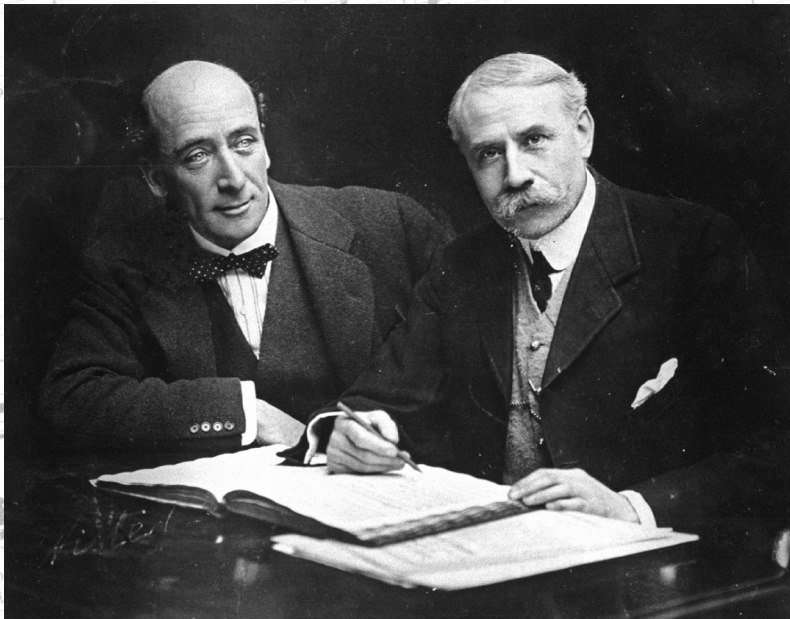


The Society

Elgar

JOURNAL



August 2014 Vol.18, No. 5



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

*Front Cover: Elgar and Algernon Blackwood on 18 February 1916 at the recording sessions for
'The Starlight Express'. (Photo: HMV) Julius Harrison was the conductor of the stage production.*

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

Presentation of written text:

Subheadings: longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Editorial

'Don't mention the war!' When putting this issue together I realised that I hadn't – no doubt a little remiss of me in an issue dated August 2014 – although in the six-year plan for the *Journal* I drew up when I became Editor¹ there are plenty of opportunities for essays relating to the Great War.

It was only when compiling '100 years ago' that it struck me just how quickly Elgar reacted to the crisis. On 19 July the family left for a six-week holiday in Scotland, intending to return in good time for the Worcester Three Choirs Festival which was to commence on 6 September. War, of course, was declared on 4 August (though the Elgars did not hear about it until next day), and Alice and Carice managed to get back to Severn House on 13 August. Elgar arrived on the 14th having broken his journey at Leeds to see Henry Embleton about the third part of the *Apostles* trilogy, which he had at last agreed to complete.

While in Scotland Elgar had written to Lord Roberts offering his services 'in any capacity during the present crisis'. Roberts replied on the 14th, saying 'I feel sure that on your arrival in London you will find many opportunities of giving your valuable services and meanwhile I thank you most heartily for your offer'. He immediately volunteered as a Special Constable, and on the 15th received a letter from his tame builder, Charles King, now doubling as an Inspector in the Hampstead Special Constabulary, informing him that 'There will be a short drill at the Drill Hall, Heath St. Hampstead on Thursday next 20th August at 9 p.m. It is most important that every Special Constable should be present, and sharp on time.'

On Monday 17 August he 'went up to Hampstead P. Court & was sworn in as a Special Constable – When some of the police or rather the one taking his name saw the O.M. he said "there are not many of them going about".' On the 18th Charles King wrote again, saying 'Your attendance is particularly requested at a meeting to be held to-morrow, Wednesday, at 8 p.m. I feel that your assistance will be very valuable to the Detachment of Special Constables, and if you are agreeable I should like to recommend you to Colonel Dunlop for a position on our Council.'

On the 21st, just a week after his return from Scotland, Elgar wrote to Windflower to say 'I am Staff Inspector to the whole corps & dying to do a man's part in the work'. That day he was summoned to the 'Drill Hall to-night at 8 o'clock, to assist in the distribution of equipment to the Special Constables'.

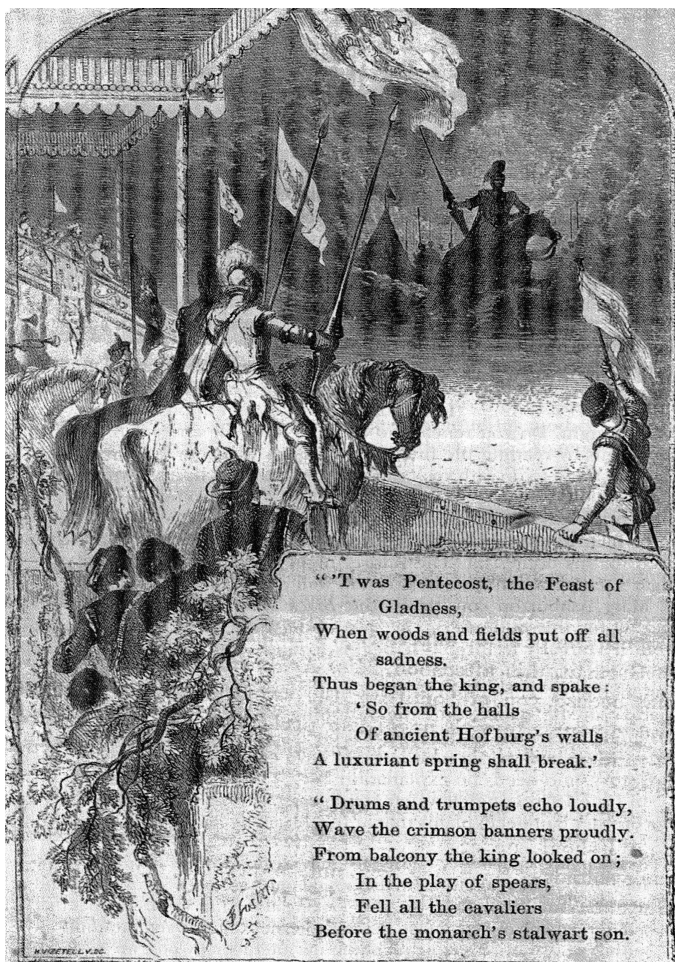
'Don't mention the war! I mentioned it once, but I think I got away with it.'

Martin Bird

¹ Yes, I know it sounds unlikely, but truly I did (and our Chairman might like to take note of my assumed length of tenure).

‘A sort of symphony in four divisions’:
The Black Knight and its first performances

Richard Smith

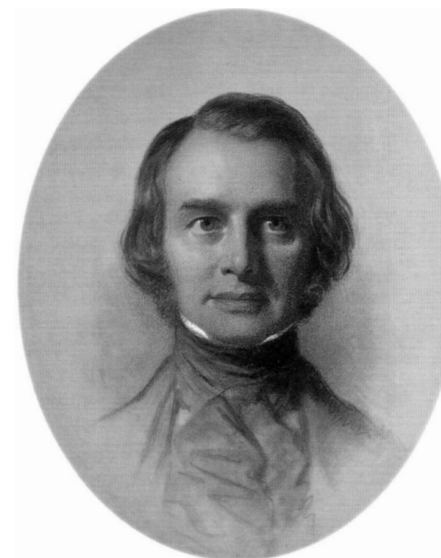


A drawing by the Victorian artist, Myles Birket Foster (1825-1899) illustrating the Black Knight together with the work’s first verse.

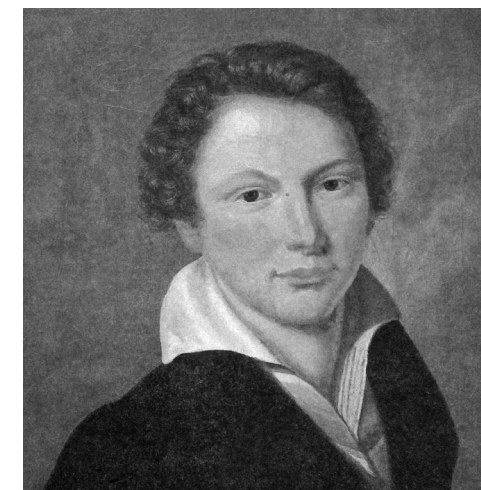
As early as April 1879¹ Elgar had been toying with setting Henry Longfellow's *The Black Knight* to music. Encouraged by his mother, Ann, Elgar had cultivated a great love of the American romantic poet, and especially of his early prose romance *Hyperion*. As he was later to confide to Hans Richter it was from him that: ‘I, as a child, received my first idea of the great German nations.’² The esteem in which he held the work was further highlighted when he sent a copy of the book to Helen Weaver, his early love, following his first visit to Leipzig in 1883.³ Elgar also gave a copy of *Hyperion* to his sister Lucy, inscribed: ‘May 4, 1889, In memory of our six years of companionship.’⁴

Drawing largely from Longfellow’s experiences surrounding the tragic death of his first wife, Mary Storer Potter, who died in Rotterdam in 1836 following a miscarriage, *Hyperion*, written three years later, tells the story of Paul Flemming, a young man who had experienced great sorrow. As Longfellow wrote: ‘The friend of his youth was dead. The bough had broken “under the burden of the unripe fruit.” And when, after a season, he looked up from the blindness of his sorrow, all things seemed unreal.’⁵ To console himself, Flemming embarks on a tour of Germany and Switzerland, mirroring Longfellow’s own attempt to drown his sorrows in travel. Flemming first

The young Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.



Johann Ludwig Uhland was born on 26 April 1787 at Tübingen in Germany and died on 13 November 1862 in the same town. Apart from his poetry he is known as a philologist and literary historian.



- 1 British Library BL Add MS 63148 f.24v dated 7 April 1879. Kent, Christopher in *Edward Elgar, a Guide to Research* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993) 122, suggests that an earlier sketch, BL Add MS 63149 f.8v may originate from October 1878.
- 2 Letter to Hans Richter, 25 October 1899, Hallé Orchestra, Richter-Loeb archive.
- 3 Anderson, Robert: *Elgar and Chivalry* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2002), 97.
- 4 Anderson, Robert: *Elgar in manuscript* (London: British Library, 1990), 21. Elgar lived with Lucy and her husband, Charles Pipe at 4, Field Terrace, Bath Road, Worcester between 1883 and 1889.
- 5 Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth: *Hyperion* (from the collected Prose Works, London: George Routledge and Sons, 1852), 1.

spends a season in Heidelberg with a German baron friend before his restlessness finds him in the lovely Swiss town of Interlaken. Here he meets a beautiful young girl: 'Presently a female figure, clothed in black, entered the room and sat down by the window. She rather listened to the conversation than joined in it; but the few words she said were spoken in a voice so musical and full of soul, that it moved the soul of Flemming, like a whisper from heaven.'

In the days that follow, he learns that her name is Mary Ashburton and during one rainy afternoon he picks up a volume of Ludwig Uhland's poems and asks her whether she has ever read anything by him.

'Let me give you a lesson in German this afternoon, Miss Ashburton; so that no one may accuse you of "omitting the sweet benefit of time, to clothe your age with angel-like perfection." I have opened at random upon the ballad of the Black Knight. Do you repeat the German after me, and I will translate to you. *Pfingsten war, das Fest der Freude!*'⁶

Mary replies:

'I should never persuade my unwilling lips to pronounce such sounds. So I beg you not to perplex me with your German, but read me the ballad in English.'

'Well, then, listen. I will improvise a translation for your own particular benefit.'

Longfellow, in the person of Flemming, then proceeds with a non too literal but rhyming translation of Uhland's poem. It was this translation that Elgar later set, unaltered, to music.

The story contained within the poem is a dark one. The first scene begins with the king and his court celebrating the joyfulness of the Pentecost festivities and the promise of a new spring. A joust then follows at which the king's son is at first triumphant, defeating all that challenge him. Suddenly there appears a mysterious knight in black armour to confront the victor but when challenged as to his identity he will only answer 'I am a prince of mighty sway!' He then engages the king's son and unhorses him with his first blow.

The scene changes to the evening where a dance is being held in the castle. Half hidden by the torchlight, the knight appears, again dressed in black, and asks the king's daughter to join him in the dance. This she agrees to do but as they dance 'a measure weird and dark' the flowers at her breast and hair fade and fall to the ground.

The final scene is at the sumptuous banquet which follows. The king glazes reflectively at his pale son and daughter but is temporarily consoled by the Black Knight's offer of golden wine to make them whole. But then his mood changes to one of anguish as he sees his children die. He cries despairingly: 'Take me, too, the joyless father!' but the Black Knight replies without emotion: 'Roses in the spring I gather!'

Although Longfellow's translation was taken directly from Uhland's *Der schwarze Ritter*, which dates from 1806, the poem may have its origins in a much earlier story. In addition to his many other skills, Uhland was a researcher of medieval manuscripts and folk legends and it is very possible that he based his poem on a previous German work of 1694 which describes the strange events which occurred at the wedding feast of King Alexander III of Scotland to his second bride, Yolande de Dreux in 1285. According to the legend a masque was performed at which musicians were followed in procession by a solemn dance of armed men. "But upon the heels of these there

6 *Twos Pentecost, the Feast of Joy!* (or *Gladness* as Longfellow translates it).

followed a single figure, of whom it could hardly be told whether he were a man or a phantasm. He seemed rather to glide like a shadow than pass by on his feet; and before the eyes of all the company he suddenly vanished.'⁷ Later it was said that Death himself had appeared. Whatever the truth of this story, there is no doubt that Alexander was no stranger to tragedy. His first wife, Princess Margaret of England, the daughter of King Henry III, died in 1274, and their three children, David, Alexander and Margaret expired within two years of one another between 1281 and 1283. Finally, King Alexander himself died falling from his horse on a dark and tempestuous night while riding to visit the queen at Kinghorn in Fife in March 1286. While some of the events recounted in *The Black Knight* were obviously compacted or transposed, they bore a considerable similarity to the life of the Scottish king.

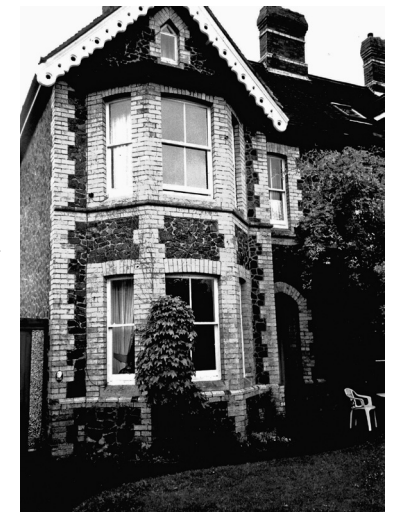
Composition begins

Apart from his love of Longfellow, there was perhaps another reason why Elgar chose *The Black Knight* to set to music. He had experienced the loss of two of his brothers by the time he was nine, and the final words seemed to express the thoughts of his sister Lucy after the death of their oldest brother, Harry, from scarlet fever in 1864: 'We must live on, just as the rose-tree lives though all its flowers be broken off; and the Spring brings roses again.'⁸

For some 13 years the original sketches which Elgar had written for the opening scene lay dormant, but now there were new incentives. He had married Caroline Alice Roberts in 1889 and 15 months later they had a baby girl, Carice, but the attempt to bring his music to a London audience had failed miserably. In despair the family returned to Worcestershire, renting *Forli*, a semi-detached house under the Malvern Hills, on 20 June 1891. By 18 April 1892 he had completed a 28 page vocal score sketch of *The Black Knight*,⁹ but doubting his ability to finish such a large work, he wrote in the top left hand corner: 'Music by Edward Elgar – if he can.'

During the next few weeks Edward busied himself with the new piece and during the evening of 11 June he played over the completed parts to 27 year old Hugh Blair, assistant to William Done at Worcester Cathedral. By this time, due to the ill health of the official incumbent, Blair was the organist in all but name. In addition his duties included conducting the Worcester Festival Choral Society which provided the county's component at the Three Choirs Festivals. Blair was so taken with the outline of *The Black Knight* that he said: 'If you will finish it I

'Forli' - the Elgar's house in Malvern.
(Richard Smith)



7 Quoted by Alexander III's biographer, James Fergusson, deriving his account from the *Scotichronicon*, an ancient Scottish chronicle similar to *Froissart*.

8 Contained in '*Reflections*' written by Elgar's oldest sister, Lucy, (Elgar Birthplace Museum)

9 BL Add MS 47900A ff.39-82v.

will produce it at Worcester.¹⁰ It was to be Elgar's longest work to date, with an approximate performing time of 35 minutes.

Blair's support further spurred Edward into action and, on 23 July, he was able to deliver the first three scenes of the vocal score of *The Black Knight* to Mr. Fry, General Manager of his London publisher, Novello's. The Elgars were en route for Bayreuth as part of a visit to Germany at the invitation of Mary Francis 'Minnie' Baker.¹¹ It was to take in Bonn (where they visited Beethoven's birthplace), Mainz, Nuremberg and the Wagner festival at Bayreuth. After attending two performances of *Parsifal* and others of *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger*, the Elgars moved on via Nuremberg, Munich, Lindau and Oberstdorf to Heidelberg, where they arrived on 11 August. Next day Edward wrote to his mother: '...then when driving up here we suddenly had to stop & make way for a great procession of Students – torchlight – three duelling guilds with a brass band & marching – all their faces wounded (silly fools) & many with bandages on, gay uniforms & no end of torches: it did remind me of *Hyperion* & the beer scandal etc., etc.'¹²

Returning to London on 16 August Edward called at Breitkopf & Hartel, who agreed to publish his *Serenade for Strings*, and Novello's who agreed to give *The Black Knight* their best attention if he would finish it.¹³ The next month saw him busily engaged on the work. As it neared completion the family went to stay with Minnie Baker at Hasfield Court in Gloucestershire. As Mrs Richard Powell (Dorabella of the *Enigma Variations*, who later became the step-daughter of Minnie Baker) remembered:

'It was summer time and very hot. He used to bring in hedgehogs from the woods and feed them in the house. He sat in the strawberry bed and wished that someone would bring him champagne in a bedroom jug.' His wish seems to have been met because forever after the last scene where the Black Knight drinks his toast was known as 'the *Perrier Jouet* theme'¹⁴



The first page of Elgar's short score for *The Black Knight* which includes his comment 'Music by Edward Elgar – if he can'. (BL Add.47900A)

10 From "Elgar at Craeg Lea", an interview of Elgar by Rudolph de Cordova published in *The Strand Magazine*, May 1904, 542.

11 Edward and Alice Elgar's joint diary, entry by Edward dated 23 July 1892.

12 Moore, Jerrold Northrop (editor): *Letters of a Lifetime* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2002), 51.

13 Moore, Jerrold Northrop: *Edward Elgar – A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press: 1984), 165.

14 Powell, Mrs Richard, *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation* (4th edition, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), 11.

At last, on 26 September, Alice joyfully recorded 'Finished the Black Knight – May all good be with his Booful music.' Four days later, 'the Mascotte' (Edward's nickname for Minnie Baker) mailed the vocal and piano score to Novello with the following covering note:

Dear Sirs:

By this post I send (the P.F. arrangement, voc: score) of a Cantata for Chorus & orchestra 'The Black Knight' now completed & shall be glad to know if you can accept it for publication.

You were good enough in a late letter to ask me to send you any vocal work for your inspection: I would point out that the present work is of a class much in request – chorus & orch:- & that the poem set is picturesque & popular at the same time presenting no great difficulty to the performers.

Should there be any point requiring explanation I should be extremely glad to call upon you but I am diffident in offering to do this knowing the M.S. will receive the fullest consideration.

I am, dear Sirs,
Faithfully yours
Edward Elgar

P.S. The work is announced for the Worcester Festival Choral Socy's Second concert to be given early in next year under my direction at the Conductor's invitation.¹⁵

Much later Elgar told Dorabella that: 'We posted it [the manuscript] at Heidelberg. I said she [Minnie] would bring me luck and so she did.' However, this seems impossible as we know that the vocal and piano score were not completed until long after the Elgars left Heidelberg. Perhaps this story originated from wishful thinking of the association of Heidelberg with *Hyperion*.

Novello's first reaction to the manuscript came on 8 October when they asked Edward to call. Next day he received a letter from Mr. Fry and on the 12th, he went to London to see their Music Editor, Berthold Tours, who explained that several passages of the accompaniment would be too difficult for the average choral society pianist. Elgar brought the score home with him to alter, but Alice commented in their diary that she was 'drefful anxious.' Four days later he returned it to Novello's with another letter:

Dear Sirs:

'The Black Knight'

Since my interview with Mr. Tours on Wednesday last I have most carefully gone through the P.F. accompaniment of the above-named Cantata & have removed all the difficulties which he was so kind as to point out. I now return the M.S. & shall be extremely obliged if you will consider the question of accepting it for publication.

I may repeat that the leading Society of this district ('Worcester Festival Choral') are announcing the first performance of the work early in the year at their second concert so that an early reply will be most welcome.

Believe me,
Faithfully yours,
Edward Elgar

15 Moore, Jerrold Northrop: *Elgar and his Publishers – Letters of a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 12-3.

P.S. The arrangement now fairly represents the orchestral effects but should any of the passages be found intrinsically too difficult I would be willing to alter them rather than anything should stand in the way of the acceptance of the work.¹⁶

In spite of two prompting telegrams from Elgar it was not until 10 November 1892 that he finally heard from Novello's that *The Black Knight* had been accepted for publication, with a fee of 2d. for each vocal score after sales of 500, with the orchestral material in manuscript. Edward replied immediately:

Dear Sirs:

'The Black Knight'

In answer to your letter of yesterday's date I write to say I shall be glad to accept the terms therein contained.

I should esteem it a favour if you would let me know how soon the vocal score can be ready as it seems to me (I am inexperienced in such matters) that time is very short: can it be issued at Christmas? The Chorus will require copies for practice early in the new year.

I propose to complete the orchestration during the holidays in January & shd. require a copy to work from as I have only my rough sketch.

I enclose a copy of the announcement of the first performance & awaiting your reply am

Vy faithfully yours.
Edward Elgar

PS I need not say that I am extremely obliged & gratified by your acceptance of the work.¹⁷

Later he wrote in their diary that: 'Little Brauts [was] vesey happy & home at 5 to meet her clever & booful.' The next few weeks were spent awaiting the first proofs, some of which Elgar corrected and sent back on Christmas Day from Hasfield Court. In an accompanying letter he asked that the following dedication should be included: '*The Black Knight*, To my friend Hugh Blair, M.A.Mus: Bac: Cantab.'

With the proof correction almost finished, Edward began orchestrating the work on New Year's Eve. This was completed on 24 January 1893 and despatched to Novello two days later. It was probably with some sense of relief that he wrote at end of the full score: '*Laus Deo!*' (Praise God!). The full score was then passed to the copying firm of Alexander Bles for duplication and drawing out the wind parts in manuscript. The string parts were engraved by their own expert, a German named Brause whose skill was famous throughout the industry. It was hoped that the whole would be completed by 18 March.

First performances

Plans were now going ahead for the first performance which was scheduled for 18 April 1893 at the Public Hall in Worcester. During February and March Elgar was consistently busy rehearsing *The*

16 Moore *op.cit.*,13.
17 Moore *op.cit.*,14.



Left: The Worcester Festival Choral Society poster advertising first performance of *The Black Knight* (Elgar Birthplace Museum).

Above: The Worcester Public Hall where *The Black Knight* was premiered on 18 April 1893. The building was demolished in the 1960s.

Black Knight, receiving the engraved violin parts together with the manuscript full score to correct on 7 March. The remaining parts followed during the month. By April the Worcester Festival Choral Society was announcing the second concert of the 1892-93 season at which:

'Mr. Edward Elgar's Cantata "The Black Knight" for chorus and orchestra will be produced for the first time. Special pains will be taken in engaging high-class instrumentalists and principals. A chorus of 100 voices will be accompanied by a full orchestra of 50 instrumentalists including several London players of note.'¹⁸

Following a final 12 o'clock rehearsal on 18 April, the Elgars had dinner with Henry Dyke Acland, Hugh Blair and Frank Ehrke and then proceeded to the hall. Although Elgar normally led the Worcester Festival Orchestra, he took the baton from Blair for the first performance of *The Black Knight*. There is little doubt that the work received a great reception and splendid reviews.

Worcester Daily Times (19 April 1893)

The second concert of the season of the Worcester Festival Choral Society took place last evening at the Public Hall. In every particular the concert was a success. Its signal triumph was the proud achievement of Mr. Edward Elgar, aforetime leader of the band. The first performance of Mr. Elgar's new cantata, 'The Black Knight', made the concert specially attractive... The orchestra was composed of 60 instrumentalists, and the chorus of 100 voices, ample guarantees of the strength and efficiency...

18 From the advertising poster held at the Elgar Birthplace Museum

... 'The Black Knight' was the next item on the programme, the modest composer appearing to conduct. It is the greatest effort of composition Mr. Elgar has made. He has done himself eminent credit with instrumental suites and other trifles, but he has not previously ventured upon so large a work as a cantata. Under his direction the band and chorus sympathetically rendered 'The Black Knight'. Perhaps the orchestra were a trifle too strong for the chorus here and there, but, that notwithstanding, the performance was a positive triumph for the composer, and his masterly production was applauded with an enthusiasm which broke into positive cheers.

The Worcestershire Advertiser (19 April 1893)

Much was expected of the work, but the highest expectations were far out-distanced. There is little doubt that 'The Black Knight' will be in frequent demand where large and efficient orchestras and choruses are to be obtained. As to Mr. Elgar's treatment of the poem, he has throughout told the story as perfectly musically as any words could tell it. His orchestration is as nearly as possible perfect, and the many original and truly marvellous effects he obtains must make his work speedily known in musical circles. Originality abounds everywhere in the work.

Worcester Herald (22 April 1893)

Festival Choral Society
Grand Concert at Worcester.

On Tuesday night this Society gave its second concert of the season in the Worcester Public Hall. As Mr. Edward Elgar's cantata, 'The Black Knight', was to be performed for the first time, every section of the hall was taken by people who were eager to hear – and some, no doubt, to pass a critical opinion on – this rising composer's most ambitious work. The cantata concluded the first part of the programme; but it may be as well, perhaps, to speak of it at once and say that it emphasizes the characteristics of Mr. Elgar's orchestral writings – sumptuous examples of orchestration, relieved by charming melodies and sparkling with bright and picturesque passages. Mr. Elgar had a very cordial reception as he took the baton to conduct the performance of his work, and there was no mistaking the enthusiastic cheering which followed its conclusion...

... The performance of the work takes about 40 minutes but so realistic is its treatment, in consonance with the poem, that the interest of the audience increased rather than flagged till its conclusion. The cantata bristles with too many difficulties for any but a thoroughly competent orchestra to perform it. A liberal interspersing of professionals strengthened the band very much on Tuesday, with the result that the conductor had a sympathetic interpretation of his ideas, the performance being almost without blemish. Mr. Elgar has the true grasp of the principles of orchestration, and many of the passages – in particular those where the horn, flute, oboe and clarinet were used – were of striking beauty and picturesqueness. A sincere word of praise must be given to the chorus, who paid strict attention to their leads – some of them very awkward – and gave the proper emphasis to their parts.

The Musical Times (1 May 1893)

On the 18th ult. the Festival Choral Society gave a Concert, the interest of which centred in Mr. Edward Elgar's new Cantata 'The Black Knight', then given for the first time, and received with great enthusiasm by a large audience. The work is a setting of Longfellow's translation of Uhland's weird poem, and reveals qualities in the composer which are bound to bring him rapidly to the front. His themes are striking and picturesque, and his command of the means whereby they can be made the most of is very considerable. The result is a work displaying power, charm, and musicianship in a high degree. Its orchestration is excellent, and abounds in judiciously contrasted effects. Chorus and orchestra did their best for this, the most ambitious of the clever composer (who is a local man) and a performance of exceptional merit was the result.

Alice Elgar merely wrote in her diary: 'Quite glorious & splendid reception. Star most beautiful & Brauts had the proudest happiest evening in all ser lives.' Next evening they received the first newspaper giving a 'glorious notice of my darling Star's Triumph.'

A few days later Edward received an interesting letter from his great friend Hubert Leicester, a flautist in 'the brothers wind' who later became Worcester's first Catholic mayor.

You must indeed have been gratified by the splendid reception given to you & to the 'Black Knight' on Tuesday. Of course you have seen the local papers; as far as I have read them, there is nothing but praise both for the work & the composer.

I was sorry you should have missed me on Monday, but I was so ill that it was with the greatest effort that I rose in the morning & my throat so sore that I could not swallow properly. When I did reach rehearsal I had to sit down the whole time & be silent. The next day I was a lot better & able to help in the Vocal parts so you see I was wise to keep quiet at rehearsal. Have you quite recovered from the anxiety? The band fellows were all loud in their praise of the 'Knight' & hoped to hear it again.¹⁹

While Elgar's setting received significant acclaim, many criticised his choice of words. As the critic, Ernest Newman, wrote in 1906:

The Black Knight – described on the title page of the score as a Cantata – is said to be called by the composer himself a 'Symphony for Chorus and Orchestra', a title which it deserves by reason of the closeness of its texture and the concision and economy in the use of its material. It is set to a ballad of Uhland – '*Der Schwarze Ritter*' – that has been translated into broken-backed, spavined verse by Longfellow... The English verse, as already hinted, is not of a very high order, but its deficiencies are hardly noticeable through the music; while the ballad as a whole, with its quick dramatic narrative and its broad contrasts of mood, is admirably adapted to a musical setting.

The success of *The Black Knight* encouraged Elgar to make an organ arrangement of the Solemn March for which he received a fee of 3 guineas from Novello on 13 May 1894.²⁰ He sent a copy to his great friend, the blind organist, William Wolstenholme, on 13 July 1895.²¹ He received his first royalties for the complete work on 18 November 1894.

Although the premiere of the complete work had been extremely successful, it was not for 18 months that thoughts were being given to further performances. On 30 October 1894 Arthur Prendergast, whom the Elgars had met in Garmisch that summer, wrote to Edward regarding a possible performance in the capital by Miss Caroline Holland's Choir.

I have not yet heard from Miss Holland about her Society, but she shall have one of our leaflets about the 'Black Knight', & I hope she will not look as black as night on the occasion...²²

The next performance was, however, to be at the Shire Hall in Hereford by the Herefordshire Philharmonic Society. The first rehearsal was held on the afternoon of 3 November with Alice commenting: 'Booful music – triumphant over feeble & scanty performers.' She was somewhat

19 Letter from Hubert Leicester, 23 April 1893, Martin Bird transcript. EBM Letter 9773.

20 Moore *op.cit.* p.22.

21 Letter to William Wolstenholme, EBM letter 10325.

22 Letter from Arthur Prendergast, 30 October 1894, EBM letter 3904.

happier with the actual performance which took place on 9 November; 'Black Knight quite blazing & splendid. Such a hapsy Braut & so saulsful proud.' A lengthier appreciation was given by Richard Penrose Arnold (RPA of the *Enigma Variations*) in the following letter:

My dear Mr. Elgar,

I must send you a line to thank you so very much for having given me the opportunity of hearing your Black Knight. I think it is splendid, and was delighted with it, and I now wish to hear it again, but I hope when I next hear it the chorus will be a very much larger one. The orchestration seemed to me to be so specially interesting and varied, &, I shld. think, beastly difficult: I saw poor Blair once or twice in terrible difficulties, though everyone seemed to be as busy as possible.²³

On 13 December a third performance, with only piano accompaniment, was given at the Temperance Hall in Walsall²⁴ with Charles Swinnerton Heap conducting the Walsall Philharmonic Society. Heap had studied at Leipzig on a Mendelssohn Scholarship and became the conductor of the Birmingham Philharmonic Union in 1870. The performance received qualified approval:

The Walsall Observer (15 December 1894)

The concert closed with 'The Black Knight', a cantata for chorus and orchestra by Edward Elgar who, we believe, is a rising composer of great promise. The libretto is Longfellow's version of Uhland's legend 'Der schwarze Ritter.' It is a pity this work should ever be given without a band. It is very difficult and rapid in places, and what musical people call 'catchy', and for a chorus to undertake it without the aid of instrumentation, which we believe is elaborate, is a most trying task. The chorus, however, showed their excellent training by the spirited execution. Only a few weak attacks were noticeable, but we thought the male voices very much overpowered by the trebles, which were rather too numerous in proportion. No doubt this work would gain much more approval on a second hearing. It would have received more on Thursday if it had come first instead of last in the programme. Mr. Amos Keay rendered indispensable services in his very onerous duties as an accompanist [*sic*]. He never failed to perform his important part with his brilliant execution and his skilful reliability. It is superfluous to add Dr. Heap conducted with his usual musical ability and energy. Altogether this concert will be remembered as one of the most enjoyable the society has ever given.

Heap was so impressed by *The Black Knight* that he visited *Forli* on 21 December and invited Elgar to conduct the work with the Wolverhampton Festival Choral Society. It also led him, on 5 July 1895, to commission *King Olaf* for the North Staffordshire Festival which he also directed. (Heap's untimely death in 1900 was a factor in the disastrous first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*.)

Some two months later Arthur Prendergast wrote again to Edward regarding the proposed London performance.

I am glad to hear the Black Knight is to be done at Wolverhampton; it is getting on at Miss Holland's Choir, and she has fixed her Concert for Thursday afternoon March 28th at St. Martin's Hall with a final rehearsal at her house 72 Brook Street the preceding Tuesday the 26th.²⁵

23 Letter from Richard Arnold, 11 November 1894, EBM 3906.

24 The Walsall Temperance Association began construction of the hall in Freer Street in 1866. It was designed by Loxton Brothers of Wednesbury and was opened in 1867. It was used for public meetings, lectures, and concerts before becoming a cinema in 1931. It was demolished in 1965.

25 Letter from Arthur Prendergast, 22 February 1895, EBM letter 3905.

Following an orchestral rehearsal after lunch on 26 February 1895, Elgar himself conducted the Wolverhampton performance, given at the Agricultural Hall.²⁶ This time with a 'band and chorus of 250 performers' the work was extremely well received

The Wolverhampton Express and Star (27 February 1895)

Mr. Elgar had no easy task before him in setting to music Longfellow's translation of Uhland's weird 'Der schwarze Ritter' but he has attained his object with marked success. The orchestration was very fine and the work abounds in striking passages of great beauty, especially where the flute, oboe, horn and clarinet are used. The composer was fortunate in having his work in such good hands as the choral society. The chorus could not have been better; the band suffered slightly from having a hurried rehearsal, and were near making a serious mishap in the opening of the third scene 'Pipe and Viol call the Dancers' but with this exception, the performance was full of merit...

...Mr. Elgar received quite an ovation at the close of the work, and a pleasing little scene took place during the interval, when he appeared along with Dr. Heap and Mr. G N Adams in the ante-room, and thanked the members of the society for the excellent manner in which they had done their work.

The Birmingham Daily Post (27 February 1895)

The work of preparation received the advantage of the composer's personal attention during the choral rehearsal on Monday night, and he made it manifestly clear that he knew precisely not only the effects he wanted, but how to obtain them, and the same may be said of the orchestral rehearsal yesterday afternoon, and when it is added that he was announced by invitation to conduct the performance it will be seen that considerable interest is attached to the occasion.

The performance must have been highly acceptable to the composer – not without blemish, for the orchestration, heavily scored, showed some roughness at times which might have been modified by a better acquaintance; but the chorus, who, under Dr. Heap, had bestowed attentive care in the work of preparation, revelled in their task and sang con amore. It would be a great pity if so richly conceived and highly successful work was not followed by others from the same pen. The applause at the close from the audience and executants was spontaneous and prolonged, and the composer had repeatedly to bow his acknowledgements.

Not surprisingly, Alice Elgar was overjoyed:

To Concert at 7.30. Never to be forgotten. Such a lovely reception & the glorious music & splendid chorus, & ovation to E[dward]. & a special ovation & speeches in the ante-room – A[lice]. so zuulsfully hapsy – Thank God for such happiness.

To London and further afield

The first London performance of *The Black Knight* was given at St. Martin's Hall on 28 March 1895 by Miss Holland's Choir (a charity 'for sending little sick children into the country'). Miss Holland herself provided the piano accompaniment but this lack of an orchestra and the repetition of the words were to result in unfavourable reviews:

26 The agricultural hall was erected in 1863 by the corn merchants who felt that there was insufficient light to inspect the corn at the old Exchange building. It cost £2,000 and was situated on Snow Hill, opposite the Theatre Royal.

The [Evening] Standard (29 March 1895)

...The music is by no means gloomy. It is modern in sprit and phraseology, and although the part writing is not very difficult, it is not conventional, except in the repetition of the words. In adopting this device for lengthening the work, Mr. Elgar has, of course, precedents in abundance, but a composer of the present day need not employ methods that have become antiquated. The Black Knight was sung with much spirit by Miss Holland's choir of about sixty voices, conducted by Mr. Prendergast...

The Times (29 March 1895)

Miss Holland's Choir. The body of amateur singers which has in the past done no small amount of really artistic work within somewhat narrow limits, and has raised very large sums for charitable objects, gave a concert at St. Martin's Town Hall on Thursday afternoon, when a choral cantata by Edward Elgar, set to Longfellow's translation of Uhland, called *The Black Knight*, was on the whole very creditably performed. The work has clever points, such as the weird dance in which Death takes part, but it is sadly diffuse, the words are continually reiterated for no apparent reason, and very little dramatic skill is displayed. Sound musicianship and a laudable desire to vary musical rhythm of verses that are a little monotonous in their regularity are the best of the composer's qualifications apart from his possible skill as an orchestral writer, which could not, of course, be judged from the pianoforte accompaniment.

Alice Elgar's fury at the latter review prevented her from adding it to the couple's press cuttings books until five years later when she wrote:

!!! Not put in book till 10 April 1901 when such foolish remarks can have no sting. (C.A.E.)!²⁷

On 5 July 1895 Edward received a telegram from Swinnerton Heap saying that he had arranged to conduct a performance of *The Black Knight* with 'a full orchestra and chorus of 450' at Birmingham Town Hall in December. A day before the scheduled concert, on 4 December, the Elgars left Malvern to attend the rehearsal at the Midland Institute where they were introduced to the chorus. Next morning Edward had a bad headache but he soon recovered to accompany Alice to the Oratory at Edgbaston, where Cardinal Newman had written the *Dream of Gerontius* and where Dvořák had met the cardinal. After lunch with Mrs Heap they attended the orchestral rehearsal with the concert itself taking place during the evening. Alice predictably commented: 'Wonderful evening... Thank God for giving us beautiful things.'

There is little doubt that the work was well received, Robert Buckley writing:

Birmingham Daily Gazette (6 December 1895)

The 'Black Knight' is no merely ingenious vamping-up of stale and worn-out platitudes. From first to last the work bears the impress of strong and original thought. There is little or none of the quality known as elegance, but in its places is a rugged power combined with a richness of imagination and a fertility of invention which remind us of Richard Wagner or Thomas Carlyle. Without being affectedly eccentric, the themes are novel and striking, their development masterly, their harmonic treatment and orchestral colouring of a great and noble type, as well as modern in the extreme sense of the term.

Berrows Worcester Journal (7 December 1895)

The Birmingham Press is lavish in its praise of this work, which is regarded as of the highest artistic

27 The press cuttings files held at the Elgar Birthplace Museum.

value. We quote passages from the *Post* critique;- ... A work which may be characterised as the outcome of keen imagination and real musicianship, admirable in technique and replete with strength – a most honourable achievement. At the close an outburst of applause broke forth from audience and executants, and the gifted composer was summoned to receive a well-earned tribute of approbation.

Although praise for *The Black Knight* seems to have been universal, some criticism of its performance was printed in another Birmingham paper which said that it was '...too little rehearsed. The vocal parts are doubtless exacting, and hardly grateful to singers, but this does not explain the numerous faults of attack, the worst instance of which was the premature lead of the soprano in the dance scene, when for several bars a complete fiasco was threatened.'²⁸

Meanwhile, Elgar had begun to establish a regular correspondence with Novello's music editor, August Jaeger (Nimrod of the *Enigma Variations*). On 18 October 1897 he wrote to Edward:

I have persuaded Mr Webb, of Torquay to do your 'Black Knight' and he may perhaps write to you about it. The work is also to be done at Sligo (I believe) so there may be a chance of the beautiful work yet, if only people's eyes are opened a bit.²⁹

Some misgivings had been expressed by the conductor at Torquay regarding some of the vocal writing of the work, and Jaeger asked Elgar whether he would consider simplification. He replied by postcard:

Dear Mr. Jaeger:

Many thanks for your card: the Concert is on Dec.21: let me have any sort of copy this week if you can – poor B.K!

Yrs ever

E.E.³⁰

Novello's had also decided to reprint *The Black Knight* as Jaeger confirmed to Elgar on 10 December. He hoped that the passage beginning 'When he rode into the lists', where the Singers 'cannot at present get the words in Edgeways' could be altered in time for this new edition. He felt that 'not only can the singers not sing the words at the speed you demand, but in their efforts to "get them in" somehow they produce ludicrous effects (not intended by the composer) which make them laugh. If you can alter the passage, kindly send me your amended version as quickly as



Elgar's drawing of 'poor BK' which was included in a letter to August Jaeger postmarked 6 December 1897. (Elgar Birthplace Museum)

28 Young, Percy M.: *Elgar OM* (London: Collins, 1955), 73-4.

29 EBM letter 8282.

30 EBM letter 9517, postmarked 6 December 1897.

possible, will you please?³¹ Just prior to the publication of the second edition of *The Black Knight*, Elgar wrote to Jaeger describing the work as he saw it:

I intended the work to be a sort of symphony in four divisions founded on the poem – different to anything, in structure, ever done before – where the ‘picture’ is fixable for a little time the words are repeated – in dramatic parts the words ‘go on’: it’s not a proper cantata as the orch: is too important: but if the pretty little public want a small orchestra they must have it.³²

He further expanded this view of the work in an important introductory note to the second edition:

This Cantata is symphonic in design; the poem is divided into four sections, which are musically illustrated. Where a ‘picture’ is suggested, the words are repeated; at the more dramatic points, the action is correspondingly rapid.

The work might be described as a ‘Symphony for Chorus and Orchestra founded upon Uhland’s poem *Der schwarze Ritter* rather than as a Choral Ballad.

Several exceptional difficulties in the vocal parts, chiefly occurring in the second scene, have been removed and the work is now practicable for smaller choral societies.³³

The first American performance³⁴ took place on 21 February 1902 by the Ravenswood Musical Club at the Congregational Church in Ravenswood, Illinois.³⁵ The conductor was Peter C. Lutkin³⁶ and the performance boasted a tenor soloist, Holmes Cowper. This concert was repeated on 27 November 1902.³⁷ The Canadian premiere of *The Black Knight* took place on 11 February 1904 by the Mendelssohn Choir of Toronto at the Massey Hall in that city. The choir was conducted by Augustus Steven Vogt with the accompaniment provided by the Pittsburgh Orchestra conducted by Victor Herbert. The programme commented: ‘The composer has been particularly successful in his treatment of Uhland’s weird poem.’ A review was admiring both of the work and the performance:

Elgar’s cantata, one of his comparatively early works, a setting of Uhland’s poem as translated by Longfellow, should alone allow him to be considered England’s representative composer. The work was presented in a most efficient light by the Mendelssohn Choir and the Pittsburghers. The interpretation was of course Mr. Vogt’s and his direction proved that he had grasped all the essentials ideas of Elgar’s creation. The choir, one would think, derived keen enjoyment in the performance, as

31 Moore, Jerrold Northrop: *Elgar and his Publishers – Letters of a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 59.

32 EBM letter 8305, 1 March 1898.

33 Note published in the Second Edition of *The Black Knight* published on 9 March 1898. In subsequent years the note was removed although all later printings were from the revised edition.

34 A reference has been found to a much earlier American performance of *The Black Knight* being given by the Bâton Club of Boston, Massachusetts on 18 November 1898. Extensive research among many respected archives in the area has failed to confirm this reference.

35 *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 February 1902.

36 Peter Christian Lutkin (1858-1931) was a talented choirmaster and organist who resurrected the Northwestern Conservatory of Music at Evanston, near Chicago, Illinois.

37 *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 September 1902.

they sang with much life and spirit, and with a close observance of the nuances.³⁸

It was not until 11 April 1916 that the Columbia University chorus under Walter Henry Hall gave the New York premiere of *The Black Knight*, coupled with Frederick Converse’s cantata *The Peace Pipe*, at Carnegie Hall. *The New York Times* review was not particularly complimentary:

Elgar’s ‘Black Knight’ is one of the earlier cantatas preceding ‘The Dream of Gerontius’ by apparently eight or nine years. There is a certain vigor and flow in the music, certain passages that still seem striking, but by far the most of it seems to tend towards the commonplace. The composition suffers in comparison with Mr. Converse’s.³⁹

On 4 and 5 May 1938 a spectacular performance of the work was given in New York by 400 voices from the Down Town Glee Club and the Golden Hill Chorus under Channing Lefebvre with 50 musicians from the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. *The New York Times* was effusive in its praise: ‘Throughout the evening the choristers maintained the true pitch admirably and could be counted on for sharp attacks and releases.’⁴⁰

In spite of the appearance of the second edition of *The Black Knight*, the work had not sold as well as Elgar had hoped. He was to comment to Jaeger: ‘Another ‘Enigma’ – the Black Knight you say is unsuccessful commercially – and it’s the only thing I ever recd. any royalty on yet...’⁴¹ Sometime later ‘Nimrod’ was to sympathise and make a suggestion:

I say, your ‘Black Knight’, which is spanking fine stuff doesn’t move much for some reason or other, chiefly, no doubt, because the subject is a bit gruesome & the music ends poetically pp. I have thought that if we could do something with the work for orchestra alone, we might make it better known, & it has struck me that the Banquet music (Menuet &c.) might be done in a short orchestral suite. Do you think there is anything in the idea? There are several lovely themes in those ‘Dance’ & ‘Banquet’ movements.⁴²

This suggestion came to nothing and the success of Elgar’s subsequent compositions meant the work was relegated to relative obscurity. Even today, it is seldom performed but a rare New York airing of this ‘forgotten score’ was given by the Pro Arte singers on 11 March 1989. *The New York Times* previewed the attraction:

The music director, Johannes Somary, will retrieve the podium for a rare performance of Elgar’s first important choral work, written in 1893 [*sic*], ‘The Black Knight.’ A romantic tale of chivalry and sorcery set at a medieval jousting competition, the expansive score was described by the composer as ‘a symphony for chorus and orchestra.’ The Amor Artis Orchestra will join the chorale.⁴³

38 *The Globe* of Toronto, 12 February 1904.

39 *The New York Times*, 12 April 1916.

40 *The New York Times*, 5 May 1938.

41 EBM letter 8350, 28 May 1899.

42 EBM letter 8526, 18 October 1901.

43 *The New York Times*, 5 March 1989.

The premiere recording of *The Black Knight* was made in 1984 by The Liverpool Philharmonic Choir and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Charles Groves. (This was coupled with *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* by the London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra conducted by Vernon Handley) but is sadly no longer available.⁴⁴ The only currently available recording is by The London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Richard Hickcox, made in 1996. This is coupled with *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*.⁴⁵

Richard Smith has published around 25 books on historical aviation, but his retirement as a teacher of software development with British Telecom a few years ago enabled him to turn his attentions to researching the life of Elgar. He has had affection for the man and his music since his teens, and fate then gave him the opportunity to express this in more practical terms. In 2005 his book on the composer 'Elgar in America' was published by the Society and he has written several other articles for the Journal. He is currently Secretary of the West Midlands Branch and, with Ernie Kay, temporary compiler of the Elgar Society News.

44 EMI Classics CMS 5 65104 2.

45 Chandos 9436.

A Personal Reminiscence

Julius Harrison

On 27th October 1960 a talk by the composer and conductor Julius Harrison was broadcast by the BBC Midland Home Service in the interval of a performance of 'The Dream of Gerontius' from the Victoria Hall, Hanley, conducted by Sir John Barbirolli, in which he 'recalls some of his contacts with Sir Edward Elgar and with his music'. The script was made available 'For private circulation to members of the Elgar Society by kind permission of Julius Harrison and the British Broadcasting Corporation' and, recently, Geoffrey Hodgkins has unearthed a copy.

It was my good fortune to hear the very first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. At that time I was a lad of 15, too young to take in the music properly, or to realise how imperfect that performance was. But the delightful 'Dorabella' of the 'Enigma' Variations, Mrs. Richard Powell, put things in a nutshell, when, at the time *Gerontius* was produced at the Birmingham Festival of 1900, she recorded in her diary:- 'The Elgar idiom was like a foreign language that cannot be mastered in a few weeks!' This indeed was my experience on that memorable occasion sixty years ago this month.

Today we are no longer baffled by that idiom. It is now part of our native musical speech. We have, moreover, coined the word 'Elgarian' to connote something unique in the annals of our British music – unique in the sense that no other English composer before Elgar ever created sounds so original, and, shall, I sat, so opulent as he did. He broke away – after a struggle mind you – from the worst of the Victoria traditions, taking in those newer chromatic harmonies which owed something to Wagner; and particularly (in my submission) to the mystical sounds we hear in *Parsifal*. Then, again like Wagner, he made use of leading themes such as were to make *The Dream of Gerontius* so immensely effective and so satisfying in its general structure as a continuous narrative.

But it is not for me here to dwell at length on the nature of Elgar's music. For I have been invited to say something about my personal recollections of Sir Edward – how I came to know him, and something about our meetings in later years.

Even before my time, my father knew him. He was born at Powick, not four miles from Elgar's birthplace at Broadheath. As a keen amateur musician my father ran a Glee Club at Stourport-on-Severn (where I was born), and to his concerts Elgar came on two occasions to play violin solos. And so through such a chance circumstance, the name of Edward Elgar was already a revered one in the Harrison family; from those early boyhood days of mine when cantatas such as *King Olaf* and *Caractacus* had brought new fame to their composer.

I longed to meet him. As a student in Birmingham in 1905 I heard his lecture on Brahms' Third Symphony, given at the University. I was so impressed by his analysis of that masterpiece – with all its wonderful treatment of a motto phrase – that the memory of that lecture still remains vivid to my

eyes and ears. I still can see and hear him, his eyelids batting rapidly with that nervous tension and energy which all those who knew him will remember; his whole mind concentrated on a subject so near to his own ideals in music

Three years later I met him for the first time – in Norwich at the Triennial Festival in St. Andrew's Hall. Sir Henry Wood was to conduct a cantata of mine which had won a prize offered by the Festival Committee. *Gerontius* was in another programme, also conducted by Wood. The hall was full; no seats were to be had. Thanks to Richard Strauss and a performance of *Gerontius* at the Düsseldorf Festival of 1902, the British public had begun to think that the flop in Birmingham in 1900 was not, perhaps, due to the composer.

Now it was October 1908, and, as I have said, St. Andrew's Hall was full, eager to listen. By great good luck I found myself sitting next Sir Edward behind a curtain near the platform. Many times he glanced downward at my vocal score – one I still have, marked with his tempi of later years, when he so often conducted *Gerontius* at the Three Choirs Festivals. Obviously he was very much moved by the performance, for from time to time he would brush the tears from his cheeks – a most poignant memory for me.

For some years after that I met him only casually. I had so far only made his acquaintance, nothing more than that. But in the autumn of 1915 he invited me to conduct his incidental music to Algernon Blackwood's *Starlight Express* – a fantasy play based on the author's 'A Prisoner in Fairyland', and which was produced at the Kingsway Theatre on December 29th of that year – myself conducting. I still have a letter of instructions sent by Sir Edward to the theatre during rehearsal days – you can find it in a volume of his letters published some few years back by Geoffrey Bles.¹ Its details, with scraps of music included, deal with a sprite-call behind the scenes – the letter headed 'Monday 6 a.m.' He was up betimes then; a busy man indeed.

From now on he gave me his friendship. We met often. I was invited to his London home, Severn House, Hampstead – oh so rightly named! For did not that noble river mean much to him – as it has always done so to me, both of us sons of Worcestershire. Once with sly humour and, not perhaps without good reason, he threatened me with a copy of Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy'. Instead he wrote --- well, let me quote from his letter of November 2nd 1920:

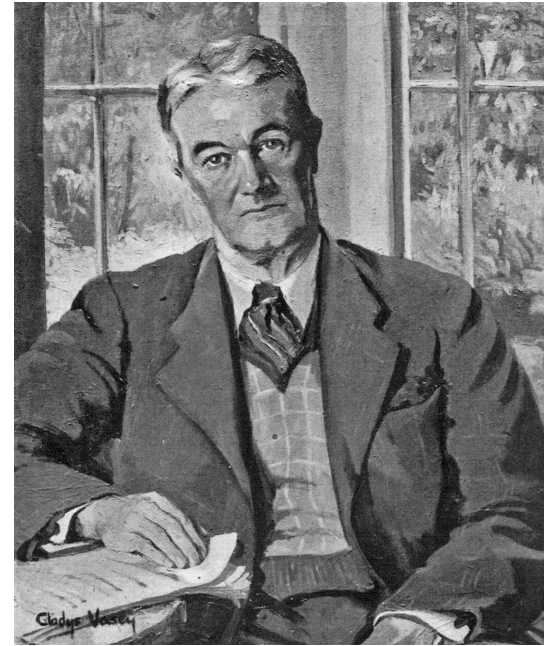
'I think you are, as I am, very much in love with our old county. I am sending you that old engraving of Stourport (1776) which I hope you will accept as a mark and a very slight token of something bigger – of my regard and esteem.'

Again – and, indeed, more pathetically from his last bed, two months before he died:

'... Unfortunately the announcement of my return home was a mistake. I am likely to be here for a long time. I am sorry I missed your broadcast of the Nursery Suite. I am glad you smell the Severn in it.'

His sense of fun throughout his long life – who else could have written the 'Enigma' Variations characterizing so adroitly his Worcestershire friends? – his stories, anecdotes, childlike play with words, anagrams, caricatures, his love of Worcestershire – to say nothing of his immense scholarship such as many men might envy – all these things you can read about in the books. While the years have robbed me of many memories I wish I could have retained, two stories told me by him, perhaps 40 years ago, still linger in the mind. The first is of those very early days when Elgar

1 Percy Young (Ed.), *Letters of Edward Elgar*, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), pp.226-227.



Julius Harrison - from a portrait in oils by Gladys Vasey

was leading the local orchestra in Worcester, the occasion being a concert under the Society's conductor, a worthy and indeed well-known musician, diffident, and shall I say, baton-shy. He rapped his desk. Elgar lifted his violin to his neck, his bow at the ready. The conductor held arms and baton aloft, waiting, making no movement. After a moment or two he dropped his arms; Elgar lowered his instrument. Twice this happened. Then the conductor leant over to his leader and whispered testily: 'Now look here Mr. Elgar, if you won't start, I shall.'

The other story is of two trombonists wrestling at rehearsal with the music of a composer unacquainted with the technique of that instrument. The first trombonist was having an uncomfortable hit and miss at two rapid, alternating notes which involved sliding from one end of the instrument to the other. The other player nudged his discomfited colleague, indicating he would share the passage with him. The upshot was that both players set their positions, one in the home position, the other fully extended. Not a slide was moved. Elgar told me this story with glee. He, too, played the trombone and as we all know, wrote for it as brilliantly as ever did any composer.

How then shall I best describe Sir Edward as I remember him in those far-off years – 1915 to 1920? He was forthcoming; friendly, signing letters 'yours affectionately' – the bond of Worcestershire, I felt, between us – full of stories as I have just told, yet, at times, letting out a stray remark betraying his discontent with the more mundane aspects of his art. Once he told me – this was in pre-broadcasting, pre-electrical recording days – that for that particular year his gramophone royalties on the 'Enigma' Variations totalled 4/6^d!

Above all else I felt he was at heart a mystic. His music had taught me that. Though he so vehemently defended his splendid *Pomp and Circumstance Marches* – 'I have something of the soldier in me' he once wrote – yet beneath this more worldly exterior in the glitter of Imperial,

Edwardian times, he was to me (as to so many others) a man apart; his soul in constant touch with other-worldly things, living in dreams; metaphysical; detached; his complex nature desiring much he could never attain to.

To this dream-world he returned again and again for his finest inspirations. Apart from *Gerontius*, there is that poignant cantata which tells of the music-makers 'who are the dreamers of dreams'. Or those two exquisite sketches for small orchestra – 'Dream Children'. Or again the dream-world in *The Apostles*, and those countless hushed moments in the Symphonies; or that wonderful, brooding cadenza in the Violin Concerto which sounds centuries old, almost as if its composer had been reincarnated for this set purpose. That was the Elgar I knew 40 years ago.

After 1920 when Lady Elgar died – and we knew what that meant to him – I saw little of him. We would often meet at the Three Choirs Festivals, but only in a more desultory way, for many were the people who surrounded him in his fame. My own professional activities took me much away from London and from the haunts that were his.

And now I come to this Diamond Jubilee performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* given by the City of Stoke-on-Trent Choral Society and conducted by my old friend Sir John Barbirolli. It takes me back to the year 1947, and to Malvern's first Elgar Festival which I had the honour to direct.

My enthusiastic Committee and I were agreed that the Festival could not be fully representative of the Master's music without a performance of one of the Oratorios. Of course *Gerontius* was the obvious choice, for it was composed at Birchwood not two miles from Malvern itself, and so far had never had a performance in Malvern. We envisaged the noble Priory Church as the only place worthy of *Gerontius*. Ways and means were explored. Many difficulties stood in the way. We were stumped for a choir big enough for the task. We needed ecclesiastical authority to proceed.

Then in one of those sudden flashes of – shall I say – inspiration, I rang up another old friend, Harold Gray, the conductor of the City of Stoke-on-Trent Choral Society, to whose performance we are listening tonight. 'Help us out. The occasion is a notable one', I said to him. His committee, my committee, the Society members all were agreed, as was Mr. Gray.

The Vicar of Malvern, Canon Ronald Bryan Lunt, gladly gave his consent to the performance taking place in the Priory Church. Harold Gray brought his singers all that long way from Stoke – they did not even want their expenses – and conducted a performance of *The Dream* I shall always remember, so noble was the setting, so glorious the sounds. Carice, Elgar's daughter, was there, so was 'Dorabella', as merry as ever she was in the 'Enigma' Variations.

Thinking back on that first performance in 1900; on that at Norwich in 1908 when I first met Sir Edward; on numerous others at Worcester and elsewhere, that Festival performance in July 1947 in Malvern's Priory Church seemed to me – Worcestershire man as I am – like a completion; something that had come full circle; something beautiful and enduring that had, after 47 years, returned to the home of its birth.

It is therefore an especial privilege for me to have been invited to speak to you tonight, for you will have realised how much *The Dream of Gerontius* and its composer, and, indeed, Elgar's music generally, have meant to me in my own long life. Some memories have faded, but many others remain. Tonight my thoughts are with everyone in the Victoria Hall, Hanley. Finally I think of the Second Part of *Gerontius* which you and I are now about to hear. I recall what the composer wrote at the end of the manuscript – 'This is the best of me ... This I was and knew; this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory'.

Imperial propaganda and *Caractacus*: Chivalry, Militarism and the multi-faceted character of Elgar's British Army

Bryson Mortensen

*This is the second in a series of three articles that discuss various aspects of empire in Edward Elgar's *Caractacus*, each focusing on the allusions to one of three concepts emphasised in contemporary propaganda: national pride, chivalry and militarism, and Social Darwinism. This article will study chivalry and militarism.*

Considering the negative public reaction to recent wars, it is impressive that militarism was cast in such a positive light in turn of the century England. The contemporary military is often treated critically – a result of the fact that military action is often viewed as oppressive, unwelcome, and coercive. Britain's world-wide empire, however, required a powerful military to maintain order. Thus, Britain needed to portray its military as a necessary and positive part of the empire's mission. This was accomplished by presenting propaganda that combined the positive ideals of ancient chivalry and medieval knights with the contemporary British military.

While chivalry had no direct relation to the modern concept of a military – any link between King Arthur and British Imperial conquest is a stretch at best – the British government saw Arthurian legend as a way of selling the idea that military service provided young minds with the discipline needed to be upstanding members of society, trained in proper comportment, and morally strong. In the *Daily Mail's* account of the Diamond Jubilee, much attention was paid to the military exercises that were part of the procession to Saint Paul's. There was much talk of the '... straight, and smart, and strong ...' troops as a testimony to the 'greatness of the British Race', the story told in the *Daily Mail* of sending British commanders to take control of the 'savages' of a country and teach them to '... march and shoot as he tells them, to obey him and to believe in him and die for him and the Queen ...' and that is part of the 'world-shaping force' of the Empire. Perhaps the most telling statement regarding the role that British military service played in forming exemplary citizens is found in the words: 'Pink-faced boys, already men in self-command ...'¹ Such sentiment conveyed the message that Britain's military was a type of education that transformed young boys into honourable men worthy of a seat at the Round Table.

At the height of the British Empire and the Diamond Jubilee, chivalry was a principal device used to improve the opinion of those men who joined the military. Beyond inculcating obedience and courage in combat, chivalry encouraged them to modify their personality and embrace all

1 *Daily Mail*, 23 June 1897, 'To Saint Paul's: The Procession en Route', 1

aspects of the human condition; a King like Arthur, who loved his Queen Guinevere as much as he loved battle, became the image of the British military at least as interested in gaining honor as exerting power. Elgar's music used aspects of chivalry and military as an integral part of *Caractacus*, defining how these early ancestors of the English military had shaped contemporary notions of Empire.

Chivalry, Militarism, and Elgar

The influences of chivalry and militarism on Elgar's concept of the imperialist state are often confused. In his analysis of Elgar's image as an imperialist, Harper-Scott did not effectively delineate these two aspects of Elgar's embrace of Imperialism. He begins his discussion by citing Siegfried Sassoon's observations on Elgar. While Sassoon's analysis is strongly coloured by his pacifism, he does reveal that Elgar often described himself as a 'Great Gentleman', a phrase that more effectively aligns Elgar with chivalrous rather than with militaristic attitudes.² Sassoon describes Elgar as taking pride in his 'conventional appearance', a characterization that better fits the image of a chivalrous gentleman – the 'duc d'Elgar' as (cynically) portrayed by Sassoon – than a general in the British Army.³

The self-concept of the 'Great Gentleman', seen as an aspiration towards chivalry, affected many of Elgar's early works. The first work that established him as a uniquely British musical voice was the *Froissart* Overture, a work forever identified with Elgar's inscription 'when chivalry lifted up her lance on high'. Here we encounter for the first time the chivalrous hero that dominated his musical subjects. The theme continues in *The Black Knight*, a text translated by Longfellow in *Hyperion*. The heroic nature of chivalry depicted is effectively summarised by Elgar in his description of the *Froissart* Overture, where he praises the 'knight's loyalty to his king, pure faith to his religion, hardihood towards the enemy, and fidelity to his lady-love'.⁴

In addition to that image of the 'Great Gentleman', Elgar felt pressed to portray the image of an army general as a sort of marital adhesive:⁵ Having married the daughter of Major-General Henry Gee Roberts, Elgar felt obliged to assume a pro-imperialist, pro-militant, persona. Elgar also saw the cultivation of this image as profitable in the context of the upcoming Jubilee. This complex of mental attitudes informs such works as the *Imperial March*, *The Banner of St. George*, and *The Crown of India*.

Harper-Scott further describes this aspect of Elgar's cultivation of an imperial personality by citing contemporary accounts that documented Elgar's personification of the military type.⁶ Elgar

certainly did look the part, much of his music reflecting military-imperialist agenda of Britain at that time. It is essential to emphasise that Elgar's military works were essentially paeans to chivalry that went by a different name to match the public interest of the time. At several points the jingoistic sentiment of the *Imperial March* is tempered by melodies more evocative of 'pure faith' and 'loyalty' than militarism. *The Banner of St. George*, while externally focused on the British military uniform, saw St. George as the embodiment of Claverhouse's notions of chivalry rather than merely a powerful warrior.⁷ Conveniently⁸, Elgar's plan of becoming a 'Great Gentleman' by portraying chivalrous heroes in his music was completely compatible with the British propaganda, and ultimately co-opted by it.

Caractacus as a 'Great Gentleman'

Presented with the story of an outcast from the Roman Empire who is upright, religious, and patriotic, Elgar was unable to resist using *Caractacus* to project his own support for the British Empire. Without much effort, he was able to blend his own ideas of chivalry and a quasi-jingoistic sentiment without creating a paradox. For Elgar, *Caractacus* was proof that chivalrous personality traits such as courage, compassion, and eloquence which produced the 'Greatness of the British Race'⁹ in the contemporary military were present centuries earlier in *Caractacus*. Elgar presents his message by portraying *Caractacus* as a blend of chivalry and military prowess, and his fellow Britons as 'Great Gentlemen' instead of jingoistic militants.

As a character, *Caractacus* poses an intriguing complex of emotions and personalities. His entrance in the first scene of the cantata portrays the qualities one expects to find in a king/general. His mood changes quickly, urging his soldiers to rest and prepare for battle. *Caractacus*'s description of the evening scene surrounding him changes dramatically from the preceding music (see Fig. 1). This music also includes a leitmotiv that Elgar labels as 'rest'. In addition, the meter changes to a triple meter which, according to Ernst Pauer's¹⁰ writings, represents sincere devotion. The key moves to E flat major: a serious, courageous, and dignified key according to Pauer. All of these elements seem to represent a gentle rather than aggressive *Caractacus*. The melody accompanying the text is more folk-like than militant. The stepwise melody, the rising sequence, and the orchestration (flute and strings) are reminiscent of the kind of melody that Elgar uses to portray the countryside. In addition, the melody and orchestration portray a gentler side of the warrior king.

2 Harper-Scott, J. P. E., *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life* (London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (Publishing) Limited, 2007), 24.

3 It is fair to note that the rest of Sassoon's description of the 'duc d'Elgar' does not always match the traditional definition of chivalry when he uses words and phrases like 'self-centred', 'inconsiderate', 'pretending', 'disguising his feelings', to describe Elgar. Harper-Scott is very effective at dismissing these scathing criticisms by understanding the circumstances under which Sassoon made his observation. In essence, the criticism is quite personal and biased, not allowing for an impartial analysis of Elgar's character.

4 McVeagh, Diana, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 13.

5 Harper-Scott, J. P. E., *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life* (London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (Publishing) Limited, 2007).

6 *Ibid.*, 25.

7 *Ibid.*, 25.

8 In his analysis of Elgar's imperialist motives, Harper-Scott argues that Elgar's imperialist interests were closely aligned with his own upward social mobility. While many of Elgar's musical decisions seem grounded in political motivations, it would seem he simply took aspects of his personality (the "Great Gentleman") and tweaked them to conform with contemporary public opinion.

9 *Daily Mail*, 23 June 1897, 'To Saint Paul's: The Procession en Route', 1.

10 Ernst Pauer's "Elements of the Beautiful in Music" is a text which Elgar read and annotated, details about the text can be found in the first article of this series (*Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.18, No.3, December 2013).

Flute

Caractacus

Cello

7 Violins

Fl. 7

C. 7

Vc. 7

The air is sweet, the sky is calm, All na-ture round is breath-ing balm, The

14 Flute

Fl. 14

C. 14

Vc. 14

c - cho of our war-fare falls faint faint dis - tant on these grass - y walls,

Fig.1: Scene I, figure 20, bar 7

Caractacus

Carac.

I have fought and I have striv-en, Fought with foes and striv'n with friends, Fought for white rob'd priests and

6 glee-men, Fought that Bri-tons might be free-men,

Fig. 2: Scene I, figure 24, bar 4

Caractacus's mood changes, however, as he considers the imminent battle (see Fig. 2). The music changes to F minor (the D flat added as an accidental), a key Pauer describes as harrowing and indicative of rising passion.

As Elgar raises the vocal range to that of a more heroic baritone, the image of a dominant military personality emerges in keeping with Pauer's description of the emotional effect of higher notes. Caractacus's words give the clues necessary to understand the seemingly contradictory characters of Caractacus in the first scene. While describing the battle in what is certainly very passionate and militaristic music, the text gives away the purpose of the battle, and makes Caractacus into a character similar to the Knight as described by Claverhouse in his description of the *Froissart* Overture.¹¹ This loyalty to his people and devotion to his religion present in this text add depth to a personality that is '[hardy] towards his enemy'. The cantata's text portrays Caractacus as a military hero to reflect the popular praise accorded the military during the Diamond Jubilee. Elgar rounds out Caractacus's character by giving him ample opportunity to exhibit the characteristics of a true gentleman. While there are few other scenes that show multiple sides of Caractacus's character like this one, there are many scenes in which one single aspect predominates.

Elgar's most militant portrayal of Caractacus appears in the cantata's second scene, shortly after he receives the Arch-Druid's prophecy (see Fig. 3).

Caractacus

Soldiers

Leap, leap to light, my brand of fight, Flash to the heav'n's thine edg-es bright; Where those sharp lips of

6 steel shall go, Red from the kiss a fount shall flow, And ma-ey a gal-lant head lie low, Leap, leap to the

13 light!

Leap, leap to the light!

Fig.3: Scene II, figure 28

The energetic duple-meter rhythm abounds in dotted rhythms. The simple melody is filled with short phrases that, with the jaunty rhythm convey the energy of young soldiers preparing for battle. The harmonic motion to a simple alternation of tonic and dominant is reminiscent of a march. To complete the military overtones, the entire soldier's chorus enters at the end of each of the three verses to echo Caractacus's final words and sing an extended chorus at the end of the third verse (alternating between tonic and dominant) to bring a close to the segment (see Fig. 4). The entire scene, reminiscent of a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, portrays well the camaraderie of a group of soldiers.

11 McVeagh, Diana, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 13.



Fig. 4: Scene II, figure 34

In contrast to this bravado, Caractacus's lament in Scene 5 (after the battle with the Romans has been lost) and his speech before the Roman Emperor Claudius reveal the nobler, more chivalrous side of his character. While the music of the lament is intriguing,¹² perhaps more interesting is the text:

Oh, my warriors, tell me truly,
O'er the red graves where ye lie
That your monarch led you duly,
First to charge and last to fly;

Speak, ah! speak, beloved voices,
From the chambers where ye feast,
Where the war god stern rejoices
That his host has been increas'd;

Say that first I clove the legions
Where the golden eagle flew
O'er the head to whom allegiance
From the Roman foe was due;

Say, too, when the fight was ending,
That with glazing eyes ye saw
Me my quiv'ring ranks defending
From the greedy Roman maw;

And the god shall give you heeding,
And across the heav'nly plain,
He shall smile, and see me leading
My dead warriors once again!

Of all the thoughts and emotions Caractacus might have had, his greatest concern is whether or not his leadership was honourable. He wonders if he inspired his soldiers to act with courage, if he was valiant in the face of the enemy, and whether he continued to fight even when success was dubious. These feelings fit the category of the chivalrous warrior well. His concern for his leadership skills demonstrated his commitment to his people, removing any possible stain of Imperial sentiment. Elgar's elimination of the fourth stanza of Acworth's libretto is compelling evidence of his attempt to place Caractacus above any negative militaristic stereotype:

12 The music of Caractacus's lament is worthy of study because of its 7/4 time signature; although almost unheard of at the time, this meter effectively portrays Caractacus' disorientation after being defeated. The high baritone range of his singing expresses Caractacus's anxiety over his defeat. In addition, the chorus (this time representing villagers instead of soldiers) echoes each stanza of Caractacus's lament – a haunting reminder of the soldiers' echo in the second scene (Fig.3).

Say ye saw me stand thereunder,
In the thickest of the ring,
While the battle crash'd like thunder,
Fighting bravely – like a king;

Similarly, in his final words to the Roman Emperor Claudius in scene six, Caractacus reveals his true nobility.

Do then thy worst on me; my people spare
Who fought for freedom in our land at home;
Slaves they are not; be wise and teach them there
Order, and law, and liberty with Rome.

Caractacus is less concerned with his welfare than with that of the people he serves. His sentiment summons forth a noble melody in which octaves and fifths depict a courageous character; similarly Elgar's effective use of sequence and the upper range (Fig. 5) elicits Caractacus's self-sacrificing chivalry. The first indication of how Elgar views Caractacus's character is his use of the term *maestoso*, a marking that recalls the similar tempo markings associated with Elgar's other chivalrous descriptions of heroes.

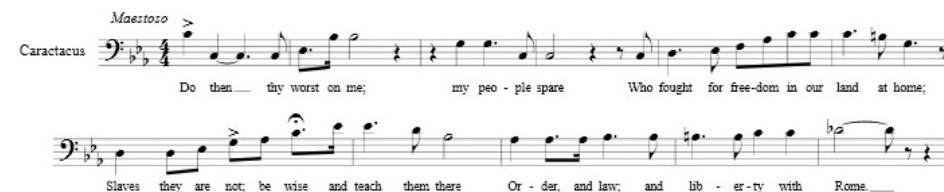


Fig. 5: Scene VI, figure 31, bar 3

In contrast to the majestic opening and closing of Caractacus's speech, the text and harmonic implication of the middle section emphasise his patriotic character (Fig. 6). The text's reference to the woodlands is paired with the freedom of the British people and highlights Elgar's commingled love of country and nature. The key moves quickly to G major, the 'pastoral' key associated with Eigen discussed in my previous essay, (*Elgar Society Journal*, December 2013). Many of the folk themes used in the first three scenes return (see Fig. 6).

Most interesting is Elgar's use of the 'Britain' theme identified by Moore and heard repeatedly in Scene I.¹³ While the violins recall the theme in its entirety, Caractacus sings fragments of the theme, recalling the ideals of the Pax Britannica (see Fig. 7). Caractacus's fragmented singing is also evident in figure 7, a musical representation of Caractacus's 'sobbing' over the loss of his homeland.¹⁴ The common thread throughout all of these examples is Caractacus's love of country boldly declared to the Roman Emperor and sandwiched (Harper-Scott would say *immured*)¹⁵

13 Moore, Jerrold Northrop, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 230.

14 Harper-Scott, J. P. E., *Elgar: An Extraordinary Life* (London: The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (Publishing) Limited, 2007), 43.

15 Harper-Scott (Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, 2006) discusses the ideas of 'immured' tonalities in his second symphony. The same principle seems to appear here.

1st Violin

Oboe

Caractacus

We liv'd in peace, was that a crime to thee, That thy fierce

Flute Clarinet 1st Violin

Ob.

C

ea - gle stoop'd up - on our nest? A free - born chief - tain, and a peo - ple free, We

Viola Clarinet

Ob.

C

dwelt a - mong our wood - lands, our wood - lands, and were blest.

Fig. 6: Scene VI, figure 27

Violin

Caractacus

For li - ber - ty wives, chil - dren, hearth and shrine,

Fig. 7: Scene VI, figure 29, bar 3

between the militant and noble sentiments of the outer segments of Caractacus's speech. The resulting gestalt is not that of a one-dimensional militant king and general, but rather a complex chivalrous monarch who embodies all of the aspects of the 'Great Gentleman' that Elgar himself aspired to become.

A Chivalrous Army

Elgar's nuanced portrayal of Caractacus is not unique to him alone. A comparison of Elgar's portrayal of the British and Roman forces also helps provide the necessary context for understanding the final chorus. While some have suggested that Rome represents contemporary England¹⁶, Elgar more likely had in mind an essential difference between them: 'One of the problems ... which it [the

16 Many have noted the similarities between the Roman Empire and the British Empire (Moore, Richards, and McGuire), but most refer to this article by Patrick Little as the origin of this particular reading of the final chorus: Little, Patrick, 'A Reading of Caractacus', *The Elgar Society Journal*, 1998, 158-167.

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

S

A

T

B

Slay — them! slay the Bri - tons, slay! Slay — them! Slay — them! Slay — them! Slay — them! Slay — them! Slay — them!

them! Slay them! slay the Bri - tons, slay! Slay — them! Slay — them! Slay — them!

them! slay the Bri - tons, Slay — them! slay! Slay — them! slay! Slay — them! slay! Slay — them! slay! Slay — them! slay! Slay — them! slay! Slay — them! slay!

— them! Slay them! slay the Britons, Slay them! slay! slay! Slay — them! slay! Slay — them! slay!

Fig. 8: Scene VI, figure 40, bar 2

British Empire] has to face is how to foster Imperial spirit without crushing the national feeling, how to do what Rome could not do – combine Liberty with Empire.¹⁷ An interlinear comparison of Elgar's musical introduction of each group will make this difference clear.

The Roman Triumphal March (Scene VI) best conveys Elgar's characterization of the Roman soldiers. Elgar's tempo marking as the chorus enters (figure 6, bar 2) is *pomposamente*, signifying a less noble character than the *maestoso* used later for Caractacus. In addition, the text they sing is quite aggressive, conjuring the images of 'sharply' ringing cymbals, 'screaming' trumpets, and a 'glaring' sun. Beyond obvious statements like 'The march triumphal thunders' and 'A shout that shakes the air', Elgar characterises the Romans as violent, war-loving people, who take pride in conquest for the sake of conquest. The most violent moment follows Caractacus's moving speech, when the chorus shouts 'slay the Briton!' (see Fig. 8) much like the crowd choruses in Bach's passions. This reaction fits the perception that the only difference between the Roman and British empires is that Britain valued and encouraged the liberty of its subjects, while Rome did not.

17 Betts, Raymond F., 'The Allusion to Rome in British Imperialist thought of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Victorian Studies*, 150, 1971.

In contrast to the Romans, the textual depiction of the British soldiers in the first scene centres on courage and love of country, both aspects of a ‘Great Gentleman.’ While the tempo marking at the entrance of the chorus provides no clue (Elgar marks only *Allegro*), the use of texts like ‘comrades firm and fearless ...’ and ‘on like men undaunted’ portray the noble courage and camaraderie of the British army. These expressions of courage are coupled with a need to protect the British countryside paired with Elgar’s named ‘desolation’¹⁸ theme: ‘Our homesteads burn, and, all between, Wide wasted lie our woodlands green.’ These images underscore the essential goodness of the British soldiers and Empire.

The musical characteristics of these two choruses vividly portray the contrast between Rome and Britain. The orchestration of the British chorus features woodwinds, instruments which provide a delicate aesthetic in contrast to the brass instruments which accompany the Romans. Similarly informative is Elgar’s choice of key. While the Roman chorus (figure 6 through figure 10 in the final scene) remains steadfastly in C minor, the British chorus in the first scene moves through several keys, opening in C minor (according to Pauer, descriptive of earnestness and passionate intensity). As the chorus describes the destruction of their homes, Elgar modulates to F minor, associated with melancholy. As night closes, he darkens the tonal centre to a sombre E flat minor. This variety of keys reinforces the Britons as different from the brutish Romans – ‘great gentlemen’ possessing complex characters.

One should also take note of the several themes that Elgar creates that are associated with the British army and are introduced at the beginning of the entire work. The first theme introduced in the work is described as connective material, and has a march-like feel that can be associated with the British soldiers. This theme is followed by the march-like rhythm described by Elgar as ‘British soldiers’ and returns repeatedly when the soldiers are present. Finally, the ‘Watchmen’ theme runs repeatedly through this scene and has a connection to his desolation theme, and returns again during the final chorus.¹⁹

A final contrast is the difference in the mimetic character of the phrases that represent the two camps. The orchestral themes representing Britain and Rome²⁰ (Fig. 9) portray the British as artful and thoughtful, the Romans militaristic.



Fig. 9: Representative Themes

Similar differences occur in other themes sung by the British and Roman troops. For purposes of demonstration, two examples will suffice: the Romans’ ‘but hark a shout, the emperor fills the cruel chair’ (Fig. 10) and the Britons’ ‘our homesteads burn’ (see Fig. 11). As might be expected, the music sung by the Roman soldiers is heavily accented. On the contrast, the Britons’ melody (described by Moore as ‘melancholy’ and associated with Elgar’s ‘desolation’ motive) is low and accompanied by strings that add to the legato quality used by Elgar to portray British temperament.

18 Rushton, Julian, ‘Caractacus Thematic Table’, personal email from author, 1 September 2012.
 19 Rushton, Julian, ‘Caractacus Thematic Table’, personal email from author, 1 September 2012.
 20 Moore, Jerrold Northrop, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 230.



Fig. 10: Scene VI, figure 22



Fig. 11: Scene I, figure 6

The sharp contrast between Elgar's portrayal of the two armies seems to contradict the view that Imperial Rome and Elgar's Britain were comparable. Were that so, Elgar surely would not have used *pomposamente* and such vigorous, even violent melodies and texts to characterise the Romans. Nor would he have given the British soldiers such depth of musical character. It seems more likely, then, that Elgar sought to demonstrate that the chivalry that was a hallmark of the nineteenth-century British Empire was already present centuries earlier when they banded together to defend themselves from outside invasion. Even though Rome ultimately prevailed, it was the British character that allowed them to create a superior empire, in which – as the final chorus put it – '... no slave shall be subjected, no trophy wet with tears ...'.

These two ideas – a chivalrous army and a refined commander – are themes that run throughout *Caractacus*, exemplifying Elgar's intention to laud the ideals of the British Empire. Such ideas downplay the power of the British army, emphasizing its role in creating responsible, valiant gentlemen for whom chivalry was a positive aspect of their society. Such values were clearly important, even if an army was required to instil them forcibly in Britain's colonies. By promoting these ideas in his cantata, Elgar carried favour with the tight-knit, upper-class circle of pro-imperialists of which he wanted to be a part.

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MUSIC REVIEWS

Elgar: The Overtures

Elgar Complete Edition Vol. 28, edited by Sarah Thompson (Rickmansworth: Elgar Society Edition Ltd., 2013)

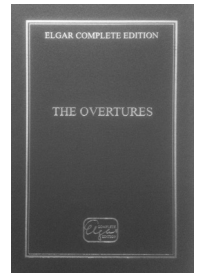
After sojourns among lesser-known treasures in recent issues, Volume 28 of the 'Complete Edition' returns to familiar territory. To the *Froissart*, *Cockaigne* and *In the South* overtures are added only the embryonic remains of the *Scottish* [sic] and *Lakes* overtures, and of *Cockaigne* No. 2 ('City of Dreadful Night').

This familiarity of content brings with it both pitfalls and responsibilities. Of the former the most obvious is that many will possess scores of the overtures, and the appearance of six pages of fragments is unlikely to create unprecedented demand: when Novello still took more than a passing interest in Elgar's music I never felt the need to buy a 'Complete Edition' volume when I already had a miniature score unless I was going to conduct a performance. Any edition that strives to be 'complete' will, inevitably, cover familiar ground while pursuing its aim of providing 'an authentic text of all the composer's surviving music'.

The edition as a whole 'is intended for both scholarly and practical use', and that is where I feel the editors have particularly onerous responsibilities. With the best will in the world orchestras are not going to replace their Novello and Boosey parts with new ones from Elgar Works, even if (and when) available, so it is incumbent upon editors to ensure that it is a relatively straightforward matter for the 'authentic text' to be reflected in what an orchestra is actually playing.

The first 'practicality' is to ensure that the layout of the score doesn't mean that the prime function of the conductor's left hand is the turning of pages. All ECE scores are now originated using 'Sibelius' software which, if left to its own devices, has a habit of being over-generous in terms of numbers of pages. *In the South* here takes 108 pages compared to Novello's 98, *Cockaigne* 80 compared to Boosey's 69: an entirely acceptable increase given the wonderful clarity of the result.

Serendipitously, shortly after I bought Volume 28 I found a second-hand copy of Norman del Mar's book, *Conducting Elgar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). This contains a wealth of sage advice not only on how to approach the music, but also on the Novello and Boosey editions of both the scores and parts. Of *Cockaigne* he says: 'For many decades the material was available on sale, but sadly this is no longer the case, and an eye has to be kept open in hire copies for misprints, which are not uncommon': of *In the South* 'The 4th horn here [11 bars after fig.15] should read B natural instead on B flat, one of several surprising misprints in a generally reliable edition'. Now I've played



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268 pp. + xxxiii.

all three overtures with amateur orchestras, and no conductor has ever pointed out or corrected a single misprint! The ECE edition ‘naturally’ has the correct horn note, reinforced by a natural sign in square brackets signifying a ‘minor editorial amendment’: but nowhere does it point out that this note (or any other) was incorrect in the Novello edition. Much of the aim of providing an authentic text for ‘practical use’ is surely lost if these corrections to the original editions are not clearly indicated?

And while my bonnet hummeth with bees, an editor has to be absolutely sure that he is right and Elgar wrong before adding his ‘minor editorial amendments’. In *Froissart*, for example, at 5 bars after [A] and in a similar place at 1 bar before [F], can we be totally confident that Elgar just forgot to mark a sforzando in the double bass part? All the other string parts have a sforzando at this point, so the assumption is at least reasonable. But if the editorial addition to the bass part is justified, why is there not a similar addition to the identical contra-bassoon part before [F] when that instrument alone among the wind band lacks a sforzando? Or maybe Elgar knew what he was doing all along: those unadorned double bass notes are reinforced in each case by timpani rolls which will produce a far more subtle effect than a herd of double basses crashing in with a sforzando. And the natural bowing of the phrase will result in a down bow (of itself a stronger stroke than an up bow) on that note anyway. Frankly, when neither I nor anyone else can be sure of Elgar’s intention here, surely the light touch of ‘leave well alone’ is the best editorial policy? We just can’t afford to second guess. There’s a passage for horns of six quavers in *Gerontius*, for example, that appears three times: twice it’s slurred four quavers and two; once two quavers and four. Is that careless penmanship, a thoughtful change, or merely a consequence of the fact that by the time he came to score the third occurrence, the first two were in a section of the score that was 100 miles away being used to produce the band parts?

As ever with the ‘Complete Edition’, in addition to the dots we get a comprehensive Foreword and an interesting selection of photographs. The paper used, while superb for the reproduction of the printed score, is less than ideal for the reproduction of photographs: I suspect there’s no real practical or economic solution to that. The Foreword gets off to a bad start by believing Elgar’s hype in his 1904 interview for *The Strand Magazine* that he ‘once ruled a score for the same instruments and with the same number of bars as Mozart’s G Minor Symphony, and in that framework wrote a symphony’. Mozart’s first movement is some 300 bars long: if you look at his manuscript, you see that Elgar completed just 17 before running out of steam.

Mention is made, too, of Elgar’s 1878 *Introductory Overture*, now presumed lost, written for a local group of Christy Minstrels organised by Elgar’s dentist, Robert Surman. But are we certain that it’s lost? On 13 August 1939 Carice recorded in her diary that she ‘Went to see Mrs. ___ (R. Surman’s daughter) & fetched Christy Minstrel music’. (Now I wonder where she put it?)

Reading through this review I realise I’ve dwelt on the negatives rather than reinforcing the many and wonderful positives of this and every other volume in the series. As a scholarly edition it is admirable: as a practical edition less so. As I’ve said before, Elgar wrote his music for us to hear and enjoy, not to look at. The printed score can only be the means to his end, and not an end in itself: we must ensure that the scholastic achievements of the edition are readily transferable to future performances.

Martin Bird

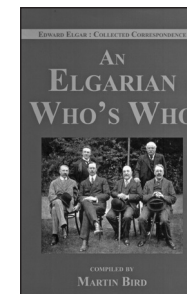
BOOK REVIEWS

Martin Bird (compiler): *An Elgarian Who’s Who*

This addition to the splendidly developing publication of Elgar diaries and correspondence series is without even the attenuated narrative of letter collections, which are ordered chronologically. The *Who’s Who* is a work to consult while reading the diaries and letters, when one is uncertain, as well one might be, of the identity of persons mentioned there. It follows that it’s not a book one can actually read through, which creates a problem for the reviewer. The material and its ordering are governed by the book’s conception; it is a mass of detail, ordered alphabetically. Accordingly there seems little to do but to potter about looking for mistakes, or lacunae. My search in this respect has (happily) been unprofitable; so it is best to start by congratulating Martin Bird for his imagination in conceiving such a thing and his outstanding diligence in carrying it through.

Who is in, and who is not? The policy is generously inclusive. The introduction suggests that musicians about whom information is readily obtainable elsewhere are omitted, although there are in fact entries for several (Fauré, Parry, Stanford, Sullivan, Strauss, and from a later generation Holst and Vaughan Williams). I am surely not the only one who will fail to recognize a very large proportion of the other people named within (also included are a number of dogs). It is good that some of the Elgars’ servants are acknowledged. Was one of their cooks really called Mrs Honeybun? It seems too good to be true; and one wonders why she only lasted a month at Severn House. Several other names might tempt the waggish, or simply those of us who marvel at the richness of European nomenclature (the letter G is particularly fruitful: Gasquet, Gleichen, Gloyne, Gore, Greffuhle, Grindrod, Groundsell, Gwatkin). Some names, too, will remind us of persons of a later generation that we know or used to know; I at least am wondering whether they are related. But to have details of descendants and relations would, again, have swollen the work-load, and the book, to unmanageable dimensions.

Mrs Honeybun is one of several brief entries marked with an asterisk, which signifies that even Martin Bird has failed to discover anything much other than their names and their location in the diaries. For instance, someone otherwise unknown might call at the Elgars’ home (one such is called merely ‘Miss Big’), or even come to tea. The Introduction explains that the asterisks are added ‘in the hope that readers may be able to provide further details’, to be posted in due course on the Society’s website. It seems likely, however, that most of what we need to know will already have been inserted between these hard covers; and some entries are likely to remain mysterious. With ‘Mr Crooning*’ Alice Elgar admits she may have got the name wrong (was he by chance a tenor?); and in 1919 Elgar lunched with an entry ‘H., Sir*’: ‘by the time Alice came to write up her diary, she had forgotten his surname’.



Rickmansworth, Elgar Works, 2014

562 pp + ix

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She must have forgotten his first name as well, since she would never refer to someone as (for instance) 'Sir Parry'. Maybe H stood for Henry, as in Sir Henry Hadow, who (we learn on the opposite page) had been knighted in 1918. I was tempted to suggest the H-rich Herbert Hamilton Harty, but he was knighted only in 1925.

Another assumption I made proved negative. 'Mrs Gray and Cecil' visited Forli in 1893; Elgar met them at the station and they stayed three hours. This sounds important, but it was not his mother bringing a young and promising musician called Cecil Gray to see the great man, for the composer and critic Cecil Gray (in adulthood no friend of Elgar's music) was born two years later. My error detection is negligible, but those who in 2007 attended a commemorative study day 50 years after the death of Edward J. Dent will be surprised to see a death-date of 1968. I wondered whether a trumpeter (a class prone to high blood pressure) had really lived to 97, but *Grove* confirms John Solomon's dates as 1856–1953. Adjacent to him is the pianist Solomon who, according to Bird, played the Chaikovsky's first concerto in public at the age of seven; *Grove* more cautiously says eight. It would be impressive even at 18.

Returning to Grays (there are nine entries with that name), that Elgar called one of them (not to his face) 'that fool Gray' is tactfully passed over.¹ This is one sign of Martin Bird's rigorous exclusion of the anecdotal, or of anything extraneous to the matter in hand, which is identification. The risk of a certain dryness, acknowledged in the introduction, had to be taken, as to include every interesting detail would make an already substantial volume unwieldy. Thus he manages to include Beatrice Harrison without mentioning nightingales; Elgar's first fiancée Helen Weaver figures in an entry headed with her brother's name, without her married name or her voyage to New Zealand (nor are we reminded of Lady Mary Lygon's trip to New South Wales; Variation (***) remains open to speculation). Consistency is virtually impossible: I noted that while Joseph Bennett's authorship of the programme booklet for *King Olaf* is mentioned, Herbert Thompson's rather longer one for *Caractacus* is not, and nor, indeed, are Jaeger's substantial 'analyses' of the later oratorios.

Where to put people with more than one name? For our benefit, Martin Bird has included 'Dorabella', but the entry directs us to 'Penny'. We are also directed there from the entry on her eventual husband, one of two Richard Powells (the other being Binyon's brother-in-law). I had not known that the opening trio of *Così fan tutte* ('La mia Dorabella') was a glee-club favourite, but I suspect it's not quite right to say that Elgar called Miss Dora Penny 'Dorabella' 'after the comic trio' rather than after the character in Mozart's opera. But when one is reduced to niggles like that, one has really run out of reviewing steam. It remains to say that this book is sure to become a

1 Letter to Jaeger, 29 August 1898, in Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, p. 87; the context is Elgar's frustration at lack of rehearsal time allowed in Leeds for *Caractacus*. The reference is to Alan Gray, who may have been favoured because he was a Yorkshireman.

valued companion to all Elgarians, and to regret that so many questions about these people must end in doubt. As, indeed, does the alphabetical section, for the final entry, asterisked although she came twice to tea at Forli, is a 'Mademoiselle Zweifel'.

Julian Rushton

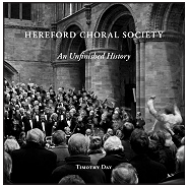
Did you ever wonder about Olga Isabella Nethersole (1866-1951)? Probably not but, and here is the point about this book, you might need to check the name in relation to Sir Edward because ... well just because her name 'rings a bell' somewhere in your mind. Well, this book will tell you that she worked as a nurse during the Great War and established the People's League of Health. Nethersole wrote to Elgar in 1928 asking him to set a poem for the League. This is hardly important; but this entry is a reflection of the thoroughness with which Martin Bird has compiled this remarkable book that will have to stay close to any writer about the composer in the future.

Opening the book at random I find I can sort out the different Legges who were involved in Elgar's life either in a large or small way: there was Walter (of EMI), Sir Henry the Secretary to the Order of Merit and the music critic, Robin. Wisely Martin has grouped families together such as the Atkins, Rodewalds, Webbs and Probyns. Who are the Probyns you may well ask? I had not heard of them either but you will find the answer in these 562 pages. The book begins with Abbot-Anderson, an important doctor in Elgar's life, and ends with Mademoiselle Zweifel who may be from Ruritania for all I know. What I do know now is that she came to tea at Forli in 1892!

Martin Bird states that the volume 'lists every person mentioned in Edward's and Alice's diaries and every person for whom correspondence with Edward and Alice is known to survive.' Just reading that and the later statement: 'A supplementary directory is planned to cover those mentioned in Carice Elgar's diaries of the 1920s and 1930s who do not fit the criteria for the present volume' is witness to his energy, determination and contribution to Elgar scholarship. In my own attempts to engage in this field I have, already, found this volume to be of inestimable value. I found one small error (by chance), for no book of this nature can be 100% accurate, but, knowing the quality of Martin Bird's research and work I doubt that there are many more.

If you want to know a little more about Ethel Hobday (the pianist who made the first recording of the Piano Quintet) it is all there. Opposite this entry is that for Mr. Hogarth. Apparently he 'played for Carice's dance at Severn House in February 1919'. Happily Alice 'thought him "very good – quite different from common dance music".' So 'that's all good then' as is this splendid and unique piece of research.

Andrew Neill



Hereford Choral
Society, 2013

80 pp

ISBN
978-0-9927781-0-1

Timothy Day: *Hereford Choral Society, An Unfinished History*

It would be easy to imagine a history of a choral society to be a rather dry document, yet Timothy Day (Vice-Chairman of the West Midlands branch of the Elgar Society), while being extremely scholarly, has a delightfully light touch which makes his new book anything but boring. This work was commissioned by the Hereford Choral Society, which has done a truly superb job with its production, and I was amazed to hear that the manuscript had been completed in only a year. Printed on lovely thick paper, and copiously illustrated, I also feel this book to be a real ‘bargain’ at £12.

The thing that interested me most was seeing the huge extent to which attitudes towards music making have changed during a comparatively short time. Apparently during the nineteenth century gentlemen were ‘more ready to encourage their workmen and servants to sing than their sons and daughters’. Was this unique to Britain? The same would surely not have been true in, say, France or Germany! The First World War, however, devastating though it was, clearly brought changes, for Percy Hull is quoted as saying in 1920 that the members of the Society ‘would find nothing under the sun to take the place of music’. He said to them that in his prisoner-of-war camp in Germany ‘men went mad’. Putting on plays and games helped keep them sane, but above all else ‘it was music, making music and listening to music, that calmed and inspired and gave hope to his fellow prisoners’. Nowadays we know of course how useful music can also be in therapy.

So much has been said and written about our Society’s hero having had ‘a chip on his shoulder’. I am glad Timothy Day says that Elgar ‘may have been hyper-sensitive’, not that he was, because I personally have always believed that he had very good reason for feeling discriminated against on account of his background and the ‘lack of education’ caused by his family’s financial constraints. Reading this book puts what Elgar suffered in context, and what an incredibly prejudiced context it was!

I now appreciate more than ever how privileged we in the twenty-first century are to be surrounded by so much talent and to have so many opportunities to go to truly superb concerts – not only in Hereford. Timothy has rightly entitled his book ‘An Unfinished History’; I am sure that the Hereford Choral Society will well outlive our grandchildren as well as ourselves, continuing from strength to strength.

Will Gloucester and Worcester now be clamouring to have their stories documented?

Ann Merivale

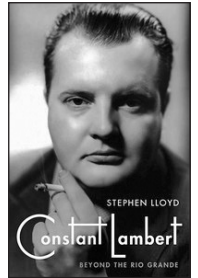
Stephen Lloyd: *Constant Lambert, Beyond The Rio Grande*

In 1947, the journalist C.B. Rees wrote of Constant Lambert in *The Penguin Music Magazine* that Lambert was ‘too familiar a figure in our musical life to need a “biography” in these pages’ and mentioned the conductor’s ‘powerful constitution’. With the hindsight of 70 years, it is bitterly ironic to note that Lambert died just five years after that article at the age of only 45, and that he is nowadays only occasionally glimpsed by most of us flowing past on the great *Rio Grande*, as it rolls down to the sea, with only balletomanes aware of his enduring contribution to the ballet in this country.

Yet this was the man about whose death Hubert Foss (*quondam* Head of the Oxford University Press Music Department) wrote ‘I do not exaggerate when I urge you to regard this brilliant young man’s death as comparable historically in English music to the death of Purcell at the age of 36’.

Two questions therefore confront this reviewer: ‘Why do we want a new biography?’ and ‘What has Lambert to do with Elgar?’. To answer the second question first, Lambert began to flourish as a very young man during the First World War, was immersed in the Ballets Russes phenomenon, had cosmopolitan and perceptive enthusiasms, absorbed an astonishing range of knowledge across a wide spectrum of art forms and lived through the death and reputational decline of Elgar. Far from dismissing the great composer, however, Lambert through his roles as conductor, critic, BBC broadcaster and journalist supported and admired the older musician, and his pronouncements on Elgar’s death and subsequently have proved to be perceptive and discriminating. As some correspondence concerning *Rio Grande* attests, Elgar admired the new work and Lambert was grateful for his kind words. In return, he lauded Elgar for not being ‘rustic’ at a time when a generation of composers busied itself with the English folk idiom. His admiration, his perception and his quixotic and often inconsistent views are exemplified in his comments on Elgar’s First Symphony: he wrote of the ‘frankly appalling melody that starts off the symphony’, he opined it was not as great as *Falstaff* or the ‘Enigma’ Variations, but he also felt the symphony was the quintessence of Elgar’s output, liked conducting it, and mentioned its ‘absolute mastery of technique, the sureness of conception, and the way in which the themes instead of being repeated in a set mechanical frame are really given a new and more vital significance as the work proceeds’ (whilst noting that others may find it ‘repellent in thought and colour’.

So we Elgarians can note that the opinions of this man about Elgar might be reasonably trusted and we general musical enthusiasts might reasonably infer that a biography of Lambert will provide us with a wealth of knowledge about post-Elgarian musical life in Britain. In this, the volume does not disappoint: if Lambert to you is simply a footnote or a name mentioned in the context of more famous figures, then this most handsomely produced book will be a revelation. It certainly provides exhaustive, and occasionally exhausting, detail about Lambert himself, and is furnished with a detailed index, list of his works, discography, iconography, chronology, summary of his broadcasts



Boydell Press, 2014

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and journalism and other appendices of interest. There are even examples of his witty and boisterous limericks that give a glimpse of substance to the comments from people on his brilliant and amusing conversation.

Backed by his near omniscience of the times in which Lambert and his friend William Walton flourished (cf. his *William Walton, Muse of Fire*, also published by the Boydell Press in 2001), Stephen Lloyd takes us on the journey of Lambert's life, packing in the work and artistic, personal and social context of this English cosmopolitan. Well researched and well written, it provides more than you might ever thought you wanted to know of the man whom Arthur Bliss felt was 'almost kaleidoscopic in his talent ... whose influence on English music is liberal and compelling'.

You will have noticed that I have yet to answer my question 'Why do we want a new biography?'. Despite being readable and of interest to the general and specialist reader alike, this fine biography enables us to put Lambert's life and achievements objectively in context. During his life he absorbed, appreciated, described and took part in many of the kaleidoscopic influences, breakthroughs and currents in different art forms of the first half of the Twentieth Century. As a young man he was recognised for his extraordinary abilities and knowledge way beyond his years. In an age of supremely talented musicians, Gordon Jacob stated 'He was the most brilliant musician I have known in my lifetime, I am bound to say. Extraordinary chap', even if Stephen Lloyd notes Lambert lacked that 'single mindedness [through which] Walton ultimately was to emerge as the finer composer'.

Lloyd therefore puts the man in context. Perhaps he was over-lionised in his youth; perhaps he has been unfairly neglected and perhaps belittled since his death (*pace* Foss's encomium quoted above). He won't, however, be the first to enjoy and suffer such a swing in opinion. Another English composer underwent the same fate. Of his opus 1, the respected critic, Henry Fothergill Chorley, wrote 'There has been no such first appearance in our time'... [it may]... 'mark an epoch in a man's life; and, what is of more universal consequence, it may mark an epoch in English music, or we shall be greatly disappointed. Years on years have elapsed since we have heard a work by so young an artist so full of promise.'

And where in the pantheon of English music was that young composer in Constant Lambert's era, and where is he now? His name, by the way, was Arthur Sullivan, and he does not feature in Stephen Lloyd's index, nor was probably anything more than mentioned in the broadcasts and journalism Lambert published, no more than 50 years after Sullivan's death.

Steven Halls

CD REVIEWS

Symphony No. 2

Staatskapelle Berlin conducted by Daniel Barenboim

Barenboim has always been an interesting if not always a compelling interpreter of Elgar. His first recording of the Second Symphony, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1972, positioned him only slightly outside a mainstream of Elgar conducting (a mainstream capacious enough to carry Boult, Barbirolli, Solti, and Elgar himself), but its recorded sound is rather drab, and as with his First Symphony recording, the tempo is sometimes heaved about in bewildering ways: it is in no sense a favourite recording. This new recording with the Berlin Staatskapelle, with which Barenboim has forged a relationship and a performing style something like that of the old Berlin Philharmonic with Furtwängler, is altogether a different experience: richer, more complex, more individual, and ultimately more successful. Even superficially there are differences. The recording is cleaner and more transparent than before, and the orchestral playing in Berlin even more virtuoso than the L.P.O. Indeed, there are moments in this recording which sound more beautiful than any I have ever heard in this symphony. Barenboim's tempos are (even) brisker now than on his first recording, although sometimes the difference is, in terms of bald numbers, not large: for instance, only around fifteen seconds are clipped off the slow movement, relative to the earlier recording. Throughout, there is plenty of Barenboim's Furtwängleresque rhythmic freedom on display, but experienced Elgarians will find in this performance relatively little either of Elgar's scrupulously notated rubato or of the traditional ambrosia that his familiar interpreters pour in.

The new recording's qualities take time to come into focus. Barenboim establishes an unemotional mood as seems possible in the extrovert opening movement. The rhythms are all well sprung, the invigorating counterpoint joyfully projected, and the big structural moments, such as the blaze of dissonant brass immediately before the recapitulation, are all well considered; but for me, the total effect was underwhelming. Although the tempo presses on – Solti is reserved by comparison – I had expected more of what Elgar tells us to expect here, the 'spirit of delight'. Only gradually did it dawn on me not only that this (relative) emotional understatedness would characterize the performance of the whole symphony, but also that there would be something very powerful about Barenboim's interpretative decision, conscious or not, to deny to fulfil the expectations raised by this symphony.

This symphony often seems quasi-Baroque in its fixation on affect. The first movement is, except for the development section, boisterous and pugnacious; the slow movement an epic of grief; the scherzo nervous and ultimately febrile; the finale a touch pompous, but self-consciously so, sensitive to the fugitive quality of its own fake confidence, and eventually –



DECCA

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well, make of the ending what you will. But even these most basic qualities of the movements are challenged by Barenboim's interpretation. The slow movement is perhaps the most arresting conception of all, and it is worth pondering the effect of a key moment of it.

Barenboim is, for me, the greatest living conductor of music expressive of noble mourning, whether for Siegfried or for Beethoven's hero. Most conductors recognize something of this quality in the 'funeral march' of Elgar's Second Symphony, but Barenboim apparently does not. Listening to this movement I missed familiar beauties and strongly wanted to resist the pressure of the beat, which I consistently felt was too fast. But I think that is the point. Barenboim simply doesn't feel the music that way. In his new version there is still somehow a strong sense of loss – and bewilderment in those breathtaking moments of stillness, when all but the strings disappear: passages which Tovey said sounded almost as if Bruckner had learnt how to phrase – but it is a loss for which we cannot stop to grieve.

I have already mentioned that Barenboim takes the movement at a rather brisk pace. The funeral cortege might only take fifteen seconds fewer than in his earlier recording, but it feels appreciably faster now; and if we consider that this is a full two *minutes* quicker than Colin Davis's recent recording with the London Symphony Orchestra, which by no means drags, it is clear that the normal ceremonial of this movement, the emotional centre of the symphony, is being rushed for some reason. And it is not simply a matter of tempo. The build-up to the big brass theme at 5:25 is less intense, the strings more reserved and objective, than one would expect. Barenboim presses on through moments where most conductors, including himself in his earlier recording, hold back tenderly. When it comes, the brass chorale is less warm and sonorous than we usually hear, too. But for me, the moment which changes the impression not only of this movement but of the whole symphony is the subtly orchestrated preparation for that chorale (starting at 4:11). In his earlier recording Barenboim made this sound like everyone else does, a yearning chromatic rise, repeated, with delicate string arpeggios seeming to pick out points of light that glisten on the surface of a lake. But now the light has gone and instead it is as if we are being troubled, bitten, stung, by a swarm of insects. This twitchy, actually slightly frightening, impression is the continuation of a nervous tic established in the music in the development of the first movement. I have never heard this mosquito quality before but it is absolutely there in the score, which Barenboim has meticulously observed. For me, it is in this moment that Barenboim's whole unsettling conception becomes clear.

His is ultimately an extremely disturbing performance, compellingly so, and it persuades me that the symphony is even more unnerving than I had previously thought, its optimism more shallow and more pockmarked by the history of psychological malaise. I have never previously noticed so much nightmarish, mechanistic hammering in the orchestration. It is there in the weird climax of the Rondo, of course, which Elgar described in frightful terms evocative of suicidal fear; but Barenboim, who never misses a Nibelung, has

found it in the other movements too. The rondo is in fact perhaps the best performance on record. Elgar becomes here a Viennese composer, sounding often like Mahler and occasionally like Webern. This movement always seems in a sense to be pushing the slow movement aside, but here the effect is heightened. It is as if the Remembrance Day crowd, having already been hurried by a clock-watching master of ceremonies, were brusquely cleared off Whitehall in order to let a goods lorry through. By contrast, the finale is more assured than it often can be, and the final pages of 'sunset glow', pining for empire, or whatever, are more touching for the fact that this succour, normally given in the slow movement, has been so long delayed.

So what does it all amount to, and can it be recommended as a recording? The second question is easier to answer than the first. This is a unique recording, challenging and rewarding. I doubt that many Elgarians will return to it as frequently as other recordings such as Andrew Davis's or Barbirolli's, but hearing it will sharpen the awareness of the beauties of the other recordings, and what a listener feels that 'the work' really 'is'. When a new interpretation challenges what we take to be the basic premise of a piece of music, and does it as persuasively as Barenboim's new recording does, it is worth a hearing. Listening to this recording might make the comfort of old performances feel more welcome, or it may make them seem unreal, and so limit their potential to soothe. So do listen, but *caveat emptor*.

J.P.E. Harper-Scott

Elgar: Sonata for Violin and Piano in E minor
Strauss: Sonata for Violin and Piano in E flat
Steven Moeckel, violin; Paula Fan, piano



Close your eyes and think of Arizona. What comes to mind? Merciless sun? Saguaro cactus? The Grand Canyon? Elgar?

Elgar? Yes; Steven Moeckel, the leader (sorry, Concertmaster) of the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, a German-American virtuoso, is a committed Elgarian. I'm ashamed to say that his is a new name to me, but his playing of the violin concerto has been widely praised for its energy and intensity. Here, with his long-term musical partner the Chinese pianist Paula Fan, Moeckel gives us his interpretations of the sonatas by Elgar and his friend Richard Strauss. They are well worth listening to, the Strauss perhaps more than the Elgar.

Strauss's sonata of 1887 antedates that of Elgar by 30 years. It is unashamedly the work of a young man passing through chamber music on his way to mastery of the operatic and orchestral genres, already with *Don Juan* in his sights. Elgar's, on the other hand, is one of a handful of late small-scale works into which, most of his creative labour accomplished, he distils the experience of a lifetime. So what we want from a performance of the Strauss is a display of the confidence of youth; from the Elgar, the serene wisdom of maturity. Steven Moeckel, we can tell, is a young man, still the

Steven Moeckel
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right side of 40.

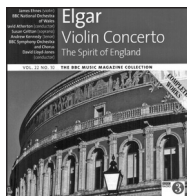
Elgar indicates that the opening of his *Allegro* first movement is to be played *risoluto*. Moeckel hits the ground not just running but racing. It is as if he takes *risoluto* to mean ‘with gritted teeth’, whereas in the context of this contemplative inward-looking work I feel it should suggest nothing more forceful than ‘confidently’ or ‘straightforwardly’, in contrast to the tentative soliloquising of much of the subsequent material. He makes a good many changes of tempo, more than are indicated by Elgar’s occasional *poco allargando* markings, and he seldom plays quieter than a solid *mezzo piano*. The effect is to render banal the *tranquillo* second subject where a wistful melody is picked out by the first quaver of slurred groups of four. What could be dreamy and introspective if played *pianissimo* sounds forthright and prosaic when done *mezza voce*. In the second movement, too, exaggerated changes of speed disrupt what should be a meditative dialectic between what is certain and what is to be questioned. The last movement, on the other hand, I think is exemplary in pace, mood and interpretation. Good but not special has to be my verdict overall.

In the Strauss, however, Moeckel hits top form – a young man rejoicing in a young man’s music and impeccably supported by Fan’s secure musicianship. It is apparent in the sonata’s opening declamatory passage that this is an outward-facing work. Its depths, paradoxically, are all on the surface, and Moeckel’s fine technique shows them off perfectly. In the luscious melodies of the last movement particularly Strauss’s ability to make two instruments sound like a full orchestra is admirably and sometimes movingly displayed.

The technical quality of this recording is impeccable. To my ear, the tone of Moeckel’s instrument (by the French maker Lupot, dated 1817) sounds a little tight in the lower register, reducing the contrast between its muted and *naturale* voices. But there is some fine playing here, and – if I can say this without being patronising – the artists deserve to be heard.

Roger Neighbour

Members interested in acquiring this disc should contact Steven Moeckel at moeckelsteven@hotmail.com



BBC Music
BBCMM372

The Spirit of England; Violin Concerto

James Ehnes (violin), BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by David Atherton

Susan Gritton (soprano), Andrew Kennedy (tenor), BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus conducted by David Lloyd-Jones

Strange bedfellows, but nonetheless welcome for that. The Canadian violinist James Ehnes recorded the Concerto live at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in May 2007 with the Philharmonia and Andrew Davis, a performance that elicited

suitably ‘rave’ reviews. This performance was recorded at the Richard Hickox Memorial Concert at Swansea’s Brangwyn Hall in February 2009 and is, simply, among the greatest I have ever heard. Ehnes’s technique is impeccable, so strong in fact that there is never a moment in which one notices it rather than the music. In an accompanying interview he responds to a question about ‘the secret of a successful performance’ by saying ‘you mustn’t get into the musical equivalent of stopping to look at every tree and missing the forest ... It’s all about finding the right combination of a large shape and some excruciatingly wonderful moments’. And he does – supremely – and is supported by some equally wonderful orchestral playing, a conductor in total sympathy with the music and Ehnes’s view of it, and, not least, an ideally balanced recording that gives equal weight to both soloist and orchestra. Maybe it was the special circumstances of a memorial concert for a much loved musician – I cannot say – but somehow there is a spirit in this performance that transcends the mere playing of notes. It is as if Elgar himself was silently directing proceedings. Elgar performances do not come better than this, and I urge you to hear it.

The coupling is David Lloyd-Jones’s fine reading of *The Spirit of England*, recorded in The Colosseum, Watford, in February 2006. Astute readers may notice that this is in fact a reissue of the Dutton recording, reviewed enthusiastically and at length by Andrew Neill in the *Journal* of November 2006. This seems to have escaped the notice of the editor of the CD’s booklet, who recommends the Dutton issue as further listening ...

But it is the Violin Concerto that’s essential listening here. I realise that by the time this review appears the July issue of *BBC Music Magazine* will have gone from the shelves, but there is a ‘back issues service’, which can be contacted by telephone at +44 (0)844 826 7350 or by email at bbcmusic@dovetailservices.com.

Richard Wiley

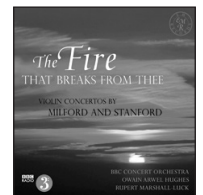
Stanford: Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 162

Milford: Violin Concerto in G minor, Op. 47

Holst: Walt Whitman Overture, Op. 7

Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin), BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Owain Arwel Hughes

That enterprising lady Em Marshall-Luck has done it again: the first recordings of two British violin concertos from between the wars. The cover claims these to be their first performances, though the booklet details two broadcasts of the Milford, the last in the 1940s, and a ‘very recent’ public performance of the Stanford. By definition the music is going to be new to orchestra and conductor, and this shows especially in the performance of Holt’s *Walt Whitman* overture of 1899, which I’d not only never heard before but had never heard of before. It is very neatly played, though orchestra and conductor seem content with presenting all the right notes in all the right



EM RECORDS
EMR CD023

places rather than adding that extra touch of flair in pointing and phrasing that would give the performance a much-needed lift. The concertos, of course, have the advantage of a soloist who has lived with the music for rather longer, and with a greater realisation of their potential. The Milford was, in fact, edited by the soloist for publication.

Stanford's second Violin Concerto dates from 1918. His first was written in 1899 for his 'friend Enrique Arbos' and played by Kreisler at the 1904 Leeds Festival, where it was rehearsed by the composer immediately before Elgar took the rostrum to go through *In the South*. Is it too fanciful to imagine in its slow movement and cadenza and in Kreisler's playing the spark for Elgar's own concerto?

The Second Concerto was never orchestrated by Stanford: just abandoned as a completed violin and piano score. It has been orchestrated with considerable acumen by Jeremy Dibble. I can only guess at Stanford's reasons for ceasing work on it, but one may well be a realisation that he had done it all before, and rather better, in 1899. Listen to the ease and flow of Anthony Marwood's magnificent recording (Hyperion, CDA67208) of the First Concerto: by comparison the Second seems rather hard work, laboured even. This impression is not helped, it must be said, by a closeness in the balance of the solo violin which condemns Rupert Marshall-Luck's playing to a pretty constant mezzo-forte. But the concerto fully deserves to be heard and I for one am indebted to all concerned with the production of this disc for making this possible.

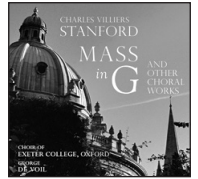
Incidentally, by one of the wonders of the internet, a scan of Stanford's violin and piano manuscript may be downloaded, free of charge, from the Petrucci Music Library.

Robin Milford (1903-1959) was the son of Sir Humphrey Milford, founder of the Music Department of the Oxford University Press, and his Violin Concerto dates from 1937. If you were to ask me what the Concerto was like I'd say 'English pastoral with a touch of thunder' but add 'buy it and listen for yourself, and be sure to listen with the well-written essay by the soloist to hand which will keep you on track'. If pressed further to name names, then I'd say 'Finzi with a touch of Vaughan Williams': both great friends of Milford. The performance seems to me to be outstanding, and the most committed of any on the disc. The balance, too, while still favouring the soloist, does not do so at the expense of orchestral detail. To my ears the work has its *longueurs*, and there were times when I wondered whether 'the extensive cuts that are indicated in the manuscript' were being observed: but do not for a moment assume that your ears will react in the same way! If you are interested in British music of the last century – and as a member of the Elgar Society you probably are – then this very attractive disc is most worthy of your consideration.

Martin Bird

Stanford: Mass in G, Op. 46
Parry: from *Songs of Farewell; Jerusalem; Dear Lord and Father of mankind; I was glad* (1911 version)
O'Neill: *Flyht*

Betty Makhariinsky (soprano), Caitlin Goreing (contralto), Tom Castle (tenor), Will Dawes (bass), Tim Muggerridge (organ), The Choir of Exeter College, Oxford, The Stapeldon Sinfonia directed by George de Voil



EM RECORDS

EMR CD021

Knowing, as I hope you do by now, my enthusiasm for all things by that great all-rounder Stanford, you will not be surprised to hear of my immediate attraction to a CD entitled 'Charles Villiers Stanford – Mass in G and other choral works' performed by the Choir of Exeter College, Oxford.

I was in for a double surprise when it arrived: the first was that the Mass was a full-blown orchestral setting (the Stapeldon Sinfonia didn't get a mention in the advertisement), and the second was that the 'other choral works' were not by Stanford (something else that somehow escaped mention).

In the event I was delighted to find that the disc included Parry's *Songs of Farewell*: distinctly less than delighted to find that the last of the six, *Lord, let me know mine end*, was omitted. Why on earth would anyone choose to do that? It's by a country mile the finest of the six, and anyone wanting a recording of the *Songs of Farewell* is not going to buy one that is incomplete. Its inclusion would have taken the disc over the magic 80 minute mark, but that could have been rectified by sacrificing *Jerusalem*, for example, or, dare I say it, Nicholas O'Neill's *Flyht*, a first recording. Now, truly, I've nothing against either Nicholas O'Neill or *Flyht*, which he composed in 2013, but what on earth is it doing on a disc of Stanford and Parry? To me it smacks of programming of the 'I know it's modern and people won't like it, but it's only short and if we slip it in amongst the more familiar stuff it won't be noticed' variety. My objection to its inclusion is not a comment on the quality of the music, but purely because stylistically it slams into the ears, without so much as a 'by your leave', seconds after the gentle conclusion of Stanford's Mass.

But let us consider what we actually have. For starters, we have an absolutely tip-top chamber choir, singing magnificently throughout. I don't think I would ever have bought a disc purely to listen to a Parry hymn, even one I had had at my wedding, but its performance is simply stunning: confident, intelligent and well-balanced singing by a first-rate group who both understand and are able to convey the meaning of the words they are singing. Their conductor, George de Voil, is something of a find, too. He may be young, but his innate musicianship, his feeling for line, for balance, for phrasing, for the placing of chords, is exciting. We'll surely hear much more from this team, and deservedly so.

Stanford's Mass, of which this is the first recording, dates from 1892, when the composer was 40. It is predominantly gentle in feeling – an enticing blend of the contemplative and the pastoral – and was written for liturgical rather than concert use. This gentleness is reinforced by the Stapeldon Sinfonia, budding

professionals from the London music schools and the University of Oxford, who play with a reticence, especially in the small string section, that provides a cushion rather than a sense of direction and purpose in support of the singers.

A flawed disc in many ways, but nevertheless one to which I find myself returning again and again. Bravo to Em Marshall-Luck for her enterprise in promoting it.

Martin Bird



NAXOS

8.573191

Vaughan Williams: Piano Quintet in C minor, *Romance* for Viola and Piano, Quintet in D, Six Studies in English Folk Song

London Soloists Ensemble (Lorraine McAslan (violin), Sarah-Jane Bradley (viola), Karine Georgian (’cello), John Lenehan (piano), Anthony Pike (clarinet)), Chris West (double bass), Tim Jackson (french horn)

This CD was recorded in the Music Room at Champs Hill, Coldwaltham, a mere five miles from Flexham Park and its ‘sad dispossessed trees’. I mention this only because I was struck, in this performance, by the similarity of mood between the first movement of Elgar’s Piano Quintet of 1918 and that of Vaughan Williams, written fifteen years earlier. It is, like the majority of the music on this disc, a relatively early work, and until the late 1990s an embargo was placed on its performance.

It is written, not for string quartet and piano, but for the forces employed by Schubert in the ‘Trout’ (a fact for which many a double bass player will be eternally grateful), and, as the liner note says, reveals ‘a young creative artist attempting to establish his own musical language’. Curious, then, that the affinity of mood with the later Elgar Quintet is so marked. It does mean, however, that those who love the Elgar should also enjoy the Vaughan Williams, especially at Naxos’s modest price. The bass player, too, is modest, coming to the fore only in his few solo passages: the resulting balance means that one rarely hears a firmly grounded chord unless the bottom note is doubled in the left hand of the piano.

The Quintet in D, for violin, ’cello, clarinet, horn and piano, is an even earlier work, dating from 1898. It is light and thoroughly engaging, though one would be hard-pressed to identify its composer – Brahms, for example, seems to have been particularly generous in donating off cuts from the slow movement of the Fourth Symphony.

The lovely *Romance* is beautifully played by Sarah-Jane Bradley, and the delightful ‘Studies in English Folk Song’ are delightfully played in the version for clarinet and piano.

Whilst it must be admitted that the earlier Hyperion double-CD by The Nash Ensemble of all the early chamber works contains more polished performances, better recorded, that set costs nearly four times as much as the present CD, which deserves to be investigated by all who are drawn to Elgar’s Quintet.

Martin Bird

LETTERS

Reaction to ‘Elgar’s Dream Children’

As might be imagined, Lynn Richmond Greene’s article in the April ‘Journal’ generated a considerable and entirely positive response.

From Robin Taylor

I’d like to thank Lynn Richmond Greene for her article in April’s *Journal*.

As well as illuminating it was kind and tactful, and it knocked firmly on the head one or two speculations of mine. It made me more sympathetic to both husband and wife.

Probably like all Elgarians I’ve long believed that amongst the greatest virtues of his music is a deep tenderness, an unsurpassed understanding of the ‘insidest inside’ of the human heart. Now, with some knowledge of perhaps one of its most important sources, I believe it more than ever.

From Richard Abram

Congratulations to Lynn Richmond Greene – and indeed to the *Journal* – on the article about the ‘Dream Children’: a really sustained and brilliant piece of personal and musical detective work; humane and moving, too.

May I add one tiny observation? As Ms Greene says, it is not necessary to know what the initials AWB/Awb actually stand for. But besides the Elgars’ familial use of the language, there are one or two direct pointers in the diary entries (e.g. ‘Braut’, ‘nicht’) that suggest the letters represent German.

I have discussed this point with my long-time German translator Gery Bramall. She makes the possibly brilliant suggestion that the letters stand for ‘Alice wieder Braut’: that is, Alice once more virgin, referring perhaps in part to the blood of the bridal night. (She thought unlikely any direct German equivalent of ‘Alice’s womanly bleeding’.)

From Kevin Allen

No doubt there will be various reactions to the article in the April *Journal*, ‘Elgar’s Dream Children’. For my part it underlines the value and importance of a complete publication of Alice’s writings in prose and verse, towards a greater understanding of the lady herself, and the wider cause of Elgar studies; a project worthy of the Society’s support.

A number of other letters and comments have been received which were not intended for publication. Brief quotations from some of these are given below.

‘I am enormously impressed by her research and scholarship.’

‘This is one of the most important and good things ever to appear in the *Journal*.’

‘The tone is absolutely right and wise.’

‘... a beautifully written piece and one that, perhaps, could only have been written by a woman.’

‘I’ve just finished reading the beautiful essay in your *Journal*, and it gives me a new dimension on Elgar, Alice and Carice ... The meaning behind AWB is very clear to me, even if the exact equivalent in words is not. (I wonder if the W is simply womb). However intimate the story behind this, knowing it throws so much new light on the marriage – and on *Dream Children*.’

From Geoff Sansome

Claines churchyard

Edward Elgar’s links with Claines Church are well known in as much as his maternal grandparents’ grave is in the churchyard. But another link has now been established that brings to life an old story about Elgar.

There are numerous references in Elgar biographies to the time when, as a boy, he would fill his pockets with bread and cheese and go out into the countryside to study musical scores of the great composers such as Beethoven. It has been believed that one of Elgar’s favourite haunts for his score reading was in Claines Churchyard, sitting on a tomb by his grandparents’ grave.

In a letter to ‘Windflower’ from 1910, Alice Elgar says: ‘E. & I have just been out to a fine old Church & seeing the tomb of “Helen Leslie” early last century but E. used to think it a pretty name & used to walk out of the town with a Score perhaps Pastoral Symph. & sit on the stone & read it’

I have been puzzled for years as to the whereabouts of Helen Leslie’s tomb and whether it was at Claines. The graveyard has some fine altar tombs which would be great for sitting on, but none of them provided any clue to Helen Leslie. All the graves were researched and documented in the 1970s also but there was nothing from that time. But over the years some of the tombs have obviously become broken or moved and there was a significant ‘tidy up’ in the 1950s.

Fortuitously a gentleman named Vincent also took some records of Claines churchyard in 1874, and buried away in the Worcestershire Record Office are his notebooks. He made reference to a grave with the name of Leslie on it. On researching this I found that Helen was buried in the family vault of one Reverend Gregory Boraston, Helen’s father, a former Vicar of Broughton Hackett who was buried in Claines in 1851 with his first wife and four of his six children who died before him. Helen, his youngest daughter, died at the age of 16. Originally this was an altar tomb with a large top slab and sides. Only the top slab exists now and this has been laid flat with the ground. It is now very difficult to read, but we can now categorically put some substance behind the tale of Elgar sitting on a tomb in Claines and point to the exact tomb and location.

From John Knowles

Daniel Barenboim and the Elgar Symphonies

In the early days of the London branch, the committee met in EMI’s offices in Wardour Street. I remember one evening Douglas Putney, a member of the committee and EMI’s Classical Promotions Manager, telling us with some amusement that when Daniel Barenboim had been to see them that afternoon to discuss future projects and had suggested that even though his conducting career was in its infancy he would like to make records of the Elgar symphonies, they had responded that he should come back and see them in a few decades when he would have more experience. So it was that within the year Barenboim began his series of Elgar records for CBS with the Second Symphony, its first recording not conducted by Elgar, Boult or Barbirolli. I fancy to suggest that not many would have ventured to suggest in the early 1970s that, four decades on, Barenboim would be recording the Elgar Symphonies for Decca in Berlin, let alone that EMI would no longer exist!

RECORDING NOTES ...

As we have seen, Elgar's first visit to a recording studio (21 January 1914) produced *Carissima*: a modest result by comparison with the mammoth enterprise which preceded it in November 1913 when, for the first time, an eminent, named conductor (Arthur Nikisch) recorded a major work (Beethoven's Fifth) more or less complete and as written and with a famous, named orchestra (the Berlin Philharmonic). But the experimental recording of *Carissima* was considered a success, the record was put on sale and by May 1914 Elgar had been 'signed up' as an exclusive Gramophone Company artiste. He remained with the Gramophone Company (trading as 'HMV') for the rest of his life; he attended functions, made records and on countless paper record sleeves in 1927 he endorsed the latest range of wind-up machines as follows: 'Sir Edward Elgar, O.M., says "Without doubt the most important invention in the history of the Gramophone"'. But this is looking ahead. He had first to prove himself in the studio.

On 26 June 1914, he was driven from Severn House with Lady Elgar to the new studio at Hayes, where five titles were successfully attempted now (as I write) nearly one hundred years ago. Our friends in 'The Symphony Orchestra' were squeezed into the recording room (literally: there is a well known photograph of them posing in the old studio with Sir Edward, smartly turned out in his suit, stiff collar and spats for the *Carissima* session). Elgar won his spurs that day in June, for the blank wax discs they cut were publishable. They did not over-run the space available or 'blast' or fail the 'wear test'; note that mistakes could not be edited out at that time and the records could not even be played back straightaway without rendering them useless. It was first necessary to use the wax recordings to make a metal 'master', from which test pressings could be stamped as required and played *ad lib*.

To modern ears, the first records from this early session have a slow and ponderous feel and must be listened to with indulgence. The first and fourth *Pomp & Circumstance Marches* (2-0511 & 2-0517) are heavily abridged – 'cut' is not strong enough a word – and even *Salut d'amour* (2-0512) seems a little wooden. Still enjoyable are 2-0519 & 2-0530 (*Bavarian Dances* 2 & 3, slightly cut), which were recorded at the end of the session when doubtless all concerned were more relaxed and confident. Nevertheless, it was *Salut d'amour* which first captured my imagination when, at a very young age, I discovered a battered copy in a pile of old 78s which had somehow eluded the salvage drives of two World Wars. These records were later doubled as D179 (the two marches), D180 (*Salut d'amour* and *Chanson de Nuit*) and the *Bavarian Dances* on D175 & D176 (with the first *Bavarian Dance* and *Carissima* respectively). As a newcomer to the dark arts of recording sound by the acoustic process, Elgar had clearly acquitted himself well. He had listened to the advice he was no doubt given, prepared his scores accordingly and achieved publishable results. He would return to all these pieces in the future when electric recording superseded the old process whereby the volume of sound itself cut the recording onto the wax blank, sufficient to register the sonority of the music without overwhelming the gramophones of the day (and causing distortion and premature wear).

Michael Plant

100 YEARS AGO ...

May started much as April had finished: 'Drove to Hendon in aftn. & saw flying'. Nikisch was conducting Wagner at Covent Garden, and Elgar saw *Die Walküre*, *Götterdämmerung*, *Die Meistersinger* and *Lohengrin*. In between he 'painted wall in garden red' and 'painted the drive green like a duck pond – Very nice'. 8 April was 'Our Silver Wedding Day – D.G. for giving these years & for all the constant love – very sweet little day – Sir Philip Burne-Jones to dine – Plate Pool till nearly 1 – A. cooked chocolate for the Co'.

On the 10th Alice and Carice went 'to Queen's Hall in aftn. to hear Grania', and on the 14th all three were in attendance to hear Kreisler play the Violin Concerto: 'Immense audience. Kreisler quite wonderful – & orch very good – A scene of almost unprecedented enthusiasm Kreisler recalled & they wanted E. all the time. At last he came & there were shouts & thunderous applause.' The following day he was 'rather tired after the tension of yesterday' and spent the day 'busy varnishing & writing important letters'.

At the beginning of June he spent a few days in Worcester where the artist Benjamin Leader was given the Freedom of the City. Elgar 'made a speech & wore his booful robes'. After a weekend at The Hut ('Motored there – Lovely drive enjoyed our souses') they went to Canterbury, where on the 19th Elgar conducted a performance of *The Apostles* with the Leeds Choral Union and the LSO. 'The most wonderful music poured out, most touching & overwhelming. Those who came & sat by A. wept ... the most perfect performance – Vast audience, beautiful surroundings & beyond the world music – Audience most visibly deeply impressed ... Frank [Schuster] said it was the greatest musical experience he had ever had.'

At the end of the month Elgar was 'very busy revising scores for Gramophone ... A. helping, till nearly moment of starting with revising, pasting passages &c, on scores – Lovely drive to Hayes lovely day. A. drove on & stopped by a nice hayfield & then on to Hayes Church, sweet old place & village. A. asked in & heard some of the playing & given tea'.

In July Elgar was in Worcester again to rehearse *Gerontius* for the Three Choirs Festival before the family left for their summer holiday in Scotland on the 19th. They visited Oban ('a dull little place') Mull, Iona, Inverness and Gairloch, where 'E. & C. fished all the morning. A. joined them in aftn. Really, dearly, A. found it rather monotonous!'

With August came the outbreak of war: 'Had a telegram saying Germany had declared war against us ... May God preserve us'. They returned to London by the 14th and Elgar volunteered immediately for the Special Constables, being summoned on the 15th to attend 'a short drill at the Drill Hall, Heath St. Hampstead'. Carice volunteered for work with the Red Cross, while 'Mother, full of indignation, embarrassed us by going into the local shops and asking how many recruits they had'.

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