Liszt. Sgambati's teacher. 'How wonderful to see & touch', Elgar wrote to Jaeger.

Elgar had written to Jaeger (on 26 April) about the part-songs: 'Nimrod' wanted to write an analysis of them for *The Musical Times*, and in this letter Elgar spelled out much of his thinking about part-singing. However, he reported on a wasted time in Italy through lack of money: 'I cannot afford to get a quiet studio where I might have worked & my whole winter has been wasted for the want of a few more pounds: it seems odd that any rascal of a painter can find a place for his 'genius' to work in when a poor devil like me who after all *has* done something shd. find himself in a hell of noise & no possible escape! I resent it bitterly but can do nothing'.

The Elgars left Rome on 5 May and took the train to Naples, sailing for home on the *Ortona* on the 8<sup>th</sup>. They had been away from home for more than six months.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

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