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The Elgar Society

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JULY 2008 Vol. 15, No. 5

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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: King Olaf at the altar of Thor

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

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

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

Presentation of written text:

Subheadings: longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Correspondence: Thanks to Mrs McKenzie for her comments on the Powick asylum, though as Andrew Lyle was too polite to point out, she seems to have detected only one 'glaring error'; her additional material cannot even be classed among errors of omission. Readers may be able to supply answers to her questions about the Hereford bulldog (it may be just the Johnsonian excuse: 'pure ignorance, madam') and Troyte's grave, though it is surely not the responsibility of the Society to tend to the resting places of people just because they were Elgar's friends.

Two correspondents, whose messages I have not included, comment (one politely, the other not) on the absence of prices for materials under review. The reason is simple: I don't know them. CD and book prices are variable anyway. I suppose anyone sufficiently impressed by a review to want to buy the book or CD could quite quickly find out the price, and I also suppose that readers of this Journal are aware that Naxos recordings, of which we review a fair number, are at the cheap end of the price-range.

Concerning the cover picture on the March issue, Dominic Guyver points out that the bottom right-hand corner provides a clue ('Photo by Histed, London'). The date, however, would be interesting to know for certain. At the risk of being castigated by those who object to references to Elgar's personal appearance, I wonder whether the exceptional luxuriance of his moustache, and a certain recession in hairline, might provide clues. At least it looks like Elgar, unlike the recently discovered Mozart portrait, which looks like Haydn.

Readers are kindly requested to take note of the following, which Andrew Neill, our departing Chairman, informs me was resolved by the Council on 19 April 2008:

That a correspondence column be established by the Editor of the News thus creating a clear differentiation between letters published in the Journal and the News. The Council agreed the following definitions:

a. Letters published by the Editor of the Journal should relate to articles and reviews previously published in the Journal and to the life and music of Edward Elgar.

b. Letters published by the Editor of the News should relate to issues raised in its columns, the Society generally, its management and activities.

There is, of course, no intention on the part of Council to qualify the editorial independence of either publication.

* * * * *

I have still managed to avoid publishing any 'solution' to the official enigma of the Variations. Nevertheless, in this issue, three items allude to it. I am pleased to include the essay by William Golding, one of those awarded Elgar Prizes for students in 2007. He takes a thoughtful view of one of the most original and controversial pieces of recent Elgar scholarship. John Ling has an intriguing idea about the enigma; and a recent purported 'solution' is the subject of a book review. It seems less original and comprehensive in its explanation than Clive McClelland's recent article in *The Musical Times*, to which Geoffrey Hodgkins referred in the *March News*. Geoffrey seems to suggest that because Elgar hated hymn tunes, he would not have known the (Anglican) one Dr McClelland suggests may have been used. But the Anglican and Catholic repertoires were not entirely distinct, however (Newman's 'Praise to the Holiest', in part, appeared in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and later in *The English Hymnal*). When Elgar snapped 'I don't know anything about your hymns', in response to Dora Penny's tactless suggestion that something in the *Coronation Ode* sounded like one, he adds to the large list of composers who have furiously denied knowledge of music that, pretty surely, they knew, and which may have unwittingly influenced them. This puts Elgar in excellent company (Verdi, Wagner, Brahms ...); it's a rare composer who, like Vaughan Williams, will admit to 'cribbing'. And if Elgar did dislike hymns, it could be because he had to spend all day persuading probably reluctant children to play them in tune on the violin – which was surely the activity that, on 21 October 1898, made him light a cigar – nice that he could afford one, or were they given to him? – and settle down to improvising, with the consequences we all know.

Finally, my thanks to all contributors to this issue, even to those who got material to me at the last moment (you know who you are). Geoffrey Hodgkins was punctual as ever with '100 years ago', those months when the great work whose centenary falls this year must have seething (rather than simmering) within Elgar's brain-pan (to adapt his words about the aborted 'Gordon' symphony). The number of CDs and BBC broadcasts of Elgar's music, as far as I can see, shows no decline in this 'Vaughan Williams Year', and if some of the recordings are reissues, there's no harm in that; indeed, judging from the review of recordings by George Weldon, as well as some other reissues reviewed here in recent years, there's almost greater interest in older performances. The Weldon issue is reviewed by our new Chairman, but a chance remark of his predecessor led to Andrew Youdell sending me another, which I have included in part as it is the record of an experience that Steven Halls is, perhaps, too young to have shared.

It is also with great pleasure that I include reviews from Róisín Blunnie and Nalini Ghuman, adding to the stock of younger contributors, to whom, and those mentioned in connection with the 'enigma', we may add Duncan Boutwood. His work on Herbert Thompson conveniently follows Tom Kelly's article in the previous issue. Duncan is working on his PhD, which reminds to signal here with pleasure the completion of two Elgarian PhDs, also from contributors to the Journal, by Corissa Gould and Norma Hollingsworth. Congratulations to them, and warm thanks to those who assist in the production of the Journal, including printers and distributors, and of course Michael Byde, who sets the pages so expertly.

Julian Rushton

Andrew Neill: A tribute to the retiring Chairman

Geoffrey Hodgkins

Andrew Neill joined the Elgar Society in 1966 at the age of 21. The annual subscription was 10/- (equivalent to 50p) and he could not afford to pay for Life Membership, which was £5. As now, there were few young faces among Society members, but things changed in 1971 with the creation of the London Branch, which is when I first met him. There were quite a number of other twenty-somethings, including John Knowles, Garry Humphreys, Robert Tucker, Michael Plant and Bill Parker. The Branch Chairman was Douglas Guest, then Organist at Westminster Abbey; the immortal Bill Jackson was secretary, and regular meetings were addressed by such luminaries as Yehudi Menuhin, Charles Groves, Paul Tortelier, Jerrold Northrop Moore, and Michael Kennedy. 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive'. Andrew was elected on to the Branch Committee in 1973, and to the National Committee two years later, thus creating a link with the very foundation of the Society, as the Chairman was then A.T. (Bertie) Shaw, who had held the position since the beginning in 1951.

Andrew soon proved adept at organisation, being involved in meetings in Leeds and Liverpool which led to the creation of the Yorkshire and North-West branches. In 1979 he became Secretary of the Society, his fellow officers being Michael Pope (Chairman), Trevor Fenemore-Jones (Vice-President), John Knowles (Treasurer), and Ronald Taylor (Journal Editor). This new team ushered in a period of growth and development in the Society. The membership increased, new branches continued to be established, and new initiatives were undertaken, including the Society's first record (LP) entitled *Elgar's Interpreters on Record*, comprising early recordings by such artists as Tudor Davies, Andrew Black, and Louise Kirkby Lunn. Undeterred by relatively modest sales, Andrew and John Knowles moved quickly on to the next Society record, of Boult conducting Elgar's choral songs. This was from a broadcast from 1967, and was made under licence from the BBC. Andrew was also the driving force behind the first, and as yet the only, recording of *King Olaf*, in 1985.

Since then the Society has produced, sponsored, or assisted in another 26 recordings. Of these the most important were undoubtedly the three sets of CDs of Elgar's own electrical recordings which began in 1992, financed jointly by the Elgar Society and the Elgar Foundation. The launch of these recordings at EMI's Abbey Road Studios on 14 May 1992 was a wonderful occasion, a high point in the Society's existence. Those fortunate enough to be present listened spellbound

to the remastering of the Violin Concerto in the presence of its soloist, the Society's President Lord Menuhin, who as a youth of sixteen had recorded the work with the composer in that very studio sixty years before. In the unavoidable absence of the Society Chairman, Christopher Robinson, Andrew presented the President with an engraved vase marking the occasion. Lord Menuhin then presented Jerrold Northrop Moore with the first Elgar Medal, and several weeks later Andrew presented the second to Leonard Slatkin.

Andrew had resigned as Secretary in 1986 when work took him and his family to Australia for nearly three years. During that time he was able to contact the local radio station in Sydney and eventually presented fourteen programmes on 'Elgar and the Gramophone', including possibly the only broadcast ever of the complete acoustic version of Elgar's Second Symphony. Back in England, Andrew was made Vice-Chairman of the Society in 1989 following the retirement of Trevor Fenemore-Jones, and when at the 1992 AGM Christopher Robinson resigned as Chairman due to pressure of work Andrew became Chairman. Despite our friendship, I actually opposed his appointment as I felt that the Society needed someone of stature in the musical world. How wrong I was! What we got was what we needed – a working Chairman. Although not musically trained, Andrew had already made friends with many musicians, and with influential people in the record industry; these contacts often bore fruit in the Elgar cause. He lost no opportunity to promote Elgar wherever and whenever the opportunity arose, as in the Australian broadcasts already mentioned. How he has managed to combine his work for the Society with having a wife and family *and* running his own business probably only those close to him could say. It is also probably worth recording that had he claimed all the expenses which were legitimately due to him in the pursuit of Society affairs, the subscription might now be a good deal higher than it is!

Andrew soon found himself caught up in the furore surrounding the proposal to build an Elgar Centre next to the Birthplace. The 1994 Annual Meeting was a stormy affair but the Society came through safely, mainly thanks to his patience and diplomacy. Another contentious issue came the following year when Anthony Payne announced his intention to 'complete' the Third Symphony from Elgar's sketches. After discussion the Committee decided to take no particular stance on the issue.

Since then the Society has continued to change and to innovate. Thanks largely to the enthusiasm and expertise of John Norris, the Society set up a website; and Elgar Enterprises was formed to produce and market Elgar products such as books and recordings. For some time Andrew had proposed the separation of the academic side of the Society's work from its more general activities; and so in 1997 the Journal gained a companion, the Elgar Society News. Perhaps the most important decision of recent years was to form a company to publish the remaining editions in the former Complete Edition of Elgar's music. Novello, having brought out the major works – that is, the volumes which would be most popular and therefore most remunerative – had been dragging their feet for years, so this was a brave and challenging venture to commit the Society to. Andrew became Chairman of the Board, and the Elgar Society Edition was launched at St James's Palace in October 2001 with the production of Volume 25, containing *Dream Children* and the two *Wand of Youth* suites. In his review for the Journal, Jerrold Northrop Moore wrote:

'Andrew Neill... grasped the moment, chaired an *ad hoc* meeting in London, and steered between the Scylla of potential competing interests and the Charybdis of nay-sayers'.

The Elgar Society owes Andrew an enormous debt of gratitude; and I find it immensely sad that almost thirty years' unselfish service at the highest levels of the Society should be stained by recent criticism. To borrow the famous last line of Osgood Fielding III: 'Nobody's perfect'. However, in spite of any perceived shortcomings, Andrew does not deserve the opprobrium that has been heaped upon him. If a list of his achievements for and on behalf of the Elgar cause were printed, it would fill many pages of this Journal. It is certainly time to move on, to build bridges, and to try and recapture the aim about which Jerrold Northrop Moore wrote so eloquently a number of years ago: 'My hope is for us all to remember constantly the generous spirit of the man who devoted his life to creating the music which has brought us together. Never lose the sound of that generosity....[Let us] treasure the fellowship that Elgar's music has brought to every one of us'.

The Prehistory of Elgar's 'Enigma'

John Ling

In March 1890, the *Musical Times* carried the third of a series of 'Chats on Current Topics'.¹ This unsigned article takes the form of a fictional discussion between three people: a composer, a singer and an amateur. At one point the amateur expresses his view of contemporary composers: for the masses they write 'twaddle' and for the other classes they 'propound enigmas and utter dark sayings which only reveal their meaning, when they have any, to those who can get hold of [the] key'.² The conjunction of 'enigmas' and 'dark sayings' – both terms of course familiar to Elgarians – in the context of musical compositions is remarkable, given that Elgar did not start work on the 'Enigma' Variations until eight years later. It could, of course, be mere coincidence, but the possibility that it is not is worth investigating.

Byron Adams notes the appearance of the word 'aenigmate' in the Vulgate version of St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, for which the Authorised Version has 'darkly'.³ The verse in which the word appears was, according to Adams, read in a service that Elgar attended in 1899 shortly before completing work on the Variations. There is, however, an even closer Biblical connection, but one without an immediate relation to Elgar. Psalm 49, verse 4 reads, in the Authorised Version: 'I will open my dark saying upon the harp'. (In the Prayer Book version it is: 'I will disclose my dark saying upon the harp'.) So not only does the psalm yield the exact phrase 'dark saying', but it also provides a musical context. In the Vulgate (where the same psalm is numbered 48) the phrase rendered as 'dark saying' is 'enigma' (or in some versions 'propositionem'). This shows that 'enigma' and 'dark saying' were practically synonymous in the early seventeenth century, the word 'dark' simply meaning 'obscure'. But by the nineteenth century a 'dark saying' may have acquired the additional connotation of being portentous. This is certainly the assumption made by Julian Rushton in his survey of 'solutions' of Elgar's *enigma*.⁴

But the coincidence under investigation lies not just in the phrases used, but in the context: modern musical composition. It is likely that Elgar read the *Musical*

Times in 1890. The journal had first mentioned his name as a performer in April 1878 and as a composer in May 1883. In January 1884 there was a review of a concert in Birmingham in which his *Intermezzo* had been performed.⁵ He was mentioned several times between then and 1890. But even if he read the 'Chats' article cited above, it is unlikely by itself to have made enough of an impression to influence him several years later.

However, this was not the only occasion where the words were used in the journal. In December 1892 Joseph Bennett used the phrase 'dark sayings' in the special Beethoven supplement that accompanied the issue. Commenting on the perennial appeal of Beethoven's 'middle period' works compared with the late works, he wrote: 'In them he astonishes without perplexing. He is a giant rejoicing in his strength and frankly displaying it; not a mystic uttering dark sayings'.⁶ This suggests that Bennett, who wrote frequently for the journal, was also the writer of the 'Chats'. Moreover, the conversational form of the latter, unusual for the *Musical Times*, is reminiscent of the *Musical World*, with which Bennett had been associated when J.W. Davison was editor.

Five years later there appeared a review of the 1897 Chester Festival in which the reviewer, commenting on a performance of Haydn's *The Creation*, writes: 'And how enjoyable this transparent music is, amid our gathering experience of dark sayings, vague meanings, and unsolvable riddles!'⁷ The review was attributed to a 'special correspondent': Bennett frequently contributed in this capacity and it is likely that he was the reviewer on this occasion. Bennett was also the influential music critic of the *Daily Telegraph*. Elgar had written to him in 1889 to present his credentials as a worthy choice to compose a work for the Worcester Festival the following year, and to forestall Bennett's questioning of the Festival Committee's judgement.⁸ Bennett later gave the work, *Froissart*, a positive review. Elgar is also known to have written to Bennett on other occasions during the period in question: in November 1897, in March 1898 (the letter in which Elgar expressed his hope 'some day to do a great work' and asked Bennett to consider writing a libretto for him), May 1898, and January 1899.⁹ The last mentioned letter shows that Elgar read Bennett's articles: 'I miss your writing in the M[usical] Times this month & regret, extremely, the blank you leave there'.¹⁰ In most of the letters there is a whiff of sycophancy, which is not surprising given that Bennett was the music critic of the paper with the highest circulation at the time. Bennett's reviews of Elgar's works

1 'Chats on current topics III', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 31, No. 565 (Mar. 1890), 137–39.

2 *Ibid.*, 138.

3 Byron Adams, 'The "Dark Saying" of the Enigma: Homoeroticism and the Elgarian Paradox', *19th-Century Music*, 23/3 (Spring 2000), 218–35, at p. 218.

4 Julian Rushton, *Elgar: 'Enigma' Variations* (Cambridge University Press, 1999): see especially p. 68, where the *Dies Irae* is described as 'no less dark a saying'.

5 'Brief Summary of Country News', *The Musical Times*, 19 (No. 422, April 1878), 227–30, at p. 229; 'Brief Summary of Country News', *Ibid.*, 24 (No. 483, May 1883), 281–6, at p. 286; and 'Music in Birmingham', *Ibid.*, 25 (No. 491, January 1884), 23.

6 Joseph Bennett, 'Beethoven: Some Thoughts on the Man and His Genius', *The Musical Times*, 33: Beethoven Supplement (December 1892), 7–14, at p. 12.

7 'Chester Music Festival', *The Musical Times*, 38, No. 654 (August 1897), 530–2, at p. 530.

8 Edward Elgar, *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime*, ed. Jerrold Northrop Moore (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 31–2.

9 *Ibid.*, 60, 62, 64 and 72.

10 *Ibid.*, 72.

during this period were generally favourable.

It seems likely, therefore, that Elgar was familiar with Bennett's way of expressing his impatience with the obscurity of modern compositions. Nevertheless, in his programme note for the Variations he speaks of 'enigma' and 'dark saying'. He must have been pretty sure that Bennett would like the work, so there may have been an element of private joke in his use of these words – perhaps even an ironic claim to be a 'modern' composer. At the same time he made it clear that his work, unlike those that Bennett had criticised, did not depend on the ability of the listener to solve a conundrum: 'its "dark saying" must be left unguessed' (this reading explains the 'must'). But of course Elgar's disclaimer had the opposite effect, especially when it was assumed that 'dark' implied 'portentous'. But once the work had established both its own and its composer's reputation it would have been demeaning to disclose the real reason for the words 'enigma' and 'dark saying'.

On this reading the theme that 'goes' over the whole set of variations is another matter entirely. Elgar described the theme as 'larger', but there is no suggestion of any 'darkness' – either obscurity or portentousness – in it.

The foregoing account of the prehistory of the language in Elgar's programme note suggests that attempts to discover the 'dark saying', or to link it with the 'larger' theme, may be misguided. But Elgar would probably have enjoyed the jape.

John Ling gained his MMus from Royal Holloway University of London in 2006 and is now a research student there.

Byron Adams's 'Dark Saying': a Critical Response

William Golding

In 'The "Dark Saying" of the Enigma: Homoeroticism and the Elgarian paradox', Byron Adams claims that the 'enigma' of Elgar's Variations is directly linked with the 'complex interaction ... between Elgar's art and ... his (paradoxical) 'tormented life'.¹ He demonstrates that Elgar's personality was divided between the outer 'rigid...quasi military' (222), socially conforming male, and the inner more emotional, effeminate, 'abnormally sensitive' personality.² Elgar was able to explore this 'crisis of identity' without dangerous social consequences through examining his individual self and nature by 'projecting himself into the souls of others' (231). The 'enigma', then, concerns identity, gender, sexuality, and 'presence' as the possible, or impossible, separation of subject and object. Adams does not 'presume to move inexorably toward a full and all-embracing explication of Elgar's 'ambiguous ... personality' (217), nor to solve the 'enigma' of *Variations*, because, as Elgar said, 'its "dark saying" must be left unguessed'.

Adams offers potentially illuminating insights through examining Elgar's cultural context and relationships. He quotes the epistle of St Paul, which he suggests was an inspiration for Elgar behind the 'enigma' of the *Variations*:

For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.³

But he cautions us that the 'enigma' is not a secret or truth beyond our understanding, but is essentially and unavoidably implicit in the process of questioning itself. In this essay I consider how this 'enigma' of identity, or the 'dark saying', has wider implications for understanding Adams's argument, what it can tell us about Elgar

1 Byron Adams, 'The 'Dark Saying' of the Enigma: Homoeroticism and the Elgarian Paradox', in S. Fuller and L. Whitesell (eds), *Queer episodes in Music and Modern Identity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 216–44, here 217. The article appeared in *19th-Century Music*, 23/3 (Spring 2000), 218–235.

2 Gerald Cumberland in Kenyon, *Set Down in Malice*, cited Adams, 'The 'Dark Saying'', in Fuller and Whitesell, op. cit., 223; further page references in parentheses are to the text.

3 St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, 13:12, quoted Adams, 'The 'Dark Saying', 216. [A number of 'solutions' to the 'enigma' have of course referred to St Paul; see also John Ling's article, above. Ed.]

and his music, and what this suggests for the perception and reception of an aesthetic experience.

Issues of identity, gender and sexuality have been present throughout much of the recorded history of European music: for instance the often sexually or emotionally orientated tradition of opera. Music is associated with eroticism,⁴ and with effeminacy and emotional instability,⁵ although the tradition has paradoxically been dominated by men. Although Adams offers interesting insights into these issues, he does not say why this should necessarily have any importance in an aesthetic experience. Eduard Hanslick said that feelings are only set forth in concepts,⁶ and concepts go beyond the scope of music, an essentially sensuous medium; as Theodor W. Adorno has written, music's form always subverts its content.⁷ For music formalists such as Hanslick the value of music is specifically musical, contained within the notes and their artistic combination; thus contextual and biographical details tell us nothing about it. Wimsatt and Beardsley's theory that 'pure emotion is an illusion',⁸ because emotive value is fixed through history, still insists that all meaning must be contained within the work of art itself; but this still cannot explain how music can have any meaning or significance when separated from the conditions of the subject who imparts meaning to it.

It seems that the aesthetic experience must be directly associated with context; as Michael Tippett said, 'it is only through images (not concepts) that the inner world communicates at all'.⁹ In music, 'images' does not mean anything visual, but the association of certain musical qualities and material that have meaning only in relation to past experiences of the subject. For music's material is 'historical through and through',¹⁰ and therefore of a prescriptive or proscriptive nature, not merely descriptive. For Susan McClary these historically conditioned musical and 'semiotic codes' culturally construct desire, sexuality and organization of gender.¹¹ Music's connection with cultural context is therefore essential within the aesthetic experience, because if gender and sexuality relate directly to ideas of subjectivity

4 *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), article 'Sexuality in Music'.

5 Adams, op. cit., 224: 'the pioneering sexologist... [has written] "it has been extravagantly said that all musicians are inverters" ... and (citing Oppenheimer), 'the musical disposition is marked by a great emotional instability, and this instability is a disposition to nervousness'.

6 *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics: 'Emotions and Music'*; E. Hanslick, *Vom musikalisch-Schönen* (1854, trans. G. Payzant as *On the Musically Beautiful*, 1986).

7 T.W. Adorno, *Society, Aesthetic Theory*, in *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O'Connor (Oxford: Blackwell 2000), 240.

8 W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley, 'The Affective Fallacy', in D. Lodge (ed.), *20th-century Literary Criticism: A Reader* (Harlow: Longman 1972), 356.

9 Michael Tippett, 'Poets in a Barren Age', 1972, 156.

10 Adorno, in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics: Adorno's Philosophy of Music*, 26.

11 S. C. Cook, Review of *Musicology and the Undoing of Women*, in Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality*, accessed through Jstor Scholarly Journal Archive.

and identity, music is in some ways determined by, and also a crucially determining aspect of, cultural values and understanding.

Nevertheless music must have some autonomy from cultural context; otherwise it would have no freedom to offer the possibility of change or an effective critique – or even to influence culture in a way not already controlled by economic and social relations. It must be undetermined in some manner so that the true identity and meaning cannot be known, otherwise it would be entirely closed to different contextual reception, and it would become separated from its own independent musical unity – which must transcend any particular experience of it. This is what Elgar may have hoped to achieve, in trying to transcend societal relations and 'identity thinking'. Through inter-subjective representation of music he could be free of the conventions that possibly led to his 'contradictory ... [and] tormented life' (217), and his music could be heard objectively. As he recognised, though, and as Adams also notes, any totalizing objective project must necessarily fail because a complete loss of any sense of self or identity is absolutely senseless. Meaning and identity are therefore an ongoing negation,¹² as they are always asserted as an understanding that depends on the self that is asserting them (hence the 'enigma'). In this way, music is a 'truly bisexual organ, and therein (lies) its power and its threat'.¹³ Thus the insights Adams offers are important in illuminating the 'truth content',¹⁴ ('enigma') of an aesthetic experience.

This lack of conceptual specificity in the aesthetic experience means music 'can offer no guarantees of a faithful passage of meaning from the composer to the listening mind'.¹⁵ In exploring the potential influence of homosexuality on Elgar's work, Adams is not disrespectfully imposing his own identity and ideology onto it, but is taking advantage of this possibility to open up meaning, rather than closing it off. He indicates how certain attitudes towards social conformism, masculinity and sexuality shaped the national identity, especially towards aesthetics, as a result of the conviction of Oscar Wilde in 1895 (225), and with the invention of the term 'homosexuality' and the idea of a homosexual type¹⁶ arising through 'advances' in psychology and sexology of the time (224). Adams also suggests that this led to Elgar's need or desire to explore a paradoxical identity through his music:

given the prejudice against homosexuality that pervaded English society and his own...internalised investment in social propriety, it is highly unlikely that Elgar ever considered consummating his intense feelings for his male friends. (228)

However, although Adams provides an account of Elgar's artistic language and

12 *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics: 'Emotions and Music'*.

13 *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity*, 17.

14 *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics: Adorno: Survey of Thought*, 18: 'it is only because of autonomy that certain works of art can achieve a critical and utopian "truth content", in the absence of which a fundamental transformation of society would be even more difficult to envision'.

15 *Queer episodes in Music and Modern Identity*, 16.

16 *Ibid.*, 12.

response to the whole of society, it is mainly a narrative interpretation, focusing on the history of reception of homosexuality in general, but not showing the psychoanalytic connections with the history of music, and how these issues are reflected in production, aesthetic composition and perception of the music.

Adams comments briefly on the treatment of the musical material in 'Nimrod' (230), and its reappearance in *The Music Makers*, representing again a potential confusion of identity and inner conflict (232-233). There are no other places, though, where any musical characteristics or material are related to historical praxis or association, and therefore not necessarily connected with the representation of certain emotions or expression as understood in the period. His strategy is also mainly regressive in relating to the cultural context, and does not explore the critical response of the public to the 'Enigma' Variations or place it within the context of reception of Elgar's music as a whole. It must be recognised that expression is something both external and internal. It is a musical feature, like tonality, which to some degree depends upon musical context and historical association, which gives it significance, yet because it is transient, elusive, and non conceptual, it is also beyond any dominant context or ideology, and can therefore be explored. Narrative and subject-based interpretation cannot be separated from the psychoanalytic aspect of the history of a musical object (the music itself). In other words, a structural overview of Elgar's sexuality and identity, and their relation to his music, 'cannot be mapped on the history of vicissitudes of a single (however paradoxical) sexual drive'.¹⁷

Although Adams denies this false innocence by reminding us that 'then shall I know even as also I am known', he has to assert the opposite view within his argument for it to have any meaning. For example, he says 'homoeroticism ... runs as a persistent thread through Elgar's work' (229). When he writes (225) 'given this censorious climate ... is it any wonder that British composers responded by creating public personas that stressed their hearty virility?' he assumes that this is a rhetorical question, and that of course they *would* respond as such. This in turn assumes that the subject can respond subjectively, separated from the 'objective' social relations. However, as Elgar was intent on conforming with social values, he would have actively encouraged this distinction between 'male' and 'female' behaviour, and although this may have 'tormented' his inner life, he may well have felt an essential need for it. In defining a social and cultural Other (for example homosexual), 'real' men can identify and know themselves as recognizable and unambiguously different. Identity can only be asserted through positing its opposite, and cannot be divorced from this binary distinction; hence the formation of subjects in relation to sexual behaviour is, as Foucault has said, for the organisation and reproduction of social order.¹⁸ Therefore whether Elgar had wanted to dissolve the boundaries of traditional subjective identity thinking or not, he seemed to realise that this was futile, as no self, identity, or meaning can be given without its absolute Other, and thus its social relations.

The 'enigma', though, is that music, and identity, must remain in a state of

17 *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*: 'Sexuality in Music'.

18 *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*: 'Sexuality in Music'.

becoming rather than posit Adorno's closed self-contained aesthetic totality, determined in advance in its relation to this Other; otherwise it would have no autonomous freedom or self beyond its context. It therefore depends on its relation with the Other to give it identity or meaning. Hegel had said that the aesthetic experience of music could bring you closer to self-consciousness through achieving 'certainty of ourselves only when we are recognized by another whom we recognize as free in turn'.¹⁹ In this way Elgar's identity only becomes asserted and given through the reciprocal action of the Other; the listener, the critic, the musician, who in giving it meaning and identity gives it life. However because every projection is in some way a self-projection, as Adams indicates, the identity becomes determined by that subject's context, and therefore the Other cannot experience the object's freedom, because that necessarily transcends any particular projection. Thus we can never be truly certain of our own identity through this relation, because we cannot ever know the true identity or meaning of the object. This is the 'possible impossibility' of the project, for Adams, Elgar, or myself: the 'truth content', or 'enigma' that promises and hopes to be 'uncovered... (but) can never be fully answered (or identified)' (238).

The composer then depends on the liveliness of the listeners', and the critics', sensibility and imagination. Musicians offer their identity up through the work of art, to free the Other from being dominated by their context, so they in turn can be free, and thus rely on the Other to not close off their identity in this relationship, and respond in such a way that opens up another 'world' of significance for others.²⁰ This is particularly important when considered at a critical distance from the former means of expression, context, or conditions of censorship and suppression as in the case of the 'Enigma' Variations. Although we can never know the Other truly, we should not determine this relationship in advance, but should be open to possibilities contained within the Other itself, beyond the dominant ideology; otherwise there can be no possible hope of change in, or freedom from, that ideology. Hence we should 'Take people as they are, not as they should be'. Yet because we only 'know in part', as it is always partly a self-projection, it must always be remembered that the Other is never fully determined through the projection we give to it; thus we can never completely know its true identity.

Elgar in the Variations, and Adams in his critical response, both demonstrate this by ending with a sense of ironic closure and organic unity. Elgar's affirmative recapitulation of thematic material seems to bring the music to a settled closure, yet his exploration of intersubjectivity throughout the piece as a whole, and the use of variations as a continuously unfolding thematic process – and as such a becoming – would suggest that identity is never in fact settled or determined. Adams, after developing his ideas in his critical response, returns affirmatively at the end to his original exposition, thus giving the sense of self-contained meaning and closure. Yet

19 Stephen Houlgate, 'G.W.F. Hegel: Phenomenology of Spirit', in R. C. Solomon and D. Sherman (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Continental Philosophy* (Blackwell 2003), 20.

20 Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Ferrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), 170: 'The work (of art) sets up a world. The work holds open the open region of the world'.

in reminding the reader that 'then shall I know even as also I am known', he seems deliberately to undermine this sense of affirmative meaning or closure in his own essay. Therefore what Adams can tell us about Elgar and his music is not at all a telling, but a suggesting or revealing of other possibilities, in the form of questions and challenges to 'see through the glass darkly' from our own perspective. Most importantly Adams demonstrates what he indicates Elgar wanted to show in the 'Enigma' Variations: the showing of what cannot be told.

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Gerontius as Ammunition? – A Newly Discovered Letter

Duncan Boutwood

The following handwritten letter (see fig. 1), on Novello's letterhead, is tucked into the back of a miniature score of *The Dream of Gerontius* in the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.¹ The score formerly belonged to Herbert Thompson, the music and art critic of the *Yorkshire Post*,² and the letter, from the company secretary of Novello & Co., explains precisely how the score came into his possession. The letter provides a wealth of information about the concerns of a commercial music publisher in wartime.

January 1st 1915.

My dear Thompson

Your letter of yesterday's date has been brought to me – Lucky for you you mentioned my name, or you would have been told that Elgar's "Gerontius", miniature score, has been produced in -->germany, & that the copies reached us from Leipzig only a few days before War was declared; that the plates have probably been converted into bullets, & that a reprint is now impossible – **Ergo** – we are not sending any of them out as Review copies. They are too precious & too few in number to be scattered abroad generally in the form of Press copies. A deal of wastage can be done in that way. Moreover as our plates have probably gone the way of most bullets we must pay for the cost of the plates, as well as of the copies, out of our 1st & only print. So we must sell as many as we can. If we sell them all I fear we shall not cover our expenses; as a Publisher's expenses are not as a rule covered by the sales of a single edition. But, as this is New Years day, & you are Thompson, I am sending you a bound copy "in a present". I have written your name in it, & am sending it to you by this Post.

I do not understand how you have heard of the existence of this score as an unpriced publication. See the enclosed cutting from the September N^o of "The Musical Times" – Poor old Musical Times – but surely you find the advertisements interesting, for they are my part of the Monthly Show.

The Index for the 1914 'Musical Times' shall be sent to you by this Post, or very shortly.

Good luck throughout 1915.

Yours v. sincerely

Henry R. Clayton

1 Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. Special Collections Music E-1 ELG.

2 For more information on Thompson, see Tom Kelly, 'Yorkshire Light on the First Symphony', this Journal, March 2008, 17–26.



160, Wardour Street, W.

London, January 1st 1915.

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NEW YORK.

My dear Thompson
Your letter of yesterday's date
has been brought to me - Luckily
for you you mentioned my name
or you would have been told that
Elgar's "Gerontius", miniature book,
has been produced in Germany,
& that the copies reached us from
Leipzig only a few days before war
was declared; that the plates
have probably been converted into
bulletts, & that a reprint is now
impossible - Ergo - we are
not sending any of them out
as Review copies - They are too

Fig. 1. The first page of Clayton's letter, showing 'germany' and 'Leipzig' in very small letters.

Thompson's diary records that he did indeed write to Novello & Co. on 31 December 1914.³ As New Year's Day was not then a public holiday in England, Clayton was able to reply immediately. From the content of the reply, one can assume that Thompson had seen the new miniature score advertised, and wondered why he had not been sent a review copy. The *Musical Times* (Novello's house journal) for January 1915, probably sent out late in December, contains a short 'review' of the score on page 29, which, although it describes the score as 'within the reach of a student's purse', does not mention the actual price. This may be how Thompson learned of the score's existence, the earlier advertisements in the September 1914 issue (on pages 570 and 592) having escaped his notice. These give the price as 7s. 6d., or 10s. 6d. cloth-bound. True to his word, Clayton wrote: 'To Herbert Thompson / From the Publishers / January 1st 1915.' on the score's flyleaf.

The extent of the relationship between the two men is difficult to ascertain. Thompson was in frequent contact with Novello & Co., having contributed regularly to the *Musical Times* from January 1893 onwards, but it is possible that he and Clayton were old friends. Barristers by training, they were contemporaries at both Cambridge (Clayton at Trinity, Thompson at St John's) and the Inner Temple, but a cursory inspection of Thompson's diaries for this period has thus far revealed no mention of Clayton's name. The possibility that they did know each other is hinted at by the only other surviving letter from Clayton to Thompson, dated 2 August 1893.⁴ This concerns a lawsuit brought against the *Musical Times* by a disgruntled author, and is in a hand other than Clayton's; but when signing the letter, Clayton altered the secretarial 'Yours very truly' to 'Yours affec'ly'. If it is true that Clayton possessed a 'certain brusqueness of manner, due to an isolated temperament', and that his kindness and generosity were 'unsuspected by acquaintances and known only to the circle of his friends', the relaxed tone of his 1915 letter to Thompson surely suggests that the two were on friendly terms.⁵

The patriotic fervour of certain sections of British society at the time is reflected in Clayton's 'whispered' references to the enemy (see 'germany' and 'Leipzig', fig. 1), accompanied perhaps by a glance over his shoulder. Anti-German feeling among Novello's customers may have been on Clayton's mind at the time, as the German employees whose virtues the company had been proudly extolling only a few years earlier were now proving to be a thorn in the company's side.⁶ The minutes of a directors' meeting held on 8 February 1915 (in Clayton's hand) mention 'a rumour that work was being diverted from this Company because it was known that the Co^y was employing German labour', suggesting that 'it might be necessary to get rid of our German hands'.⁷

Clayton's comment about publishers not expecting to recoup their costs from a single edition provides useful insight into commercial practices of the time.

3 Brotherton Library, Special Collections MS80.

4 Brotherton Library, Special Collections MS361/49.

5 Obituary of Clayton, *The Musical Times*, January 1933, 80.

6 'The Novello Centenary Supplement', *The Musical Times*, June 1911, 12.

7 British Library Add MS 69597.

and perhaps explains Novello's reluctance to publish the full score of a new work unless the composer had already achieved a secure reputation.⁸ In fact the miniature score of *Gerontius* proved not to be an immediate 'hit'. A Novello stock book shows that the 500 copies received from Germany on 27 May 1914 took nearly two decades to sell, the last few not being bound and sent out until December 1933.⁹

Fortunately for Novello, Clayton's fears that the plates had 'gone the way of most bullets' were unfounded. A pencilled note beside the entry for the miniature score in the company's plate book records that 'These plates are in Germany 23/4/20 with Geidel of Leipzig see letter with Mr. HRC'.¹⁰ A similar note records that Geidel (who had printed the *Gerontius* scores in 1914) also had the plates for the miniature score of Elgar's Variations. In both cases, the notes are crossed out, and replaced by 'Zincs with Boden', in a different hand. The plates must have found their way to England at some stage, although it is not clear precisely when, as Novello subsequently reprinted the miniature score of *Gerontius* in 1934, 1946, and 1947; but the date of their arrival is not clear. The aforementioned stock book, which also records that 'These plates are with Geidel of Leipzig', notes that the plates of the Variations were 'received Mar. 1923', so it seems reasonable to assume that the *Gerontius* plates travelled with them.¹¹

It is uncertain whether Elgar himself was aware of any of the circumstances surrounding the 1914 publication. Robert Anderson suggests that relations between the composer and Novello & Co. were then at a low point, so Clayton may have thought it better to keep his concerns to himself.¹² One can only imagine Elgar's horror at the thought of *Gerontius* being used as a weapon of war.

Duncan Boutwood is a PhD student in the School of Music, University of Leeds. His research uses the extensive Herbert Thompson collection in the Brotherton Library, including Thompson's letters and diaries. Our thanks to the Brotherton Library, and Chris Sheppard of Special Collections, for assistance in preparing this article.

8 See Robert Anderson, 'Elgar and his Publishers', in Daniel M. Grimley & Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 24-31, especially pp. 26 and 28.

9 British Library Add MS 69558.

10 British Library Add MS 69577.

11 British Library Add MS 69558.

12 'Elgar and his Publishers', 29.

Elgar and Academe (2): Dent, Forsyth, and what is English Music?

Julian Rushton

In the last issue, I revisited Edward J. Dent's observations about Elgar and their connection to a no less infamous dismissal by Cecil Forsyth in the *History of Music* written in collaboration with Stanford.¹ In this sequel I propose to explore further the peculiarities and possible ambiguities of Dent's position.

Dent was a pupil of Stanford and Charles Wood, a circumstance that need not have precluded admiration for Elgar (as it did not with Vaughan Williams). He was a broadly-based musician who taught and wrote about musical technique, as well as being the leader of British musicology. Dent was no enemy of instrumental music; but his passion was opera. A true European, fluent in several languages, he knew the European scene in which Stanford and Smyth had recently been accepted as opera composers. Dent was hardly a Wagnerian, but he wrote with discrimination and enthusiasm not only about French and Italian opera, but also about *Die Zauberflöte* and *Fidelio*; and he adored Weber.² And while his knowledge of European opera, ancient and modern, was exceptional, one of his long-term aims was the establishment of an operatic tradition in England, based on an English repertoire fit for permanent professional companies.³

Dent's comments in Adler's *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* were penned in the early 1920s, when English culture was no longer so strongly associated with Germany, and Elgar's music was perceived, with some truth, to be German in its foundations. Dent would not have emphasized this point negatively in a dictionary designed for a German readership, in which he also praised Parry and Stanford. But he probably shared Forsyth's view that Elgar was not much interested in

1 This Journal, March 2008, 27-32. This essay makes use of material delivered orally: in 2007, a Radio 3 essay (4 June), the Elgar Study Day (Royal College of Music, 10 May), and the Dent Symposium (King's College, Cambridge, 29 June); in 2008, the Richards lecture (London Branch of the Elgar Society).

2 See in particular Edward J. Dent (edited by Winton Dean) *The Rise of Romantic Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

3 It is with evident pleasure that he added to the second edition of his concise book *Opera* some lines on the box-office success of *Peter Grimes*. E.J. Dent, *Opera* (London: Penguin, 1940; revised second edition, 1949, reprinted Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978, 190). But already the book may seem, from an extra-British viewpoint, to have over-emphasized English opera, of which Dent had previously written a definitive study.

English music.⁴ The contradiction in Dent's position concerns his attitude towards the 'academic', and the apparent use of that word to mean more than one thing.

Elgar's music fitted poorly with academic expectations in instrumental music. That, at least, was the perception of his friend G.B. Shaw, no less experienced a music critic than Dent, as reported by a younger contemporary, the composer Cyril Scott:

I had only met Elgar once for a few moments and never knew that he took the slightest interest in my works. And yet, when Shaw had on one occasion said to him: 'Why, Elgar, for a British composer you have become quite daring in your harmonies of late', he had answered: 'Yes, but don't forget it was Scott who started it all'. It was a generous though curious remark, and I can only assume he meant that I was the first English composer to side-step the British academicism of the time. Even so, this was not quite correct, for when I first appeared in the arena, Josef Holbrooke was also writing unacademic music and to no small extent dumbfounding the professorial burgher.⁵

Dent simplistically attributed Holbrooke's style to the influence of Wagner, while noting that like other students of Frederick Corder (including Bax), he favoured programmatic music; and he blamed Scott for over-production of trivial music (Scott agreed, justifying himself on economic grounds), while noting that his main works show an unusual connection with impressionism.⁶ At least Dent did not criticize Elgar for writing *Salut d'amour*, *Rosemary*, etc.!

Most of us would agree that Elgar's music is not, in any pejorative sense, academic. But for that period, Dent's musicological concern with opera was hardly run-of-the-mill academic either. Scott's observation reminds us that composition teaching was based on severely imitative disciplines, of which some (such as 'harmonizing Bach chorales') remain on the agenda, or did until recently, in our University music departments. An 'academic' attitude (in the pejorative sense of 'academic') might be represented as: if someone hasn't done it already, it can't be right. But this was hardly the attitude of Dent, an enthusiastic supporter (and president) of the International Society for Contemporary Music, and friend and biographer of Busoni. From Dent's point of view, Elgar's music seems to have fallen somewhere midway on the spectrum between the respectable and the modern.

Dent's comments are so much at odds with what nowadays seems a balanced perception of Elgar that I have been tempted to wonder whether he may have been engaging in a little private warfare, not necessarily at Elgar's expense. If so, his serpentine irony, in this case, went undetected. For instance he labels Elgar, like Mackenzie, a violinist by calling ('von Beruf'). Dent can hardly have been unaware

4 Charles Villiers Stanford and Cecil Forsyth, *A History of Music* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1916), 316–7; the section on Elgar is quoted in the March issue (see note 1).

5 Cyril Scott, *Bone of Contention. Life Story and Confessions* (London: Aquarian Press, 1969), 147–8.

6 Dent, 'Moderne', in Guido Adler (ed.), *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*, 2nd edition (Berlin: Max Hesses Verlag, 1930), 1044–57, cited pp. 1048, 1052. The section on Elgar is quoted in the March issue of this Journal; see note 1.

of the limited scope (compared to Mackenzie's) of Elgar's professional performing career, and either he was being disingenuous – and looked down on jobbing musicians – or he was subverting precisely that form of snobbery by juxtaposing Elgar's mundane musical origins with a comment on the brilliance of his orchestration. Dent's labelling Elgar an acolyte of Liszt seems perverse; Elgar's eclecticism scarcely embraced Liszt to the extent that he learned from Wagner, Brahms, and Dvořák – or indeed Parry. But Liszt 'disgusted conservative musical academics'. Such a phrase severs Dent, in his own estimation, from the ranks of conservative academics, a phrase that would probably, in England in the 1920s, have brought Parry and Stanford immediately to mind. Or were they, whom Dent had warmly praised a couple of pages earlier, neither conservative nor academic to his ears?

Perversely, however, Dent used 'academic' and 'dry' to dismiss Elgar's chamber music. Such a view could hardly withstand the most cursory examination, and its oddness is emphasised if we hear these works alongside the chamber works of Parry, and of Stanford and his pupils, which despite their many merits – and they are often distinguished – nearly all conform more closely to the formal and harmonic conservatism that one might reasonably label academic.⁷ With Elgar, by contrast, consider the ghostly qualities of the central movement of the Violin Sonata and the opening of the Piano Quintet; his marked originality of form, in the Quintet and the central movement of the String Quartet; and the surging energy of the Quartet's outer movements. Could Dent simply have spotted a smidgeon of fugato in the first movement of the Quintet, and based his opinion on that?

Dent seems to complain about the powerful emotions in Elgar's music, inextricable, in large-scale music, with its expression through orchestration; he called this distasteful to 'English ears'. Is he suggesting that the English had a problem with powerfully emotional instrumental music (as distinct from opera)? Was the cosmopolitan Dent implying that his own (English) ears were affected thus, or was he suggesting, as Elgar did, that English ears ought to do better? For it was Elgar who invoked the positive aspect of vulgarity – which in its best sense means comprehensible to the mass of humanity, for whom the Last Night of the Proms audience can stand as representative. In his inaugural lecture at Birmingham, Elgar said:

Critics frequently say of a man that it is to his credit that he is never vulgar ... But it is possible for him – in an artistic sense only, be it understood, to be much worse; he can be commonplace ... Vulgarity often goes with inventiveness, and it can take the initiative – in a rude and misguided way no doubt – but after all it *does* something, and can be and has been refined. But the commonplace mind can never be anything but commonplace, and no amount of education, no polish of a University, can eradicate the stain from the low type of mind which is the English commonplace ... English music is white, and *evades everything*.⁸

7 Stanford apparently advised his students to compose Brahmsian chamber music; hence the early and enjoyable chamber works of some who later went down very different roads, including Coleridge-Taylor, Vaughan Williams, and Ireland.

8 Edward Elgar, ed. Percy M. Young, *A Future for English Music* (London: Dobson, 1968), 49.

Perhaps these comments, or reports of them, were known to Dent, and provided him with ammunition. Even if Dent were adopting an ironic detachment that invites us to read between the lines in Elgar's favour – and the phrase about the chamber music makes this unlikely – his position appears contradictory. He clearly appreciated English composers' (including Elgar's) command of modern orchestral resources; he praises the 'colourful orchestration' of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor in *Hiawatha*, and the 'masterly understanding' of the orchestra displayed by Granville Bantock.⁹ But, like Forsyth, he conveniently overlooks the strong appeal to 'English ears' of Elgar's brilliantly coloured works from the time of *Caractacus*, if not before.¹⁰

One would hope that Dent (if not Forsyth) could have risen above jealousy on behalf of his teacher, but he would probably not have been alone in noting that the rise in Elgar's fortunes, in Germany as well as England, coincided with some fading in Stanford's. And Elgar, in his attack on the commonplace, exempted Parry from criticism, but continued:

Twenty, twenty-five years ago, some of the Rhapsodies of Liszt became very popular. I think every Englishman since has called some work a Rhapsody. Could anything be more inconceivably inept. To rhapsodise is the one thing Englishmen *cannot do*.¹¹

Stanford was Anglo-Irish, or a 'West Briton', but nevertheless he was surely Elgar's target, having recently produced the first two of his six *Irish Rhapsodies*.¹² Elgar had provided further ammunition for his critics by this weird assertion, so easily refuted by the work of Delius whose music is surely rhapsodic even when not called a rhapsody. Two Stanford pupils, Vaughan Williams and Holst, responded during 1905–7 by composing their Norfolk and Somerset rhapsodies.

Stanford may also have felt targeted when Elgar, himself no stranger to influence from European composers, summed up the recent history of English music thus: 'the Mendelssohn imitator whined, the follower of Brahms groaned, and now we seem to be threatened with shrieks transferred from the most livid pages of Richard Strauss'.¹³ Stanford could at least be exonerated from the last charge, since he would have had no time for Strauss even if the latter had not come forward as Elgar's champion. Elgar may have been thinking of Josef Holbrooke (1878–1958), who nevertheless was almost a protégé: the full score of Holbrooke's *Queen Mab*, performed at the Leeds Festival in 1904, was printed by Breitkopf & Härtel of

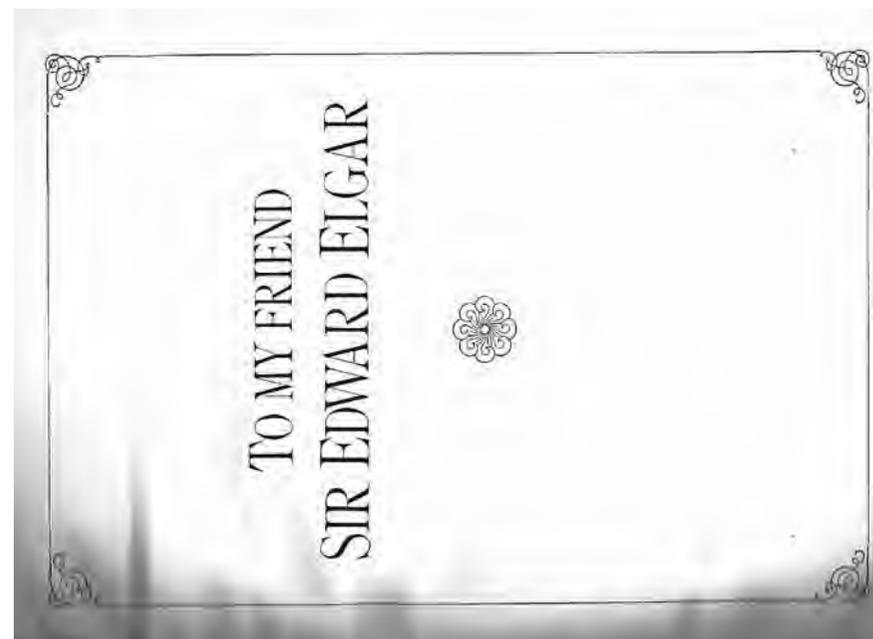
9 Dent, op. cit., 1048.

10 I mention *Caractacus* rather than the Variations because its acclamation by a critic as a work of genius made an impression on Arnold Bax. See Bax, *Farewell, my Youth* (London: Longmans, Green, 1943), 28–9; in Lewis Foreman (ed.), *Farewell my Youth and other writings by Arnold Bax* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992), 23.

11 Elgar, *A Future for English Music*, 51–3.

12 I am not here concerned with the reasons for Elgar and Stanford falling out, which is considered in fine biographies of both men. Bax alludes to Stanford as a 'West Briton' (and 'not Irish enough'): op. cit., 27; Foreman (ed.), *Farewell my Youth and other writings*, 22.

13 Elgar, *A Future for English Music*, 49–51.



Dedication of the vocal score of Holbrooke's *The Bells*



Title-page of the vocal score of Holbrooke's *The Bells*

“Queen Mab.” 1904.

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Loose sheet provided by the publisher (Breitkopf & Haertel) for the full score of Holbrooke's *Queen Mab*. Faintly pencilled (top left-hand corner): 'Please attach to your score', suggesting that the sheet was provided for subscribers. The work was dedicated to 'F.R. Spark Esq. (Leeds)'. The reason for the pencil marks beside Messrs Hoggett and Withers is not known.

Leipzig 'with the aid of the following kind subscribers', a list including Elgar.¹⁴ Then Holbrooke's *The Bells* was produced at the Birmingham Festival in 1906, and was published, again by Breitkopf & Härtel, in a vocal score inscribed 'To My Friend Sir Edward Elgar sincerely dedicated' (see illustration). But it is hard to imagine Elgar liking either work.¹⁵

Forsyth's comments in *A History of Music* appear like an act of retribution, and one hardly even vicarious, given that Stanford was his co-author.¹⁶ It might be a more realistic image of British orchestral music in the first half of the twentieth century to say that rhapsody, with its implications of enthusiasm, even ecstasy, was its natural outlet; Butterworth and Ireland provide further examples, as does Bax, a rhapsodist *par excellence* even if he avoided using the word.

The correspondences between Dent's and Forsyth's summaries are enough to suggest that their view of Elgar's music was broadly similar. But Dent went beyond discussing music when he remarked that Elgar lacked 'literarische Bildung'. At the time of the formal protest by Elgar's friends, the phrase was misleadingly translated 'literary culture'. Brian Trowell points out that 'Bildung' is a broader term, and since the context is Elgar's being self-taught, it should probably have been translated 'education' – in which case it is more or less true.¹⁷ Probably what Dent had in mind was a classical education. Like Shakespeare, Elgar may have had 'small Latin, and less Greek' (he might not have been offended by the comparison). But it was particularly offensive (at least to Elgar's friends) to contrast Elgar in this respect with Parry and Stanford, even though (a point Dent does not make) they more consistently found better poetry for their songs. Elgar's literary culture was wide-ranging, and none the worse for being the product of his own choice of reading; and this Elgar's friends, led in the charge by G.B. Shaw, had no difficulty in demonstrating.¹⁸ Belief in the importance of general culture was not confined to academics; Bax remarks of Alexander Mackenzie that 'he had no literary taste and

14 Other names of evident Elgarian interest include Bantock, Newman, Speyer, and H.J. Wood (not yet Sir Henry); see illustration.

15 I mention this because there are few references to Holbrooke in standard Elgar biographies (although his music is featured in Forsyth's book on orchestration). Michael Kennedy includes him among those Elgar helped because 'he thought they had a raw deal' (*Portrait of Elgar*, 3rd edition: Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987; see p. 295).

16 Charles Villiers Stanford and Cecil Forsyth, *A History of Music* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1916); for Forsyth's observations on Elgar, see the March issue of this Journal.

17 Brian Trowell, 'Elgar's Use of Literature', in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Edward Elgar. Music and Literature* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 184.

18 See Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar. A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 789–90. On Elgar's reading, see Trowell, *op. cit.*, and Byron Adams, who argues that Elgar's literary education was probably all the better for not being the result of schooling. See the section 'The Voracious Reader' in Byron Adams, 'Elgar and the Persistence of Memory', in Adams (ed.), *Elgar and His World* (Princeton University Press, 2007), 60–75. It is hoped to carry a review of this important book in a future issue.

little general culture of any kind'.¹⁹ Dent was also anti-clerical, which may account for his dismissing Newman's *Dream of Gerontius* as a 'half-dramatic poem about death and purgatory'.

Forsyth's charge that Elgar distanced himself English music may be connected to Dent's observations. An earlier section of Stanford and Forsyth's *History of Music* provides a clue. Chapter X, 'Song and Folk Song', was written by Stanford. He makes a contrast between Germany, where 'the people have been interpenetrated for centuries with the best works of their professional composers', with England (sic; not Britain) where

... we find that secular music has mostly been the plaything of the rich townsman. The countryman has had to provide his own. Its folk-music is therefore the most interesting of all from the historical standpoint. It is strongly marked in type and widely divergent from the national art-music.²⁰

Stanford goes on to criticize uncritical devotion, or placing all folk-music on a pedestal:

... the tunes of the people are to be judged by the same canons as those of the professional artist. A bad tune does not become good by having the word 'folk' prefixed to it. ... [But] the proportion of really beautiful tunes in folk-music is high ... it strengthens one's faith in human nature to know that the common folk instinctively drop what is bad and vulgar.²¹

Stanford is here closer to the cultural ambiance of Cecil Sharp and Vaughan Williams than Elgar ever came. But it was Elgar who served as inspiration for those composers who were not Stanfordistas (for example Bantock, Bax, Scott, and Holbrooke), and whose view of musical developments encompassed early European modernism. Elgar was the first great modern European composer to be born in England.

19 Bax, *Farewell my Youth*, 28; in Foreman (ed.), *Farewell my Youth and other writings*, 22.

20 Stanford and Forsyth, *History of Music*, 210–11.

21 *Ibid.*, 211.

REVIEWS OF MUSIC

Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf
Elgar Complete Edition, Series 1, volume 4
Edited by Robert Anderson and Roger Dubois
The Elgar Society Edition, 2007
pp. 1 + 388
ISBN 978-1-904856-04-7 (hardback)

After a hiatus in the publication of the Elgar Complete Edition's Series 1: Choral Works, this impressive tome has arrived just as interest in the composer's early choral music is experiencing something of a surge. An attractive and spacious score, meticulous editing and almost fifty pages of informative introduction, source discussion, commentary, illustrations, and the libretto ensure that this volume will prove valuable and thought-provoking for listeners, scholars and performers alike.

Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf, a work of considerable importance in the development of Elgar's reputation during the 1890s, features the significant textual preparation of the composer's neighbour H.A. Acworth, who reduced Longfellow's original to manageable proportions and largely refashioned it to suit the tastes of Victorian Britain. The documentation quoted by Robert Anderson in his foreword usefully sheds light on the person of Acworth.¹ Examples demonstrating the contrasts between the Longfellow poem and the work's libretto are well chosen to highlight some of the reasons for Acworth's alterations: to soften the character of Olaf and remould him as a Christian hero acceptable to Victorian audiences, to remove inessential characters and references, thus simplifying the plot material, and to reshape the drama to allow for musical set pieces such as the love duet of Thyri and Olaf.

Anderson leads us swiftly yet thoroughly through the genesis of *King Olaf*, with Alice Elgar's diary and Elgar's own letters pinpointing various stages and intricacies of composition from early 1894 through to excisions and orchestrations. Rosa Burley's recollections outline the euphoric ups and despairing downs of the composer in the throes of creativity, and other sources show reactions to the work in progress. Newspaper cuttings from the *Staffordshire Sentinel*, the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* and the *Daily Telegraph* are particularly enlightening as contemporary indicators of the composer's standing and favourable public reception in this pre-*Gerontius*, pre-'Enigma' period, while Joseph Bennett's remark that Elgar came to the fore 'by the sheer force of merit, without organised puffery or the aid of any clique' (Foreword, x) is as revealing about the world of British music, in the eyes of Bennett at least, as it is about the composer.

The journey of *King Olaf* from Longfellow's text to the cantata's libretto is fascinating,

1 For more information on Acworth's role in Elgar's early choral works, see Róisín Blunnie, 'A High Victorian Spyglass: *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* and Late Nineteenth-Century British Idealism' this Journal, 15/1 (March 2007), 5–14; and Charles Edward McGuire 'Elgar and Acworth's *Caractacus*, the Druids, Race and the Individual Hero', in J.P.E. Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton (eds.), *Elgar Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 50–77.

featuring not only a sizable abridgement, but also a dramatic change of moral focus. A question never far from an engagement with this work concerns the respective roles of Elgar and Acworth in this change. The analyses of Elgar's copies of Longfellow presented in this edition shed some revealing light on the topic and constitute a valuable and indeed engrossing feature of the new volume. From the editors' findings and their outline of the compositional process we can see, for example, that it was the composer who decided to marry Olaf's encounter with pagan leader Ironbeard and the men of Drontheim, from Longfellow's Episode VII, to the miraculous appearance of a holy cross, originally placed in the poet's Episode XII, thereby substituting heavenly intervention for earthly brutality. This combination creates one of the most symbolic and morally forceful moments in the work, in what, after extensive reworking by Acworth, became the Conversion Scene. Indeed, Elgar's somewhat destructive efforts with the libretto were such that they resulted in what Roger Dubois laments as 'the sacrifice of at least three copies of Longfellow' (Sources, xii); information that, as well as causing a collective booklovers' gasp, suggests that the composer was responsible for significant restructuring of *King Olaf* prior to the involvement of Acworth.

The tantalising topic of what might have been is broached by Anderson as he documents the musical excisions made by Elgar at the behest of his editor at Novello. An illustration of the abandoned Recitative No. 3 is included, providing an opportunity for the reader to ponder the effect of its omission. Anderson also draws attention to what is then mentioned by Dubois in the discussion of sources: evidence, contained in a privately owned set of vocal score proofs, that Elgar considered possible, and indeed substantial, additions to the work many years after its publication. This evidence, an illustration of which is provided, shows that new sections, characters (including another dreaded female), with, as Anderson puts it, 'only a couple of murders' (Foreword, x), were contemplated by the composer, as was the inclusion of text from elsewhere in Longfellow's oeuvre. Both editors show separately that *King Olaf* was still on Elgar's mind in the 1920s by quoting an excerpt from his letter to Ivor Atkins of 30 December 1922, though, curiously, with a slight difference in the wordings of their renditions. This letter is a testimony of the esteem in which Elgar continued to hold *King Olaf*, even after greater successes in the intervening quarter of a century, and its inclusion here serves to highlight the work's importance during the composer's lifetime.

The analysis of sources discloses some fascinating snippets regarding Elgar's compositional considerations, even down to questions of time signature. Roger Dubois notes, for example, that in the second of two books of drafts and sketches (British Library Add MS 57995), the tenor solo 'Sigrid, hail' at bar 65 of No. 11 was sketched in 4/4, not in 12/8 as it comes down to us. The point at which Elgar changed his mind about this is not entirely clear, though an editorial diagram shows the new time signature was in full swing by the time of the vocal score proofs; perhaps the answer is lost with the sadly missing MS vocal score, which, Dubois tells us, would have followed the two books of drafts in the compositional process (Sources, xv). It is worth noting that only the solo tenor is in 12/8: the orchestra remains in 4/4 throughout. Another interesting revelation is that in the aforementioned book of drafts and sketches, No. 14, 'The Gray Land Breaks to Lively Green', was written in 3/4, not in 6/8, a time signature in which it seems to me to have developed a certain contentment, to the extent that it is difficult to imagine it comfortably any other way.

Some rather endearing insights into Elgar's engagement with his subject matter emerge in the analysis of the book of drafts and sketches (Add MS 57994). Dubois

notes, for example, that above the first choral entry in No. 7 'Gudrun', Elgar wrote 'Oh, what a bridal night is this!' While this could be viewed merely as a reference to a later use of similar musical material, the composer's inclusion of the exclamatory 'Oh', which is not part of the libretto, hints that it is rather an occasion of his well-known wit, as the events of the wedding night subsequently take a turn for the murderous.

The principal source for the new edition is the Novello full score of 1905, but many welcome changes, not least of a practical nature, have been incorporated. With 386 pages of music, compared to 304 in the 1905 score, this version is markedly less cramped. An extra two inches or so to the height and the absence of movement titles, numbers and voices at the head of each page allow Elgar's deliciously spacious harmonies the vertical measurements they deserve, while the redistribution of bars, the inclusion of bar numbers, the allocation of four staves to the choir parts, and the re-spacing and re-beaming of notes are just some of the improvements which combine to make this full score as pleasing to the eye as it is to the ear. Editorial alterations are clearly recorded and justified in the extensive Commentary and consist largely of notational corrections, adjustments to grammar and punctuation, and careful repositioning of expression marks: in short, everything to suggest that a number of fine-tooth combs were permanently attached to the hands of the editors, and nothing to cause the composer any posthumous disquiet.

Of course, a major benefit of the new publication is that it provides a whole new way to enjoy Elgar's orchestration, including his handling of that most effective of instruments, the chorus. With 82 pages, compared to a mere 58 in the 1905 edition, the Conversion Scene is now a visual as well as an aural feast. Here we can witness Elgar's use of choral and orchestral forces to convey impressions of motion, of rank-on-rank military advance, of retreat from the scene of the action, and of celestial overview. After the ferocity of battle the subtly achieved thinning of texture, use of harp and division of choir usher in the heavenly vision of the cross, before the momentum builds once more to the climactic announcement: 'the power of Christ was felt'. Intricate and occasionally violent polyphonic choral writing gives way to hymn-like unison with great dramatic effect, and contributes to the delicate balance of commotion and repose which makes this work such an aural spectacle. This comfortably spaced score facilitates the experience of all such delights without endangering one's eyesight and in such a way that the composer's combination of themes and choice of forces can be better appreciated.

This volume contains plenty to intrigue and excite the *King Olaf* enthusiast. The foreword and discussion of sources will make essential and enlightening reading for performers and scholars. For the sake of those of us easily addled by abbreviations, a list of sources with full and shortened titles would have provided a little extra comfort: sometimes the abbreviated title appears before the explanation, resulting in frantic searches forwards and backwards for clarification. This is, however, an insignificant quibble amidst the presentation of so much valuable information and commentary. A few typing errors in the introduction will annoy no-one but the editors. The score itself is beautifully presented, with editorial input unobtrusively included, and many details that will ease the path of future conductors of the work. The foreword and source analyses complement each other well, together providing a most welcome depiction of the birth of this captivating piece. The recommendation of this reviewer is to lock the door, close the curtains, turn off all modern technological nuisances, and indulge yourself with only this score, a recording, and the beverage of your choice for company.

Róisín Blunnie

Elgar: Piano Works, Edited by Koji Amasaki

Tokyo: Ongaku No Tomo Sha. Corp., 2007

This is an anthology of music that is not too difficult to play, either composed or arranged for piano. The contents are: (1) Sonatina, (2) *Dream Children*, (3) *Rosemary*, (4) Minuet Op. 21, (5) *May Song*, (6) *Salut d'amour* (two versions, in E and in D), (7) *Bizarrerie*, (8) *Mot d'amour*, (9) Serenade, (10) *Adieu*, (11) 'Nimrod' from Op. 36, and (12) 'Land of Hope and Glory'. The latter, presented as a song, is in no sense a piano piece, but was perhaps considered too well known not to be included.

Elgar's wrote relatively few original piano compositions, and this selection lacks the most substantial, *Concert Allegro* and *In Smyrna*, and also *Skizze*, a mature miniature elusive to the point of insubstantiality. Included are several pieces originally for violin; volume 37 of the Complete Edition (violin music) includes Nos. 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8, while acknowledging that *May Song* was originally for piano. I can't comment on the reasons for the editor's choice, since the critical apparatus is in Japanese (as is the general introduction by Andrew Neill of which, however, he kindly supplied me with a copy in English). But I suppose the intention is more promotional than scholarly; and there really can't be any complaint about that.

The arrangements are not all Elgar's own, but are nevertheless agreeable to play. Some passages seem to me over-elaborated, particularly as the original piano pieces (notably Nos. 1 and 9) are easy, as if designed for the young (and as such a useful supplement to pieces by Schumann, Chaikovsky, and others). The introduction to *Rosemary* has more notes here than in the violin and piano version. The D major *Salut d'amour* is transcribed from the orchestral version by the editor, who also arranged *Bizarrerie* and 'Land of Hope and Glory'. When a piece comes from an orchestral version later than the piano (or violin and piano), the music is supplemented by instrumental indications, which clutter the page without, I suggest, doing much to help the performer in what was, after all, mostly music first conceived for piano, not orchestra. A pizzicato indication (*May Song*, bar 37) isn't helpful when the notes are written as full crotchets; if the arranger wanted to replicate an orchestral effect, he would have made bolder with Elgar's notation, as he does in *Bizarrerie* to represent pianistically a passage of brilliant violin double-stopping. Oddly, a similar passage in *May Song* (bar 79) has left-hand staccato, just right for a pianistic pluck. 'Nimrod' is essentially Elgar's piano version, with a few editorial slurs, probably unnecessary. It lacks the crescendo 'hairpin' in bar 9, while adding some editorially distinct hairpins elsewhere. It is doubtful whether performance would be affected by these, though they may help inexperienced players. I noted very few errors: (4) the computer has supplied a D natural in the middle part, bar 81 (it should be sharp); (7) probably the 8va bassa in the left hand, bar 37, should come in the previous bar (as in the violin version); 'Land of Hope and Glory' contains two rhythmic errors in the first verse, correct in the second. The anthology is nicely printed and the fingerings by Masaaki Hirasawa are more helpful than not.

The publication is supported by the Elgar Society, as is acknowledged on the cover and inside. Copies may be ordered from Music Supply, Tokyo Ltd, 4-5-12 Hakusan, Bunkyo-Ku, Tokyo, 112-0001 Japan; e-mail music-supply@net.email.ne.jp.

Julian Rushton

BOOK REVIEWS

Elgar: An Anniversary Portrait

Introduction by Nicholas Kenyon

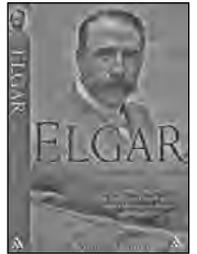
Elgar: An Anniversary Portrait was published to 'celebrate the occasion' of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Edward Elgar. From its cover – including both a National Portrait Gallery image of Elgar looking out over the Malvern Hills, and a selected list of contributors, several of whom, like Sir Edward himself, have had British Empire and other honours bestowed upon them (KBE, CBE, DBE, OM) – the volume promises a friendly and familiar portrait of the composer for the general reader.

How delightful, then, to find that, in addition to affectionate tributes, several of the essays tucked inside take less well-trodden paths through Elgar's life and his music, notably Adrian Partington's fine chapter on 'Elgar's Church Music' which gives the reader a vivid sense of 'the variety, colour and intelligence' (p. 127) of what John Butt has described in another recent collection of essays on Elgar as a 'small but striking oeuvre'.¹ Affectionate yet critical, personal yet informative, Partington's essay is a wonderful and illuminating read, the result of his deep engagement as a conductor and organist with the works under discussion. This is no uncritical celebration, though; of the first of the Op. 74 anthems 'Fear not, O land', Partington concludes that 'the piece is almost completely devoid of musical interest [and that] ... It is a relief to turn to [the second anthem] "Give unto the Lord"!

Julian Rushton's chapter, 'Elgar's Biography, Elgar's Repute', is an excellent, concise survey of scholarship on the composer and how changing views and emphases have affected reception of Elgar's music. Rushton, himself the co-editor of two recent scholarly volumes on the composer, includes some fascinating details and valuable insights, not least the reminder that far from being insular, Elgar's music was 'fuelled by a thoroughly healthy eclecticism' and that it was influenced by composers as diverse as Berlioz, Puccini and Dvořák (p. 42).² Rushton explains that

1 John Butt, 'Roman Catholicism and being musically English: Elgar's church and organ music', in Daniel Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 119.

2 *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, already cited, and *Elgar Studies*, edited with J.P. E. Harper-Scott (Cambridge University



London:
Continuum, 2007
x + 199 pp.

'the only reason his music sounds English is that it sounds like Elgar', and concludes that 'the recent tendency towards wide-ranging investigation of cultural issues ... has engendered [a great deal] in the way of insight into the man Elgar and, especially, his music' (p. 45).

A number of the essays are written from more personal perspectives or take the form of reminiscences, rather than providing new historical details or interpretative insights through biographical, cultural or musical investigation, with the result that the volume often reads more like a portrait of some of its contributors than one of Elgar. Of course, this can make interesting reading! Diana McVeagh gives us an historical perspective on her engagement with Elgar's music in 'A View from 1955'. Ironically, the first two sections of the present volume – Part One, 'Elgar the Man' and Part Two, 'Elgar the Composer' – correspond to what McVeagh describes as the rigid separation of 'Life and Works' characteristic of the biographical studies published over 50 years ago when she began writing about the composer (p. 52). Some of the best tributes are to be found in Part Three, 'Performing Elgar'. A lively contribution by Tasmin Little focuses on the mystery (and the magic) of the accompanied cadenza towards the end of Elgar's violin concerto, the 50-minute work which she describes as 'a monumental journey in search of something elusive' (p. 162). Recounting a performance in Venezuela, she explains that 'there can be a freshness about going outside the UK and shaking off all preconceptions' (p. 164). This section also includes an engaging interview with Mark Elder, who explains that the recordings made in the 1920s and 1930s of Elgar's own conducting have 'been a source of great inspiration to me and may others ... I regard them as a main key to understanding his music' (p. 135). Elder reveals two further interpretative keys: the scores themselves which, he explains, like Mahler's, 'are full of the most incredible details – like tiny little brush-strokes on an artist's canvas' (p. 142); and the composer's 'inner state', or 'the emotional narrative' that can be found in his works (pp. 139–40). Janet Baker shares delightful insights into the role of the Angel in *Gerontius*, and Andrew Keener's essay, 'The Cello Concerto – Jacqueline du Pré's Recordings', makes fascinating reading (and helpfully contains full citations of the recordings discussed).

In the opening chapter, 'Orchestrating His Own Life: Sir Edward Elgar as an Historical Personality', David Cannadine muses on the different images he believes that the composer cultivated: 'the music-maker' (p. 2), 'the socially ambitious self-promoter ... who was resolved to 'conquer' the great world' (p. 3)

Press, 2007).

and 'the man of business in the tradition of Dickens and Trollope' (p. 4). Cannadine sets out to disprove Elgar's 'own version of his upbringing', telling us that 'he was neither born nor brought up in philistine poverty' (whatever that is supposed to mean: p. 6). This lengthy chapter unfortunately re-inscribes several myths that have been disproved in recent years, most notably the view that 'Elgar suddenly stopped composing after the Cello Concerto' (p. 27). 'Far from it', as Robert Anderson exclaims later in the volume in his fine essay, 'Elgar in Manuscript': he explains that Anthony Payne's realization of the Third Symphony sketches has laid this erroneous assumption to rest (p. 77). In his vivid sketch of the composer's process of composition, Anderson gives us examples of 'Elgar's virtuosity as both composer and letter-writer' (p. 71), and reminds us along the way that the composer was 'an expert extemporizer' (p. 73). Stephen Hough's essay, 'Elgar the Catholic', contains some valuable insights beyond the notion that Elgar's Catholicism 'was an impediment to his career' (p. 60), notably the idea that the composer's 'Catholicism was not deep-rooted and was more cultural than creedal' (p. 60).

The perils of what appears to be an editor-less volume – repetition of information between chapters, misspellings, omission of diacriticals, lack of citations for quoted material in a number of chapters, and even the misnomer 'overture' in reference to *Falstaff* (p. 9) (the 35-minute symphonic study which, as Rushton rightly states (p. 42) is 'one of Elgar's greatest works'), or the reference to *Malcolm* [rather than Matthew] Arnold's *Dover Beach* (!) on p. viii of the Introduction) – can generally be overlooked. In Christopher Kent's long chapter entitled 'Elgar the Composer', however, the problems are serious enough to impede the reader. This examination of Elgar's sketches may have been cut up from a larger piece of work, which could account for the puzzling non-sequiturs found later in the chapter (especially on pp. 93-94). But what can account for sentences (pp. 93-102) that just don't make sense? For example:

In the Symphony after some 'boisterous antiphony' its cantabile transformation (fig. 114-116), an eleventh hour insertion made after most of the movement had already been scored. (p. 101)

And what of sentences that start in mid-flow with no beginnings? For example: 'from the final *stretto* shows his crafting...' (p. 81) or: 'gives a harmonic paraphrase of this repeated two-bar cell.' (p. 92: both sic, beginning without initial capitals). I even tried, without success, to make the italicized captions (complete with their own full-stops) underneath music examples stand in for the beginnings of these sentences.

One could wish for a sentence or two on each of the contributors: either all were considered to be so well-known (to a particular readership, of course) as to need no introduction, or the lack of biographies of any of the writers (except Nicholas Kenyon) is an oversight. Providing such information would also clarify that this is not a collection of new essays, for the volume also contains reprinted material – specifically by Hans Keller (d. 1985: ‘Elgar the Progressive’) and Yehudi Menuhin (‘Sir Edward Elgar: My Musical Grandfather’). Readers unfamiliar with the provenance of these two pieces might well be perplexed to find such constructions as this by Keller, which obviously requires knowledge of its historical context (it was first published in *The Music Review* in 1957):

Elgar’s unconscious, infantile folklorism forced his sophisticated Continental style into an act of submission by naturalization (p. 109).

Similarly, parts of Menuhin’s address to the Elgar Society in 1976 can surely be read today only with a sense of historical perspective: for instance, when Menuhin supplies the answer for why Elgar’s music is what he describes as ‘so typically, so characteristically, English’ (pp. 150-1):

It is simply because the Englishman is complete, as a plant or a tree is complete. How far have the great English qualities been debased and violated today?

Or his conviction that:

... there must be a basic, racial, national character of which Elgar himself ... is proof for me of the eternal English qualities which I would like to think are incorruptible.

‘Part Four: ‘The Legacy’ is the book’s (admittedly rather thin) final section, containing a single essay. Michael Messenger traces in fascinating detail the struggles and fortunes of the Elgar Birthplace Museum. He begins by explaining that Elgar ‘retained a deep sentimental attachment to the cottage [in Broadheath] in which he was born’, and that he had said to his friend Herbert Howells: ‘I wish they [the nation] would buy this little cottage. It’s the only wish I’ve got, about the nation and me’ (p. 181). The rest of this illuminating chapter takes us through his daughter’s tireless efforts, right up to the developments since August 2000 when the enlarged museum, complete with research room, was opened. How wonderful (not least for this Elgarian in San Francisco) to know that this treasure-trove of manuscript scores,

letters, concert programmes and other related material may soon be digitized ‘so that information concerning the museum’s holdings is made available worldwide through the Internet’.

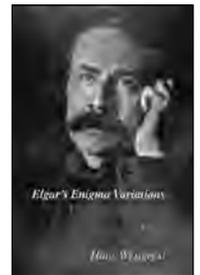
Through this volume then, along with other recent collections and the exciting possibilities opened up for future research, we may ‘finally come to grips with the music’ (Rushton, on p. 44) of that ‘open-ear’d, open-minded, truly humane spirit’, as Kenyon so memorably describes the composer in his Introduction (p. x).

Nalini Ghuman

Hans Westgeest: *Elgar’s Enigma Variations – The Solution*

Reading anything new to do with the supposed ‘enigma’ behind the Op.36 Variations feels slightly precarious, given the strong opinions and theories which have fizzed periodically over the years; but then how much more so when one is writing about it? The amount of copy that has been generated since the work’s premiere in the quest to solve one of the most famous mysteries in music (perhaps *the* most famous?) is impressive indeed, as does the certainty with which various problem-solvers claim they have found ‘it’ at last, where all others have failed.

We now have a fresh crack – from the Netherlands – at this tough nut. Hans Westgeest is a lexicographer at the Institute for Dutch Lexicography in Leiden. He tells us in his opening remarks: ‘from the moment the work was performed for the first time, more than a century ago, a number of publications have – until now unsuccessfully – tried to break Elgar’s code. This booklet is about his enigma’. The process of solution takes up the latter half of this slim volume, but this is preceded by an overview of the work and its genesis. Westgeest leads the reader smoothly but concisely through the familiar territory of anecdote, and of the personalities behind the initials and asterisks. There is R.P.A.’s variation ‘with its posh theme in the bass’, and then there is ‘Nimrod’ – Jaeger being ‘for a long time ... a close friend of Elgar, giving him useful advice, but also severe criticism, something Elgar greatly appreciated’ (perhaps not all the time!). When it comes to Variation XIII, Westgeest takes a ‘traditional’ view that Elgar did not name the friend ‘pictured within’ because of that number’s association with bad luck, and that ‘in all likelihood he was referring to Lady Mary Lygon’: I think we can have a better guess at the identity of the person on the voyage for which Elgar wished calm waters and prosperity, now that so much has been revealed about the very significant presence of Helen Weaver in



Leidschendam-Voorburg: Corbulo Press, 2007
69 pp.

Elgar's early life.

Genesis of the Variations (chapter 2) puts the composition of the Variations into context: notwithstanding the triumphant premiere of *Caractacus* at Leeds, the post-compositional blues left Elgar bad-tempered and grisly, complaining to Jaeger in October 1898 about the financial disadvantages of composition and Novello's 'lack of acknowledgement'. On Friday 21 of that month came the now-famous occasion when Elgar strummed away at the piano with Alice sitting nearby, and inspiration came there and then for depicting some of their circle of friends in musical terms. He was caught up in the whole thing, and there was a sea-change in his mood within a few days of that gloomy letter to Jaeger, with the visiting Dorabella finding him hard at work, buoyed up by his own imagination, with several variations apparently already sketched, including her own.

On 24 October he could tell Jaeger that he had now become a variation named 'Nimrod' – the fact that his music had been sketched so early on in the composition of the Variations being something which might illuminate the path to a solution of the enigma, according to Westgeest, who also warns us about the 'pitfalls' to be avoided when trying to solve the puzzle. For example, 'it is unclear whether Elgar intended to explicitly hide an enigma in the work from the very beginning', and if he had, he managed to keep it to himself for a long time. It is most likely that it was Jaeger who wrote the word 'Enigma' in pencil on the MS score – either in consultation with the composer, or on his instructions. But it is not quite clear to what the word applies, though – the first part of the work, the theme – or a specific section of it?

A supposed hidden theme is only mentioned for the very first time in a letter (untraced) to Charles Ainsly Barry, who used material from it for the programme of the Variations' first performance given by Richter, thus setting in motion the whole business of 'enigma' solving. Westgeest uses these notes in setting out his criteria for a solution: first, it should reveal the 'dark saying' of the enigma which Elgar mentioned in his letter to Barry; second, that an existing theme needs to be discovered which 'goes' throughout the work in some way or another, but is never played; third, that – at least to a certain extent – one should be able to identify this as 'the principal theme'; fourth, that the 'hidden' melody should be 'larger' than the main theme, but – fifth – that it is a *musical* theme rather than (as sometimes been mooted) an abstract one such as 'friendship' (that it is musical is given credence by the story of the trick Elgar played on a rather hapless Troyte, getting him to play the 'hidden' theme on the piano, guidance being given by pieces of paper stuck on the keys, Elgar knowing that his friend would soon forget what he had played).

Sixth, the theme should be a (quite) *familiar* one, Elgar being surprised ever after that no-one had solved it. Lastly, it would be one to which the original theme was a counterpoint, as Buckley noted in his early biography of the composer.

Given all this, the 'Nimrod' variation is crucial to a solution, with Westgeest dwelling at some length on how Jaeger bolstered Elgar up in 1898 both by letter and in person when his spirits were flagging, drawing on the example of Beethoven's own trials and triumphs as inspiration. From this Westgeest leads us through his own process of elucidation to his solution. Elgar initially believed that he had left sufficient musical clues to lead to this hitherto 'hidden' melody; but why, later on, did he either avoid the subject or negate guesswork about it? Dorabella believed that 'the enigma must be silly because he seemed to be growing ashamed of it'; while the editor of this Journal, in his Cambridge Handbook, mentions the theory that Elgar perhaps found himself embarrassed when a solution was not found early on – because it was too difficult, or trite, or even because the enigma hid sentiments 'too deep for words, too tender for public scrutiny'. Westgeest, however, is certain that he has found the solution by examining Elgar's comments on the matter chronologically: the composer sketched a counter-melody – Westgeest names it the 'Elgar theme' – which was 'a diminution' of a theme from Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata, the piece of music which Jaeger had brought to Elgar's attention by way of encouragement. He then sketched 'a simple but noble melody' (i.e. *Nimrod*) based on this original, hidden 'Elgar theme'. And combining the hidden counter-melody (which itself matches the rhythm of his own name) with the theme from the *Pathétique* at last 'reveals the 'dark saying' of the enigma'.

I am not sure that the theme he has found can be claimed as being *quite familiar*, but it seems to fit. Whether it is the 'right' solution I have not the faintest idea; I suppose every reader must decide for themselves. But it is probable that enigma-solving will, like the poor, always be with us. There are a few things which should be corrected in a future edition, such as the year of Elgar's death (given here as 1937), and references to 'Hew David Steuard-Powell' and William 'Maeth' Baker.

Dominic Guyver

CD REVIEWS



Elgar Editions
EECD 006

Der Traum des Gerontius

Julius Patzak (tenor), Ira Malaniuk (contralto), Ludwig Welter (bass)

Austrian Radio Choir and Orchestra / Hans Swarowsky.

Here is a surprise. This classic performance was given in Vienna in 1960 by Austrian Radio, and now is brought out on CD for us all to hear. And what a marvellous experience it is! I have several recordings of *Gerontius*, and none, to my mind, is quite definitive. What a shame one cannot mix and match to make one's ideal performance. I still have a soft spot for Boult's magisterial reading, with the excellent Nicolai Gedda in the title role. While Britten's and Colin Davis's dramatic recordings have excellent Angels in Yvonne Minton and Anne Sofie von Otter, they are let down by the tenors (a personal view, I know: some enjoy Peter Pears's voice more than I do). This is likely to be a recording I shall turn to in future when I want to listen to a fresh and vital interpretation.

Julius Patzak was the leading tenor in Germany and Austria of his generation, studying conducting with Franz Schmidt, no less, before turning to singing. He was the leading tenor at the Bavarian State Opera from 1928 to 1945, and then at the Vienna State Opera from 1945 till 1960, the year this Elgar performance was given.¹ I have always felt that the part of Gerontius needs an operatic approach. Elgar himself said 'I've not filled his part with church tunes and rubbish', and the dramatic momentum has to be put across with fervour and passion. But *Gerontius* was also an old man. Patzak was nearly at the end of his career in 1960, and he captures the world-weariness and regret of the music of a man at the end of his life. He still has the passion when needed, and a resounding top B flat (just before fig. 63 in Part 1). I liked the sheer quality of his voice, evenly nuanced throughout its range. He takes some of the alternative notes in the part, often a shock at first hearing till one notices in the score that they were Elgar's original idea. Some words too are different from Julius Buths's translation (Buths was the first German conductor of *Gerontius*,

1 He is the tenor, with Kathleen Ferrier the contralto, on Bruno Walter's recording of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, and I recall him in a broadcast of his teacher Franz Schmidt's great oratorio *Das Buch mit Sieben Siegeln* [ed.].

and so the man who really put it on the map). Perhaps they have been changed to be less archaic?

Ira Malaniuk and Ludwig Welter are less well-known. Both had substantial operatic careers, particularly in Wagner and Strauss (Malaniuk is on Solti's *Ring* recording). Malaniuk's rich, dark contralto is a change from the lighter voices we often hear nowadays, but she can lighten it when necessary, and she clearly loves the part. The only duet passage in the work (fig. 27 in Part 2) is beautifully sung. Ludwig Welter's resonant and commanding bass voice is ideal as the Priest and Angel of the Agony. He brings real authority to these parts.

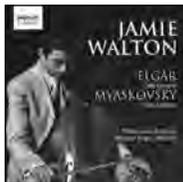
The hero of the occasion is the conductor, the Austrian Hans Swarowsky, a distinguished figure of the time, but certainly not noted for his promotion of British music. He brings absolute assurance to moulding and pacing the score with close attention to Elgar's myriad markings of tempo and expression. His freshly conceived reading brings some surprises; tempi are sometimes a little slower than usual, as in the Demons' fugal chorus ('Dispossessed, aside thrust ...'), the approach to the Angelicals' Chorus ('Praise to the Holiest...'), and the final 'Angel's Farewell'. None of this troubled me, and in fact it leads to some extra clarity of detail. One notices instruments – the bass clarinet, cor anglais, or violas for example – that are often submerged in the orchestral texture. The orchestra plays magnificently, and the chorus too has been well drilled and sings with great attention to detail. Presumably they are a professional chorus, but my only regret is that it is not as big as the work really warrants. The great Angelicals' Chorus in Part Two needs more sheer heft to make its full impact; on the other hand the first entry of the semi-chorus is breath-taking – a real **ppp**.

The recording quality isn't absolutely ideal; although it has been cleaned up for transfer to CD, it lacks the spaciousness of the best modern recordings, and the soloists are rather close-miked. The booklet comes with Michael Kennedy's excellent notes, and full libretto, in English and German. I should end by saying that the first hearing, in a foreign language, of a work that one knows so well in its original English, is rather a strange experience. It had me listening to the work much more attentively and appreciating again the sheer musical genius of the score. But this is probably nearer to what Elgar heard in those early German performances. Instead of the work emerging as a series of set pieces – Demons, Angelicals, Glimpse of God, etc. – we have a work that has been studied afresh by performers not brought up in the English tradition, and it emerges as a continuous flood of glorious music. The devotional qualities, the mysticism and the drama are finely captured by these artists, and their love of the

music shines through. Well done to Elgar Enterprises for making this available.

It is interesting to note that it was largely through 'Elgar in Performance' that this new issue came about. 'Elgar in Performance' sponsored the Austrian organist Alexander Negrin to give performances of Elgar's Organ Sonata across Austria last year. It was Herr Negrin who brought to the attention of the Elgar Society that this classic performance of *Gerontius* was still in existence, and held by Austrian Radio. Andrew Neill led negotiations with the Austrians on behalf of Elgar Enterprises, and these led to the release of these new discs.

Barry Collett



Signum Classics
SIGCD116

Elgar: Cello Concerto

Myaskovsky: Cello Concerto

Jamie Walton (cello)

Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Alexander Briger

This is probably the best performance of the Elgar Cello Concerto that I have heard. I know I am not alone in saying that, as with *The Dream of Gerontius*, I had to stop listening to the Cello Concerto at some point in my concert-going career since I began to hear too many performances that fell far short of my ideal. I had in mind a performance with my favourite soloist(s), orchestra and conductor; and the sad fact was that they would rarely meet on the concert platform – or, indeed, in the recording studio. It is depressing to relate that such masterpieces can be too often played (or too often heard by keen Elgarians such as I. Oh! for the occasional *King Olaf* or *Caractacus* or Coronation March or *Falstaff* instead! Eventually, though, one comes back to the work; and to come back to it through such a performance as this is indeed an epiphany, restoring faith in what one actually always knew, namely that it is performances that are often to blame for a work making a poor impact, not the works themselves.

Elgar's Cello Concerto is an outstanding masterpiece and Jamie Walton (in particular), the Philharmonia Orchestra, and Alexander Briger give it an outstanding performance. Right from the start, Walton grips the listener with his superb timing, accuracy of intonation, beauty of tone (on his 1712 Guarneri cello), musical involvement, and nobility of expression. I have never heard the opening five bars of this work played so compellingly, encapsulating all that is to come – both of the work and of the interpretation. Indeed, 'interpretation' (often a word meaning

'wayward performance of my own version of what I think the composer should have written') in this case means a scrupulous reading of what is on the page, played with conviction but without indulgence. It is a 'scholarly' performance, faithful to the musical text.

The main theme of the first movement is finely judged by the orchestra and only slightly slowed down by Walton when he enters. At fig. 4 a full fat climax is reached and Walton's ascent to the top note at fig. 5 is perfectly judged – no need to squirm in anticipation here, as I have done at many performances. The music never seems to hurry but neither is it allowed to dawdle. If you want another example of Walton's perfect timing and intonation, listen to the sections between figs 10 and 11 and figs 12 and 13. They are exquisite. The second movement is brilliantly played, but sounding effortless. If a touch faster than the 160 crotchets per minute marked, it is always under control and totally effervescent. Walton's wrist action is superb. The third movement is finely paced and intensely played. There is no sentimentality but a great deal of finely wrought sentiment, a nobility of which Elgar would have been proud – and the kind of nobility I am sure that he intended, one full of heart, but not wearing its heart upon its sleeve. The movement is kept moving and Walton is not afraid to treat *stringendo molto* literally – i.e. for a moment the music speeds up a great deal. Its 60 bars, in this performance, become a brief *Intermezzo*, which is surely what Elgar intended, rather than the over-laboured angst-ridden slow movement of so many performances.

So soon we are back in the thick of it. Again the perfection of the ascent to the top note, and the note itself, in the bar before fig. 44 are a wonder to hear. I don't know how many takes it took to make, but, frankly, I don't care: what is on the CD is good enough to last a lifetime. The fourth movement, far from being the jolly swaggering performance often encountered, is a dogged, determined, if slightly reluctant interpretation. This I like, as I do also the way the music quickens in pace at *animato* (fig. 55). This pushes the music along until the compensating Tempo 1 is reached at fig. 59. So, soon, we are at the final *adagio* moment. This is the real heart of the work, exquisitely played, with chilling eloquence wrapped in the gorgeous tone of Walton's Guarneri, but not over-played: the music is allowed to speak. The last few pianissimo bars speak volumes before they are brushed aside by an ending which is not, as usual, peremptory, but which seals a masterly and convincing performance of a masterly and convincing piece of music.

I really cannot praise this performance too highly. For faithfulness to the text, interpretative musicality, accuracy,

ensemble and warmth and beauty of tone, Walton cannot be beaten. I shall treasure this recording – literally: I shall hoard it against a musically rainy day: I shall play it from time to time, to restore my faith in the work if I ever again have the misfortune to hear too many inadequate performances. It will, I am sure, do the job every time.

Myaskovsky's 'Cello Concerto, written in 1944, has two movements: *Lento* and *Allegro vivace*. The opening movement starts in the depths of Russian brooding, but this proof of national identity soon gives way to a passage of the most lyrical intensity, eminently suited to Walton's playing. The music is not extrovert but its melodic lines are extremely beautiful. It makes the movement sound like a profound 'song without words'. The second movement begins in lighter vein but soon becomes more ruminative. These two moods pervade the movement as a whole, with the central, slightly 'schmalzy-Waltzy' atmosphere exceedingly attractive. It leads directly to a restatement of the opening and then a remarkable cadenza for the soloist. This in turn leads to a full orchestral reprise of the opening theme of the first movement, a slackening of pace, and then, finally, a relaxation into the major mode, whereat the music gradually winds to a final acceptance with the same two haunting chords as closed the first movement. It is a fine work, new to me – and, no doubt, to many Elgar Society members – but well worth getting to know.

This is an excellent CD with very fine playing all round. I would recommend it heartily, not the least for the impeccable performance of the Elgar Concerto. I would love to hear more of Jamie Walton, maybe in his namesake's Cello Concerto, perhaps coupled with another Russian Concerto – possibly one by Shostakovich.

Paul Adrian Rooke



SOMMCD 073

Sea Pictures, op. 37

Gladys Ripley, London Symphony Orchestra / George Weldon

In the South (Alassio), op. 50

London Symphony Orchestra / George Weldon

Variations on an Original Theme ('Enigma'), op. 36

Philharmonia Orchestra / George Weldon

The re-issue of this recording in 2008 coincides with the centenary of the birth of both Gladys Ripley and George Weldon (1908-1963), and it is a fitting tribute to both artists. Recorded in 1954, *Sea Pictures* was therefore captured only a year before Gladys Ripley's untimely death. In her recording with Malcolm Sargent, she had

been a fine Angel in *The Dream of Gerontius*, in the tradition of Clara Butt, the first soloist in *Sea Pictures* and an Angel in 1916. *Sea Pictures* appeared close to *Gerontius* and the *Enigma Variations* and, whatever its limitations, it combines the beauty of vocal writing of the former and the assured orchestration of the latter.

In the recording, Weldon and Ripley bring out both qualities. If I have a criticism of her generally, it is that her vibrato is more of an unvaried wobble. Compare it with Janet Baker with Barbirolli (1965) or Felicity Palmer's subtle and understated interpretation with Hickox (1987), both of whom use vibrato more sensitively to enhance the expression. A propos, the much more restrained voice of the baritone Konrad Jarnot in the recent recording of Vol. 1 of the Complete Songs with piano show how a much cleaner sound can enhance the work even more. Nevertheless, from the initial breaking of the waves, this is an engaging interpretation. The recording has the violins a little bright and harsh, and the bass somewhat booming; but 'Sea Slumber Song' sets the scene of this full-blooded reading. 'In Haven', the setting of Alice Elgar's verse, is the weakest link of the cycle in both words and music, but not in Ripley's singing. Elgar made no attempt to portray the 'storms are sweeping' or 'the hurrying blast', but orchestrated a setting for voice and piano composed in his earlier style. Jarnot's version with piano reveals the original, rather commonplace, drawing-room ballad but the orchestration masks (almost) the distance Elgar had travelled.

From the setting of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' to the end, the rest of the reading is a delight. Like Janet Baker, Ripley takes the first and final songs faster than Felicity Palmer, but she luxuriates even more than them in the Browning, one of the high points of the set. Another is the equally long final setting of A.L. Gordon's 'The Swimmer', a fitting end to a very enjoyable performance.

The performance of *In the South (Alassio)* confirms Weldon as a passionate interpreter of Elgar. Three minutes longer than Alexander Gibson's 1983 recording with the Scottish National Orchestra, it nevertheless seems just as tightly controlled, and the LSO makes fewer mistakes than the SNO. As with *Sea Pictures*, the orchestra is bright and immediate, and there is a wealth of detail. The effect produced reminded me of the performances that the composer himself recorded, such as of the Second Symphony reviewed in these pages recently.

As with *Sea Pictures*, the original 1954 recording took place at Abbey Road studio no. 1, originally opened by Elgar. Brian Culverhouse was the producer then and it was he (with Gary Moore) who re-mastered the whole disc over half a century later because,

he tells us, 'I decided to digitally re-master the recordings on this disc as a tribute to a remarkable conductor and a fine friend'. We still hear the sound of the LSO players rustling music and shifting in their chairs which I find curiously moving, although I might not tolerate it in a modern recording.

It was, however, Walter Legge who produced the 1953 version of the Variations, and I liked it very much indeed. Legge and Weldon had a fruitful recording partnership from the latter's days with the CBSO, and it shows here, with a wide dynamic range and a good sound. Weldon clearly loved the work as it was the final piece on his farewell concert in Birmingham and 'Nimrod' was the one work he stipulated should be played at his funeral. From the opening careful statement of the theme, there is a meticulous shaping of each individual variation matched by sympathetic playing from the Philharmonia. It is a slightly lengthier reading than most others, chiefly attributable to a more spacious rendition of 'Nimrod' that, nevertheless, is controlled and not self-indulgent.

All in all, this is a splendid disc that puts together a varied and unusual all-Elgar programme that repays playing through as an entire concert. If it sells well, as it deserves to, it will have served to remind us of how fine an Elgarian Weldon was.

Oh, and a pleading postscript. I'm sure I recall once possessing *Sea Pictures* with Bernadette Greevy on CFP, and I definitely remember it as the best version I had then heard. Wanting to compare it to Gladys Ripley's recording, I couldn't find it; so I must have lent it to someone. Presumably, after twenty years, whoever out there who has it has now finished with it, so, may I please have it back? Thank you.

Steven Halls

The following additional comments on this recording were supplied by Andrew Youdell:

Playing this was a trip down memory lane, for it was George Weldon who introduced me – and many of my contemporaries, through records and concerts – to a large part of the standard orchestral repertoire. Oh! memories of Saturday night concerts at Leeds Town Hall! – and the smell of musty *Gramophone* catalogues, which list 'Popular Concerts' or 'Philharmonia Favourites', first on the Columbia green label, 33SX, and perhaps later reissued on MFP. I remember my frustration when, in 1962, I heard *In the South* for the first time in a concert, only to find that there was no recording available (there were many other gaps in the Elgar catalogue in those days). And there was the excitement of reading the *Gramophone* for December that year, when they reviewed the

present recording, then on HMV Concert Classics XLP 30008 (this became my Christmas present).

During the 1950s George Weldon was heavily promoted as a recording artist by Walter Legge in popular works such as overtures, concertos, and a great deal of British music, both serious and light, when building up the early LP Columbia catalogue. In fact, he recorded almost exclusively for that label from 1944 until his death. He excelled in concerto accompaniments, particularly in the Russian repertoire, for artists such as Benno Moiseiwitsch and Cyril Smith, and many of these fine performances have now been reissued on budget CDs. Born in Chichester 100 years ago, Weldon first found fame with the City of Birmingham Orchestra, which he built up from wartime austerity, adding the word 'Symphony' in 1948, and achieving permanent contracts for the players. In 1951, he left the CBSO under acrimonious circumstances, and was immediately invited by Sir John Barbiroli to become 'second' conductor of the Halle. Here, he took charge of industrial concerts, domestic tours, and the inauguration of the Halle Proms, while still finding time to appear and record with other British orchestras, and to make the occasional tour abroad. He certainly knew where his strengths lay in repertoire, and his ability to achieve really effective results with minimum rehearsal made him popular not only with the players themselves, but with concert promoters and recording producers. He had a very large repertoire, based on his love of Russian music (he had conducted Glazunov's 6th Symphony at a Royal Philharmonic Society concert in 1945), and the British works he loved to promote.

Elgar was his favourite composer, and the Somm label reissue contains three of his best recordings. In the Variations the overall sound is much richer than could ever have been heard on the original 33SX, particularly in the last variation, which builds to an effective climax which was always slightly distorted on my rather worn LP: 31 minutes must have been among the longest Columbia sides of its day.

This was Weldon's second recording of *Sea Pictures* with Gladys Ripley. I do not think that I am alone in preferring his 1946 version with the newly-formed Philharmonia Orchestra, a lighter view of the work, with a dancing lilt lacking in the LP remake; and in my view, Ripley's voice was fresher, her diction clearer, and 'Where Corals Lie' so charmingly played that this is my favourite version of all. The 1954 re-make feels generally slower, but none of the pieces are given the leaden accompaniment we have come to expect in more famous versions. In this new transfer, Ripley's voice has the full 'contralto' tone which we seldom hear today, and the words come through with more clarity than on either of the two LP reissues with which most people will be familiar, the XLP

and the later MFP version, both differently re-cut.

In the South sometimes emerges as a series of colourful vignettes, but not here. Attention is given to the work's structure and details of orchestration, the wind solos brought to the fore, the brass held in check. If only this recording had been made a few years later in stereo, it might have remained in the catalogue longer and be better remembered, but, once more, the full strength and tone of the LSO strings and brass emerge very well in the digital transfer – with far more presence than on the LP.

Andrew Youdell



Discrete 0701

Elgar: String Quartet in E minor

Bax: String Quartet No 1 in G
Pavão Quartet

The all-woman Pavão Quartet was new to me. It turns out that they the quartet at the Royal Academy of Music in 1998 and have, we are told, a 'passion for British music'. It certainly shows in this recording of two quartets that date from 1918. The Bax is a predominantly sunny work, less discursive than this composer can sometimes be, and it is dedicated to Elgar, who responded that he 'liked the look of it', although I doubt whether he ever heard it. I liked it, and felt that it was a good companion to the better known, but more troubled, Elgar Quartet.

The Quartet must surely be Elgar's most elusive major work. The first movement, with its wayward twelve-eight rhythms and quirky melodic motifs, needs serious attention if one is to get the most out of this enigmatic material. The slow movement is calm and serene, although rising to a quiet rapture at times: 'Like captured sunshine', in Alice Elgar's memorable description. The finale has a driving rhythmic impetus and terse melodic phrases that distil the essence of this nervy, moody composer, and despite the vigour of the writing, shadows do fall across the texture, as in the extraordinary *sul ponticello* passage just before fig. 49. The brusque, throwaway ending offers a smidgeon of optimism, but as in the Cello Concerto it comes too late to dispel much of the angst in the music. The Pavão Quartet captures all this to perfection, and this can certainly be compared favourably to recordings by better known quartets. Their tone is full and rounded, with impeccable intonation throughout. One should expect this, of course, but equally delightful is their understanding of the composer's myriad tempo markings which are observed so naturally and seemingly spontaneously that the work unfolds in

all its autumnal glory. I enjoyed this enormously, and I feel sure that the stature of the quartet has been enhanced by this new recording. Strongly recommended.

Barry Collett

Elgar: First Symphony, arranged for solo piano by Sigfrid Karg-Elert

Alan Bush: Piano Sonata in B minor, Op. 2
Mark Bebbington (piano)



SOMMCD 069

Any recording of orchestral music transcribed for the 'monochrome' piano invites the question 'why do it?' The piano reduction (two hands, four hands on one piano, four or more hands on two pianos) had its *raison d'être* in the era before recordings or (in the case of Elgar) before recording techniques could cope with the length of a symphony and with the multitude of sound-sources and tone-colours of the orchestra. Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* has been recorded in a version for solo piano, although Berlioz was no pianist, a fact which contributed to his orchestral originality. There the reason is clear: the transcription is by Franz Liszt, and was for several years the only published version of the symphony; it was used for a remarkably perceptive review by Robert Schumann, and is thus a document of importance; moreover Liszt is known to have played some, at least, of his transcription in public.

The reasons for recording Elgar's symphony, transcribed by the apparently indefatigable Sigfried Karg-Elert, are nothing like as clear. Karg-Elert's compositions have never entered mainstream repertory, even for organists (there are over 150 opus numbers, several works without opus number, and evidence that he destroyed other pieces; he died in 1933 aged only 55). Perhaps to pay the bills at what was apparently a difficult period of his life, he was available to make transcriptions, and tackled a Dvořák symphony and *Falstaff* as well as both Elgar's symphonies. But he was hardly a musician of the stature of Liszt. Moreover the symphony was published in score shortly after its premiere, removing one *raison d'être* of piano transcription. And the normal purpose of such arrangements, as with operas transcribed without the voice parts, was domestic; they could be used at home, for ease of study or for enjoyment. But with Elgar's symphony, as Mark Bebbington points out, a formidable technique is required to get round the notes. The piano duet version, incidentally, is not much easier, if

at all, but at least retains the possibility of domestic enjoyment.²

In discussing the First Symphony at a recent meeting of the London branch of the Elgar Society, I used the piano to suggest that while much was lost in colour and articulation, at least the musical structure remained intact. But I wonder whether even that is really true. In slower and quieter passages, where nearly everything can be encompassed by two skilful hands (and Bebbington's hands are certainly that), the transcription can even sound poetic. The end of the first movement is beautifully handled. But in the contrasted tuttis of the finale, notably the luscious G flat episode (fig. 132) and the climax after fig. 142, the sound is simply too thin. This may be because Karg-Elert wanted to keep something in reserve for the final pages, but the loss of a full sound amounts to a structural failure. The last return of the motto theme manages to generate some excitement, but the unvaried monochrome – no trombones! – soon feels inadequate. Thus probably the most enjoyable is the slow third movement. The most painful to me is the Scherzo. There is little of the frisson it has when played by an orchestra, and although some entries of the 'heard by the river' theme retain a touch of magic, much of the movement is rebarbative, mechanical, and around fig. 35 lumpy to the point of unintelligibility.

Bebbington can hardly be blamed for this; nor can Elgar or Karg-Elert. Elgar's rich orchestral texture in several passages – including fast music – can only be represented by a good deal of spreading and consequently delayed attack, usually in the treble. This was a feature of piano performance in Elgar's time, audible in his piano improvisations. But at best it makes the symphony sound like a too-ambitious piano sonata. Gallant the performance certainly is; but not, I think, over-scrupulous with dynamic markings and nuances of tempo, although not all of these seem to have found their way into the transcription. As with the Berlioz, any piano performance is likely to be slower than an orchestral version, although Bebbington is hardly slower than Colin Davis (making his version 7–8 minutes longer than Elgar's own). But from the interpretative point of view, comparison with orchestral versions is pointless. This is a pianist with a fine technique, who clearly understands the nature of the mountain he has to climb; but I must stop short of saying that I enjoyed more than a few parts of this CD, or that it is a necessary acquisition for an Elgarian's library (especially as Elgar did not make the transcription himself).

2 Bebbington ascribes some difficulties to the solo piano version having been started as a version for two pianos. Can any reader shed light on this? Or is he confusing it with the version for four hands on one keyboard, which is extant (see illustration of the title-page)?

The filler is Alan Bush's piano sonata, composed when he was 21. Somewhat insecure and derivative in style, it nevertheless does rather show up the symphony transcription in that it is real piano music, albeit not particularly characteristic of its composer.

Julian Rushton

Complete Songs for voice and piano, Vol. 1: *The Self-Banished; Oh, Soft was the Song; In Moonlight; Pleading; There are seven that pull the thread; Twilight; Sea Pictures; The Wind at Dawn; In the Dawn; Speak, Music!; Dry those fair, those crystal eyes; Always and Everywhere; Like to the Damask Rose; Queen Mary's Song; A Song of Autumn; Come, Gentle Night.*
Amanda Roocroft (soprano), Konrad Jarnot (*baritone*), Reinild Mees (piano)



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Elgar's solo songs with piano are coming out of the shadows at last. Somm recently reissued its fine collection of 23 songs, and there was David Owen Norris's double CD of songs and piano music on Avie, unfortunately put right out of court for me by the decision to use Elgar's own piano.³ Even José Carreras has just recorded *In the Dawn*!

Now comes the first of a two-volume set of the complete songs, recorded under the auspices of St.20ste-eeuwse Lied (20th-century Song Foundation), based in Holland. The driving force behind this is the Dutch pianist Reinild Mees, who, with the two singers, gave several recitals of these songs in major centres across Holland last autumn. Without doubt the recording is a triumph, and must certainly go to the top of recommended recordings of the songs. I had not associated Amanda Roocroft with Elgar before, although she did sing in *The Kingdom* at Birmingham's Symphony Hall last year. Both she and Konrad Jarnot are excellent throughout, with impeccable diction, warmth of tone, and the sense that they believe in the songs; and so they emerge as much finer works than they have sometimes been thought to be. The first song, *The Self-Banished*, receives its premiere recording here, maybe its first ever performance. It dates from 1875, when the composer was 18, and has only recently come to light. It shows a more confident structure from Elgar's only earlier song (*The Language of Flowers*, from three years earlier), and although very much in the Victorian ballad tradition, points in its flexible vocal line towards the glories to come.

3 See this Journal, November 2007.

I have noticed one or two performances recently of *Sea Pictures* with baritone, instead of the more usual mezzo, and I always feel cheated by versions with piano, depriving us of Elgar's magical orchestral scoring. I need not have worried here. Konrad Jarnot performs the songs with great feeling and understanding, encompassing the passion and grandeur of *Sabbath Morning at Sea* before fining his voice down for the more intimate *Where Corals Lie*. Reinild Mees accompanies with great feeling for texture. Listen, for example, to the piano sonorities at the words 'I the mother mild' in the first song. One can almost hear the divided lower strings and splashes of gong in her handling of these rich harmonies. I am surprised at the neglect of that dramatic and eloquent song *Always and Everywhere*, which has only been recorded once before,⁴ as has *Dry those fair, those crystal eyes*. As an example of the freshness of these interpretations, listen to *A Song of Autumn*, the type of song which can look so ordinary on the printed page (and I wonder if past criticisms of Elgar's songs have been based solely on the look on the page!), but which here sounds so lovely with its melancholy drooping phrases.

It is, in fact, difficult to come up with any real criticism. Perhaps *Pleading*, one of Elgar's loveliest songs, could have been more rapt, and *There are seven that pull the thread* (from *Grania and Diarmid*), doesn't really work with piano, which can't sustain the long-held string lines. But these are minor quibbles. Despite the excellence of the singers, I must give the final word of praise to Reinild Mees, for Elgar's accompaniments do not play themselves. The piano writing is idiosyncratic and doesn't always lie easily under the fingers. It is always effective in the right hands, but it needs a pianist who knows when to blossom, when to colour the harmonies with a chromatic note, and when to 'orchestrate' with the sonorities that are such a part of Elgarian style. Reinild Mees is ideal throughout, from the virtuosic *The Wind at Dawn* (a 'terrific song' as Elgar rightly said), to the gentle cadences of *Come, Gentle Night* which ends the disc.

On the 20th-Century Song Foundation's website I saw two reviews of this CD, one in Flemish in a Dutch magazine, the other in a French publication. My Flemish is not too good, but what I could make out seemed most complimentary. But the French critic gave it a most enthusiastic review, ending by saying he could not wait for Volume 2. Neither can I.

Barry Collett

4 The Unknown Elgar. Pearl SHE 9635.

LETTERS¹

From Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore

A recent question about Carice Elgar's confirmation has sent me back to Alice Elgar's diary. The entry for 11 June 1903 cites Carice's 'first communion' as the event neither parent attended. The error will be put right in future editions of *Edward Elgar: a Creative Life*.

From Mark Cole

I write as an old friend of Andrew Neill and as a long-standing member of our Society. I am appalled at the almost vitriolic criticism of Andrew's work as Chairman of the Society. I appreciate that it is endemic for most musical societies to be riven sooner or later by dissent and factional intrigue – I have personal experience of this state of affairs, having served, as a younger man, on the committee of several similarly orientated organisations. However, I find it quite outrageous that Andrew should be subjected to the sort of comment exemplified in the correspondence of the March 2008 Journal.

I have personal knowledge of Andrew's contribution to the Society since he became Chairman in 1992, and for many years before that. Time and again our normal social life has been interrupted because he had to attend some Elgar function or other. I know too that there have been occasions when his business interests have suffered. I think it perfectly reasonable for there to be differences of opinion as to how an organisation such as ours is run, but there are ways and ways of arguing a point of view. I feel that the present critics have overstepped the mark. Andrew is the most honest, straightforward and upright of men. The Society can consider itself fortunate that it has had the benefit of his services for so long.

From Andrew Neill

I refer to the letters from Mr Rooke and Messrs Newton and Norris which you published in the Society's Journal in March 2008. I consider that it is not in the interests of the Society for me to prolong this correspondence which, unfortunately, has become personal. Therefore, I have limited my response to these letters to the report which I read at the Society's AGM on 31 May. Readers will find an edited version of this in the current issue of the Society's News.

This correspondence is now closed; see Editorial

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 Carl Newton

Elgar – the English Tribal God! The Elgar Society always fascinates when it is not infuriating me. It seems to be a perfect microcosm of English mores, prejudices, obsessions, anxieties, and (sometimes) virtues. The March editions of News and Journal were perfect examples.

Why is it necessary to prove that Elgar was the most wonderful Englishman ever in order to accept that he is a major world class composer? No other historical figure is so treated. He is loaded with perceptions about 'Englishness', not to mention highly mythical views of English history, which have nothing to do with a realistic assessment of his artistic achievement. Geoffrey Hodgkins's piece (in the News) was a classic example in rejecting any criticism, implied or otherwise.

A Southern Branch report recently attacked a presentation because it did not conform to the 'heart-warming' view of Elgar we are all supposed to have. I doubt if most Elgarians are Methodists and having our hearts warmed is not the issue. In truth most biographies of Elgar would not pass muster in a major School of History because they have been written from partial sources, without critical assessment of the evidence, and with an obviously skewed bias in the subject's favour from the start. Some sound as if the author were actually a personal friend. Elgar could be arrogant, self-serving, money fixated, politically reactionary, socially snobbish, and terrified of appearing unconventional, in exactly the same way as the majority of his class contemporaries. Pretending he was not, often by flying in the face of the evidence, does him a disservice.

And then we have the music connoisseurs whose approach reminds me of wine pseuds. Incredibly we are treated to discussions on whether a note in a recording is held three seconds too long even if it is marked 'ten' or 'tenuto'. For all I care it can be Tom Emmett's famous 'sosteneuter'.² Then there is the lavish praise loaded on to prominent musicians who have actually performed an Elgar work. It's how they make their living, for heavens sake! We should be criticising them for not playing him *enough!* And that includes some who have been specially honoured by the Society.

Every major artistic figure has to be re-mediated to remain relevant. This is not an easy task with Elgar who is encrusted with misperceptions which hinder appreciation of his real merits and achievements. Some of these misperceptions were promoted by himself, it has to be said, but many more are being loaded on him by the obsessive desire of the Elgar Society (and others) to present him as a kind of English tribal god. As so often one cannot do better than quote Bernard Shaw: 'the British public is incapable of admiring a real great man, and insists on having in his place the foolish image they suppose a great man to be'.

² For the benefit of readers without an encyclopaedic knowledge of cricketing history, Carl informs me that the 'sosteneuter' was a delivery bowled by Thomas Emmett, of Yorkshire, but he would not explain why he called it that. It was 'held back' to deceive the batsman, which leads Carl to suggest that there may be a musical connection ('ritenuto') – especially as Emmett hailed from the musical town of Halifax.

From Mrs V.M. McKenzie

It is a pity the long and extensively researched article by Andrew Lyle about Elgar and Powick (November 2007) includes several glaring errors.

If you approach Powick from Malvern, the first thing you reach is the traffic lights at the top of Hospital Lane: the village is nearly a mile further north at the bottom of the hill. It is worth noting that Bovis Homes tried to call the lane 'Hospital Street', but accuracy prevailed and they had to correct this. However the correction took the form of replacing the long word 'street' with much larger letters for 'lane' in the same space.

The Superintendent's House, known as Bredon House, is indeed on this lane and being used for modern purposes. However it is not 'all that is left of the institution' which at its height held 1500 patients. The house pictured in fig. 1 is not and never was the residence of the superintendent. This elegant eighteenth-century building is 'White Chimneys', the house at the centre of the estate bought to create the asylum, and as such is recorded on early maps of the area. 'White Chimneys' still stands today, though Bovis Homes did very little to protect this listed building from vandalism. After a fire there was a long battle before Bovis was forced to rebuild the house as original, and then they had their revenge by changing the name to Barrington Court.

As a hospital, two long wings were built on either side of 'White Chimneys' and eventually these were extended and formed the south side of a large complex of wards round an open courtyard. Parts of these wings remain and are now converted into dwellings. 'White Chimneys' is now flats.

To the rear of 'White Chimneys', when it was the administrative block of the hospital, the ballroom was built. This was used for the concerts and dances mentioned and had the first sprung dance floor built in Worcestershire. As it had been built so that the main entrance was from the first-floor landing of 'White Chimneys', it was considered covered by the Listed Building Status. Somehow Bovis Homes got permission to demolish the ballroom. Local Elgarians fought long and hard against this, but were finally defeated when 'opinion' stated that the Elgar connection did not justify preservation. The ballroom had been upgraded as a cinema; the stage was equipped for full theatre productions including a lift for scenery and props; and greenroom facilities were extended for casts and orchestras. The ballroom was also marked out as a badminton court for the local club. There was an iron fire escape and plenty of easy access, but still demolition was done.

In the Hospital Chapel where the Rutland Sinfonia Concert was given, followed next day by a Thanksgiving Service led by the Bishop of Worcester, there were some modern stained glass windows. These were rescued by the then Vicar of Powick, the Rev. John Ilson, and are now in Callow End Church. The curved altar-rail shown in the photograph was also rescued and is now in the Lady Chapel of Powick Church. The pots of plants all along the rail were carried down to the Chapel by the patients working in the gardens and greenhouses, and they also provided flowers for the altar for the Sunday Service.

Accuracy is one of my foibles. Into this category [sic] falls the now perpetuated claim that Alice Elgar lived in Gloucestershire. Her home at Redmarley d'Abitot was

in Worcestershire, and is recorded as such on her gravestone. Just because someone altered the county boundary in the 1970s (and it is now in Gloucestershire, I think) does not alter the historical fact.

Why has a statue of an old English bulldog been erected on the bank of the Wye in Hereford, purporting to be Dan? Anyone familiar with Elgarian photographs knows Dan to have been a Victorian Bulldog, with long legs, a normal-sized head, and a much lighter body than the modern hybrid. My enquiries were received askance by Hereford City Council; 'nobody else has complained, and we left the design to the carver' (the statue is a wooden carving).

Why has the wrong date of Harry's birth been put on the family gravestone in Astwood Cemetery, and not corrected? Why has the washhouse window been removed from the front façade of the Birthplace Cottage? Why is Troyte Griffith's grave not on the list of concerns of the Elgar Society?

Andrew Lyle responds:³

I am grateful to Mrs McKenzie for pointing out an error in the caption of the first photograph in my article on Elgar and Powick Asylum. Having recently visited Powick again, I can confirm that the photograph is of 'White Chimneys', and not the Superintendent's House. Both buildings survive, albeit in a somewhat altered state from the structures with which Elgar would have been familiar. It was also interesting to hear from Mrs McKenzie of the local politics that went on after Powick Hospital was eventually closed. I shall not comment on the final three paragraphs of her letter, since these are beyond the scope of my article.

I also owe apologies to Laser (the current occupant of Bredon House); for misspelling the name of the company (S, not Z, as the central letter), and for inaccurately describing the nature of its business: it is a civil engineering firm, not a computer company.

3 See also the editorial (Ed.).

100 YEARS AGO...

The Elgars arrived in London from Italy on 16 May, and spent a week or so there seeing friends such as Richter, Schuster, Lee Williams, Pitt and Kalisch. On 20 May they heard Nikisch conduct the *Variations* in the afternoon (Elgar called the interpretation 'odd'), and attended a performance of *Die Meistersinger* in the evening. They also spent a couple of nights at Ridgehurst with the Speyers. Alice returned to Hereford on the 25th, and Edward followed four days later, having stayed at the Langham. He returned to 'a mass of correspondence'. The modern world was impinging on his rural idyll: on 1 June Alice wrote: 'E. depressed about bicycling on account of Motors'. Three days later modern distractions were closer to home: 'E. C. & May out for bicycling day to escape Vacuum cleaner'. Elgar was finding it difficult to settle to work now he was home, and wrote in a depressed state to Jaeger saying that he could 'only get orders for rot of kinds', but financial demands meant he was forced to write them. He went on: 'Of course I have the thing – the biggest of all sketched – but I cannot afford for the sake of others to waste any time on it'. Yet ten days later Alice's diary reads: 'E. writing beautiful Symphony': on the same day Edward wrote to Jaeger: 'Oh! such a tune' – the opening 'motto' theme. At last he was inspired to work consistently at the long-awaited symphony. 'E. deep in his musics' Alice wrote on 19 June; and Elgar wrote to Ivor Atkins on the 25th: 'The Symphony grows – a squalling child with teeth & hair'.

The first week in July found Elgar in Birmingham and London for meetings, and then he went to The Hut for a few days. Schuster was 'quite wild with enthusiasm' when the Symphony was played to him. Elgar's spirits were raised by the progress made on the new work; his letters at this time to Edwards and Atkins in particular are light-hearted and happy. Edwards lived in Potters Bar, and Elgar began his letter of 17 July: 'Who was Potter & why did he possess a Bar? What sort of Bar?', continuing in similar vein two days later. On 14 July, while riding with Carice and May Grafton, he asked if they would like to take tea in the village of 'Synagoguinetta'; when the two girls professed ignorance he explained it was Little D[*J*]ewchurch: 'They nearly fell off their cycles & have felt mentally incapable since'.

At this time Elgar was also writing his programme note for the second *Wand of Youth* Suite which was to be performed at the forthcoming Worcester Three Choirs Festival. Another short break from composition was a week-long visit to Ostend, where on 14 August Elgar conducted *In the South, Sea Pictures*, the *Variations*, the first *Wand of Youth* Suite, and the Triumphal March from *Caractacus*. 'Great ovation' wrote Alice, 'then suddenly "God Save the King" most stirring & affecting, proud to be English'.

Disturbances during particularly fruitful periods of creativity often upset Elgar and this was no exception: on 5 August he was 'trying to finish his Scherzo. Very badly all P.M. distressingly so'. However, he was able to leave the first two movements at Novello's before going to Belgium; and the day after they returned (18 August) Alice was able to write: 'E. feeling his way to his Symphony again'. (One can almost hear her relief!) The Speyers arrived on 19 August for a short stay, and Troyte Griffith and Ivor Atkins came over the following day. 'All very congenial spirits & very nice evening' was Alice's comment.

A difficult and depressing chapter closed at the end of the month. On 29 August: 'E. wrote resigning [the] Birm[ingham professorship]'. The following day: 'A. posted E's letters resigning Birm'. And on the last day of the month: 'E. anxious about Birm. but feeling weight lifted'.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

ISSN 0143-1269

*Printed by
Westpoint Printing Co. Ltd,
113 Fazeley Street,
Birmingham B5 5RX*