

The Elgar Society JOURNAL



JULY 2000
Vol.11 No.5

'ANY FRIEND OF ELGAR'S IS A FRIEND OF MINE'

Barbirolli and Elgar

K D Mitchell

[Kevin Mitchell is Vice-Chairman of London Branch of the Elgar Society, and a member of the Society's Council. He is a Director of the Board of Elgar Enterprises, and involved in the preliminary planning of the proposed Elgar Society Edition. He is also a member of the Barbirolli Society. This article was due to appear last year to celebrate the Barbirolli Centenary but had to be postponed due to unavoidable personal pressures. Kevin has also prepared a Discography of Barbirolli's Elgar recordings which will appear in the November JOURNAL].

Barbirolli's lifetime association with the music of Elgar began at a young age when, as he later recalled, "as a small boy, I used to waylay members of my father's orchestra and beg their complimentary tickets for the Proms, where I stood entranced by the majesty of the music I was hearing."¹ In middle age he wrote that "from the age of ten onwards the music of Edward Elgar ... meant more to me than I can say."²

After studying at the Royal Academy of Music he became a freelance cellist in 1916, playing in many London orchestras including Henry Wood's Queen's Hall Orchestra where he played in the Promenade Concerts in 1916 and 1917. Following a short spell in the Army he resumed his orchestral work and in October 1919 was one of the cellists in the London Symphony Orchestra for the premiere of Elgar's Cello Concerto to be given by Felix Salmond. It is well known how Albert Coates utilised more of his scheduled rehearsal time to work on the other pieces in the programme by Scriabin and Borodin leaving insufficient time to prepare the concerto. Barbirolli, who felt the injustice of this throughout his life, wanted to say: "Go home, sir, refuse to conduct it until you can have a proper rehearsal."³ Elgar did consider withdrawing but put Salmond's reputation first. The performance was a disaster and one critic wrote that the orchestra "made a lamentable public exhibition of itself", which was perhaps hard on the orchestra.

The chance to play under Elgar's baton in happier circumstances came in September 1920 when the LSO took part in the first post-war Three Choirs Festival which was being revived seven years after the 1913 Gloucester meeting. The Elgar works being performed included *The Music Makers*, the Introduction and Allegro, 'For the Fallen' and *The Dream of Gerontius*. Forty five years later, he recalled his good fortune to play at this Festival: "For a young man who loved Elgar's music, it was wonderful to see the great man, radiantly happy amongst his friends in the Cathedral precincts; more wonderful still to play 'The Dream' under his direction ... I remember that Elgar conducted from memory (the antithesis of Vaughan Williams, who always averred that he could never remember a note of his own music) and although he could not be called a great conductor by the highest professional technical standards, it was extraordinary how he could make you feel exactly what he wanted if you were in sympathy with him."⁴

Barbirolli was one of the earliest interpreters of the Elgar Cello Concerto for he played it at the Winter

¹ Barbirolli, John: 'Elgar the Man' in *Hallé*, May 1957; reproduced in *The Barbirolli Society Journal*, January 1988, no 51, p 11

² Barbirolli, John: 'Forty years with Elgar's Music' in *Edward Elgar: Centenary Sketches* (Novello, 1957)

³ Kennedy, Michael: *Barbirolli - Conductor Laureate* (Hart-Davis & MacGibbon, 1971) p 39

⁴ Barbirolli, John: *The Dream of Gerontius: a personal note* (with EMI records ASD 648/9,

Gardens, Bournemouth under Sir Dan Godfrey on 27 January 1921. A critic spoke of his "evident sympathy with the composer's intentions, and the interpretation suggested some singularly refined conceptions on the part of the soloist and orchestra."⁵ He played the work again at a recital in the Aeolian Hall on 13 June 1922.

Whilst continuing his career as a cellist, he also nourished ambitions to be a conductor and late in 1924 formed, with his own funds, a chamber string orchestra of twelve players. The baritone John Goss had previously formed the Guild of Singers and Players and invited Barbirolli's string players to give their first public performance at a Guild concert. Thus when in 1925 the New Chenil Galleries were opened as an arts centre in Chelsea, the Guild's orchestra was reformed as the Chenil Chamber Orchestra with Barbirolli as its conductor. One critic noted that the string playing was the best and most carefully rehearsed in London; and the repertoire included Elgar's *Elegy* and Introduction and Allegro. It was with this latter work that Barbirolli chose to make his first Elgar recording in October 1927 (and it was to be the first recording of the piece) under the auspices of the National Gramophonic Society. At the time it was unconsidered as a major Elgar work. Compton Mackenzie on sending the record to the composer received this reply: "I hasten to say that I think the record excellent in every way ... I know that Mr Barbirolli is an extremely able youth and, very properly, has ideas of his own, added to which he is a remarkably able conductor ..."⁶ Barbirolli made a second recording of the piece in January 1929 and his fine interpretation caused Elgar to remark that "I'd never realised it was such a big work."

Barbirolli's first major conducting job was with the British National Opera Company and in September 1926 he conducted his first opera, Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*. It was when the Company were in London, in December 1927, that Barbirolli was given his "first great chance to conduct in the symphony world."⁷ Beecham was to have conducted the LSO on 12 December, but had to withdraw due to injury. The secretary of the LSO - a self-governing body - suggested that "young John" should be contacted: "The concert was on Monday and the LSO rang me on Friday. With my habitual conscientiousness I was all for refusing the date ...",⁸ but JB's father was adamant that such an opportunity should not be passed over, so Barbirolli "capitulated". He substituted Haydn's Symphony no 104 for Mozart's *Linz* Symphony and he already knew Haydn's D Major Cello Concerto but the programme was to finish with Elgar's E Flat Symphony. He had 48 hours to master the complex score. That he did so is evident by the remark made by the leader W H Reed at the rehearsal: "John already knows what he wants to do", and by Casals' comment to the players: "Listen to him. He knows."⁹

The critics were divided. The reviewer for *The Daily Telegraph* noted that the Elgar "sounded heavy and turgid instead of being, with all its faults, vigorous and brilliant ... the most magnificent pages of the slow movement went for nothing." In the *Manchester Guardian* Eric Blom wrote that Barbirolli was "so fully conversant with this extraordinarily complex score that he had a safe margin of energy left to expend on technicalities ... he did not always remain content with following Elgar's meticulous indication of the tiniest variations in tempo but actually supplied some additional modifications of his own ... one point to which

1965)

⁵ Kennedy, *op cit*, p 40-42

⁶ Moore, Jerrold Northrop : *Elgar on Record* (OUP, 1974) p 84

⁷ Speech by Sir John Barbirolli made on 12 December 1961 in Manchester Town Hall (Barbirolli Society, 'Sir John Barbirolli Speaks', vol 2. BS 02)

⁸ *ibid*. He also gave an account of this event in an interview with R Kinloch Anderson on 21 April 1964, which can be heard on CDSJB 1999.

serious exception could be taken was the sentimentalising of the second subject in the initial movement ... Here Elgar's favourite direction - nobilmente - was certainly violated."¹⁰

The reviewer in *The Musical Times* wrote that the Elgar was a "torrent" and that Barbirolli "had talent, audacity and a remarkable will of his own ... a young man who can pull off such an event should go far." *The Times* noted that there was a peculiar atmosphere of expectancy in Queen's Hall and that this "expectancy turned in the course of the evening to enthusiasm. Haydn's *London* Symphony obtained an interpretation at once finished and vigorous. From the moment when the violins turned the opening subject of the allegro with a suave, easy beauty ... one realised that Mr Barbirolli knew what he wanted and ... was able to get it ... The Elgar E flat Symphony ... offered a more difficult problem. It is a long work, heavily laden with what one may call emotion, and to make it tell as a whole a conductor has to keep a tight hand on the orchestra and on himself. Mr Barbirolli came through the ordeal successfully, moments of special beauty being the brilliant climax of the first movement and the diminuendo which marks the coda of the finale. His skill in keeping his forces in control also showed up well in the third movement, where the complicated rhythms were admirably brought out. Mr Barbirolli has few personal idiosyncrasies, and his beat is always indicated in a straightforward way ... Both he and Casals and the orchestra were accorded applause in fuller measure than even the generosity of Queen's Hall audiences usually grants."¹¹

Elgar's friend Frank Schuster attended the concert and wrote to the composer : "I must just tell you that to my thinking Barbirolli gave a remarkably good account of your No 2, playing it as it is written and, what's more, as it is felt ... no exaggeration but very cohesive and round and rich. But it appears that in spite of a most enthusiastic reception the highbrows don't agree with me. Am I wrong?"¹² As Elgar had had to contend with the views of the "highbrows" throughout his career, he was more than happy to endorse the interpretation of this young conductor and wrote to him thus : "I hear splendid accounts of your conducting of the symphony concert on Monday last; for your kind care of my work I send you very sincere thanks. I should have sent a word before the concert had I known of it, but I was unaware that anything of mine was being given."¹³ However such a view did not still the voices of those who were unhappy with Barbirolli's heartfelt approach to music which he loved, for as Daniel Barenboim trenchantly observed, "During his lifetime, people in England often criticised [Barbirolli's] musical personality in general and his Elgar in particular. They considered him too emotional and thought he took too many liberties. But I felt that he brought a dimension to Elgar's music which is so often lacking, a kind of nervous quality which he had in common with Mahler ... There is almost a certain over-sensitivity in some of Elgar's greater works, which is sometimes sacrificed for the conventional idea of Elgar as the perfect English gentleman."¹⁴

One man who also recognised the true measure of Barbirolli's potential was Fred Gaisberg - one of the founders of The Gramophone Company - who after the concert accosted Barbirolli and told him not to sign any gramophone contracts and he would see him the next day! Thus Barbirolli began his long association with HMV. His fine series of Elgar recordings for the company commenced in September 1928 when he accompanied Peter Dawson in two extracts from *Caractacus*, 'Leap, leap to the Light', and 'O, my warriors', which was followed in 1929 by the second recording of the Introduction and Allegro, and

⁹ Barbirolli, John : 'A Few Reminiscences' in *The Gramophone*, October 1936, p 187-8

¹⁰ Kennedy, *op cit*, p 55

¹¹ *The Times*, 13 December 1927

¹² Kennedy, *op cit*, p 55

¹³ Kennedy, *ibid*

'Where corals lie' sung by Maartje Offers.

His burgeoning career in the Opera House, recording studio and elsewhere drew further praise from Elgar who at a dinner in July 1929 - at which JB was present - spoke of him as "a rising hope of music in England for whom I have admiration and in whose work I have confidence ... as long as we have conductors and musicians like Barbirolli, this country has nothing to worry about." In turn Barbirolli recognised that Elgar became more open with him because "... he knew I loved his music so much that I couldn't gush about it. He felt that what I said about it was true."

In 1930 he became conductor of Covent Garden's touring company. The withdrawal of funding meant that the company was wound up after the 1933 summer season; but by then JB had been appointed as permanent conductor of the Scottish Orchestra in Glasgow. Through the influence of Sir Landon Ronald, Barbirolli conducted the orchestra in January and February 1933 - he was "on trial" before the decision was made regarding the permanent appointment - and one of the works he conducted was Elgar's First Symphony. His friend D C Parker, a journalist with the *Glasgow Evening Times*, was a devoted Elgarian and JB wrote to him in May 1933 that he was "entirely coming round to your estimate of Elgar. Of my great admiration you have known for a long time, but as you know I was torn in my affections between him and Delius. Without in the least diminishing my love of the latter's music, I have had to confess to myself he is something of an Amateur of Genius as against a Master ..."¹⁵

Parker suggested to Barbirolli that they should visit Elgar at his Worcester home, so on 19 August 1933 they arrived at Marl Bank. Elgar was delighted to receive them : he proudly showed them the view of the Cathedral saying, "That's what I see every morning when I wake up". He played them his own recording of the Symphonic Study *Falstaff*, making the comment on the side drum solo passage: "Well, that's a good bit anyway", as though he dismissed the rest of the work. Of his Second Symphony, he said that the opening theme of the last movement was evolved from a phrase that appeared later in the movement.¹⁶ This was an example of the working method which he had once elaborated to Sanford Terry, namely, that the climax of a movement came to him first, followed by "a great mass of fluctuating material which might fit into the work ..." As the visitors departed, Elgar emotionally hugged Barbirolli and thanked him for liking his music. This was JB's last meeting with Elgar who shortly after was diagnosed with cancer.

Elgar had been booked to conduct the Hallé in a concert of his music, the overtures *Froissart* and *Cockaigne*, the *Enigma Variations* and the Violin Concerto, on 15 February 1934. In the event, Barbirolli stood in for the dying composer. "Mr Barbirolli made a considerable success of last night's Elgar programme," wrote Neville Cardus. "In the *Enigma Variations* he gave us one of the best pieces of conducting seen this season. Not a point was missed, and the composer's original mingling of masculine and feminine qualities, sounded more than ever like the greatest music he has ever written. The orchestra responded finely to Mr Barbirolli's indications, the ear was always being won by beautiful touches of instrumentation, notably the expressive 'cello phrasing in the noble B.G.N. variation, and the wistful pointing of the clarinet in the wonderful sea painting of the thirteenth variation. Mr Barbirolli even

¹⁴ Barenboim, Daniel : *A Life in Music* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991) p 65-66

¹⁵ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 79

¹⁶ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 84. See also Jerrold Northrop Moore : *Edward Elgar, A Creative Life* (OUP, 1984) p 611. The sketch is reproduced on p 421.

¹⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 February 1934

made the finale dignified and strong; he unfurled the flag of the music masterfully. Mr Barbirolli has gifts! Last night's performance was a testimony to Mr Barbirolli's love of Elgar as it was to the orchestra's ability to read a score ... All in all the performance [of the Violin Concerto] held the attention and must have given a deal of pleasure to the composer as he listened-in miles away on his bed of sickness in Worcester. Let us hope the audience's applause heartened him and acted better than medicine. The concert proved his genius; we can take pride in the thought that England produced him.¹⁷

It is doubtful that Elgar was aware of the concert. He died a week later on 23 February. Barbirolli was moved to write to Parker: "Our beloved Master left us today. It seems incredible that men like that should go, though of course they live on in ever increasing glory in the heritage they leave behind them. It seems but yesterday we paced his garden together ... Elgar had been at various times very kind to me and that is what makes it all such a deep personal loss. The man was as noble and beautiful as his music, and I feel very humbly and deeply grateful that I was granted the privilege of having known him. To think I fulfilled his last public engagement ..."¹⁸ Both he and Parker attended the Elgar Memorial Service in Worcester on 2 March; JB was also at the London memorial concert on 24 March conducted by Boult and Ronald.

In his 1934/35 season with the Scottish Orchestra, Barbirolli was able to pay tribute to Elgar, Holst and Delius, who had all died in 1934. It was at this time that he started to consider his Elgar performances in a new light, vowing to do all he could to further Elgar's cause, to make the public appreciate his genius. He wrote to Parker: "I still feel the mass of our public is still very far from a true appreciation of his greatness."¹⁹ One member of his Glasgow public recalled that "he ... did not particularly push Elgar in his Glasgow programmes, apart from the *Enigma Variations* which were something of a favourite with the Glasgow audience."²⁰ Be that as it may, in his three seasons in Scotland - and the brief season only ran from November to February - he gave the two symphonies, the *Enigma Variations*, the Violin Concerto, the Introduction and Allegro and the Funeral March from *Grania and Diarmid*. Whilst the orchestra enjoyed playing this music apparently there were a lot of unsold seats on an Elgar night for as one player recalled: "He was always 'selling' Elgar ... and Scotland would not 'buy'."²¹ He soon had a chance to "sell" Elgar abroad. In February 1935 he travelled to Helsinki, Leningrad and Hilversum as a guest conductor and included the Introduction and Allegro and the *Enigma Variations* in his programmes. From Leningrad he wrote to Evelyn Rothwell, an oboist in the Scottish Orchestra, and his future wife, that "... they loved the Enigma, which was the loveliest thing of all ..."²²

On 3 April 1936, the manager of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York sent a cable offering Barbirolli a ten week season from November following Toscanini's decision not to conduct the 1936/37 season. Even though JB had never conducted in America, Arthur Judson, the manager of the orchestra, had heard good reports of him from Heifetz, Horowitz, Rubinstein and others and was therefore prepared to consider him on the evidence of these musicians. This was to be a trial period to assess him for the post of permanent conductor - the rest of the season was to be shared with Enesco, Stravinsky, Carlos Chavez and Rodzinski. This offer caused a sensation in Great Britain. Glasgow released him from his contract and he conducted his first New York concert on 6 November. Lyndon Jenkins has pertinently written that "...at first Barbirolli sensibly and modestly viewed the chance to conduct Toscanini's orchestra

¹⁸ Kennedy, *op cit.*, pp 84-5

¹⁹ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 89

²⁰ Emmerson, George S: 'A Personal View of John Barbirolli from his Glasgow Days', in *Sir*

as a huge compliment and made the most of it.²³ On the following two evenings his programme included the *Enigma Variations* and he reported to Evelyn Rothwell " ... we played the 'Enigma' tonight (received with great enthusiasm) ... I wish you could have heard it. The sound this orchestra can make, and they play as if they loved me, makes it almost unbearable at moments ..."²⁴ To Parker he wrote : "... you will rejoice to hear that after my performance of the 'Enigma' we had many letters asking for a repeat ... So you see I have quietly begun my Elgar propaganda. We are fortunate people ... who know and realise the greatness of this man, for we have been enriched beyond measure ..."²⁵

Within five days of his first concert, the orchestra was openly clamouring for him to be appointed permanent conductor and this became a reality on 10 December. He immediately wrote to Evelyn Rothwell "... in the face of extreme scepticism, after 5 weeks or so of my work, your John has been unanimously selected to direct the destinies of this great organisation."²⁶ In a newspaper interview he said that his three-year appointment "... is good for English music ... I played the *Enigma Variations* and my interpretation of Elgar seemed new to American audiences. They have now asked me to play the Elgar Symphonies!"²⁷

He returned to finish his Scottish season in January 1937, conducted Puccini at Covent Garden and studied scores prior to returning to America in the autumn. In his first full New York season, he gave a performance of the Elgar Violin Concerto with Heifetz, who, he considered, played it wonderfully but "not perhaps with enough 'hurt'." To Evelyn Rothwell he wrote that "...it is still a practically unknown, and certainly misunderstood, work here. It brings back so vividly that day when I saw him for the last time and he hugged me and told me how glad he was I had come to see him. I knew then ... how much he had felt the lack of understanding in the English people of his work ... But surely ... some day the whole world must know that he was one of the greatest composers of all time ..."²⁸ This view was not however shared by the critic of the *New York Times*, Olin Downes, who wrote of "the bad, involved style of the pompous beginning ...", of the "commonplace, bourgeois, Belgravian" slow movement, and the last movement finale he found to have "neither tension nor cohesion."²⁹

During his second American season JB conducted the Second Symphony and the Lionel Tertis' transcription of the Cello Concerto for viola. Predictably, Downes thought the symphony "a lengthy, pompous, bourgeois sort of thing; it reflects the complacency and stodginess of the era of the antimacassar ..."³⁰ He found it depressing and commented on "... its evident fatigue. Hearing it gives the sensation of a worn-out culture which died at the roots a long time ago ... The playing can be little more than suave and meaningless and tired."³¹

Barbirolli took his orchestra on a 14 day American-Canadian tour in November 1939 and included the Introduction and Allegro in the programmes, whilst in July 1940 he made his Los Angeles debut at the Hollywood Bowl with the *Enigma Variations*, Delius's *First Cuckoo* and Brahms's Fourth Symphony

John Barbirolli : 80th Anniversary Memoir (The Barbirolli Society, 1980) p 14

²¹ Reid, Charles : *John Barbirolli* (Hamish Hamilton, 1971) p 110

²² Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 91

²³ Jenkins, Lyndon : 'Hallé and Glorious' in *International Classical Record Collector*, Winter 1999, p 14

²⁴ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 116

²⁵ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 118-9

before an audience of 12,000.³² In November 1939 Edward Heath saw Barbirolli at Carnegie Hall conducting the Introduction and Allegro and later wrote that "Barbirolli brought some of the freshness and tenderness of the English countryside to the string playing of the New York Philharmonic in the Elgar work", which he found a welcome contrast to the hard, bubbling, exciting atmosphere of New York.³³

Not all the critics condemned Barbirolli's Elgar performances in America. Lawrence Gilman of the *New York Herald Tribune* was one of JB's champions. Regarding Barbirolli's rendering of the *Enigma Variations*, he wrote of the "breadth and feeling that were conveyed with especially moving power in the noble Nimrod variation. Here the tonal richness and grandiose power of the Philharmonic's magnificent strings encompassed Elgar's purpose to the full."³⁴ Alas, Gilman died in 1939, to be succeeded by Virgil Thomson, (a composer himself, now little remembered apart from some music for documentary films). The new season opened on 10 October 1940 and Barbirolli chose to conduct the *Variations*. Thomson's first notice appeared on the following day. He found that the *Variations* were "an academic effort ... because the composer's interest in the musical devices he was employing was greater than his efforts towards a direct and forceful expression of anything in particular ... Mr Elgar's variations are mostly a pretext for orchestration ..."³⁵

Nevertheless Barbirolli persisted. During the 1940/41 season he gave the first Philharmonic performance of the Cello Concerto with Piatigorsky, and in January 1941 as a guest conductor for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, he revived *Carillon* with Walter Pidgeon as narrator - a curious way to stir American militarism! Finally, as a last defiant gesture, in March 1943 at the concert that marked the close of these seven American years, he conducted the *Enigma Variations*. So in these years Barbirolli had fulfilled his vow to perform Elgar's music - despite much critical disapproval - but was unable to perform, or record the Violin Concerto with the soloist who had given its premiPre in 1910, Fritz Kreisler.

That JB left New York in 1943 was primarily due to a ruling of the Musicians' Union and not to any sense of failure : everyone who played in American symphony orchestras had to belong to the union and to obtain membership you had to be an American citizen. Similarly, any conductor of an American orchestra had, after six years, to become an American citizen. Barbirolli had no wish to take up American citizenship and thus his contract could not be renewed. The first contract had been renewed in 1940 and the second expired at the end of the 1942 season. After that, he stayed on due to eighteen guest engagements and according to Lyndon Jenkins "this faith in his abilities speaks for itself and makes it all the more mystifying that for decades afterwards it was fashionable to denigrate his New York tenure as a failure. Nowadays it is clear that there is little evidence to support that view and plenty to contradict it."³⁶ However, he did not simply wish to continue his work as a guest conductor in America and was keen to return to England.

In addition, Barbirolli had a great longing to return to his family in England, who were enduring the

²⁶ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 121

²⁷ *The Observer*, 24 January 1937, quoted in Reid, *op cit.*, pp 172-3

²⁸ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 134

²⁹ Reid, *op cit.*, p 213

³⁰ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 139

³¹ Reid, *op cit.*, p 214

³² The Bowl could hold more than 17,000

³³ Heath, Edward : *Music - A Joy For Life* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1976) p 68

hardships of war at home. The third reason for his departure was the offer to become the permanent conductor of the Hallé Orchestra, which at that time was going through a difficult period.

In February 1943 Barbirolli had received a telegram from the Principal of the Royal Manchester College of Music, Robert Forbes, which had been sent on the instructions of the Chairman of the Hallé Society, Philip Godlee, asking if he would be interested in the permanent conductorship of the Hallé. Barbirolli, who was eager to find an opportunity to return home, replied that he was and said to his wife, "This is it." By April all was settled. He wrote to his London agent : "... I cannot tell you how great is my joy ... at the thought of working again in my beloved country with a real permanent orchestra ... I have a big task on hand, and it is one to which you know I will give my utmost devotion ... now that I am really wanted at home, it was hard to resist the appointment ..."³⁷



John Barbirolli, in his early 30s

But it was a 'big task' indeed. The Hallé Orchestra had had no permanent conductor for some time and there was a danger of losing almost half the band to the BBC's Northern Orchestra. In fact, between the offer of the post to JB and his arrival to take up the job, over 30 players defected to the BBC on the strength of greater security and more money. (The management clearly believed that the appointment of Barbirolli would staunch the flow.)

On 2 June 1943 Barbirolli arrived in Manchester. How he prepared and built up the new orchestra in readiness for his first concert on 5 July following the loss of over thirty players has become the stuff of legend and need not be repeated here. The wartime enthusiasm was immense; the Hallé had been rejuvenated and JB raised the standard to a peak that had not been achieved for years. He rightly saw his work with the Hallé as "a very great mission."

The music of Elgar was to be a leitmotif throughout his twenty-seven years with the Hallé. To no-one's surprise, the first concert of "his" Hallé in Manchester - 15 August 1943 - included the *Enigma Variations* in which a critic noted that "the orchestral playing was indeed finer than any we have heard in Manchester for many years."³⁸ He was eager to play the Elgar symphonies. He had conducted the E flat Symphony with the Hallé, on 4 February 1937 (following his return from his initial New York trial) and

³⁴ Reid, *op cit.*, p 200

³⁵ Reid, *op cit.*, p 207

³⁶ Jenkins, *op cit.*, p 168

³⁷ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 168

Sheffield first heard the work with JB's Hallé on 12 January 1945. For the Manchester performance Barbirolli placed a note in the prospectus asking for a 'FULL HOUSE WHEN WE PLAY THE SECOND SYMPHONY OF ELGAR ...'³⁹ The public did as it was bidden : 6,000 came to King's Hall, the timber stadium at Belle Vue.

The Second Symphony coupled with the Introduction and Allegro and Cello Concerto would therefore regularly provide a popular Elgar evening for Barbirolli's audiences. He was always deeply affected by the work, especially by the final pages of the last movement : "...there is a nostalgic feeling in this music, as of the end of an era. It tells of a way of living that is no more, a way that I knew something of as a child. During those closing pages I think of Sir Edward Grey's words the day before the 1914 war was declared : 'The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime'. For me, infallibly, those lamps are fleetingly relit by the flame of Elgar's genius every time we reach the end of the E flat symphony."⁴⁰ These views were echoed by the critic Gerald Abraham, who, writing of a London performance by JB and the Hallé in the 1960s, found the symphony "... an enduring monument to all the nobility, the splendour of thought, the idealism that are despised and rejected and mocked in England today and that seem to be deserting her for ever."⁴¹ For Barbirolli, memories of his childhood in pre-1914 London helped him to be an excellent interpreter, not only of the symphony but also of other 'London' works such as *Cockaigne*, Vaughan Williams' *London Symphony* and John Ireland's *A London Overture*. The work gathered more personal associations when he played it in memory of the Hallé's chairman, Philip Godlee, following his sudden death in September 1952.

He took infinite pains over the work. When in 1946 an oboist who had never played it joined the Hallé, Barbirolli invited her to his home and took her through the entire piece, beating time with a pencil! He recorded it twice for HMV, in 1954 and 1964. The earlier version is generally accepted as a more accurate record of his interpretation at its peak. His deep love for the work is evidenced by the remark he made after giving a concert at the start of his twenty-first season with the Hallé, which comprised the Intermezzo from *Fennimore and Gerda*, Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, *La Mer*, and Elgar's E flat symphony : "These are the pieces I'd like to conduct if I knew I wouldn't be conducting any more."⁴² For him it was simply "... a sublime piece of music. It is part of my heritage and my life."

He could have said the same of the First Symphony, which he included in the Hallé season for 1945/46 and frequently thereafter (often both symphonies were played in the same season). The composer Arthur Butterworth, who played the trumpet in the Hallé, remembered one particular performance of the work on "... a beautiful, mellow September evening in Truro Cathedral, with the slowly sinking sun ... illuminating the great west window of the cathedral. The music unfolded with its steady tread, the melancholy, the romance, tenderness, old-world gentility and yet the ominous undercurrents of vague unease which it all symbolised. In that gradually darkening west-country cathedral everything was perfection; the music, the aura it created ... a rapt audience, mesmerised and transported back half-a-century by the magic of those expressive hands."⁴³ When in his last Hallé season he conducted the symphony, "... some special magic entered the performance and made it not only deeply emotional and moving but seemed to reveal new points of detail and new facets of beauty ... The suppleness of the

³⁸ Granville Hill in *The Manchester Guardian*, quoted in Michael Kennedy: *The Hallé 1858-1983: a History of the Orchestra* (Manchester University Press, 1982) p 39

³⁹ Reid, *op cit.*, p 266

⁴⁰ Reid, *op cit.*, p 93

⁴¹ Gerald Abraham, quoted in Kennedy, *Hallé*, p 108

strings and the superb ensemble of the full orchestra, wholly at one with Barbirolli at his unapproachable best, were exactly in accord with the Elgar ethos.⁴⁴ It was this symphony, rather than the second, which he was to conduct in the last week of his life.

Another Elgar work, which found a special place in his heart, was *The Dream of Gerontius*. In 1945, he began to study the work in detail : "I began to realise for the first time the great delicacy, imagination and subtlety of much of the scoring." While thus involved, several members of the Hallé told him of the contralto Kathleen Ferrier and urged him to engage her as the Angel. He first heard her in Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, but was disappointed by her performance : she had little sympathy with the work. In spite of this Barbirolli's first performance of *The Dream* on 26 April 1946 included Ferrier with Parry Jones and David Franklin, and from that time on Ferrier sang the part of the Angel for him whenever possible. In 1952, they gave a series of performances, one of which Neville Cardus described as being "... as close to faultlessness as could be wished." At the Edinburgh Festival that year she gave her last performance of the work with Barbirolli, who later wrote of the "poignantly beautiful memories" of her singing.

When rehearsing *The Dream*, he paid much attention to the choruses, bringing the Demons' Chorus to life with comments such as : "Don't be so bloody polite! Let's have a bit of snarl. I want nasal tone on Ha! Ha! Show your teeth a bit ..."; "You're not bank clerks on a Sunday outing, you're souls sizzling in hell." He would even pretend to be a demon himself to obtain the requisite note of derision and contempt at the words "What's a saint." He once advised a chorus to sing 'Praise to the Holiest' as though it were rocking a baby. Their response to this instruction met with the retort : "If you rocked a baby like that, you'd give it stomach ache." Everyone laughed - but Barbirolli's point was taken!⁴⁵

He was thrilled to be able to give the first performance of the work in Rome in the centenary year of Elgar's birth with the Orchestra and Chorus of the RAI : "Never shall I forget the look of joyful surprise and enthusiasm on the faces of the orchestra and chorus at the first rehearsal, when the wonders of the work unfolded themselves ... since Italian and English are mother tongues to me, the very voluble comments on the work did not escape me".⁴⁶ He found the performance to be "... wonderful ... chorus was absolutely incredible and I don't think I have heard it sung better."⁴⁷

In the following year the Choir of Our Lady of Dublin came to the Free Trade Hall and, at the end of the performance of *The Dream*, JB made a speech saying how good it was to hear "this Roman Catholic work sung from the hearts and throats of ardent Roman Catholics." Later in 1958, he travelled again to Italy with this choir and performed *The Dream* at the 'Sagra Umbra' Festival in Perugia and followed this on 29 September with a performance of Part One in the presence of Pope Pius XII at Castel Gandolfo. The Pope followed the score and told Barbirolli that it was "a sublime masterpiece." Pius XII died only ten days later; and Barbirolli "often wondered what the feelings of Newman and Elgar would be if they could know that the last music he heard had been Elgar's setting of Newman's words, 'Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul'.⁴⁸

His last performance of *The Dream* was given in Dublin with Our Lady's Choir in May 1970, their Silver Jubilee year. He started rehearsals two weeks prior to the concert and his methods astonished and

⁴² Reid, *op cit.*, p 421

⁴³ Butterworth, Arthur : 'A Memoir of Sir John Barbirolli' in *Sir John Barbirolli : 80th Anniversary Memoir*, p 8

⁴⁴ Kennedy, *Hallé*, p 111

delighted the singers and players. He told the choir : "This work can only be sung by Catholics. You are Catholics. It can only be conducted by a Catholic. I am a Catholic ..."⁴⁹ The performance was profoundly satisfying despite poor acoustics. This is not to imply that his interpretation was simply a "saintly" one for, like Elgar, he found secular drama in the work; but on the other hand he never forgot that *The Dream* was religious music, and each performance was meticulously prepared and fashioned with this in mind. He believed that this masterpiece was written "in a constant white heat of inspiration," and his performances sought to reflect this. A review of a performance in March 1963 described it as "... blazing with glorious conviction ... every moment is as real as truth to him, impossible of exaggeration. One could regard Elgar's careful markings as restrictive; Sir John understands them as spurs to the imagination."⁵⁰ He was profoundly grateful when EMI granted him "the privilege of recording ... this great work which I love so deeply"⁵¹ in December 1964, and it has rightly become one of the classic Elgar recordings. He wrote to a friend : "I wanted to leave it as a kind of testament of my faith."

During his Hallé years he frequently conducted the Cello Concerto. Curiously, he did not admire Casals' performance because he considered the phrasing of the opening movement to be wrong, but admired those of Pierre Fournier, André Navarra and Amaryllis Fleming. But, of course, it is his performances and recording with the young Jacqueline du Pré which are remembered above all others. Barbirolli first became aware of her when he was the chairman of the jury to decide the award of the Suggia Gift on its establishment in 1956. The eleven-year-old du Pré was recognised by Barbirolli as the winner as soon as she started to play, but his notes record that she was "More advanced technically than musically. Feel that she should now really get down to her cello."⁵²

Her 'gift' was £175.00 a year for lessons. Her progress was reviewed every year by the panel. In 1958 Barbirolli noted : "Certainly fulfilling her promise ... Needs developing in terms of real beauty of sound, poetry and imagination and warmth. Vitality, she has plenty." When she last appeared before the panel in 1962, he "... had a little talk with her and was delighted to find how unspoilt she has remained."⁵³

Her concerto debut in March 1962 was with the Elgar concerto, and for her first concert with Barbirolli - at the Royal Festival Hall on 7 April 1965 - she naturally played this work where it was noted that it was "an extraordinary thing that so young a player should have identified herself so completely ... with this nostalgic, autumnal work of an ageing composer."⁵⁴ It now seems ineluctable that the former cellist who had played in the first performance and was steeped in the Elgar tradition should record du Pré's stunning interpretation.

Clive Smart, then the Hallé's General Manager, recalled that "Jackie had a wonderful rapport with JB, who understood everything she wanted to achieve ... He had a telepathic sympathy for Jackie and, being a flexible accompanist, was able to bend with the music. This was important in the Elgar concerto, where Jackie was a law unto herself ... JB was immersed in Elgar's musical world, and had very personal feelings for the Cello Concerto. Overall in Elgar his tempi were very fluid, but always spot on, however much rubato he used."⁵⁵ Smart was disappointed that the Hallé could not make the recording with du Pré. This was due to economic reasons as apparently EMI did not approve of the halls in Manchester, and it was cheaper to book the LSO and record the work in London rather than to pay the Hallé's travelling and other expenses.⁵⁶

⁴⁵ Reid, *op cit.*, p 409

⁴⁶ Barbirolli, *A Personal Note*.

⁴⁷ Kennedy, *Barbirolli*, p 234

⁴⁸ Barbirolli, *A Personal Note*.

Lady Barbirolli considered that JB “did have a very great influence on Jackie’s understanding of the Elgar, although perhaps in general terms rather than specific. He helped her to develop a sort of musical wisdom and tried to give her a little more tranquillity ... they seemed to agree on tempi and the general feeling about the work. Sometimes he would also make specific suggestions, which she always tried to incorporate. He was rather touched that she took his advice so willingly ... she had the most wonderful technical equipment, she could act on anything. After they had recorded the Elgar, I remember him saying that she was destined to be very great, he felt that she had the mark of genius.”⁵⁷

Unhappily he gave fewer performances of the Violin Concerto since he considered modern soloists could not perform it as Kreisler, Sammons or Heifetz had done. He recorded the Beethoven and Brahms Concertos with Fritz Kreisler but not the Elgar Concerto.

His reverence for *Falstaff* stemmed from the 1920s. It is well known that on his meeting with its dedicatee, Landon Ronald, he exclaimed how wonderful he considered it to be, while Ronald confessed in reply that he “never could make head or tail of the piece.”⁵⁸ Barbirolli included it in the 1945/46 Hallé season; and when he played it on two consecutive evenings in November 1954 he prefaced it with a talk which included over forty orchestral musical illustrations to help the audience understand the plot and structure of this complex masterpiece. That he could make head and tail of it is evident by his magnificent 1964 recording, which reveals the programmatic design and brilliance of the score like no other. Arthur Butterworth recalled that there was one particular place in the score that “JB did ... with such incredible elan and sheer thrilling electrifying panache ... [namely] at the fifth and sixth bars after fig 118 ... the Timpani, Side Drum and Cymbals. Whenever we played this passage his arms would wave towards the percussion-players like some super circus ring-master wielding his whip - he would smile broadly with that wry contorted grin, and everyone would smile inwardly as they played, with sideward glances to the poker-faced percussionists as they thrashed away at their battery ... It had to be seen as well as heard ... in other conductors’ hands the passage is not particularly remarkable; we shall never experience this kind of thrill ever again.”⁵⁹

He also lavished much care on the shorter works. As a string player he understood the masterly writing in the Introduction and Allegro, recording it no less than six times. His recorded performances of the *Cockaigne* Overture show how he revelled in the rumbustious passages yet perceiving poetry in its tranquil moments. He played the Overture *Froissart* - “lovely piece, almost first manifestation of the great Elgar” - *Elegy*, *Sospiri* and the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches. When in November 1951 the new Free Trade Hall was opened, JB concluded the concert marking the event with Kathleen Ferrier performing ‘Land of Hope and Glory.’ The *Guardian* reviewer wrote : “It was fine and it was right, but lovers of this tune will fear that never again can they hope to hear it in such glory.”⁶⁰ Barbirolli and much of the audience were moved to tears.

With Barbirolli in command, the Hallé orchestra took part in every major musical festival in the country from 1947 until the late 1950s and, at such events, JB very often performed Elgar’s works. One festival in particular played a vital part in the Hallé’s year, at Cheltenham where the orchestra was for long the

⁴⁹ This curious dogmatic statement does not mean that every member of a choir which sang the work under Barbirolli could only perform it well if they were Catholic. It was made having regard to the particular faith of Our Lady’s Choir in a predominantly Catholic country.

⁵⁰ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 290

backbone of the festival. Here Barbirolli would conduct works by the great Romantic composers: Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Vaughan Williams and Elgar.

As the Elgar centenary fell in June 1957 and the Hallé centenary in January 1958, Barbirolli was able to conduct and record much Elgar at that time. He opened the 1957 Edinburgh Festival with an all-Elgar concert and during the ovation lifted up the score of the First Symphony to kiss it. In Manchester he conducted the Introduction and Allegro, Cello Concerto and Second Symphony on 1 May. *The Dream* was given on the actual anniversary, 2 June (and then repeated in London). He was the cellist in the String Quartet and Piano Quintet on 7 May. At Cheltenham he gave a performance of the E flat Symphony.

To end the Hallé centenary concert on 30 January 1958 he conducted the A flat Symphony which had received its premiPre at a Hallé concert under Richter in December 1908. Colin Mason considered the performance was "not four movements but a single symphonic poem, haunted all through by the tempo and mood of the opening march theme. It may be doubted whether Richter himself did better than this."⁶¹ The choice of this work for the centenary concert symbolised the special link between Edward Elgar, the Hallé and John Barbirolli.

But it was not only at home that JB kept his vow to further the Elgarian cause. With the backing of the British Council, he took the Hallé on tour to Austria in May-June 1948 instead of the planned visit to the Prague Spring Festival - made impossible after the Communist takeover - and each of the five concerts ended with a performance of the *Enigma Variations*: the tour earned the name 'Operation Enigma' with the British Council organisers. The Viennese critics praised the two concerts given in Vienna. He conducted the work again when the orchestra visited Rhodesia in 1953 and, most importantly of all, when he returned to his New York orchestra after an absence of fifteen years, in the winter of 1958/59. His first concert on 1 January 1959, included the Introduction and Allegro - a critic noted "a golden lustre absent from the Philharmonic's string section for fully fifteen years" - and he subsequently played the Second Symphony. At the end of the month, he gave four consecutive performances of *The Dream*. JB was delighted: "For each performance beloved Carnegie Hall, which holds three thousand, was absolutely full. It's a great tribute to the New York audience - and it was a great thing for me - that they should come to *The Dream* like that: twelve thousand of them in four days. You see, once people hear this music they cannot withstand the fascination and beauty of it."⁶² The American critics, on the other hand, were as ever a little cool over *Gerontius*.

In 1960, on a visit to St Louis, Barbirolli discovered that the principal cellist, Leslie Parnas, was keen to learn the Elgar concerto, which was then hardly known in America. The score was found, and after JB had taken him through it he wrote that Parnas "played it, including all the difficult passages, better than

⁶¹ Barbirolli, *A Personal Note*.

⁶² Atkins, Harold and Cotes, Peter: *The Barbirollis - A Musical Marriage* (Robson Books, 1983) p 130

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Martin Cooper in *The Daily Telegraph*, quoted in Kennedy, *Hallé*, p 103

⁶⁵ Wilson, Elizabeth: *Jacqueline du Pré* (Faber & Faber, 1998) p 172

⁶⁶ *op.cit.*, p 173

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Kennedy, *Barbirolli*, p 82

⁶⁹ Butterworth, *op cit.*, p 9



Barbirolli with the young Jacqueline du Pré

many I have heard who have studied it for years.”⁶³ In future years Barbirolli frequently returned to America not only to conduct the Houston Orchestra of which he became principal conductor in 1961, but also other orchestras where he continued to programme Elgar.⁶⁴

When in the 1960s Barbirolli began to make regular visits to Germany to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic, he again travelled as a missionary for Elgar. He had first conducted the orchestra at the Edinburgh Festival in 1949 when they performed the *Variations*. He gave two performances of the Cello Concerto in June 1965, after coaching the principal cellist, Ottomar Berwitzky, and gave the *Variations* in October 1967. Plans to perform *Gerontius* in Berlin never came to fruition, however.

During June 1963 he toured Scandinavia with the Hallé, principally to play Sibelius and Nielsen, but he also included some Elgar. A tour with the BBC Symphony Orchestra with Boulez in January 1967 took him to Prague and Moscow where he conducted du Pré in the Cello Concerto and he gave the Second Symphony at the final Leningrad concert. This work was also programmed several times during a Latin American tour in June 1968 where it was not known but, as Barbirolli exclaimed, “How they took to it! They know it is not only English music but great music.”⁶⁵ As an encore he sometimes played the first *Pomp and Circumstance* March which was described as “electrifying and deeply-felt ...”

⁶⁰ Norman Shrapnel in *The Manchester Guardian*, quoted in Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 223

⁶¹ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 238

In December 1969, his 70th birthday concert in Manchester included the Introduction and Allegro. The season also included a performance of the Concert Overture *In The South*, an Anglo-Italian work absolutely made for this Anglo-Italian conductor. Barbirolli had been studying it since 1966 at the prompting of his friend Michael Kennedy who "was rewarded with a performance of a sumptuousness such as [he] never experienced from anyone else, including Silvestri."⁶⁶ Gerald Larner considered the Manchester performance on 30 April 1970 a great one and that JB "phrased the melodies with his very happy instinct for the Elgar line and the Elgar sound."⁶⁷ When the Overture was repeated in London in May, the BBC recorded it.

On 23 July he conducted RVW's *Tallis Fantasia* and Elgar's First Symphony in the grand setting of Ely Cathedral. By now, Barbirolli was a very ill man and thought that "every performance might be his last."⁶⁸ The next day he moved on to the Kings Lynn Festival - a favourite of his - and did indeed conduct his last Elgar concert, which was also recorded by the BBC⁶⁹ : five days later he was dead.

At his funeral, three of his recordings were played including 'Nimrod'. In Manchester on 27 September Maurice Handford conducted a moving memorial performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* with the Hallé. When Janet Baker came to the words 'Farewell, but not for ever, brother dear', her voice broke and tears streamed down her face while she whispered the last words.

Neville Cardus once wrote that "Sir John and the Hallé serve Elgar as once on a time the Vienna Philharmonic and Bruno Walter served Bruckner." This phrase is particularly apposite as Barbirolli found in Bruckner "... a great affinity to Elgar. Not in actual music, of course, but in loftiness of ideals and purpose, richness of melodic line and harmony, and even an affinity of defects. The over development sometimes to the point of padding, the sequences etc, but all very lovable, and to me easily tolerated and forgiven in the greatness of it all."⁷⁰

Like all great conductors Barbirolli achieved greatness through hard work and hours of study. Wolfgang Stresemann, the Intendant of the Berlin Philharmonic, noted : "His was a universal musicianship ... On the podium he was laden with temperament, yet extremely sensitive and filled with a religious fervour. He penetrated to the very heart of the score, its inner message, but at the same time he understood and made clear the formal structure of a work which his alert mind and keen intelligence so quickly grasped. Above all, his musicianship was marked by an all-embracing humanity; it permeated each performance and revealed itself to those around him in an almost overwhelming fashion."⁷¹

A member of the audience from his early Manchester days could not recall "a 'dull' performance when JB was on the rostrum, for he had the marvellous ability of making what was happening in the concert hall seem at that moment to be the most vital thing in the world. His music-making was so 'alive'."⁷²

All this was distilled into his Elgar performances. For Arthur Butterworth Barbirolli was unique "in divining Elgar's passionate, quintessentially English style. Under Sir John's expressive hands the music of Elgar took shape and lived with uncanny sense of being absolutely right; those heartfelt, imperceptible

⁶² Reid, *op cit.*, p 363

⁶³ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 268

⁶⁴ Ray Fliegel, the leader of the Houston Symphony Orchestra recalled that he felt the *Enigma Variations* must have been written for Barbirolli because of his feeling for the work. Interview with Gary Werdesheim, *Barbirolli Society Journal*, November 1998, p 14

⁶⁵ Reid, *op cit.*, p 402

nuances, sighs, hushed and breathless quietnesses, or exultant towering climaxes were indeed Elgar's living spirit re-incarnate ..."⁷³

Why was Barbirolli so effective in conducting Elgar's music? First, as a cellist the string sound of an orchestra was of supreme importance to him. Daniel Barenboim wrote that "he had a great knowledge and sense of colour in the strings, often asking string players to play passages in different positions and on unexpected strings which brought forth great feeling and colour from the instruments. This produced a distinctive sound - a real Barbirolli sound - and there is no doubt that that existed. He got a very similar sound from whatever orchestra he conducted."⁷⁴ The strings are the foundation of Elgar's orchestration and thus the production of a unique string sound showed Elgar's orchestral writing to its best advantage.

Barbirolli paid much attention to phrasing and tempo rubato. He understood the fluid, 'elastic' nature of Elgar's nervous, ever-changing music.

On a more subjective level, his temperament was attuned to this music. It has been said that he had Gallic sensitivity, Italian passion and English romanticism. As has been seen he was unreserved in his feelings for music. Michael Kennedy has written of an experience after JB had conducted the First Symphony in Manchester: "Suddenly, he gripped Evelyn's forearm with one hand, and mine with the other, tears filled his eyes, and he said with frightening intensity: 'God, I love that music.' His body was shaking as though swept by forces he could not control."⁷⁵ Elgar had something of a similar temperament. He was without English reserve. When listening to the 'March to the Scaffold' in Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, Compton Mackenzie noted "he was like a man in a strong gale of wind."⁷⁶ The reverse side of such a reaction resulted in a depressive state. Barbirolli, similarly affected by depression, strove to overcome it through work.

Barbirolli also understood and loved the era in which much of Elgar's greatest music was written. It is clear from the above, that his affection for the Second Symphony, for example, stemmed from his childhood memories. A composer, being a creative artist, does have his individual vision and techniques and - while this should not be overstressed - he also has a special relation to the age in which he lives. Barbirolli sensed this and while it would not be correct simply to tie Elgar's music to a particular time, some of Barbirolli's feeling for the music may emanate from its historical context.

Elgar's music was a necessary part of Barbirolli's life. If he spoke to people about Elgar he remembered them. "Any friend of Elgar's is a friend of mine" was a favourite expression. He was one of the greatest second-generation interpreters of his music, and he did all he could to adhere to the vow he had made years earlier in Scotland to further Elgar's cause. Elgar needed such a champion and Barbirolli fulfilled the role to perfection. Barenboim and Mehta, for example, came to Elgar because of him. Toward the end of his life he could rightly proclaim and proudly boast "that I have brought more and more people to a realisation of his stature."⁷⁷

⁶⁶ Kennedy, Michael: 'Some Elgar Interpreters' in *Elgar Studies* ed. Raymond Monk (Scolar Press, 1990) p 233

⁶⁷ Kennedy, *Barbirolli*, p 319

⁶⁸ *op cit.*, p 325

⁶⁹ The recording of *Sea Pictures* and the First Symphony were issued, briefly, by Intaglio in 1991 (INCD 701-1)

⁷⁰ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 216

⁷¹ *Sir John Barbirolli : 80th Anniversary Memoir*, p 31

⁷² Martin, M : 'Voyage of Discovery' in *80th Anniversary Memoir*, p 26

⁷³ Butterworth, *Memoir*, p 8

⁷⁴ Barenboim, Daniel : 'Barbirolli's Magic', reproduced in *The Barbirolli Society Journal*, October 1997, no 50, p 4

⁷⁵ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 232

⁷⁶ Mackenzie, Compton : 'Sir Edward Elgar', in *An Elgar Companion*, ed. Christopher Redwood (Sequoia Publishing, 1982) p 160

⁷⁷ Kennedy, *op cit.*, p 235

ELGAR AND CAMBRIDGE

Percy M Young

[Dr Young's writings on Elgar go back more than sixty years. Apart from a standard biography of Elgar, and another of Alice, there are two volumes of letters, an edition of the Birmingham lectures and, most recently, a book on *The Dream of Gerontius*. The following essay first appeared in the *Programme Book of the 1994 Cambridge Elgar Festival*, and is reproduced here by kind permission of Dr Young.]

In the closing years of the last century the road to eminence for an English composer was marked by performances of choral works at the major provincial Festivals. According to A C Mackenzie, it was Elgar's *King Olaf*, first performed by the North Staffordshire Choral Society in 1896, which "brought him out of provincial obscurity into sudden prominence... It was Stanford who enthusiastically drew my attention to the almost unknown newcomer's splendid gifts".¹

During the next three years the paths of Elgar and Stanford from time to time crossed, and a friendly relationship developed. In May 1898 a Worcestershire Philharmonic Society was formed, of which Elgar was conductor, and Stanford an honorary member. Later in that year the performance of *Caractacus* at the Leeds Festival firmly established Elgar as a composer of stature. The first performance of the *Enigma Variations* in 1899 confirmed the favourable opinions generally expressed after Leeds. It should not have come as a surprise that, in 1900, Stanford, as Professor of Music at Cambridge, promoted Elgar's name, together with that of F H Cowen, for an honorary Mus.D. Other than Stanford, the members of the Music Degree Committee at that time were Sedley Taylor and Austin Leigh (Elgar subsequently maintained his acquaintance with both), Alan Gray, Charles Wood, and A H Mann.

It was two weeks after the first performance of *Gerontius* when Elgar received word of the proposed honorary degree. In the highly emotional state that had lasted since the first, troubled, performance of *Gerontius* in Birmingham, he was inclined to refuse the honour. It took the persuasion of his wife and Rosa Burley - a family friend - to convince him that he should change his mind. So the Elgars duly attended at Senate House on St Cecilia's Day 1900, where J E Sandys, Public Orator, elegantly took the recent first performance of *Gerontius* into his presentation. Turning from Latin, he concluded in Greek, with a fitting phrase from the *Odyssey* where the minstrel pleads to Odysseus for his life: 'Self-taught am I, and the god has planted in my heart all manner of lays, and worthy am I to sing to thee as to a god'.²

Why the friendship between Elgar and Stanford ended is not known, for none of those who were close to both men were ever able to give good reason. In her diary for 27 December 1904 Alice Elgar noted that Edward had received "an odious letter from Stanford", after which there was virtually no communication between the two men.

The credit for bringing the music of Elgar to Cambridge belongs principally to A H Mann, who, inspired by a performance of *The Apostles* at the Norwich Festival of 1905, arranged for a performance by his Festival Chorus and the London Symphony Orchestra to take place in King's College Chapel on 14 June 1906. Writing to Elgar, Mann looked forward to a "glorious representation of the work", which was to be "part of a Service which is drawn up for the occasion: I suppose rather like the Three Choirs Festivals".³

¹ Mackenzie, A C: *A Musician's Narrative* (London, 1927) p 205

² *The Odyssey*, XXII, 343-53

There were those present at this performance who were greatly moved. The Secretary of the Festival Choir, H A Chapman, immediately wrote to Elgar on behalf of the choristers,

to express to you the unbounded pleasure it has given to us all to participate in rendering this most lovely work and under such good conditions ... We have retired to bed with it on our lips, we have dreamed of it, & woke in the morning, singing [two bars of 'The Dawn' quoted]. We have helped in a Service that will never be forgotten either by the singers or hearers. We wept during the Service, we weep now it's over.⁴

On 24 June, A C Benson, of Magdalene (author of the words attached to the first *Pomp and Circumstance* March) wrote a long, emotionally-charged, letter :

It was a very fine performance, a thoroughly religious one - a service more than a performance. Mann conducted with great emotion. Upon me it produced an extraordinary effect - the beauty of certain movements is incredible - out of the reach of art. I can't conceive the process by which you dreamed of such sounds, such textures. Even where I did not understand it - and I felt I must hear it a dozen times - I felt the movement of the great overshadowing figure half thought, half emotion, moving in the background... The finale affected me so much that it brings peace to think of it! You are a great magician, like Merlin, like Virgil, & I do envy you the source of joy. Of course I know that the conception and creation of a beautiful thing is not without sorrow and pain - & I don't know if you have the joy of it at all...⁵

On 11 June 1907 Mann conducted a performance of *The Kingdom* in King's College Chapel. Although his friends came to Cambridge for the occasion - among them Julia Worthington, Sidney Colvin, and Lady Maud Warrender - Elgar was in a tense state. He told Benson that he was finding it difficult to work, that "it gave him no sort of pleasure to hear *The Kingdom*, because it was so far behind what he had dreamed of..." He had asked to be seated near the door of the chapel so that "he might rush out if overcome".⁶ Alice noted that they had lunched at Trinity, and - in respect of the performance - added "Tempi not quite E's". Two years later, on 15 June, a performance of *Gerontius* took place in King's. Elgar, being out of the country at the time, did not hear it. The *Musical Times* described it as "a very devotional and sympathetic rendering of Elgar's work". Mann was soon ready with further ideas which, on 11 August, he put into a long letter to Elgar. He was interested in arranging a concert in the 'Town Hall', which would include Stanford's *Ode to Wellington* and Elgar's Symphony. If Elgar could conduct his own work, Mann said, Cambridge music-lovers "would give you a lovely welcome". After repeating an invitation to Elgar to be guest speaker at a forthcoming Conference of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, Mann came to the matter which had for some time occupied his thoughts : "the bringing out of your Part III to *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*".

My question is this - Are you proposing to wait until the 1912 Birmingham Festival before you bring that part out? My asking this, is not idle curiosity. I want to have a three days Festival in our College Chapel on paper, to have those works performed (and none others) on three consecutive afternoons and I want to prepare for this some time before it comes on...

³ Hereford and Worcester Record Office 705:445:3747

⁴ HWRO 705:445:3744

⁵ HWRO 705:445:3743

⁶ Moore, Jerrold Northrop: *Edward Elgar - A Creative Life* (Oxford, 1984) p 513

⁷ HWRO 705:445:3063

If the third part of the once-projected trilogy were not to come until 1912, Mann sadly concluded, "it would not be possible for me ever to be able to carry out my design".⁷

In 1912 Elgar was in Cambridge, to conduct one of a series of concerts given throughout the country by the London Symphony Orchestra to which he was committed. He "had to conduct Stanford's [Third] Symphony. Made the orchestra play it splendidly".⁸

On the outbreak of war in 1914 Elgar, seized with patriotism, was impelled to become a special constable. Before war was even declared, however, he was most concerned to find a text to be the foundation of an appropriately patriotic rallying song. In 1885 Elgar had set a poem 'Through the long days' by the American poet (and statesman) John Hay. Looking again into Hay's collection, *New and Old*, he found inspiration in the terrifying outburst of 'God's Vengeance', about which, on 24 August, he wrote to Benson. With some emendation of the text of 'Land of Hope and Glory', he suggested,

The refrain might be something like this (adopting fragments of your new stanzas)
Land of Hope and Glory...
Leap thou now to battle, bid
thy foes increase
Stand for faith and honour - smite
for truth and peace.

Benson replied by return of post :

I'm not strong on the vengeance line, & indeed I don't see what there is to revenge as yet - We have hemmed in Germany tight all round for two years, in the good unsympathetic way in which we Anglo-Saxons do treat the world, & the cork has flown out! I haven't the faintest doubt that the patriots in Germany are saying, 'How long, O God, how long!' with precisely the same fervour and spontaneity. What I do feel with all my heart [is] that bullying must be stopped - but bullying mustn't be met by bullying.

Elgar replied apologetically, but reminding Benson of Hay's last verse :

Shame! to stand paltering thus,
Tricked by the balancing odds;
Strike! God is waiting for us!
Strike! for the vengeance is God's.⁹

After the first phase of the war, the early loss of many lives, and realisation that there would be no quick end, there was a wide response to Laurence Binyon's 'For the Fallen', published in *The Times* of 21 September. Before the end of the year Binyon issued a small anthology, *The Winnowing Fan*, in which 'For the Fallen' and other poems suitable to the general mood appeared. At this time C B Rootham, Organist of St John's since 1901, University Lecturer, Fellow of St John's, and conductor of the Cambridge University Musical Society, was recognised also as a sensitive composer. He set words to music with consistent percipience. It was his intention in 1915 to set Binyon's 'For the Fallen' as a choral work that occasioned a dispute of which the echoes have hardly yet ceased. Unknown to Rootham, who had come to an arrangement with Novello to publish his work, Elgar at the same time, ignorant as yet of Rootham's interest, was beginning to work on the same text. On 3 March 1915 Binyon wrote to Elgar :

⁸ Lady Elgar, diary entry

⁹ HWRO 705:445:3333, 3334, 3336

Rootham writes to me that Novello will not now publish his score. He writes quite nicely but is aggrieved with Novello, who had promised to published his work if they could make a satisfactory arrangement about the words. I feel for his disappointment & still cannot see why Novello shd not publish his MS. It is, after all, only one poem that he has set, & I imagine it is intended for provincial small societies to perform, therefore not competing with your work.¹⁰

Since Rootham saw no reason for him to step aside, and since Novello were nervous about undertaking publication of two works with the same text, Elgar magnanimously offered to withdraw in Rootham's favour. Rootham therefore wrote an appropriate thank-you letter to Elgar.¹¹

At this turn of events Elgar's friends were not pleased, and under pressure he went on with his sketches. In the meantime, as the result of the intervention of R A Streatfeild, Novello decided that Rootham's and Elgar's works would both be published. This was not the end of the matter. On 15 March 1916, having read an announcement in *The Times* of the forthcoming publication of his own work and also of a forthcoming setting of the words by Elgar, Rootham, after reference to Elgar's kindness in at first withdrawing in his favour,¹² wrote bitterly about the appearance of Elgar's work soon after his own :

You must have realised then, as now, that the weight of your name as a composer against mine would spoil my chances, not in the matter of publication only. So that your generous action (which I made as public as I could) is completely negated by what you have since done. I fail to reconcile your first letter to me with the action which (without giving me a hint of what you have done) you have since taken.¹³

Perhaps Rootham never got over this misfortune; but he never referred to it.

On 26 April 1919 Elgar's friend and patron, Frank Schuster, invited a distinguished audience to his London home to hear a recital of Elgar's new chamber music : the Quartet, the 'Romance' of the Violin Sonata, and the Quintet. Among the guests was Edward Dent - at this time living in London rather than Cambridge. Concerning his new music he wrote to Elgar as follows :

10 New Quebec Street
Marble Arch
W1
30 April 1919

Dear Sir Edward

I hope I may write a line to say how deeply I was impressed with your Quartet & Quintet on Saturday afternoon. They are both intensely characteristic of yourself, especially in the slow movements, which one gets hold of easiest, at a first hearing. I rejoice that you have taken to chamber music, for I think that in almost all cases the best composers of the past have been at their best in chamber music. Perhaps this is merely an individual preference of mine : it might have been a difficult argument to sustain, if I was closely questioned. But to take two quite extreme cases : I feel Wagner is not complete without the five songs, nor Verdi without the quartet.

I hope you will go on writing in this branch of music.

Yrs sincerely,

Edward Dent¹⁴

¹⁰ HWRO 705:445:6351

¹¹ HWRO 705:445:6355

¹² HWRO 705:445:6353

¹³ HWRO 705:4445:6352

On 2 December 1927 the *Cambridge Review* reported the CUMS concert of the previous week. This was the occasion of the first performance in England of Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus*. Described as "the best concert that has been given in Cambridge for some years" the programme opened with Elgar's *Cockaigne*: "With its sweeping phrases and subtle rhythms it is one of the composer's best works... It is also a good conductor's piece, and Dr Rootham took his chances, while the Orchestra played excellently".

On account of his article in Adler's *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* of 1924, with which English readers caught up seven years later, Dent won a permanent place in an Elgarian demonology. That Dent ever considered repentance is unlikely.

In the 1930s the musical voice of Cambridge was Vaughan Williams, so often the companion of Elgar at the Three Choirs Festivals, and a frequent visitor to Cambridge as examiner and conductor. On 19 February 1934, four days before Elgar's death, he wrote :

The White Gates
Westcott Road
Dorking
Feb 19

Dear Elgar :

I want to tell you how my choirs of the Dorking Festival are loving performing 'Gerontius' - greatly daring I suggested it for this years [sic] festival - I had been longing to do it for years, but had thought it too dangerous an experiment as I could not bear to do it badly.

Whether we shall do it well I do not know. But if enthusiasm and hard work can achieve anything be sure that it will not lack these. And it will be one of the great moments of my life when I stand with trembling baton to conduct it. We have good soloists - Astra Desmond, Steuart Wilson and Harold Williams - and we shall think of you - please give us your blessing.

Of course this wants no answer.

Yrs affectionately
R. Vaughan Williams¹⁵

¹⁴ Elgar Birthplace, MS 9083

¹⁵ Broadheath, Elgar Birthplace, MS 9413

Right : Dr A H ('Daddy') Mann, Organist of King's College Cambridge from 1876 until 1929;

Below : the King's College Choir of 1907



A DEVIL OF A FUGUE

Berlioz, Elgar, and *Introduction and Allegro*

Julian Rushton

[Julian Rushton is West Riding Professor of Music in the University of Leeds. He is a leading authority on the music of Berlioz. Last year he published a book on the Enigma Variations in the series of Cambridge Music handbooks. This article is a revised version of a paper read at the Elgar Forum in the Department of Music, University of Reading, on 23 October 1999.]

Gerontius might be summed up as 'the other oratorios abide our question: thou art free'.¹ Nevertheless, the Demons' chorus is often singled out as a weakness; Michael Kennedy points out that it has been the butt of critics - ever since Ernest Newman, never one to mince his words, referred in 1905 to 'pantomime demons'.² Diana McVeagh compares the demons unfavourably with the angelicals;³ Jerrold Northrop Moore calls this 'the one section of *Gerontius* that was not to wear well. The passage of time has blunted its daring'.⁴ But before Newman pronounced, Arthur Johnstone, music critic of the *Manchester Guardian* from 1896 until his premature death in 1904, took a different view. He suggested that only Bach could achieve the sublime exaltation required for the angelicals, and that only in the *Sanctus* of the B minor Mass. But Johnstone admired the demons :

The extraordinary demon music would in itself offer material for an essay. Here we can only touch on a few obvious features - the upward rushing semiquaver figure in chromatic fourths, which is grotesque and rat-like; the three-part figure for strings in quavers which is first heard with the words "Tainting the hallowed air," [actually at '...gods! By a new birth And an extra grace'] but belongs more particularly to "in a deep hideous purring have their life"; the terrific fugato "dispossessed, thrust aside, chuck'd down" [*sic: recte* 'aside thrust']; the sinister and ominous four-note theme "To every slave and pious cheat" [transformed from an earlier passage, 'Low born clods of brute earth']; the *motif* of demonic pride, p. 83 [*Presto* in 3/4]; and the sarcastic prolongation of the last word in "He'll slave for hire." The long chorus formed of these elements is a welter of infernal but most eloquent sound ...⁵

In this welter of ideas, 'the terrific fugato' lasts barely twenty bars. A few years later, Elgar composed another fugue, ostensibly in the same key, G minor, within his *Introduction and Allegro* for strings. In a letter to Jaeger, he called it 'a devil of a fugue', stating that it took the place of a working-out or development section; this fugue keeps going for more than fifty bars.

¹ See Matthew Arnold's sonnet *Shakespeare*.

² Michael Kennedy : *Portrait of Elgar* (third edition, Oxford University Press, 1987), 137.

³ Diana McVeagh: *Edward Elgar: his Life and Music* (London: Dent, 1955), 134.

⁴ Jerrold Northrop Moore : *Edward Elgar, a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 309.

⁵ Arthur Johnstone : *Musical Criticisms* (Manchester, At the University Press, 1905), 103-4, à propos the first Hallé performance; 13 March 1903.

⁶ Johnstone, *op cit.*, à propos the first performance, 3 October 1900.

⁷ See Julian Rushton, Foreword to Berlioz: *La Damnation de Faust*, New Berlioz Edition vol. 8b (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1986), 455.

After the first performance of *Gerontius*, Johnstone had commented :

Here a comparison with Berlioz is simply inevitable - for Edward Elgar's dramatic power admits of comparison with the great masters. His demons are much more terrible than those of Berlioz, who was a materialist in the profound sense - not, that is, in virtue of more or less shifting beliefs, but of unalterable temperament. Infinitely remote from that of Berlioz is the temperament revealed in Edward Elgar's music, which, like parts of the poem, fairly merits the epithet "Dantesque".⁶

Presumably Berlioz was the great master who came to Johnstone's mind because he too juxtaposed choruses of demons and angels in *La Damnation de Faust*, first performed in 1846. Johnstone makes no comparison with Berlioz's angels, perhaps because the two composers' rhetorical objectives are totally different. Berlioz's angels, whose only task is to usher the penitent Gretchen into heaven, are monochromatic; they sing one idea, serenely, in D flat major, with only the gentlest harmonic inflections, and against an unchanging orchestral continuum. The music befits a text almost free of theological complexity. Berlioz's demons sing a nonsense language invented by the composer, who teasingly made believe it was derived from Swedenborg. Their inarticulate utterance leaves it to us to interpret from the music what they are doing and saying; mainly shouting with glee, reeling off the names of senior devils, and prancing about.⁷ But these choruses of demons share a high level of musical instability. Neither Berlioz's nor Elgar's demons manage to keep any idea going for long; but in *Gerontius*, at least, the sum of these ideas makes something musically purposeful, even though, in *Gerontius*, the demons have failed to get their man, whereas Berlioz's are triumphing over the downfall of Faust (when Elgar's devils, immediately after the fugue, sing 'Triumphant still', they are referring to the angelic hosts who have remained on the side of God).

Within his demonic scene, Elgar makes the fugue a highlight. Short as it is, 'Dispossessed, aside-thrust' is one of the most exhilarating moments of the oratorio; Kennedy calls it 'tremendous stuff', and Norman Del Mar calls the subject 'fine and invigorating'.⁸ It is a display of contrapuntal mastery, being in effect two simultaneous fugues, one for orchestra with an instrumentally- conceived (hence unsingable) theme, and one for chorus, formed around the words to produce a marked accent on 'chuck'd'. But strong as is the texture, the tonality is surprisingly slippery. Is the fugue in C minor or in G minor? The instrumental fugue begins in C minor, and has a tonally correct answer in G minor. The vocal fugue begins as a countersubject to the instrumental one, but clearly is itself a fugue in G minor; but the fugal answer is real, but in the subdominant, starting on G. The rare choice of subdominant - compare Bach's famous Toccata and Fugue in D minor - results from the impossibility of presenting a 'correct' tonal answer without seriously distorting the melody. This bifocal tonality seems appropriate, in the circumstances, and it leads to the marked flatward drift of the tonality during the very short fugal section : there is a late entry in E flat minor, and before being suddenly cut off the music seems to be tending down yet another fifth, to A flat minor. Elgar makes use of the ambiguity of the tritone to wrench the tonality to F minor, at which point the strings' fugue subject continues unabated, while the vocal fugue is abandoned (it is quite an achievement to make F minor sound like a sharp key).

The combination of subjects is a model of how Elgar's counterpoint can be at once original, expressive,

⁸ *loc. cit.*; Norman Del Mar : *Conducting Elgar* (Oxford : The Clarendon Press, 1998), 245.

⁹ Hector Berlioz : *Mémoires*, Chapter 13.

¹⁰ Robert Schumann : *Gesammelte Schriften I*, (Leipzig : Georg Wigands Verlag, 1854), 134.

¹¹ Percy M Young : *Elgar O.M. : a Study of a Musician* (London : Collins, 1955) 279.

¹² Young, *Elgar O.M.*, 315-6.

and contrapuntally pure - consisting mainly of thirds and sixths - although it risks using very rapid suspensions within second and third beats (arrows in Ex. 1), at a semiquaver's distance, the second being quitted by leap.

Curiously enough, such purity cannot quite be claimed for the fugue in *Introduction and Allegro* (Ex. 2). On the second beat of bar 3, and the first beat of bar 4 (arrows), there are bare fourths : one has to read the countersubject as polyphonic - the first beat C with B, the second beat D with A - to 'justify' this bar according to traditional contrapuntal principles. Compared with *Gerontius*, there are more dissonant, even if permitted, intervals : the answer in the second 'voice', which is tonally correct, nevertheless enters a tritone away from the first 'voice', and another tritone comes on the fourth beat of this bar. This interval is exactly half an equal-tempered octave, and is thus more perfectly invertible than any other, but it is also 'diabolus in musica'; it is not usual to bring in the answer on a tritone. The second quaver of bar 3 includes another awkward interval, the augmented second. Note also the leaps in subject and answer of a minor seventh, tritone, and diminished seventh; these compare with the two tritones in the second bar of the instrumental subject in *Gerontius*, and bar four of Ex. 1 contains two more (the first in the instruments, not the doubling voice).

Ex.1 : Demons' fugue (*The Dream of Gerontius*)

These comments on the music contain the beginnings of an answer to the questions which inspired this essay : why should demons sing in fugal texture, which in the lexicon of musical topics is particularly associated with the sacred and learned? and why, in *Introduction and Allegro*, a devil of a fugue? If we search for precedents of associating fugue with demons, we shall not find them in Berlioz's *Faust*. Fugue plays a considerable role in Faust's two philosophical meditations, and there is an Amen fugue, sung by drunken students. In his memoirs Berlioz contrasted the attitudes of his two teachers to such fugues :

I once begged Reicha to tell me what he honestly thought of fugues vocalising the words *Amen* or *Kyrie eleison*, which infest the solemn masses and requiems of the greatest masters of every school. 'Oh!' he exclaimed brightly, 'they are barbaric!' 'In that case, sir, why do you write them?' 'Mon Dieu, everybody does it.' Miseria! To Lesueur, also, these monstrous fugues, like the howling of a pack of drunkards, which seem to be nothing less than a blasphemous parody of the sacred text and the sacred style, were worthy of barbarian times; but he at least took care not to write them.⁹

The Amen fugue provides the chorus of drunkards; but when he had to write music for devils, Berlioz did

Ex.2 Introduction and Allegro fugue

not use fugue at all.

There are, however, demonic fugues in earlier music surely known to Elgar. In Haydn's *The Creation* the fallen angels are evoked by a sudden choral fugato, in C minor, within an aria in A major ('Despairing cursing rage attends their rapid fall'). If one ascribes demonic inspiration to enemies of true faith, instances can be multiplied, including the imitative entries of the crowd music in Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, and the scornful 'He trusted in God' from *Messiah*. Although his devils in *Faust* are not fugal, Berlioz composed his Round Dance in the Dream of a Witches' Sabbath, in the *Fantastic Symphony*, as a double fugue. It is a defining moment in the movement, and as Schumann observed, though not Bach, it is clear and regular.¹⁰ A work much influenced by Berlioz (and dedicated to him) is Liszt's *Faust* symphony. In the Mephistopheles movement, one of Faust's themes is presented in a fugal exposition for strings (Ex. 3), with the performance instruction: 'Den Fugensatz in allen Streichinstrumenten sehr scharf markiert und abgestossen': note the nose-thumbing fact of the answer being at the unison with the subject. And in Liszt's B minor piano sonata, a work sometimes associated with Faust, the brittle scherzando is a passage which might represent Mephistopheles, and it is, of course, a fugue. And in both these passages, though not in the Berlioz, we note the same preoccupation with dissonant melodic intervals.

Even if literal devils do not appear, oratorios may represent the enemies of God by a kind of metaphorical devil. In *L'Enfance du Christ*, a work Elgar is known to have liked, Berlioz wrote several fugues, but when Herod and the soothsayers plot the massacre of the innocents, the ensemble is not fugal. It does not appear, therefore, that there is a fixed connection between fugues and demons. Such an association lies beyond the musical topography of Mendelssohn, for instance; the overture to *Elijah* is a dry fugue, depicting drought - absence of grace, rather than devilry - and the priests of Baal rely upon

¹³ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 492.

antiphonal imitation rather than fugue. For Mendelssohn, possibly fugue could not be associated both with Bach and with devilry. Whereas for Berlioz, brought up in a conservatoire directed by Cherubini, who appears as a kind of demon in the early part of the Memoirs, the satirical and demonic use of fugue was a way of avenging himself upon the unmusical rigours of his contrapuntal training. Is there perhaps a touch of this kind of devilry in Elgar's use of fugue for the demons in *Gerontius*? Whether or not he encoded names of hostile people in the demons' chorus, as Percy Young avers,¹¹ he might well have felt, as a musician who had been neither to conservatoire nor to university, that he could get back at the academically snooty (a) by showing that he could write a devil of a fugue with invertible counterpoint, and (b) by putting that fugue in the mouths of howling demons. Young suggests that the *Gerontius* fugue demonstrates 'intellectual power', though whether this is Elgar's or the demons' is not clear. He continues by noting Elgar's 'original and unexpected' attitude to fugue, mentioning that the *Introduction and Allegro* fugue was originally marked *fantastico* and, more pertinently from my point of view, that

Ex.3 Liszt : *Faust Symphony* ('Mephistopheles') fugue is used in *Falstaff* for a section



when he is 'boastful and mendacious', while the mendacious Meercraft in *The Spanish Lady* is also introduced with a fugato.¹² These men are not demons, but they are not behaving angelically either. Young might also have cited the Pentecost scene in *The Kingdom* (Ex. 4).

The disciples speak in tongues; the crowd utter comments which are amazed, but also disparaging. As in *Gerontius*, the orchestra has its own motive, not singable, and brought in fugally. Moore remarks on the kinship of this theme with the *Gerontius* devils.¹³ Where the *Gerontius* semiquavers have syncopations, this has rests, whereas the *Introduction and Allegro* subject has neither; but the *Kingdom* theme moves on in jumpy quavers, very like the string piece. There are no devils here, only fallible mortals, but the fugal topic suggests *doubt* and the problematic nature of the experience; for speaking with tongues could very well be interpreted as a manifestation of diabolical possession. The music for the Pharisees in *The Light of Life*, while not fugal, is based on similarly angular orchestral motives.¹⁴

One thing all these demonic fugues have in common is that they are in a fast tempo, with angular subjects articulated staccato; and the later examples use angular intervals and rhythms. Most are in flat minor keys. Of course not all of them display the full list of possible characterising features of devilry: for instance, Haydn repeats his fugato in A minor, and Berlioz's witches dance is in C major. I am not, however, suggesting that fugue, even fast, minor-key fugue, is intrinsically diabolical. Signification in

¹⁴ I am indebted for this suggestion to a member of the audience at the Reading Elgar Forum.

¹⁵ Relf Clark kindly pointed out at the Reading Elgar Forum that Bach's great G minor fugue also uses angular intervals, in this case

music, as in language, is dependent on context. Even without the title 'Faust symphony', Ex. 3 would convey the message 'parody', because Liszt transforms a theme we have already heard with another musical and rhetorical character. The idea of parody Liszt derived from the *Fantastic Symphony*, of course, but not from the fugue: diabolical parody of a noble theme occurs earlier in the witches' sabbath, when the *idée fixe* is heard as a grotesque jig, played by the E flat clarinet. Even minor-key fugues in fast tempi are not all diabolical: consider the 'Libera me' in Verdi's *Requiem*, which shares a fortissimo punctuation with the Berlioz.

In a vocal work, context is provided by text. We don't need to hear a dignified or beautiful version of the same music in order to receive a negative message, because we know from the Angel (if we could not otherwise work it out) that Elgar's double fugue in *Gerontius* is sung by devils. Nevertheless, if we consider it in the context of other music, a demonic topic may be reasonably inferred. Other possible

Ex.4 The Kingdom: 'The multitude came together, and were all amazed'



models surely known to Elgar for this type of dissonant and involved fugue, involving wide, angular intervals, include Bach's complex G minor Fantasia and Fugue for organ (BWV 542) and Mozart's strenuous C minor fugue for two pianos (K. 426), which he later transcribed for strings with an Adagio introduction.¹⁵ Mozart's knotted counterpoint and almost wilful dissonance have no demonic association as far as I know, but it remains one of his more enigmatic, albeit exhilarating, pieces. This evidence may be enough to suggest that demonic fugues are a convention, if not a clearly distinct musical topic: better, perhaps, a counter-convention. The conventional use of fugue, the learned style, in sacred music affects Berlioz and Liszt as much as it did Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms and Dvořák, to name others whose music Elgar knew and usually liked. Elgar was not one to write too many fugues just because it was expected of him; unlike Beethoven, Dvořák, and later Reger, he did not cap his variations with a fugue. But in *Gerontius*, Part I, the 'Kyrie eleison' and 'Holy Mary, pray for him' are respectively a beautiful evocation of Renaissance imitation, and a proper fugal exposition with tonal answer.

sevenths. Incidentally, this fugue was later used to mock Ebenezer Prout - another academically-minded musician!

¹⁶ When Elgar soon afterwards, in his inaugural lecture at Birmingham, said "To rhapsodise is something Englishmen cannot do", he referred to the rhapsody as a genre; I use 'rhapsody' as a type of freely imaginative fantasy controlled by, for example, variation form or in this case, sonata

Did Elgar tell anyone other than Jaeger that, in *Introduction and Allegro*, he had written 'a devil of a fugue'? If he used the phrase metaphorically, as a kind of oath, the question is otiose. But whatever he intended to say, there seems to be just enough internal, musical evidence to consider this fugue as representative of demonic energy and ingenuity. And this may open possibilities for interpretation of *Introduction and Allegro* as a whole. I read this marvellous piece as at once rhapsodic, and firmly controlled.¹⁶ Rhapsody inheres in the wide variety of themes, and also in the types of theme. The grand opening gesture conveys a challenge somewhat mitigated, within the allegro (Ex. 5 line 1) by its clipped phrasing.¹⁷ The main allegro theme (Ex. 5, line 2) covers two octaves and feels like roaming music - a loose, rhapsodic discourse.

Control of material inheres in the strict relations between the introduction and the allegro, and in the use of sonata form and fugue. Elgar said that his fugue was in lieu of 'working out', and some commentators have suggested that this section bears no thematic relation to the rest, although the end of Ex. 5 line 3 recurs as a counterpoint during the fugue (see the end of Ex. 5 line 6). But the feeling that he did not want a 'working out' of themes, or development, is significant for interpretation of structure and, perhaps, of more covert forms of communication, or meaning. A possible structural interpretation is that the material of the main allegro *requires* no development. Or, to put it another way, it is developed in advance, in the introduction. With both the opening gesture, and what proves to be the main theme of the allegro, initial presentation in the minor leads in chronological sequence to presentation in the allegro in the major.

But in retrospect, surely the major-mode (Allegro) versions are the 'real' or fundamental ones (hence these alone appear in Ex. 5). Thus Elgar's chronological presentation is contrary to a developmental progression which would normally present an idea in the major, then proceed to a minor-mode version.¹⁸ Another developmental aspect is texture; but this is progressive in a more usual way. The stirring opening creates a massive sound, but is largely in unison, whereas when this theme appears in the allegro, it is richly elaborated in texture. A similar textual trajectory affects the third theme (Ex. 5 line 4), which for convenience I will call the 'Welsh tune'. The main Allegro theme (Ex. 5 line 2) is perhaps less developed texturally. It is a mobile kind of musical persona, which in the introduction is clearly groping for a definite shape. In the allegro it acquires a periodic structure, but over its first eight bars it is increasingly uncertain of itself tonally. Significantly, it starts with a musical sing of simplicity, purity, the elemental; the opening is derived from the pentatonic scale. This limited set of pitches does not last long, but the pentatonic set (G A B D E) is presented entire before any other pitches are introduced. And when C and F# complete the diatonic scale, they disappear at the end of the phrase (brackets in Ex. 5 mark the pentatonic sections of the tune). Purity is also a feature of the Welsh tune, through its folk-song and vocal character - something which, again, we could infer without the famous story of its genesis.

The Allegro's near-pentatonic clarity is soon overcast, first by E minor (Ex. 5 line 3), then, using the secondary limb (also line 3), B minor and G minor. A second recovery and fall into textural indeterminacy brings the anxious chatter of the second allegro theme (Ex. 5 line 5), presented, since this is a sonata exposition, in sonata form, in the dominant, D major. Even with the return of the opening gesture, also in D major, there may be a certain desperation, a discomfort in the mixed rhythms, three against four, which prevents the music settling down. If we hear this as a triumph, it is quickly dissipated; and the Welsh tune comes as if from a distance, weak and nostalgic.

form.

¹⁷ Has anyone remarked on the connection between this opening gesture and Variation 13 (***) of the Variations ('Enigma')?

A major source of tension in late 19th and early 20th-century music is what to do about sonata form. It is a way of imposing control upon rhapsody, but because of the elements of symmetry and repetition, it may actually be a straitjacket : there is often too much control. Recognition of this, I think, led Elgar to dispense with working out and use fugue instead. The devil of a fugue avoids the problem of developing themes that don't need it, by using a musical texture which is intrinsically developmental. Fugue resolves the problem, in sonata terms, of excessive rhapsody by its disciplined texture. But note that fugal elements are very much at home in connection with, or even within, fantasias; and thus within a sonata, the normal location for a fugato, which presents material in different keys and with different counterpoints, is the so-called 'free fantasy' section, usually called the development or working-out. But the fugues found there are usually based on material we have already heard (as in the first movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony). Elgar's fugue begins as if a chasm has opened in the musical structure, like a crack in the ground which reveals something previously hidden, and decidedly sinister.

No doubt with some ingenuity one could discover a relation between the subject and earlier themes, but it certainly *sounds* new, at least until we recognise that this sinister element is integral to the trajectory of the work. Recognition comes with a new countersubject, which is the first solo entry in the fugue (Ex. 5 line 6). The soloists also introduce the motive in Ex. 5 line 7, which sounds like a call to order. But the fugue only grows more complicated until eventually its energy is dissipated, over a dominant pedal, to fig 21. At this point, Elgar juxtaposes the fugue theme, in the major, with part of the chattering theme (Ex. 5 line 8). Light dawns in this brief transition between fugue and recapitulation : but juxtaposition does not establish any real connection between these themes. What they clearly have in common, the use of staccato semiquavers, if anything tends to emphasise their different shapes, and they are distinctly separate in register and instrumentation. This is another fissure in the structure, parallel to the one before the fugue, and equally effective, partly because the sun is momentarily obscured by a cloud of minor-mode inflections.

Control is firmly imposed by the sonata recapitulation, and at one level, this suppresses the devils. The recapitulation also transforms the exposition. It passes through all the themes in order, using tonic and subdominant; but the Welsh tune, instead of lapsing into nostalgia, is treated to a full-blooded apotheosis at fig 30. This 'apotheosis technique' is a staple of romanticism, of Berlioz, Chopin and Liszt, and here it works particularly well within such a controlled form. Elgar concludes with a few characteristic gestures, including a final intrusion of B flat and E flat (from the minor mode), which here function not as a threat, but as heightening of cadential excitement.

* * *

¹⁸ There is a Berlioz precedent here, of anticipating a theme whose basic form is major, by playing it in the minor : it is the introduction to *Harold in Italy*.

¹⁹ Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 309.

²⁰ Jacques Barzun, *Berlioz and the Romantic Century* (second edition, New York : Columbia University Press, 1969), vol. 1, 494.

²¹ to Jaeger, 26 January 1905. See Jerrold Northrop Moore : *Elgar and his Publishers. Letters of a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 607-8.

Ex.5 Introduction and Allegro : the themes

1 *ff* *sf* *sf*

2 *pp* *pp*

3 *p* *f* *pp* *f* *pp*

4 *p* dolce

5 *p* simile *cresc. molto* *f*

6 *p* *p* *f*

7 *ff*

8 *pp* *p*

Detailed description: The image shows eight staves of musical notation for a piece titled 'Ex.5 Introduction and Allegro : the themes'. Each staff is numbered 1 through 8. Staff 1 is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It features a melody with dynamic markings *ff*, *sf*, and *sf*. Staff 2 is also in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and common time, featuring a melody with *pp* dynamics and slurs. Staff 3 is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and common time, featuring a melody with dynamics *p*, *f*, *pp*, *f*, and *pp*. Staff 4 is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and common time, featuring a melody with *p* and 'dolce' markings. Staff 5 is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and common time, featuring a melody with *p*, 'simile', 'cresc. molto', and *f* markings. Staff 6 is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and common time, featuring a melody with *p*, *p*, and *f* markings. Staff 7 is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and common time, featuring a melody with *ff* markings. Staff 8 is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and common time, featuring a melody with *pp* and *p* markings.

Interpretation of this music, as often with Elgar, suggests autobiography. Elgar is known to have had his own demons, or daemons, and he also belonged to an interesting clutch of composers whom one might classify as 'gap' composers. Some composers compose pretty well every day : composing is what they do. Obvious examples are Mozart and Schubert, but the phenomenon was normal, at least up to 1830, and continues with Liszt, Brahms, Richard Strauss and Hindemith, all composers for whom putting dots on staves was a normal diurnal activity. For such composers there was always something, and often two or three things, on the go. 'Gap' composers complete a project, then begin another only after a lapse of time : not necessarily a long time, but a significant period in which compositional note-pushing is interrupted, and not always because of external pressures. Berlioz, Wagner, Verdi, and Mahler are 'gap' composers. With Verdi, gaps occur only when he became famous and wealthy enough to retire, which he did repeatedly. Wagner filled gaps by writing prose works; would he had written more music instead. Mahler, Berlioz and Elgar had parallel careers as conductors, but only Mahler, in charge of an opera house, could claim that this was a full-time activity.

Both Berlioz and Elgar, more than once, proposed abandoning composition, yet neither was rich enough to retire. Berlioz had to earn a living by journalism, but he suffered a debilitating illness which he could only shake off when he was composing or conducting. Elgar had his aches and pains, but his longevity suggests a fundamentally healthy man. His gaps were caused more by post-natal depression : a work delivered is a work whose umbilical connection with its creator is severed, and if its public reception was not ecstatic, he grew more depressed before eventually curing himself by writing something else. Elgar, perhaps, was naturally a diurnal composer whose career-structure, or economic situation, prevented him taking full advantage of his facility; so there were gaps, and into these gaps the devils, or the blues, worked their way.

Reading the design of *Introduction and Allegro* along topical lines follows, of course, many interpretations of other works, not least the *Enigma Variations*. At the time he composed *Introduction and Allegro* Elgar's star was shining brightly. *Gerontius* had overcome the disaster of its first performance, confirming the judgement of those, like Arthur Johnstone, who did not need Richard Strauss to tell them it was good. But in admiring the demons, Johnstone was out of line with much subsequent criticism. Moore continues, on the page already quoted in part: 'The passage of time has blunted its daring and left its vulgarity exposed. Yet after all perhaps that was what the subject needed.'¹⁹ If the subject required vulgarity, or whatever shortfall one identifies - perhaps pedantry, in using strict fugal procedures for a bunch of anarchic demons - it may well be because the representational elements of the composition require it. In short, the weakness of the demons' music in *Gerontius* is not weakness after all. Moore's comment parallels Jacques Barzun's comment on Berlioz's Pandemonium : where the devils try 'to romp and be gay ...', producing 'a hymn to odious desolation ... Berlioz shows us that Hell is dullness, stupidity, and weakness of will'.²⁰ Both these critics seem to be suggesting that to write really good music for the foot-soldiers of Hell would be rhetorically, as well as theologically, a mistake. Berlioz wrote better when evoking the fear of damnation than when representing Hell itself - best of all in the *Te Deum* with a highly original fugue on the composite text 'Judex crederis esse venturus, in te Domine speravi, non confundar in aeternum'. Elgar's achievement in *Gerontius* is musically on this elevated level, rather than on the level of Berlioz's Pandemonium, which really is that of Ernest Newman's 'pantomime devils'.

There are thus at least three reasons to take Elgar's comment about 'a devil of a fugue' seriously. One is the topical argument; it is a fugue one can relate to musical signification of devilry. Another is that within the trajectory of the whole work, and on the ostensibly abstract plane, Elgar did compose a working out in *Introduction and Allegro*; but what is worked out is a confrontation with his personal devils,

ending in victory. And finally, Elgar may have felt some unease with the too-swiftly abandoned fugue in *Gerontius* - and for that reason, and for the sake of artistic completion, in the middle of *Introduction and Allegro* he composed 'a devil of a fugue ... said divvel in G minor ... with all sorts of japes and counterpoint'.²¹

MORE ON MOTT...

Charles A Hooley

[The following is a short postlude to Mr Hooley's article on the baritone Charles Mott, which appeared in the last issue. It contains material that was not available to Mr Hooley at the time he wrote his article].

As we know, Elgar enjoyed Mott as Kothner on 16 March 1914 and wrote to Percy Pitt about the experience. The same day he sent a note to Ivor Atkins, co-ordinator of the Three Choirs Festival at Worcester, urging him to have Mott sing in *Gerontius*. He added: "I wish you might [also] hear him as a possible Elijah - I think a little new blood wd do good. He sang some of it to me finely..."¹

Elgar followed up with Atkins on 1 June. "I suppose Kirkby Lunn will do *Gerontius*; you did not tell me. What is Charles Mott doing? I hope you will like him. I heard him do (since Kothner) Gunther, & the Herald in *Lohengrin*, both good".²

In fact Atkins *did* hear Charles Mott and was duly impressed. As a result he engaged him to sing the part of the Priest in *Gerontius* with John Coates and Louise Kirkby Lunn. Nothing came of Elijah. In the end all was for naught. Troops were soon on the march.

On 15 November 1914, the nation was shocked by news that Field Marshal Lord Roberts had died while visiting troops in France. Atkins decided to hold a memorial service at Worcester on the 19th. It took the form of an organ recital with Charles Mott as soloist to sing the 'Proficiscere' from *Gerontius*. On the 21st, Elgar wrote to Atkins: "I am so very sorry I could not get down to Worcester on Thursday. What an excellent choice - *proficiscere*, & Mott, I hope, sang well".³

Writing to Sir Edward on 15 December 1915 about the forthcoming production of *The Starlight Express*, for which he was writing the music, Algernon Blackwood acknowledged Elgar's request that he see Mott in action. "You want me to hear Charles Mott and I long to. I suppose you realise that your music is the most divine, unearthly thing ever written... It makes me happy all day long, and I want to cry and sing. It will go all over the world, I know. I shall simply burst when I hear Mott sing it".⁴

When the eleven-year-old Wulstan Atkins attended a performance of *The Starlight Express* early in 1916, he expected to see Elgar conducting, but in fact the young Julius Harrison appeared on the rostrum. "My disappointment soon disappeared, however, when Elgar's fascinating overture began and when the Organ-Grinder, Charles Mott, appeared on the apron of the stage to sing his first song, 'O children, open your arms to me'. Soon I was completely absorbed..."⁵

* * *

¹ E Wulstan Atkins: *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (David & Charles, 1984) p 256

² *op.cit.*, p 261

³ *op.cit.*, p 267

⁴ Moore, Jerrold Northrop: *Edward Elgar - Letters of a Lifetime* (Clarendon Press, 1990) p 294

⁵ Atkins, *op.cit.*, p 271

⁶ Moore, *op.cit.*, p 313

After his posting to France, and close by the front line, Mott took pencil in hand and wrote to Elgar, just four days before he was wounded. Almost as his letter arrived came news of his wounding and subsequent death.

Saturday 11th. May 1918.

Dear Sir Edward.

This is a short note to let you know that all goes well up to the present. (You probably know by now that I have been 'out here' for about five weeks). I have enjoyed the experience immensely and look forward to heaps of 'fun' (admittedly of a rather grim nature) within the next few hours! I *know* you would feel the same. There is something grand & very fascinating about a battery of big guns & a shell that can make a hole in the ground big enough to put a motor-bus in - what a vast amount of pent up energy.

However, on passing over a shelled area I could not help deploring the waste of power, which, if directed in another channel might preserve life instead of shatter it. There is something still very much wrong with a world that still sanctions war & something wrong with our *practise* of the various forms of religion too. One can only hope & pray that this war may wake the whole world up with a great start and preachers & teachers rise up to the *priceless* occasion which this poor ravished bleeding world offers. It is groaning for the truth - so simple too.

If I were a preacher I would make 'Love, Unselfishness and Work' the burden of every text and the heads of every Government should do the same.

O, what a golden opportunity awaits *everyone* who cares to think at all. You, my dear Sir Edward realised this years before the war commenced. What consolation to recall your glorious Gerontius & that beloved work 'To the Fallen'. I shall be thinking a great deal of both works & have been of late.

There is one thing that 'puts the wind up me' very badly & that is of my being wiped out & thus miss the dear harmonies of your wonderful works [*Mott here wrote two themes, one from the Violin Concerto, and one from the Starlight Express*].

But I have a supreme confidence in my destiny & feel that I have some useful work to do in the world before I am called away.

Meanwhile the roar of the guns thrills me somehow, & I only dread my comrades coming to grief & seeing them wounded. I pray that they may all get through safely.

I will write you again with more details, if possible.

Hoping that you & Lady Elgar & Miss Elgar are all flourishing & with my heartiest good wishes & best regards

Believe me

Yours sincerely

Chas. Mott⁶

BOOK REVIEW

In our Dreaming and Singing: the story of the Three Choirs Festival Chorus, compiled by Barbara Young. Logaston Press, 2000. 112 pp. £6-95, paperback.

As Sir David Willcocks points out in his foreword to this well-produced little book, previous accounts of the history of the Three Choirs have focused - understandably - on the major players. Then three or four years back Mary Parsons brought out *A Prevailing Passion*, an account of the Worcester Festival Choral Society (which of course has always performed at other times than just the Three Choirs).

Now comes this offering from Barbara Young, for many years a member of the Hereford contingent of the Three Choirs Chorus, who obviously is able to speak from first hand of the joys - and headaches, such as short rehearsal time! - of singing at the Festival. These experiences (chapters 1 and 14) are the most interesting part of the book, plus chapter 12 - an account of her great aunt's connection with the Festival - and a final chapter which consists of a correspondence between a young man who has just joined the chorus and his grandmother who speaks from years of experience. (Whether Mrs Young is the grandmother and the correspondence genuine is not made clear.) The rest of the book is interesting but rather heavy-going in places. There is much information on the ladies who were "imported" from the north during the 18th and most of the 19th centuries. It is interesting to note that Gloucester in 1892 was the first Festival to dispense with northern singers. "For the first time the resources of the counties of Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester were relied upon, and the help.. from [elsewhere]... dispensed with". Yet as the author points out, that year Bristol had sent 100 singers as members of the Gloucester Choral Society! The author tends to draw a veil over the standard of the singing by local performers, but her assertion that "the local choirs were, by the end of the century, quite as competent in producing the notes [as singers from the north]" seems to run counter to the experience of Elgar himself (who called the chorus "a pizenous crew" in 1899) and later on A T Shaw, who on moving to the West Midlands in 1922 "found myself thinking that the festival chorus could not stand comparison with the fine competition choirs I had heard at Morecambe".

Elgar's links with the Three Choirs are dealt with, beginning with the performance of *Gerontius* at Worcester in 1902. The choir were happy enough to sing *Messiah* and *Elijah*, but "being asked to produce a chorus of demons, souls in purgatory and angelicals, placed greater demands on singers and posed a challenge to an audience brought up on the hymns of Sankey and Moody". In the author's view the years 1905-08, when two of the three great Elgar choral works were heard at each Festival "... was surely the time when Elgar was absorbed into the Chorus blood stream so completely that the singers of nearly a hundred years later still have it in their genes and chromosomes". As one conductor was reported to have said to the choir, "You feel safe with this music, don't you?"

There are some interesting and pertinent illustrations, and those who love the Three Choirs and their counties will enjoy this account.

The Editor

RECORD REVIEWS

Symphony no 3 elaborated by Anthony Payne

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Daniel
Naxos 8.554719

Like Symphony no 1, 'Elgar-Payne' is "making a very wild career, traversing the world with giant steps". It deserves to, and Naxos has commemorated its progress with its 2000th release in the UK. Admiration for Payne's achievement increases with every hearing. If only a trusted Anthony Payne had been in contact with Marl Bank and at Elgar's side during those crucial months of 1932-33 to hear the symphony

taking shape, to listen to the ever-faithful Reed busy with the parts that had been copied out for him and snatching phrases from over Elgar's shoulder, to 'critikise' and absorb with the quick understanding of a fellow-composer the drift of Elgar's thought, perhaps even to get Elgar's own blessing, when illness struck, not only to 'tinker' with the manifold sketches but to bring what Elgar had already considered as the 'strongest thing' he had yet put on paper to the conclusion that so far eluded him. Might not Elgar have dictated from his sickbed to such as Anthony Payne as Delius was then dictating to Eric Fenby? Yet the cases were very different. Delius, with iron will, was fighting a disease that wasted him inevitably but gradually; his creative instinct was urgent enough to overcome seemingly impossible obstacles. Elgar was struck down suddenly. Often he needed external stimulus for his work, perhaps the encouragement of Lady Elgar, the pressure of a deadline, the demands of a commission. The approach of death and dissolution offered no incentive, and the BBC waited more than sixty years for its symphony.

The symphony relies greatly on material from earlier projected works. As so often with the chivalrous Elgar, a womanly ideal also plays a notable part. There is not only the second tune of the first movement, inspired by Vera Hockman; but it is Queen Guenevere whose fate is in the balance during the *Arthur* banquet music that opens and dominates so much of the Scherzo. It is more than likely that Elgar's perusal of his sketchbooks and the disjecta membra of aborted projects involved his mind's dwelling, if only briefly, on the inspiration that had originally called the music into being. The 'Antichrist' theme that opens the symphony may have recalled not only the oblique allusions of the *Apocalypse* he was scanning for *The Last Judgement* but also the fearsome presence in Augustine's *City of God*, from which Minnie Baker had outlined a libretto in 1894. Again, the start of the development as laid out by Anthony Payne recalls not only the lyrical song of Matthew Arnold's young Callicles but also the philosopher on the mountain-top, that noble Empedocles whose despair hurled him into the crater of Etna. The 'vast bronze doors' that open on to the astonishing slow movement were originally to be the gateway to *Cockaigne* no 2, 'The City of Dreadful Night', James Thomson's filling out of Shelley's line, "Hell is a city much like London".

But enough, and what of the new recording? Its main characteristic is an admirable clarity, in which all details of Payne's orchestral imagination, so devotedly Elgarian, emerge as subtly coloured threads in a glorious tapestry. The playing of the Bournemouth orchestra is above praise, and Paul Daniel pays more meticulous attention to the dynamics than did Andrew Davis, whose initial championing of a work that was bound to stir controversy must never be forgotten. Daniel's performance is just over a minute shorter than Davis's. This is mainly due to the more nimble Scherzo, which has an airy grace of great appeal. I had imagined, when listening to the Adagio solenne, that the Bournemouth players were notably slower than the BBC. It is Daniel's admirable pacing and sense of line that gives the music its inner tension and power at the cost of only ten extra seconds. The two finales are almost neck and neck, but Daniel is willing throughout the work to extend Payne's occasional commas of silence into expressive semi-colons, thus letting the music draw the deeper breaths. In the midst of so much that is admirably judged, I found Vera's tune a touch too slow. I thoroughly approved, though, of the more discreet handling of the percussion. Not for a moment do I begrudge Payne's letting rip in the first movement precisely where Elgar indicated he shouldn't; Daniel gets the best of both worlds, and the final gong stroke does indeed lead Elgar's music towards infinity.

Robert Anderson

The Crown of India, Op 66 : March; 'Hail, Immemorial Ind!'. The Wind at Dawn. Empire March. Une Voix dans le Desert, Op 77. Polonia, Op 76. Piano Concerto, Op 90 (arr. Young): Slow Movement. The Spanish Lady, Op 89: Suite (arr.Young). Civic Fanfare.

Mette Christina Østergaard (mezzo-soprano), Peter Hall (speaker),

Here is a disc to savour - number 7 in Classico's enterprising The British Symphonic Collection (previous issues have featured rare music by Vaughan Williams, Holst, Bax, Arnold, Gordon Jacob, and Arthur Butterworth and Ruth Gipps). The brains behind the series is that great champion and expert of British music, Lewis Foreman. Given the amount of Elgar which is now on record, it is noteworthy that there are five world premiPre recordings, though two are arrangements, as we shall see. (I must confess a personal interest, as Lewis consulted me and asked if I knew of any previously unrecorded Elgar pieces for orchestra. I was interested in hearing *Cantique*, written originally in 1879 for wind quintet, but revised, orchestrated and performed in 1912, and later published in an organ arrangement. However the orchestral score and parts seem to have disappeared.)

The opening track is of the *Crown of India* March; not the 'March of the Mogul Emperors' from the same work, with which it is sometimes confused. It has been recorded before, but only by military band (available on the Society's record CDAX 8019), not full orchestra. I guess that because it was not included in the original suite, it never gained the popularity of the 'Mogul Emperors'. If the latter characterises 'India', then this march is much more 'the Crown' in its Britishness. Though lacking the weight of the *Pomp & Circumstance* marches, it has something of their quality; in fact at times it sounds almost like Walton (or should that be Walton imitating Elgar, as he once said that he wrote *Crown Imperial* to sound deliberately like Elgar?). But as Basil Maine wrote, it is "an admirable piece of theatre-music". The other extract from this work is a set piece aria 'Hail, Immemorial Ind!', when the city of Agra (sung by a mezzo-soprano) greets the personification of India. It is sad that these two items - out of some twenty or so in the masque - are the only ones for which a full score has survived (orchestration obviously exists for the Suite, which was later taken from the masque). The scena is sung by a Danish mezzo, Mette Christina Østergaard, who invests it with as much meaning as anyone might be able to wring from Henry Hamilton's rather tortuous and often obscure libretto. Elgar has tried to give the music an oriental tang, making wide use of a theme from the 1905 piano piece *In Smyrna*. It works quite well: I know that many have dismissed the Masque as second-rate - encouraged perhaps by the composer himself, who described it as "this small effort", and hinted that it was done for the money - but coming as it does between the Second Symphony and *Falstaff*, it shows that Elgar's creative powers were still well in evidence.

This is also true of *A Voice in the Desert* (or to use its correct title *Une Voix dans le Desert*), a short tone-poem from 1915 for speaker and orchestra, and containing a lovely song for soprano 'When the spring comes round again'. Like *Carillon* from the previous year, it uses words by the Belgian poet Emile Cammaerts, but it has always lived in the shadow of the earlier work, which was much more popular at the time. Tub-thumping is entirely absent from this work; it is much more reflective on the horrors of war, and optimism in the future. It has been recorded once before, by Barry Collett on his Pearl CD of war pieces (SHECD 9602). Peter Hall as speaker cannot quite rival Richard Pascoe on the earlier disc, but this is a persuasive account of the work, and Ms Østergaard performs the song with feeling and intelligence.

The other war work is *Polonia*, here receiving its fifth recording, if one includes Elgar's own abridged account of 1919 (on Pearl GEMMCDs 9951/5), and Andrzej Panufnik's 1978 Manchester performance on BBC Radio Classics 15656 91942. I personally prefer a little more time and indulgence in the *cantabile* theme (first heard at fig 6), but overall this is a crisp, convincing account of another underrated piece. The *Empire March*, written for the Wembley Exhibition of 1924, has also been recorded before -

by Percy Pitt and the BBC Wireless Orchestra shortly after its premiPre, by Boult in 1977 and Menuhin in 1991. It is not top-class Elgar- the fifth *Pomp & Circumstance* March in 1930 shows him back to his best - but it is good to have a new recording of it, and it receives yet another inspiring performance.

The soloist is also heard in *The Wind at Dawn*, a song to words by Alice Roberts (as she still was in 1888), but heard now for the first time with the orchestral accompaniment Elgar wrote for it in July 1912. As in all Elgar's works which possess accompaniments both for piano and for orchestra, one is grateful for the latter. It makes the song sound more impressive than it otherwise would, for the tune lacks the distinction of some of Elgar's other songs of the period; and Alice's words, like a number of Victorian anthropomorphic offerings, now sound rather dated and twee. But the orchestration is sure and confident and - dare one say it? - almost erotic.

Elgar's *Civic Fanfare* was written for the Mayoral Procession at the opening of the 1927 Three Choirs Festival at Hereford. It is a short piece (barely 80 seconds) and fades away almost to nothing, as it was intended to lead straight into the National Anthem, which it does on the recording of the first performance (preserved on Elgar's test pressing, unissued at the time but later transferred to LP, and most recently to CD (CDS 754560-2)). Its chief interest is the large size of orchestra Elgar employed, but without first violins.

The remaining works are arrangements by Dr Percy Young of uncompleted Elgar works. The composer toyed with the idea of a Piano Concerto for years but it never really consumed him. Most work had been done on the second, slow movement, where the sketches were almost complete, and this was arranged with a string accompaniment for a performance in 1957. Wind and brass were added for a performance in 1979, and this is essentially what is recorded here. Dr Young's work on *The Spanish Lady* is well-known, culminating in the publication of the sketches in Volume 41 of the Elgar Complete Edition; and a production of the opera at the Cambridge Elgar Festival in 1994, "edited, arranged, and orchestrated" for stage performance. The suite for strings has been known for many years; this is a fuller version of the incidental music for full orchestra.

I have spent a good deal of space dealing with this disc; but this is an important new issue, and should be attractive to all Elgarians. The performances and recording quality are first-class, and our thanks go to Lewis and everyone involved in the project. Now, what about *Arthur* and *The Pageant of Empire*?

The Editor

'The Barbirolli Elgar Album' : Symphony no 1, Op 55 (1956); Enigma Variations, Op 36 (1947); Introduction & Allegro, Op 47 (1947 & 1956); Elegy for Strings, Op 58 (1947 & 1956); Bavarian Dance no 2 (1947)

*Hallé Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli
The Barbirolli Society/ Dutton CDSJB 1017*

Newer isn't necessarily better! The recordings Barbirolli made for HMV in the sixties were an integral part of the Elgar revival. They were warmly welcomed at the time and it was assumed that his earlier Pye recordings, made less than a decade earlier, were completely eclipsed, to some extent musically and most certainly technically. It is now clear that part of the prejudice was the quality of Pye's LP pressings, both in their original mono format and then when they appeared in stereo on the bargain Golden Guinea label. However, present day listeners can come to them with fresh ears, for now whether a recording is 38 years old or 44 years old doesn't seem quite so crucial, particularly once Michael Dutton has worked

his miracle.

The first CD in this double album restores to circulation the results of two days worth of Pye stereo sessions in the Free Trade Hall in December 1956. I heard Barbirolli and the Hallé perform the First Symphony twice in the late sixties and they were wonderfully memorable occasions, warm hearted and vital, with an excitement that for me made the then 'standard' HMV recording always a touch disappointing. Rediscovering their first recorded performance in such splendid sound now seems to conjure up more closely those memories. It first appeared in the summer of 1957 as one of a number of releases to mark the Elgar Centenary. It was only the third time the work had been recorded and with the composer's own performance unavailable, its only rival was Boult's first recording first issued on 78s in 1950 and then transferred to LP in 1953. It seemed rather expensive at the time as it was spread over three sides but, as Trevor Harvey noted in *The Gramophone*, this did allow the transition between the second and third movements to be savoured uninterrupted for the first time on disc. Harvey compared the approaches of the two conductors without really saying which he preferred. He did recognise however that technically the newcomer was well in advance and concluded his review: "What you will get in this Barbirolli performance are the most tremendously exciting climaxes... He goes ahead as if possessed by a demon and the result is rare on records, something that sounds anything but a carefully prepared studio performance." I would just echo those sentiments: this is music making that is wonderfully alive and communicates a total conviction. (I don't suppose that there was any one left in the orchestra who had played in the première but there must have been some who knew someone who had.)

The same could be written of this performance of the Introduction & Allegro, Barbirolli's fifth. It was not issued at the time, perhaps because HMV were just putting out his fourth which they had had in the vaults for four years. It eventually appeared in 1970 as part of a memorial issue and then more recently has been available on an EMI Phoenixia CD. Heretical it may be, but I think this is a much finer performance than the oft reissued, universally admired 1962 HMV performance which in comparison to this leaves me rather cold.

The second CD has fine transfers of (mono) recordings made for HMV by Barbirolli and the Hallé in 1947. The Elegy for strings was their first Elgar recording, presumably viewed by HMV as a replacement for the composer's own recording (its only previous one) which was by then just 14 years old. RW in *The Gramophone* commented that the "The Hallé has a particularly suave strong tone now... The Elgar trifle is seldom heard: a chaste bit of the familiar finger-printed writing."

A few months later, W R Anderson was not so sure about Barbirolli's *Enigma*, in particular finding Dorabella "Too fast. Speed is the curse of native conductors, with scarcely an exception. This variation is quite spoiled for me." He doesn't much care for the exuberance of GRS either but when it comes to EDU he is more fulsome in his praise. "In this kind of floridity Barbirolli lets loose the Southern in him. Some of our other men might benefit by a little voyage among the less tight-lipped temperaments." It's good to have Barbirolli's third Introduction & Allegro for completeness but with some rather lumpy phrasing, it's nowhere near as good as the 1957 Pye.

Full marks to The Barbirolli Society for sponsoring this issue. There are excellent notes by Michael Kennedy and a full Barbirolli Elgar discography which shows that with the exception of his 1927 Introduction and Allegro and the record of 'Where corals lie' that he made with Maartje Offers in 1929, all Barbirolli's Elgar recordings have now appeared on CD. There is a small error in the liner details – it was the Introduction & Allegro that first appeared on GSGC (not CSGC) 14137 in 1970 and Elegy on CEC 32023 in 1958 and not vice-versa. This is a tiny quibble. This is a wonderful set of CDs – don't miss out.

John Knowles

Symphony no 2 in E, Op 63: 3rd movt. rehearsal (15 July 1927) : plus works by Sibelius, Beethoven, Fuleihan, and Varèse.

*Various performers (see below) including London Symphony Orchestra
conducted by Sir Edward Elgar
Symposium 1253*

I must declare a personal interest in this intriguing disc, as my predecessor as Editor, Ronald Taylor, and I were asked to listen to the Elgar track and give our opinions on the wording of Elgar's comments. Entitled 'lonisation' (after the final track) the disc is, as the booklet admits, "a decidedly strange assembly. The justification for it is what it conveys to the serious collector and student about orchestral performance in the mid-years of the twentieth century". It includes recordings by such musical legends as Sibelius, Toscanini, Furtwängler, Stokowski, and Wood - and Elgar of course - and will appeal to their aficionados as well as to those interested in style of musical performances and recording techniques. Some of the recordings are (very) amateur, and those who dislike the 'sausages-in-the-frying-pan' type of sound reproduction are advised to stay well clear of this disc.

However, some of the tracks are fascinating. Toscanini conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra in the National Anthem at Queen's Hall in 1938; Sibelius his own *Andante Festivo* in Helsinki the following year. Henry Wood's performance of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, and a few moments of the Fourth Symphony, are from an amateur recording - found, amazingly enough, in Germany - of a concert at the Queen's Hall on 3 January 1936. Furtwängler's third movement of the Choral Symphony is from another amateur recording, of the Vienna Philharmonic in April 1942. Stokowski conducts the first performance of Fuleihan's Concerto for Theremin in February 1945 (the theremin is an electronic instrument, in case any of you are wondering). Varèse's *Ionisation* for percussion instruments is conducted by Nicholas Slonimsky (its dedicatee) shortly after its premiPre in 1933.

I guess that most members will have heard the famous "rehearsal" record of the beginning of the Rondo of Elgar's Second Symphony. The whole work had been recorded in April 1927 as a celebration of the composer's forthcoming seventieth birthday; but some extraneous noises were later noticed in the third movement. At his next session in July, therefore - when he was due to record the *Bavarian Dances* and the *Pomp & Circumstance* Marches - Elgar agreed to re-record the opening of the Rondo. He took the opportunity to try and improve the ensemble at this point, and this meant a rehearsal. Unbeknown to the composer, the HMV engineers now decided to record this, and so Elgar's remarks to the orchestra were picked up by the microphone. Elgar was told about it afterwards, was delighted when it was played to him, and asked for a pressing for his collection. This was discovered among his records years later by Jerrold Northrop Moore, and transferred on to LP with the complete Symphony on World Record Club SH 163 in 1971, and in the boxed set 'Images of Elgar' (RLS 708) the following year. Most recently it has appeared on CD in Volume I of 'The Elgar Edition' in 1992 (CDS 754560-2).

According to the accompanying notes, "in this transfer the music portions and the speech portions have been treated separately, to reproduce each as well as possible". Elgar's words were played at a slower speed to try and catch them more easily, although "some parts are so faint that only conjecture is possible, and we are not helped by a tendency to rush words". The transcription of Elgar's remarks is fuller than what has appeared before. Those doing the transcription deliberately avoided reading the version already in existence so as not to be influenced, and this has led to the two accounts differing quite markedly in places. I don't intend to give the game away - you'll have to buy the CD! - but it makes for fascinating listening. However, it needs to be said that parts of this new version of Elgar's words do not seem to make much (musical) sense. Symposium claim no infallibility for their version, and in fact "readers who can make out further words" are requested to send them in.

The disc costs £10 and can be ordered at all good record shops, or obtained direct from Symposium at 36 Paul's Lane, Overstrand, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 0PF (tel/fax: 01263 579715; e-mail: symposium@cwcom.net). Postage + packing is £1-50 for UK; £2 for Europe; £2-50 for rest of the world.

The Editor

Symphony no 1 in A, Op 55. Introduction & Allegro for Strings, Op 47.

*BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by Tadaaki Otaka
BIS-CD-727*

It has often been pointed out that foreign-born conductors can sometimes bring a new perspective to British music. Solti's 1972 recording of the First Symphony, although he had carefully studied the composer's own account, was a breath of fresh air for many. Tadaaki Otaka has recently been awarded the Elgar Society Medal, and listeners to BBC Radio 3 are no strangers to his fine interpretations of the great orchestral works of Elgar, and much other British music, which were broadcast regularly during the years when he was Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

This recording was made five years ago by the Swedish company BIS but I was only made aware of it recently. It confirms (to me) that Otaka is a first-class conductor, and one of the finest interpreters of Elgar we now have. It is rare for a performance of a work which I know so well to sound so fresh, and to bring out points never noticed before. Yet that was the effect of listening to this disc; and it was achieved without any histrionics, or an individualistic 'interpretation' resulting in a wholesale disregard for the composer's markings. The opening shows Otaka's control of pulse, and he finely judges the dynamics so that the **ff** at fig 3 really makes an impact, with a wonderful *molto sostenuto* as marked. The whole of the opening movement is exemplary; I was particularly impressed with the wistfulness - an essential Elgarian ingredient - which he obtains, as at the *poco più mosso* at fig 19. The climaxes are beautifully prepared and impressive, for instance the *grandioso* at fig 28.

Otaka really drives the Scherzo along in a thrilling way, but I personally prefer the Trio to be a shade slower for purposes of contrast (although to be fair there is no change of tempo marked in the score). The transition into the Adagio is neatly engineered, and here again the pacing and expression of the movement are well-nigh ideal. Listening to the **pp** *molto espressivo* passage for strings at fig 104, one can appreciate what Jaeger meant when he said "We are brought near Heaven". The final movement is perhaps a little disappointing after the heights reached by the first three, but Otaka brings the work to an appropriately triumphant and optimistic conclusion.

The make-weight on the disc is the Introduction and Allegro, the first time this Wales-inspired work has been recorded by a Welsh orchestra. It once again shows how completely Otaka understands the Elgar idiom. The recording, in Swansea's Brangwyn Hall, is nicely resonant, but the strings needed to be more closely recorded. The balance is fine in the quieter passages, or where the strings play on their own, but in the *tutti*s they tend to be somewhat overwhelmed by the brass and woodwind. But this is a minor matter; the performances are outstanding and one hopes that this will be the first of many Elgar recordings by this gifted conductor.

The Editor

CD Round-up

For me, one of the most delightful musical sounds is a high-class string orchestra, and so a two-CD set entitled 'String Serenades' from Virgin Classics (VBD 561763-2) by the London Chamber Orchestra under Christopher Warren-Green, has made for extremely enjoyable listening. The first disc contains the well-known Serenades by Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, and Elgar; plus the latter's Introduction & Allegro. Disc 2 is mostly Vaughan Williams - the *Tallis Fantasia*, *The Lark Ascending* (with Warren-Green as the soloist), and the *Greensleeves Fantasia*; plus a wonderful find (for me), the Serenade for Strings by Josef Suk. This last is an early work, written when the composer was 18, and obviously indebted to his teacher and later father-in-law, Dvořák. The Elgar works would not be first choices, although they are more than adequately played; but as I said, the whole disc is a delight - nearly two-and-a-half hours of wonderful music at mid-price.

Another mouth-watering disc is the latest Classics for Pleasure CD of Elgar from Vernon Handley, which features the 1981 coupling of the *Pomp & Circumstance* Marches, and *Sea Pictures*, sung by Bernadette Greevy, with the fill-up from Handley's 1978 *Falstaff* recording, *Cockaigne*. The Marches are superbly played; this is no mere stick-waving, as points in the score are subtly brought out. Greevy is a more than competent singer, but lacks the last ounce of the passion called for at the "big" moments. Roger Hecht in his review (JOURNAL November 1999) places the blame more on Handley than the singer. The best moments are certainly in the shortest songs (numbers two and four). *Cockaigne* starts well, and the "love" theme is superbly brought off. Somehow the soldiers' march doesn't really catch fire, and the whole thing really needs to move a little faster; it is one of the slowest versions on record. But as always with Handley there is absolute integrity and intelligent fulfilment of the composer's wishes (574003-2).

The recent production of *Great Expectations* by the Northern Ballet Theatre was described in the March NEWS and is reviewed in the current one. The music, all by Elgar, has been arranged by John Longstaff and is played on a new CD by the Northern Ballet Theatre Orchestra conducted by John Pryce-Jones (NPC 021). Like most pit orchestras, the band is reduced from normal symphony orchestra size, but they give an excellent account of themselves. Credit should also be given to the engineer, Bob Bunnell, for making a band of 28 sound like a full orchestra. The Director of NBT, Stefano Giannetti, was inspired by hearing the BBC Music magazine CD of Anthony Payne speaking about the Third Symphony, when extracts were played by an orchestra and a solo piano. This also happens here, and without seeing the ballet it is difficult to know how it might have worked. That recording also included Percy Young's edition of *The Spanish Lady*, and it is these two works which dominate the extracts used. Giannetti draws heavily on *The Spanish Lady* for the dances in Act 2. Other music includes the Scherzo of the First Symphony for the Graveyard scene; the whole of *Cockaigne* for 'The Forge and Journey to London'; extracts from the *Enigma Variations* for the Pip and Estella music; and the Finale of the First Symphony for the death of Magwitch. The disc is no doubt a fine memento of the ballet, and is well played, as I said, but I doubt whether Elgarians will want to buy it except perhaps as a curiosity.

EMI have also brought out for the first time together all of Jacqueline du Pré's concerto recordings in a four-CD set, newly remastered. Apart from the Elgar, there are two concertos by Haydn, plus those by Boccherini, Schumann, Saint-Saëns, Monn, Dvořák, and Delius; and Strauss's *Don Quixote* and Dvořák's *Silent Woods* (CMS 567341-2).

The Editor

LETTERS

From : Alan Machin

Not for the first time in the pages of the Journal has the view been expressed (most recently in the March Record Review) that it is a scandal EMI should not be recording Vernon Handley on a full-price label. While not pretending to know our esteemed Vice President's views on the subject I could only subscribe to this prejudice against budget-price labels where there is a compromise on the quality of orchestras or recordings, yet Handley's acclaimed Elgar, Delius, and Vaughan Williams performances on Eminence and CFP have been made with top class orchestras in, for their days, superb recordings. Issues like the magnificent new Paul Daniel recording of the Elgar / Payne Symphony no 3 show that quality does not have to mean full price, and indeed Naxos with their adventurous repertoire and wide distribution are doing far more to introduce music and Elgar to a wider audience than full price issues available only in specialist shops ever can.

I remain hopeful that one day EMI will ask Vernon Handley to record The Apostles and The Kingdom. If they choose to issue the recordings on a budget-price label I for one will not consider it a scandal and I venture to suggest that the resulting increased number of appreciative purchasers would concur.

[The Editor replies: Mr Machin's thoughtful letter is helpful in pointing out the achievement of Naxos and other labels (including Saga many years ago) in showing that good-quality performances and recordings can appear on budget-price discs. It is not uncommon now for critics doing comparative reviews to choose a budget-price recording as their preferred version. My comments, however, were relevant for the situation which existed in past years, when a good deal of snobbery existed, linked to the old adage that if you pay peanuts, you tend to get monkeys. Artists of international standing would have been offended by being asked to make a recording at less than full-price (though their old recordings often did appear on such labels as Decca's Ace of Clubs). Similarly, record companies would not want to risk offending their "big names" by bringing out a full-price recording on the same label by a (supposed) lesser light lest it should be greeted with greater acclaim. Possibly the Kennedy / Handley Violin Concerto of 1984 will in future be seen as a watershed - the first budget-price recording to be voted the Gramophone Record of the Year. Within a couple of years or so Naxos began to bring out discs, and the rest we know.]

From : Arthur D Walker

[NOTE: this letter was incorrectly reproduced in the last issue, for which we apologise to Mr Walker]

In the letter from Denis Bloodworth re pedal timpani (JOURNAL November 1998) he states that : "as far as I know Elgar never used these (not even in Falstaff)... I feel sure Elgar knew of them and I wonder why he never used them?"

What is the source of this information? The following passages will require pedal timpani, unless an orchestra can afford to hire an extra set of timpani to deal with the quick changes of pitch. References are to the miniature score pages.

The Dream of Gerontius

p 8 E in D three bars between at \mathbf{q} = 92

pp 53-4 Eb in D for two bars then return to Eb at \mathbf{q} = 138

pp 98-99 C in Bb, four bars, three at Allegro \mathbf{q} = 112

p 106 Bb in C two bars between at \mathbf{q} = 120

pp 146-7 **Bb** in C and **Eb** in G, two bars between at **h** = 42

Falstaff

p 30 F in G six bars between at **h** = 96

p 45 G in A five bars between at **h** = 120

In the South

p 13 **Bb** in C three bars between at **h** = 63

p 49 last bar to bar 5

p 50 **Ab** in **AN** at **h** = 63

Symphony no 1

IV. pp 139-40 G in **F#** four bars between at **h** = 84

Symphony no 2

I. pp 37-8 **Bb** in **Ab** three bars between at **q** = 100

From : J H Roberts

Even in the 1930s when early design troubles with the tuning mechanisms of pedal timpani (or machine drums) had been overcome and the instruments were becoming generally affordable, there was a marked reluctance on the part of players to give up the skill they had acquired in re-tuning hand-operated drums. Over the period 1900-1913 when the major works of Elgar identified by Mr Walker (JOURNAL March 2000, p 243) were composed, the appearance of pedal timpani even on the platform of Queen's Hall was a rare event, and to cover a wide range of timpani notes composers often specified two timpanists (as in Holst's Planet Suite and Stravinsky's Rite of Spring). Sir Edward could well have had this extra player solution (see Mr Walker's letter) in mind should his parts prove troublesome (after all, the attendant percussion section could supply the player) or, perhaps more likely, he viewed his re-tuning requirements as a challenge.

Both Mr Walker, and Mr Bloodworth in an earlier letter (JOURNAL November 1998, p 325) mention Falstaff, and here we have the Pathé film taken in 1931 at the Abbey Road Studios when Sir Edward recorded the work (JOURNAL July 1998, p 253). It is clear that the LSO timpanist is playing on hand-tuned drums even though some twenty years or so had elapsed since the score was published.

If Sir Edward had demanded the type of machine drums that he had come across in the German opera houses at the turn of the century, then the Worcester Amateur Orchestral Society and like bodies, who offered Sir Edward the best hope of live performances, would have faced enormous hiring, storage and transport difficulties. This is due to the sheer bulk and unwieldy nature of the drums - far less of a problem in the opera house pit where the instruments could remain in situ over an extended opera season.

[This correspondence is now closed].

From : Philip Scowcroft

Further to my writings in the JOURNAL (Vol 10, nos 4 & 5), I have discovered a number of further uses of Elgar's music on TV. The first movement of the Cello Concerto was drawn on for 'Paradise Postponed'

(1986), *Salut d'Amour* for 'The Ornamental Kitchen Garden' (1990), *Sospiri* for 'In Time of War' (1992), and *Pomp & Circumstance no 2* for the programme on the *Chelsea Flower Show* in 1993. Turning to advertisements on TV, the *Cello Concerto* was used for *Buxton Spa Water*, the *Enigma Variations* for *Royal Doulton*, *Chanson de Matin* for *Allied Dunbar*, and - most appropriately perhaps - the *finale of the First Symphony* for *Schweppes Malvern Water*. All these references come from *Tele Tunes*, issued annually and a useful work of reference for TV and film music.



[Photo : Gordon Richmond]

Claines church, just north of Worcester, in whose churchyard Elgar's maternal grandparents are buried and where, as a boy, Elgar liked to visit

100 YEARS AGO...

After finishing the composition of *Gerontius* on 6 June, Elgar went to London for a few days, seeing *Götterdämmerung* at Covent Garden, attending a Richter concert, lunching with Frederic Cowen, and having supper with Jaeger and Percy Pitt. He returned home on 12th, and the following day Alice wrote to Jaeger: "[He] immensely enjoyed himself but he looks very tired". A week later he began the task of orchestration. Despite the passing days, Elgar was still golfing regularly, thinking perhaps that there was still plenty of time to orchestrate what he had written. But Jaeger was seriously questioning a passage towards the end of the work, where after the Angel sang "Alleluia! Praise to His Name!", the chorus of Souls intone part of Psalm 90, and the tenor soloist enters *p* at the words "Take me away". On 16 June Jaeger complained: "Surely you want something more dramatic here!? It seems mere weak whining to me..." Elgar at first refused: "You must read the poem: I cannot rewrite this". But Jaeger would not let go. The uncertainty caused delay. At length Elgar relented, changing the order of this section, and introducing a great orchestral crash *fffz* as Gerontius momentarily glimpses God, followed by a beseeching 'Take me away' *ff* on a top A. On 1 July he wrote: "Very well: here's what I thought of at *first*... of course it's biggety-big..."

The remainder of the scoring was done at Birchwood to which the Elgars went on 3 July. The tiny cottage inspired him as never before. But the work was not completed until 3 August, and the first choral rehearsal took place on 20th of that month, only six weeks before the premiPre. The choirmaster was William Stockley, replacing Charles Swinnerton Heap, who had died in June. Perceptive musicians who attended these rehearsals, such as Henry Coward, were deeply worried for the premiPre of the work. The printing and the copying of the parts by Novello was taking an age, as there was only the one score to work from.

On 10 September the Elgars went to Hereford for the Three Choirs, at which *Caractacus* was given the following day. Their stay was interrupted the day after that by a visit to Birmingham where Edward rehearsed the chorus at Stockley's suggestion. "Thrilling rehearsal", Alice noted. On 20th they went for a week's stay in London for the orchestral rehearsals for Birmingham at the Queen's Hall.

There was only one full rehearsal for soloists, choir and orchestra, in Birmingham on Saturday afternoon, 29 September, four days before the premiPre. The first part was passable, but things got worse, and during the Demons' Chorus Elgar came down to the rostrum and interrupted, obviously in a rage, and telling the chorus what he thought of them - that their singing was like a "drawing-room ballad". One of the chorus, W R Smith, admitted many years later that "we were far too 'polite' in our rendering of such curious and difficult music, and had not grasped at all what it was intended to portray". Alice's diary confirms: "Chorus dull & wretched".

On 3 October 1900 Hans Richter conducted the premiPre of *The Dream of Gerontius*. Just before the concert began, as one of the choir recalled, the conductor "with unforgettable voice and gesture besought us to do our very best 'for the work of this English genius'". But it was too late.

The Elgar Society Journal

107 MONKHAMS AVENUE, WOODFORD GREEN, ESSEX IG8 0ER

Tel: 020 8506 0912

Fax: 020 8924 4154

e-mail: journal@elgar.org

CONTENTS

Vol.11, No.5

July 2000

Articles

"Any Friend of Elgar's..." - Barbirolli and Elgar	250
Elgar and Cambridge	270
"A Devil of a Fugue"	276
More on Mott...	288
Book Reviews	290
Record Reviews	291
Letters	300
100 years ago...	303

Front Cover : The head of Elgar on the new statue in Malvern.

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

