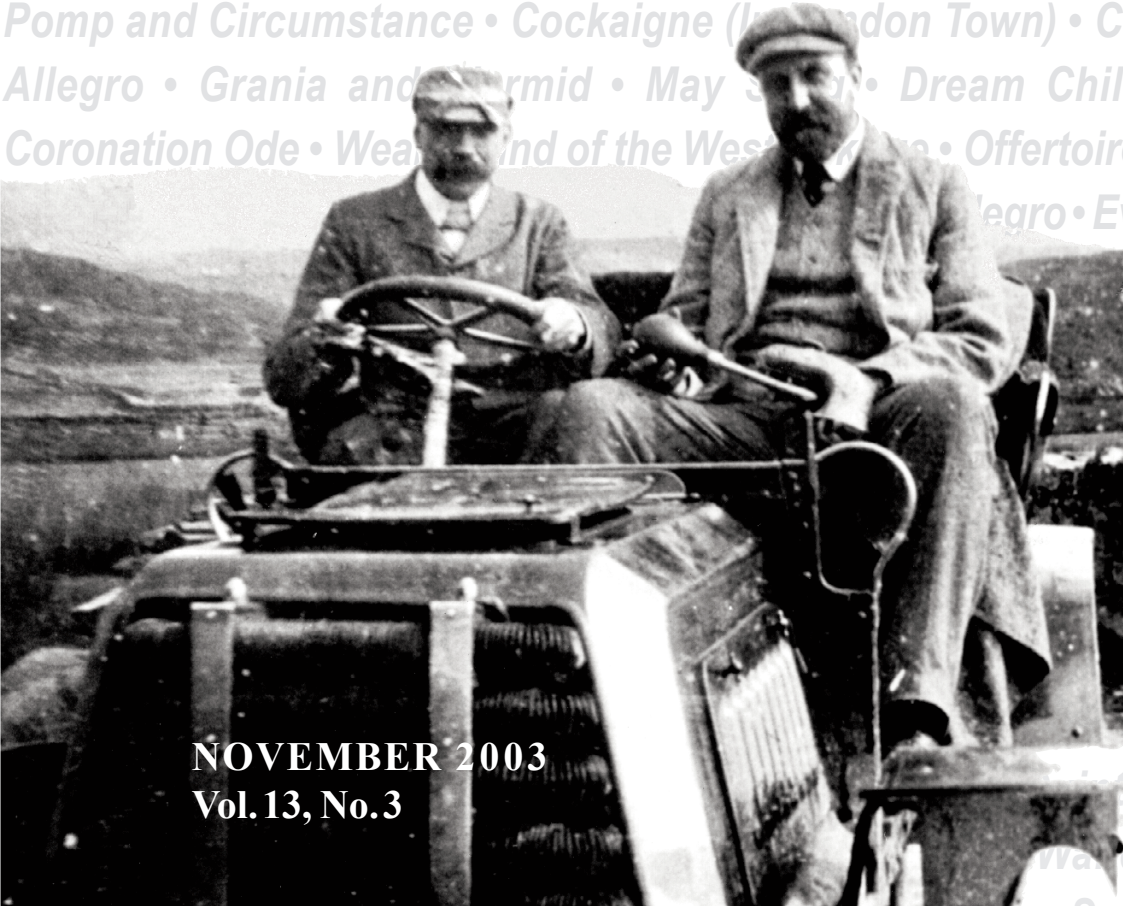


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and Benedictus • Caractacus • Variations on an Original...
(Enigma) • Sea Pictures • Chanson de Nuit • Chanson de Matin...
Characteristic Pieces • The Dream of Gerontius • Serenade Ly...
Pomp and Circumstance • Cockaigne (London Town) • C...
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The Elgar Society
Journal



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The Elgar Society

Founded 1951

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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: All aboard the 'Shover' as Elgar takes the wheel beside Alfred Rodewald whose sudden death one hundred years ago proved such a shock for the composer. This issue marks the anniversary with an article celebrating Rodewald's life.

EDITORIAL

The idea that certain creative artists can somehow tap into an inherited national cultural consciousness is extremely seductive. A number of speakers at March's 'special flame' conference highlighted this issue by once again raising the question: what do we mean by 'English music'? Or—to relate it directly to the subjects of the symposium—how can composers with voices as different from each other as Elgar and Vaughan Williams both create 'typically English' music?

Michael Kennedy in his *Portrait of Elgar* seemed to clear up the matter when he wrote that English music 'is not an identifiable product. It is, simply and obviously, music written by Englishmen out of genuine creative endeavour'. In other words, there is no such thing as 'English' music, only sincere English composers; so when we describe a piece of music as 'typically English', the description is (to use the author's words) 'almost meaningless', perhaps no more informative than saying the piece has pitches and rhythm, and telling us more about the composer than the music itself. Yet that phrase 'typically English' is incredibly persistent, and its tenacity suggests we use it to signify more than simply a work's national origins. A 'typically English' piece is not just a piece which sounds as though it was written by an Englishman: the phrase hints at some quality of 'English-ness' which we believe—rightly or wrongly—the piece captures.

So what might that quality consist in, and are its characteristics as elusive as those of a 'typical Englishman' (to use Michael Kennedy's comparison)? 'We English are a miscellaneous people,' wrote George Eliot in *Daniel Deronda*, 'and any chance fifty of us will present many varieties of animal architecture or facial ornament'. So maybe, as the producers of a certain brand of Scotch would have us believe, 'It's all in the blend': perhaps certain features—some undoubtedly inherited from other national traditions—when brought together give a characteristic 'English' flavour.

In his book *The English: a portrait of a people* (1998), Jeremy Paxman wrote, 'the [Second World] war and its immediate aftermath are the last time in living memory when the English had a clear and positive sense of themselves.' It is no surprise then that many of our stereotypical images of England and 'English-ness' originate from that period when national identity triumphed in the face of its most dire threat. Could something similar be true of 'English' music? Perhaps those characteristics we most associate with an English musical language are simply typical of a certain historic period when English music rose to new heights: the era represented by those two great figureheads, Elgar and Vaughan Williams. Reason tells me this might be so; my heart, on the other hand, prefers to believe in a timeless source which our greatest artists are able to divine, and to which the rest of us instinctively respond.

Philip Maund

Early Performances of Elgar's Music in Belfast

Wesley McCann

In his article 'Elgar in Belfast' published in the JOURNAL in 1998, Professor David Greer recounted the circumstances of the composer's only visit to Ireland when, on 21 October 1932, he conducted performances of the 'Enigma' Variations and The Dream of Gerontius in the northern capital.¹ By the date of his visit Belfast audiences were already familiar with a wide selection of his music and Gerontius had been performed on four earlier occasions. This article surveys performances of Elgar's music in the city prior to 1932, and in particular those of his choral masterpiece.

Music in Belfast

By the second half of the nineteenth century Belfast, like most large industrial cities, could boast of a lively tradition of music-making based largely on amateur choral societies which in turn drew on a strong foundation of church choirs. The most significant of the several choral bodies was the Belfast Philharmonic Society founded from a merger of two older societies in 1874. From its inception the 'Phil' annually promoted a season of five or six subscription concerts which, in the early decades, alternated large-scale choral works performed by the Society's own orchestra and chorus, with miscellaneous concerts featuring, on occasion, some of the world's leading virtuosi. It is no surprise to find that Handel and Mendelssohn were the most frequently performed of choral composers.² Among the internationally famous soloists who took part in concerts in the Society's series were the double bassist Giovanni Bottesini in 1885, 1886 and 1887, the violinist Tivadar Nachez in 1889, and in 1898 the pianist Paderewski. Ysaÿe played the Beethoven Violin Concerto with the Society in February 1903, and Kreisler the Bruch Concerto in the following year. In November 1898 the Society hosted a concert by the Hallé Orchestra under Frederic Cowen.³

Although the Philharmonic was the largest and the most active musical organisation in the city, it was not the only promoter of concerts. Other choral and orchestral groups existed and, in addition, bodies like the Belfast Postmen, the Belfast Masonic Charities, and the Railway Benevolent Society put on concerts combining the resources of local amateurs and visiting professionals. Many of the leading singers of the day shared the stage with these societies: Harry Plunket Greene, Antoinette Sterling, Marie Brema, Andrew Black, Agnes Nicholls, Muriel Foster, to name only a few. In the period before the First World War a local impresario, Henry Bettesworth Phillips, promoted several ambitious series of concerts in Belfast and throughout Ireland. Phillips, who began his career as a piano tuner in Londonderry in the 1890s, opened a music and gramophone shop in Belfast in 1907 from where he ran his concert agency. He several times brought the Hallé under Hans Richter to Belfast and, as we shall see, promoted a concert by Thomas Beecham and his newly formed orchestra.⁴ The opening of the BBC's Belfast station and the formation of a permanent orchestra in 1924 added another dimension to the range of musical activity in the city. All this gave Belfast audiences the opportunity to enjoy a wide range of repertoire, and as the twentieth century progressed this was to include a broad selection of Elgar's music.

Belfast was fortunate in possessing one of the finest concert halls anywhere in Britain and Ireland. The Ulster Hall, opened in 1862, had seating for two thousand and could comfortably accommodate a choir and

orchestra of two hundred and fifty. It also was home to the Mulholland Grand organ, a full-blooded concert instrument by Hill.⁵ Most of the performances in the following survey were given in the Ulster Hall, and it was there that Elgar conducted on his visit to the city.

Early Elgar

The earliest reference to one of Elgar's works being performed in Belfast was at the Philharmonic Society's concert on 31 January 1902 when the chorus 'It comes from the misty ages' from *The Banner of St George* was included in a miscellaneous concert.⁶ This was followed later in the same year (on 21 November) by a performance of *King Olaf*. Both performances were given under the direction of Francis Koeller, the Society's conductor since 1887. Writing about the latter event in the following morning's *Belfast News-Letter* the newspaper's music critic commented that:

The attendance was very large, and this was particularly gratifying, having regard to the excellence of the arranged programme. The concert was interesting from the point of view that it afforded local music-lovers an opportunity of hearing the work of Dr. Edward Elgar of Malvern, who has been acclaimed by many critics as the foremost among contemporary English composers.

There followed a detailed synopsis of the work and an appreciation of the performances of the three soloists: Miss Gleeson-White, Mr Kelley Cole and Mr Ivor Foster. The critic thought the chorus 'showed an intelligent appreciation of Dr. Elgar's desires and motives'. The orchestra on the other hand was 'only moderately good. The strings were excellent, but where the fault lay was in the brass, which at times was blatantly oppressive, not to say discordant.'⁷

The First *Gerontius*

Despite the popular success of the performance of *King Olaf* no other of Elgar's works was included in the Philharmonic's seasons until 10 March 1905 when *The Dream of Gerontius* was given its first performance in Ireland. Lewis Foreman has traced the spread of the work in the period 1900 to 1904 and recorded the rapid increase in the number of performances in 1903 and subsequently.⁸ While the Belfast performance cannot lay claim to being among the very early outings of the work, it is noteworthy that it was among the earliest of the many performances given by Gervase Elwes. Elwes had first heard the work at Westminster Cathedral on 6 June 1903, and he sang it for the first time on 9 April of the following year at the Queen's Hall under Weingartner. In her biography of her late husband his widow records that he sang the work three more times in 1904, five times in 1905 and one hundred and eighteen times altogether in the sixteen years before his tragic death in an accident in America in January 1921.⁹

Elwes had strong family links with the north of Ireland. His mother, Alice Ward, was the daughter of the Reverend the Hon. Mr Henry Ward, incumbent of the parish of Killinchy (which lies twelve miles south-east of Belfast) and the brother of the 3rd Viscount Bangor of Castle Ward in County Down.¹⁰ Alice became the second wife of Valentine Henry Dudley Cary-Elwes of Billing Hall, Northamptonshire in 1865 and Gervase was born to them on 15 November 1866. Eight years later Alice with her husband and their children were received into the Roman Catholic Church.¹¹ Gervase's own quiet faith was thought by many who heard him sing *Gerontius* to give him a particular insight into the part. Vaughan William wrote that for Elwes 'the part of *Gerontius* was not a role to be acted, but an expression of what, to him, was a living faith.'¹² The other soloists in the first Belfast performance were the mezzo-soprano Alice Lakin, who had sung the part for the first time at Wolverhampton on 23 March 1903,¹³ and Charles Bennett who had appeared with the 'Phil' once before, at a miscellaneous concert on 5 February 1904 when the accompanist was the twenty-four-year-old Ulster-born Hamilton Harty.

The music critic of the *Belfast News-Letter* began his review with a gentle reproof of those who had missed the opportunity of hearing the work:

The attendance last night at the Ulster Hall, when the Philharmonic Society gave their fourth concert of the season, was fairly large, but the importance of the occasion should have made it certain that not a seat in the building remained vacant. The society, with praiseworthy enterprise and courage, decided upon giving Belfast music lovers an opportunity of hearing the magnificent work by which Sir Edward Elgar has placed himself in the front rank of British composers, and it redounds greatly to their credit that so difficult a composition should have been so capably and intelligently rendered.¹⁴

The critic was generous in his praise of the performance:

By far the greater part of the solo work falls to the tenor, of whom it may be said he acquitted himself admirably, and it would be difficult to imagine a finer or more finished rendering of the difficult and trying soli. He has a voice of good clear quality and wide range, and for a tenor remarkable carrying power and strength. It was this which enabled him to do justice to such an arduous number as the hymn of faith and veneration, 'Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus', but he sang throughout with perfect feeling for the spirit of the composition, and made a deep impression. The tender delicacy of the solo 'I went to sleep and now I am refreshed' was made doubly manifest by his careful and reverent treatment. Miss Alice Lakin also achieved a marked success, and here again we were treated to vocalism of the highest order. The pure rich tone quality of the voice was equalled by the exquisite sympathy and artistic restraint which were employed, and the words of the angel were enunciated with a tender pathos which made them very vivid and real. The soothing melodic beauty of the solo 'My work is done' came upon the ear with enchanting sweetness, while in the vocal dialogue with Gerontius Miss Lakin evinced perfect control and clear expressiveness. Mr Charles Bennett was not greatly taxed, but he sang with his usual power and emphasis, and the solemnity and dignity of the music were finely realised. Both orchestra and chorus must be congratulated on their part of the work. They were, at times perhaps, at fault; but, for the greater part, they overcame the many difficulties in a manner which deserves high praise.

The city's other morning newspaper, *The Northern Whig*, was equally enthusiastic about the performance and the soloists, reserving its only adverse criticism for the choir in the Demons' Chorus in which 'the dramatic situation was admirably depicted by the male voices, but the fair sex did not infuse the same vigour into their exclamations.'¹⁵

Belfast had to wait just over two and a half years to hear another performance of the work, and in the meantime both the Philharmonic Society and other choirs and soloists had included some of Elgar's songs in their concerts. On 1 February 1907 the orchestra gave a performance of his overture *In the South* as part of a concert which also included Schubert's 'Unfinished' Symphony and Liszt's *Hungarian Fantasy* in which the soloist was Percy Grainger.

Gerontius Again

The second Belfast performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* on 22 November 1907 again featured Gervase Elwes. His fellow soloists on this occasion were Phyllis Lett and William Higley, both of whom were noted Elgarians. Lett was already known to Belfast audiences from her appearance with the Belfast City Choral Society earlier in the same year.¹⁶ Higley, like Elgar a native of Worcestershire, had made a great impression on the composer when singing the part of Peter in *The Apostles* in 1905,¹⁷ and in October 1906 took part in the first performance of *The Kingdom*.¹⁸

The *News-Letter's* critic next morning was unstinting in his praise of the performance.¹⁹ Of the Demons' Chorus he wrote that it, 'was one of the finest achievements throughout the performance, where the harmony of discord prevailed, and where the combination of voices and instruments rose to a point of really magnificent grandeur.' 'Praise to the Holiest' he thought 'was given with a precision that would do ample credit to the best

efforts of the professional rank. Nothing but severely accurate reading by the leaders of the various parts could have accomplished such a splendid result.' Elwes was again highly praised, and the critic thought Higley 'did full justice to his impersonation', and his 'resonant bass inspired confidence in his listeners.' 'Nothing,' he concluded, 'could have been more satisfying than the lustre given to the music of the Angel by Miss Phyllis Lett. From start to finish she imbued the part with the idiosyncrasies of tenderness and devotion.' The *Northern Whig's* reporter was less enthusiastic, commenting that 'though the rendering last night was in many ways fine, we should scarcely consider it equal to the first representation.' He found the hall cold and draughty, and felt obliged to record that 'a disagreeable feature during the performance was the noise of the sliding seats when the chorus rose which detracts very much from the enjoyment of those who are entering into the spirit of a serious work.'²⁰

In a brief notice the *Musical Times* saw in this second performance of the work 'proof of the advance of musical culture in the city.'²¹ That might well have been true, but it is perhaps surprising that it was not until 1925 that the work was heard again.

Beecham and the First Symphony

The intervening years however saw no lessening of interest in Elgar's music. The 'Phil' Chorus added several of his part-songs to its repertoire, and the Orchestra gave a performance of *Cockaigne* (5 February 1909), and several of the E minor Serenade (the first on 7 February 1913). *The Spirit of England* (17 November 1916) and a second performance of *King Olaf* (27 March 1914) were also included in the programmes. But rarely did Belfast encounter a work newly (or even recently) minted. Most works were already several years old before audiences were given the chance to enjoy them. One exception was a performance of the Symphony no. 1 given by Thomas Beecham and his orchestra on their visit to the city on 25 October 1909 which took place within a year of its first performance on 3 December 1908. The Belfast performance was included in the second of H. B. Phillips's season of subscription concerts and the advertising boasted the 'first appearance in Ireland of the premier British orchestra', promising that it would contain seventy-five performers, and give the first performance in Ireland of 'The Elgar Symphony'.²²

The visit of the twenty-nine-year-old Beecham was part of an extensive tour of Britain and Ireland in October 1909, beginning in Exeter and working northwards, then crossing to Ireland for the concert in Belfast and another in Dublin on the following day.²³ It was on this tour that Beecham notoriously and progressively reduced a work of fifty-five minutes' duration to a mere thirty-eight, declaring, 'I don't know how it sounds, and I don't care!'²⁴ It was only three days after the Belfast performance that Havergal Brian heard the work at Hanley, prompting his letter to the *Musical Times* which branded Beecham's actions as 'an insult to the composer and also to those responsible for the concert.' 'This is surely not,' he continued, 'the use to which so exceedingly fine an orchestra should be put, to say nothing of the misuse of the genius with which nature has endowed Mr Beecham.'²⁵

The concert began with Smetana's overture to *The Bartered Bride*, continued with Ethel Smyth's prelude to *The Wreckers* before the symphony was heard. The *News-Letter's* critic wrote enthusiastically of the work and its performance, and betrayed no awareness that it was in any way less than Elgar had intended. Beecham's apparent disregard of the score in front of him had possibly a greater significance than the critic realised:

The symphony was received with prolonged applause last night. It was brilliantly played. Between the conductor and the band there was a thorough understanding. Mr Beecham made very little use of the score, although he had it before him. The orchestra responded promptly to every demand made upon them, and the result was that they achieved a signal triumph, notably so in the glorious adagio.²⁶

E. Godfrey Brown

In 1912 ill health forced Koeller to resign after almost twenty-five years in charge of the Philharmonic Society.

The Society was fortunate that it was able to replace him with E. Godfrey Brown, a product of the Royal College of Music who had considerable experience of choral and orchestral conducting and was at the time of his appointment organist of Penrith Parish Church in Cumberland.²⁷ During almost forty years running the 'Phil' he did much to improve the standard of performance and broaden the repertoire. Under him the miscellaneous concert gave way to a more structured format which included orchestral works of greater substance. He introduced audiences to the music of Bach, until then little heard in Belfast other than in organ recitals. He was above all else an enthusiast of Elgar's music and gave the first performance in Belfast of *Caractacus* in March 1915. A month earlier the Society performed under Brown's direction Elgar's *Carillon* written to accompany the recitation of the poem 'Chantons, Belges, Chantons', the words being spoken by Professor Douglas Savoury of Queen's University. Thereafter it was rare to find a 'Phil' season which did not include something of the composer's. When Brown finally laid down his baton as director of the Society in March 1950 he chose to do so with a performance of *Gerontius*.

Sir Henry Wood and the Jubilee Performance

When the Society came to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary season in 1925 the main work chosen was *The Dream of Gerontius*, and the conductor invited to direct it was none other than Sir Henry Wood. In announcing the performance the Society boasted that:

In honour of the great event, the Committee have engaged three of the finest Vocalists of the day, the Orchestra is to be specially augmented, and the Chorus will be given much special rehearsal.

The work of preparation fell to Brown and, if the glowing praise of the critic of the *Belfast News-Letter* is to be believed, Sir Henry was able to draw forth a memorable performance from the resources made available to him. This took place on Maundy Thursday, 9 April 1925.

[Sir Henry] seeks for tone quality and the subtleties of expression, the shading of phrases, and all the finer points which mark a refined performance, and he got his desires in full measure. The orchestra responded to the guiding master mind and gave of its best.

The chorus too was on top form:

Here, again, the expression was most impressive, the gradations of tone ranging from the softest of whispers to the thrilling grandeur of the great climaxes, in which the majesty of the conception was faithfully realised.²⁸

The music critic of the *Belfast Telegraph* was equally generous in his praise of Sir Henry and the Society.²⁹

The soloists on this occasion were the tenor John Coates, the bass Harold Williams, and a local singer, Mrs John Seeds, who sang the part of the Angel. Coates was of course a renowned *Gerontius*, and was perhaps the natural successor to Elwes in the role. Williams was no stranger to the part of the Priest and the Angel of the Agony. Norah Seeds was the wife of a leading architect in Belfast and had sung with the Society on a number of occasions. She first appeared with the Society in February 1918 when she sang the solo part in *The Music Makers*, and on 15 September 1924 she took part in the inaugural broadcast from the BBC's new station in Belfast under the direction of Godfrey Brown in his role as the station's first musical director. Among the works played by the thirty-strong orchestra in that opening broadcast was the *Pomp and Circumstance* March no. 4.³⁰

Sir Henry was accompanied on his visit to Belfast by Lady Wood and they stayed as guests of Sir Charles Brett, a leading solicitor and for many years the Secretary of the Society. After the performance Wood wrote in fulsome terms to Brown:

As you know, I have directed many performances of this beautiful work at provincial music festivals and with other choral societies in Great Britain, but I have NEVER found the chorus and orchestra better prepared in every

Second Subscription Concert,

Monday Evening, 25th October, at 8.

THE FAMOUS

Beecham Orchestra

Conductor :

Mr. THOMAS BEECHAM.

At this Concert

Dr. Elgar's New Symphony

will be performed for the

FIRST TIME IN IRELAND.

Left: Prospectus of the Phillips Subscription Concerts for the 1909–10 season announcing the Irish première of Elgar's Symphony No. 1 (from a copy in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast).

Right: Erratum leaf issued with the programme for the concert given by the Beecham Orchestra in the Ulster Hall Belfast, 25 October 1909. The symphony had originally been programmed as the last item in the concert but for reasons which are not explained was brought forward (from a copy in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast).

Since printing the Book of Words the Programme has been re-arranged, and will be performed in the following order —



- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--------------------------------|---|---|--------------|
| 1. OVERTURE | — | — | "The Barttered Bride." | — | — | Smetana |
| 2. PRELUDE | — | — | "The Wreckers." | — | — | Ethel Smyth |
| <small>(As performed by command of the King and Queen at His Majesty's Theatre, London, July, 1900.)</small> | | | | | | |
| 3. ARIA | — | — | "Mon Coeur." | — | — | Saint Saens |
| Missa ZELIE DELSART. | | | | | | |
| 4. SYMPHONY in A flat (Op. 65) | — | — | — | — | — | Edward Elgar |
| 5. | — | — | "Variations on an Irish Tune." | — | — | Wood |
| 6. PRELUDE | — | — | "L'Après Midi d'un Faune." | — | — | Debussy |
| 7. SCENA | — | — | "Che Faro." | — | — | Gluck |
| Missa ZELIE DELSART. | | | | | | |
| 8. OVERTURE | — | — | "Tannhäuser." | — | — | Wagner |

department than on this occasion.³¹

Even allowing for some exaggeration on Sir Henry's part this is a generous tribute and Wood went on to invite the chorus and Mrs Seeds to come to London to sing the work at one of his Saturday afternoon concerts, but he could offer no financial assistance with the costs of travel and nothing came of the idea. This was not Wood's first visit to the city; he had conducted the *Hallé* there in 1912 and he was to return on several occasions to conduct the local BBC orchestra.

Under Brown's guidance the Society continued to explore Elgar's music and in November 1929 performed *The Kingdom* for the first time, the soloists being Isobel Baillie, Norah Dahl, Trefor Jones and Roy Henderson. The following year saw the Society giving its first performances of the Violin Concerto (Harold Fairhurst, soloist) and *The Apostles*, with a return visit of Baillie, Dahl and Jones appearing with Herbert Heyner, Henry Crowther and Albert V. Froggatt.

March 1931 saw another performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*, with soloists Rispah Goodacre, Francis Russell and Stuart Robertson. The last named was a regular with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. The delightfully named Rispah Goodacre sang again with the 'Phil' a few years later in a performance of excerpts from *Samson and Delilah* by Saint-Saëns. The performance of *Gerontius* coming soon after those of *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* prompted the critic in the *Northern Whig* to wonder whether an 'Elgar cult would not be altogether outside the range of possibility.' He went on to reflect on the rising standard of the Society's performances:

Last night's performance under Mr E. Godfrey Brown impressed on one the greatly increased resources now at the command of the Philharmonic. It did not draw on material outside the city, except for the soloists, and the performance was adequate in a way that would have been impossible a few years ago.³²

Postscript to Elgar's Visit

Professor Greer has dealt comprehensively with Elgar's visit to Belfast in October 1932 and little need be added to his account. During his stay Elgar resided at the city's largest and most luxurious hotel, the Grand Central in Royal Avenue which boasted two hundred rooms and many suites of apartments. On his arrival he wrote to Ivor Atkins in Worcester; 'You see I am here safe & your good friend Godfrey Brown is taking wondrous care of me. He is a good cicerone [guide]. I don't wonder you like Belfast. Back next week.'³³ Atkins was himself a frequent visitor to Belfast, having first conducted the 'Phil' in 1922 in his *Hymn of Faith* (with words by Elgar), and he returned on later occasions to broadcast with the BBC Wireless Orchestra.

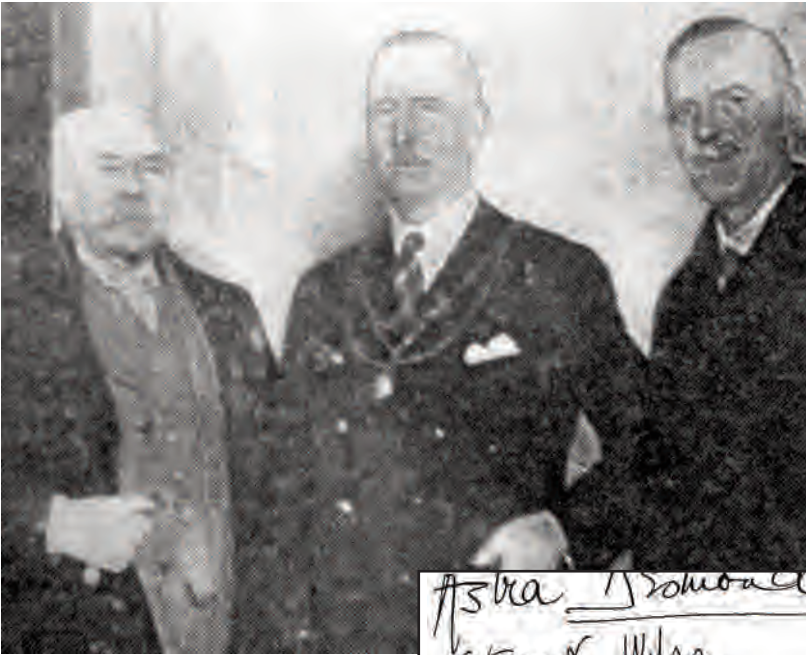
When not rehearsing, the composer was taken on a tour of some of the sights of Belfast including a visit to the imposing new Parliament Buildings at Stormont which were being prepared for the official opening by the Prince of Wales in three weeks' time. He was also welcomed at the City Hall by the Lord Mayor, Sir Crawford McCullagh, and taken to visit the eighty-three-year-old Hugh C. Kelly, a notable figure in the world of sport who had played rugby football for Ireland and was a prominent supporter of the Philharmonic Society.

Unfortunately there are many gaps in the surviving minute books of the Belfast Philharmonic Society and none relate to any of the performances of *Gerontius* before 1932. However the minutes of the first Committee meeting to be held after Elgar's visit have been preserved and they record that the cost of putting on the performance was £245 17s 1d against the estimate of £262 17s 0d and that this happy outcome was 'due to the large number of tickets sold for this one concert.'³⁴

The same minute book records on 26 February 1934 the Committee's sorrow on learning of the death of the composer. The following resolution was passed and the Secretary was requested to forward it to Sir Edward's daughter:

The Committee of the Belfast Philharmonic Society have learned with deep regret of the death of Sir Edward Elgar. We recall the honour which he conferred upon the Society by conducting two of his works at our Concert in

October 1932, and the keen and friendly interest he then showed in the work of the Society. In common with all lovers of music in our country we mourn the loss of one of its noblest apostles and we tender our sincere sympathy to his daughter and relatives in their bereavement.



Above: Sir Edward Elgar photo-graphed on his visit to the City Hall, Belfast in October 1932 when he was welcomed by the Lord Mayor, Sir Crawford McCullagh. On the Lord Mayor's left is E. Godfrey Brown, the conductor of the Belfast Philharmonic Society (from a cutting in the Linen Hall Library, Belfast).

Right: The Belfast Philharmonic Society programme for the performance of The Dream of Gerontius on 21 October 1932 signed by the composer and the three soloists. Astra Desmond (whose signature was cropped when the programme was bound with others) signed as 'Astra Desmond Neame', her married name. (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland D2693/1/39).

Astra Desmond Neame
Stewart Wilson
Victor Harding

Belfast Philharmonic Society
Edward Elgar

Artistes:

ASTRA DESMOND	-	-	Contralto
STEWART WILSON	-	-	Tenor
VICTOR HARDING	-	-	Bass
Leader	-	-	JOHN CROWTHER
Organist	-	-	J. H. MacBRATNEY

Chorus and Orchestra prepared by
E. GODFREY BROWN

Conductor - - **SIR EDWARD ELGAR**

1. David Greer, 'Elgar in Belfast', *Elgar Society Journal*, vol. 10 no. 4 (March 1998), pp. 167–76.
2. Malcolm Ruthven, *Belfast Philharmonic Society 1874–1974: a short history* (Belfast: The Belfast Society, 1973), pp. 60–63 lists the choral works performed in the Society's first one hundred years.
3. The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland Belfast (PRONI) holds a complete run of the Society's concert programmes from 1874 to 1956. Many are signed by the principals. PRONI D2693.
4. Phillips later went to live in England where he owned and managed the Carl Rosa Opera Company from 1924 until his death in 1950. See the present writer's *H. B. Phillips impresario: the man who brought McCormack, Kreisler and Robeson to Derry* (Belfast: The Belfast Society, 2001).
5. Marcus Patton, *Central Belfast: an historical gazetteer* (Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1993), p. 30. The place of the Hall in the musical life of the city is described in Roy Johnson, "'Here we sit': the creation of the Ulster Hall", in *Music and British Culture: essays in honour of Cyril Ehrlich*, edited by Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 213–32.
6. The evidence for the performances noted comes from surviving concert programmes and newspaper reports. There may also have been performances of his works at small-scale amateur events of which no record remains.
7. *Belfast News-Letter*, 22 November 1902.
8. Lewis Foreman, 'Elgar and Gerontius: the early performances', in *The Best of Me: a Gerontius centenary companion*, edited by Geoffrey Hodgkins (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 1999), pp. 162–236 (p. 187).
9. Winefride Elwes and Richard Elwes, *Gervase Elwes: the story of his life* (London: Grayson & Grayson, 1935), p. 138.
10. *Clergy of Down and Dromore* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1996), pp. 437–38.
11. Elwes, p. 23.
12. Elwes, p. 295.
13. Foreman, p. 219–21.
14. *Belfast News-Letter*, 11 March 1905.
15. *Northern Whig*, 11 March 1905.
16. Both Lett and Elwes were later to sing in the first Dublin performance of the work on 11 April 1911 when the bass was Wilfrid Douthitt. See [Ronald Taylor], 'The first Dublin Gerontius', *Elgar Society Journal*, vol. 7 no. 1 (January 1991), pp. 15–16.



The interior of the Ulster Hall photographed in the early years of the twentieth century. It has changed little in appearance in the past one hundred years.

17. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: a creative life* (Oxford: OUP, 1984), p. 466.
18. Kenneth Thompson, *A Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Composers (1911–1971)* (London: Faber, 1973), p. 145.
19. *Belfast News-Letter*, 23 November 1907.
20. *Northern Whig*, 23 November 1907.
21. *Musical Times*, 1 December 1907, p. 812.
22. *Belfast News-Letter*, 25 October 1909.
23. *Sir Thomas Beecham: a calendar of his concert and theatrical performances*, compiled by Maurice Parker ([Westcliff-on-Sea]: Beecham Society, 1985). The visit to Belfast is unaccountably omitted from the list of venues and dates.
24. Charles Reid, *Thomas Beecham: an independent biography* (London: Gollancz, 1962), p. 75.
25. Quoted in R. Nettel, *Ordeal by music: the strange experience of Havergal Brian* (London: OUP, 1945), p. 88.
26. *Belfast News-Letter*, 26 October 1909.
27. Greer, p. 167 gives a full summary of his career.
28. *Belfast News-Letter*, 10 April 1925. The newspaper printed a panoramic photograph of Sir Henry with the chorus and orchestra on the stage of the Ulster Hall taken during the rehearsal.
29. *Belfast Telegraph*, 10 April 1925. Reference is made in this review to a performance of the work by the Society in 1915, but no evidence of this has been found and it is probably an error on the critic's part.
30. *Belfast News-Letter*, 16 September 1924.
31. Quoted in Ruthven, p. 34.
32. *Northern Whig*, 28 March 1931.
33. E. Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1984), p. 450.
34. 'Minutes of the Belfast Philharmonic Society November 1932–April 1938', PRONI D2693/1/A2.

WESLEY MCCANN is a native of Belfast and a librarian by profession. His love of Elgar's music was awakened by his interest in the life and career of Harry Plunket Greene about whom he has been assembling materials for several years. He has published and broadcast on a variety of bibliographical, literary and musical topics, and his study of the impresario and owner of the Carl Rosa Opera Company, Henry Bettesworth Phillips, was published in 2001. An enthusiastic concert-goer, he has recently taken up the study of the piano after a gap of more than forty years and hopes eventually to progress beyond Grade II.

Composer as Librettist: Elgar's notes on *The Apostles*

Nicholas Hawker

*The British Library holds a fascinating and detailed collection of unpublished notes by Elgar on his oratorio *The Apostles*, first performed one hundred years ago this past October. At one time they were apparently intended for publication, and now offer a revealing insight into the methods and means by which the composer created his biblical epic.*

In the inevitable comparison with *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles* suffers. There can be little question that even in its centenary year Elgar's later work lies in the shadow of its Birmingham Festival predecessor. Much criticism of *The Apostles* is directed not towards the music (although critics have all too frequently used Jaeger's often misguided terms to do this), but rather towards the libretto. In compiling the text himself Elgar was entering new territory. Newman's poem had required only curtailment, and when composing his only previous oratorio *The Light of Life* (1896), Elgar used a libretto by the protestant priest Edward Capel-Cure. But the text for *The Apostles* was something Elgar wanted to compile himself, probably because he had been thinking over the subject for so long, and had therefore formed ideas in his head. But his subsequent unique approach in telling the Gospel story has resulted in confusion over the work's central focus:

I was conscious of a want of central grip, of a comparative failure of emotional inspiration as distinguished from imagination. It was as if the picture Dr. Elgar has painted astonished me by its rich content of detail, by the polychromatic hues of its background, while the design itself, the very reason for this particular kind of picture, was too crowded and ineffective.¹

Dora Powell (née Penny, 'Dorabella' of the 'Enigma' Variations) makes reference to such criticisms in a recollection of the first performance of *The Apostles*:

And what is the libretto about? It is the Gospel story commentated on by the Disciples in their own words; words which they had known from boyhood, from the law, the Prophets and the psalms of David... And do listeners agree about this? Just a few do, those who understand; but most people—judging by what they say—do not even trouble themselves to read the words and so they have no idea what it is about, and many of them say that they do not care for it. I cannot help wishing Elgar had written a short preface explaining his plan in the oratorios. Of course he never guessed that people would be so lacking in understanding!²

Unlike *Gerontius*, Elgar's apostolic subject naturally did not contain the single issue of focus which makes the earlier work, as Michael Kennedy has put it, so 'compelling' as narrative. In his copy of Latham's *Pastor Pastorum*, one of many sources used to assist in the formation of a scenario, Elgar marked the following passage, which goes some way to undermine this apparent criticism:

[*The Apostles*], as actions in the drama, were taken up with their parts for the moment, while we contemplate it as spectators from the beginning to end; and even if we cannot quite follow the action, yet we can make out enough

sequence to see that this action forms a whole.³

Individual scenes form part of a whole, and are only fully contextually understandable in hindsight, unlike *Gerontius* which unveils a progressive and emerging narrative on a single issue. In fact, evidently unawares to Dora Penny and perhaps to preempt this apparent flaw and subsequent criticisms, Elgar had produced a series of notes on *The Apostles*, mainly concerned with his compilation of the libretto. The majority of these are hitherto unpublished and remain in manuscripts housed at the British Library. Elgar's discussions are substantial but fragmentary, and include a character summary, a detailed reference list of biblical and concordance sources, and acknowledgements of various authentic musical themes. The intended purpose of these discourses was primarily the intended separate edition of the work's libretto, which was never published, although some notes are earlier extended versions of the composer's introductory note for the vocal score.

The following hand-written outline is an overall picture of Elgar's intentions, which was no doubt written as an introduction to the edition of the libretto, but it may also serve as the brief explanation that Dora Powell desired. The document confirms that Elgar's primary concern was the portrayal of character, illustrating his particular fascination with Judas Iscariot.⁴

Ex. 1 BL Add MS 47904 B ff. 214–15.

The Prologue and division I (The Calling) and II (By the Wayside) explain themselves; in the remainder of the work the following sequence of ideas was present in my mind in compiling the text:—

I. That forgiveness of sins must be shown to the prospective teachers: Mary Magdalene is the most important type;—a sinner who truly repents, not in old age but in the flower of life; the sinner who in the deepest distress pleads for mercy and does not 'fall from her hope in the Lord'.

II. A manifestation of Christ's supernatural powers was nec[essary] to my plan: I chose the miracle of Christ's walking on the waters in preference to the Transfiguration, because all the Apostles were present at the former.

III. No attempt to depict the foundation of the Church could be considered in any sense adequate which did not deal largely with the traitor: Judas, the type of sinner who despairs is given prominence not from any melodramatic reason but because the lesson to be learnt from him is needed more at the present day than at any other time. Avarice and unbridled ambition leading to atheism and despair, sometimes ending in self-destruction[,] may be found too often in this meeting time of the centuries.

I have taken the ancient view of Judas' character on which it is unnecessary to enlarge in this place: my authorities are Theophylact, reflect to by Whiteley (Annotations Matt. 27, 3) and Whatley's lectures. Some singularly shallow remarks have been made on this point by persons least able to judge. The articles in the Encyclopaedia Brit[annica] and in Smith's Dict[ionary] of the Bible are wholly inadequate and cannot be depended upon in reference to the motives of Judas.

It is frequently stated that Elgar's earliest attraction to the subject of apostlehood came from his schoolmaster's comments describing the Apostles as ordinary men. The intention to depict the followers of Christ in this way is clearly fulfilled and supported by comments in the above note. Another incentive that may have attracted Elgar to the subject possibly derived from his interest in literature. It may be supposed that much of the subject's appeal came in the fact that Elgar could shape his own libretto around individual characters, and allow simultaneous development of music and text. On this matter Mrs Powell makes a comparison with Richard Wagner:

...when Wagner wrote the words of his operas the music to go with them was at the same time forming in his mind. In writing the words himself he gave himself the utmost freedom in this method of procedure. ...I suggest

that in selecting the words for *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* Elgar was not only carrying out the general scheme as he conceived it, but was aiming as Wagner did before him, at securing the utmost freedom for the musical ideas which, I do not doubt, were in his head as the work progressed.⁵

However, whilst this approach did give Elgar the 'utmost freedom', it was too much autonomy on a subject so lacking in definite shape. The nature of the subject and the flexibility with which he could approach it meant Elgar was continuously able to alter his plans. Given his usual rush to meet deadlines, such room for manoeuvre was dangerous in the hands of a composer of Elgar's temperament.

The comparison with Wagnerian opera is not only restricted to the compilation of text, however. Elgar's admiration for Wagner no doubt provided several other aspects upon which he could base his own work; the use of leitmotif is one notable example of this influence.⁶ It is also frequently assumed that Wagner's *Ring* provided the model for the dimensions of the 'Apostles project'; Elgar's trip to Bayreuth in the summer of 1902 is often considered to have provided this inspiration. Critics argue that from the outset of the project Elgar intended to emulate Wagner's epic opera and produce the first such titan in oratorio by encompassing his chosen subject in several works. Examination of Elgar's compositional process, however, reveals that the subject was intended to be covered in a single work. Although earlier in his career Elgar may have casually considered that the subject could be encompassed in a multi-work format, at the time of its commencement in the summer of 1902 *The Apostles* was to be a single self-contained oratorio covering all of Elgar's ambitions on the subject. Furthermore, there is no mention of any subsequent oratorio in correspondence or sketches until after the first performance of *The Apostles*. Moreover, the eventual conception of the later oratorios may, as previously suggested by Christopher Grogan, be seen in hindsight as Elgar attempting to cover his own shortcomings by proposing the more commercially attractive idea of two further oratorios.⁷

Elgar's writings illustrate that he wanted to begin the work with the 'Calling of the Apostles' and end with scenes from Antioch (Acts 11—where the followers of Christ were first called Christians). This initial plan was subject to much revision during the course of composition. As Elgar compiled material, individual scenes outgrew the proportions of this scheme, and he eventually recast the oratorio within a much smaller narrative. As late as April 1903 he still intended the work to conclude at Antioch,⁸ but by the summer he realised he would not be able to complete this intended scenario. He decided therefore to conclude *The Apostles* as we know it today, with the Ascension. However, having been unable to honour his outlined scheme, Elgar proposed that he wrote a short third part, dealing largely with Peter, to add as a kind of supplement at a later date.⁹ This is evident from the original introductory note for the first edition of the vocal score, which also appears in Elgar's hand at BL Add. MS 47904 B f. 207 and typed at f. 205:

Ex. 2

Note

It has long been my wish to compose an oratorio which should embody the calling of the Apostles, their Teaching (schooling), and their Mission, culminating in the establishment of the Church among the Gentiles.

The present work carries out the first portion of this scheme; for practical reasons the second portion remains for production on some future occasion.

The plan of the oratorio and the selection of words are my own, but I have to thank several friends for kind suggestions; these acknowledgements and some explanatory notes are given in the separate edition of the libretto.

The ancient Hebrew melody (Ps. XCII) commencing on p. 21 is quoted, by kind permission of the publishers, Messrs. Augener & Co., from the volume edited by Ernst Pauer whose broad and appropriate harmony is retained in a few bars. Use is made of a portion of the Gregorian tone (freely adapted)—'Constitutes eos'—the Gradual in which power is promised to the Apostles and their successors for all time; this theme and

other details concerning the music will be found in the analysis.

E. E.

Malvern, 1903

As Elgar acknowledges, the first portion of the scheme (from the calling of the Apostles to the establishment of their mission) he completed in *The Apostles*. The second (the establishment of the Church among the Gentiles) he intended to produce on some future occasion (in the proposed short third part). However, Elgar eventually considered this to be unsatisfactory since the commercial attraction of an oratorio with a kind of supplement added later was distinctly unappealing. After a suggestion from Henry Clayton of Novello, initially made to Elgar's wife, the composer revised his intentions by proposing to add two further oratorios to the existing *Apostles*.¹⁰ Christopher Grogan has suggested that it was due to the embarrassment of his failure to complete the work as promised for the 1903 Birmingham Festival that Elgar embarked on the trilogy as a kind of 'face-saving expedient'.

Therefore, Parts I and II of *The Apostles* would now stand alone, and would not be followed by a 'second portion' concluding at Antioch, but by two works. *The Kingdom* would deal with the 'earthly result' of the Apostles' mission, and *The Last Judgement* would cover the 'result in the next world'. Since the project had altered considerably from its proposed format, the existing introductory note was now misleading and was eventually curtailed to comprise only the final paragraph. The title page of the first edition was also altered and the words 'Parts I & II' (of an intended three) removed.¹¹ This revision is difficult to date, but since the revised score advertises the Second Symphony it cannot have been reissued with this alteration until after 1911. However, a German edition of the vocal score was published in 1904 (translated by Julius Butths) and this includes only the final paragraph of Elgar's introduction, suggesting that the revision was made very soon after the première, most likely when Elgar had first finalised that he would write the later oratorios.

Elgar's original introductory note (see Ex. 2) also makes reference to the separate edition of the libretto, which would contain his annotations and remarks. It was never forthcoming, but Elgar made considerable progress in manuscript form, and today it offers a fascinating insight into the method by which he compiled text for *The Apostles*. The composer's accompanying comments are diverse and intricate, at times offering explanation for his choice of a single word or phrase. Possibly to avoid any troubles of doctrine, such as those which beset *Gerontius*, the entire libretto of *The Apostles* is taken from the Authorised and Revised Versions of the Bible (with one exception: the words of 'The Watchers (on the temple roof)' in the first scene are taken from the Talmud). Elgar's referencing down the left side of the page shows that he approached the task of selection with the utmost care, using a great number of biblical sources to capture his exact intentions. Not only did he take verses from the New and Old Testaments, as well as the Apocrypha, he also used several Bible concordances which he frequently cites to justify his chosen narrative. Although never published in full, Elgar did use a portion of the annotated libretto in his article for the *Strand Magazine* in 1904.

The following pages, published for the first time, illustrate the remarkable process by which Elgar compiled his text for *The Apostles*; almost every line is from a different source. In this short passage alone (taken from the first scene) Elgar makes use of the New and Old Testaments and the Apocrypha. His comments on the left correspond to the line numbers on the far right (SEE OVER):

Ex. 3 BL Add. MS 47904 B ff. 3–4

64. "Our Lord having called to Him 'whom He Himself would' and chosen the twelve, assigns to them their name. They are 'Apostles', men sent forth to preach. But it is not till the risen Christ appeared to the eleven in that upper chamber and said, 'Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me even so send I you', that they all knew what was meant by this name; viz. that Christ was the Apostle of His Father and that they were the Apostles of Christ."

Pastor Pastorum [by H. Latham] p. 252

64. The word **UB'FJ@8@!** is used in classical Greek for a fleet on service, but the Jews had adopted it for an emissary of the Sanhedrin, in which sense St Paul was probably an apostle when he went to Damascus.

[A Continuous Narrative on the] Life of Christ, [A. E.] Hillard, note p. 46.

67. This chorus is founded on the Gregorian tone to the Gradual 'Constitues eos'—Thou shalt make them princes of the earth: they shall remember Thy name, O Lord' &c.

71. "direct their work in truth" Is[ai]a. 61, 8 The sense being, "I will give them their true reward"; i.e. the true reward of their works. It is rather a promise to the righteous than a menace to the wicked. (see M[atthew] Henry, p. 637, vol. 2).

82, 83. —Ps. 122, 6 (peace is prosperity)

[Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.]

85. Judas. "There was one Apostle who did not witness the resurrection—Judas Iscariot. With all that has been written about him, the problems of his call and of the purpose of his treason remain unsolved. If, as many suppose, Judas came from some place in Judea, Keriath by name, he was the only one who was not a Galilaean... Judas may have been of a mind less simply receptive than the rest of the twelve. Perhaps he had aims for Israel, perhaps also for himself, the patriotic element may sometimes have been uppermost in his mind and sometimes the selfish one, and perhaps he wanted to hasten the Divine scheme and help it forward in his own way."

Pastor Pastorum, H. Latham p. 246 (Deighton Bell, Cambridge)

RECIT. (TENOR).

Luke 6: 13

And when it was day, He called unto Him
His disciples: and of them He chose

Mark 3: 14	twelve, whom also He named Apostles, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.	65
	CHORUS.	
2 Chr. 29: 11	The Lord hath chosen them to stand before Him, to serve Him,	
1 Cor. 1: 27 [RV]	He hath chosen the weak to confound the mighty;	70
Isa. 61: 8	He will direct their work in truth.	
Job 36: 22	Behold! God exalted by His power, who teacheth like Him?	
Ps. 25: 9	The meek will He guide in judgement, and the meek will He teach His way.	75
Isa. 61: 8	He will direct their work in truth,	
Isa. 2: 3	for out of Zion shall go forth the law.	
	—————	
	<i>John, Peter, and Judas.</i>	
1 Esdr. 6: 13	We are the servants of the Lord.	
	<i>Peter.</i>	
Ps. 16: 11	Thou wilt shew us the path of life;	
Ps. 36: 9	in Thy light shall we see light.	80
Ps. 90: 16	Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants.	
	<i>John.</i>	
Tobit 13: 14	O blessed are they which love Thee, for they shall rejoice in Thy peace:	
Ecclus. 2: 16	And shall be filled with the law.	
	<i>Judas.</i>	
Isa. 61: 6	We shall eat of the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall we boast ourselves.	85
	<i>John, Peter, and Judas.</i>	
Isa. 2: 3	For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.	
	CHORUS	
2 Chr. 29: 11	The Lord hath chosen them,	
Isa. 61: 6	they shall be named the Priests of the Lord, men shall call them the Ministers of our God.	90
	<i>John.</i>	
Tobit 13: 14	O blessed are they which love Thee.	
	<i>Peter.</i>	
Ps. 36: 9	In Thy light shall we see light.	
	<i>Judas.</i>	
Isa. 61: 8 [sic]	God exalteth by His power.	

[Job 36: 22]

The composer's other hand-written manuscripts largely deal with his employment of various authentic musical themes. Their intended use is unclear, but references to the separate edition of the libretto suggest they were not intended for that project but were perhaps written as an earlier, more detailed version of the introduction to the vocal score. They may also have been produced to aid Jaeger with his analysis, though the formal language suggests that they were primarily intended for publication:

Ex. 4 BL Add. MS 47904B ff. 208–11

Note

In the libretto—which may be obtained separately with further references and some notes—use has been made of the Authorised and the Revised versions.

In the music the following themes, very freely adapted, have been utilized:

a) A portion of the Gradual 'Constitues eos'; this Gradual celebrates the power promised to the Apostles & their successors.



b) A portion of the antiphon 'O Sacrum Convivium' from the second Vespers of the feast of Corpus Christi[.]



c) The ancient Hebrew melody to psalm 92.

This is quoted, by kind permission of the publishers Messrs. Augener & Co., from the volume edited by Ernst Pauer whose broad & appropriate harmonies are retained in a few bars.

The first appearance of these themes may be noted

a) on p. 15 of the vocal score; more fully on p. 39

b) in the introduction to pt. III

c) On p. 21

The call of the watchers, p. 20, was suggested by the second theme in No. 15 'Shomea Tefillah', also from the above named work [The edition of Jewish music edited by Pauer].

Thanks are given to the Rev. F. L. Cohen for valuable information regarding the Hebrew tune and for furnishing the authentic 'Call' of the *Shofar* (p. 19).

Thanks are also due to several friends for suggestions: as these concern only the libretto, they are referred to in the separate edition.

E. E.

It will be observed that I have confined my references to the simple and most easily obtainable books: the unnecessary complication of some modern sophistic thought does not affect the great underlying principles on which this libretto is built.

The following passage, in effect an acknowledgements page, appears to have been an afterthought to be added to the above note:

Ex. 5 BL Add. MS 47904B f. 206

It has long been &c.

The plan of the oratorio and the selection of words are my own but I wish to thank the below named priests for very valued assistance. Viz.:

The Rev. E. Capel-Cure, M.A., Rector of Stour Provest, the Rev. Canon Gorton, M.A. Rector of Morecambe whose choice in several cases has been followed.

To the Rev. F. L. Cohen.

I am indebted for much useful information concerning Hebrew music ritual partially produced in part I, for the authentic call for the shofar, & also for the translation of the Watchers' announcement 'The face of all the East &c.'.

'Constitues eos' is the Gradual on the Feast of St Peter and St Paul (29 June), 'Thou shalt make them princes of the earth: they shall remember Thy name, O Lord'. Elgar's use of this is most obvious in the passage he cites in the above note, page 39 of the vocal score:

Ex. 6 'The Lord hath chosen them'

First fragment from 'Constitues eos' (as given in Jaeger's analysis)



'The Lord hath chosen them', from Fig. 49

A musical score for a vocal line. It starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'tempo andioso' and the dynamics are 'ff'. A box containing the number '49' is placed above the first measure. The melody is written on a five-line staff. Below the staff, the lyrics are: 'The Lord, the Lord hath chosen them, they shall be named the Priests of the Lord.' There are three triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a bracket) over the words 'be named', 'the Priests', and 'of the Lord.'

In Ex. 4, Elgar's reference to 'pt. III' is to the intended short third part originally to be added, and should not be mistaken for a reference to a later oratorio. The material based around 'O sacrum convivium' was eventually used between figures 18 and 19 of *The Kingdom*. Elgar also acknowledged that he turned to Hebrew music transcribed for piano by Ernst Pauer.¹² He made use of two portions, firstly the ancient melody for Psalm 92 ('Mizmor Shir' in Pauer's volume) used at the beginning of the 'Morning Psalm' scene, which may explain why the passage is not very Elgarian in idiom:

Ex. 7 Ancient Hebrew melody and 'Morning Psalm'

'Morning Psalm' sequence, fig. 28

29

Secondly, the theme associated with the Watchers is derived from 'Shomea Tefillah' in Pauer's volume. Pauer's own setting is based upon one important musical aspect of the Penitential Services, in which eighteen blessings or 'berakhot' are used in total. The melody for Pauer's phrase is taken from one of these blessings, as given below.

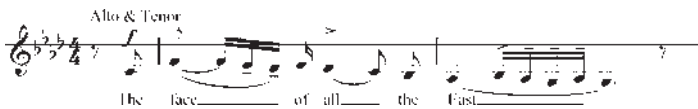
Ex. 8a Hebrew theme taken from the service of Tefillah providing material for the second theme in Pauer's 'Shomea Tefillah', and in turn the Watcher's theme from *The Apostles*.



Ex. 8b Second phrase from Pauer's 'Shomea Tefillah'



Ex. 8c 'The Watchers', fig. 27



The shofar call, traditional in 'Jewish Synagogues from time immemorial, and most likely what time Christ walked upon the earth',¹³ is first sounded at the opening of the dawn sequence at fig. 25. The instrument is the ram's horn of the Bible, the most frequently mentioned instrument in the Old Testament and the only ancient Jewish liturgical instrument still in use today. In the Old Testament the shofar's functions are various, both in sacred and secular ceremony. Since *The Apostles* is 'set' in the time of the New Testament, Elgar's use of the instrument may be seen in the context of its use in Jewish synagogues today. It is used in the festival of Rosh Hashanah to call Israel together and to summon all Jews to repentance and to God; thus Elgar uses the instrument as a call to worship at the beginning of the new day. Four calls are blown on such occasions, and Elgar's use of the instrument is in line with these.

Ex. 9 Shofar call as used in Jewish music ritual



Any insight into the working methods of an artist necessarily adds to a greater understanding of their finished work, especially when this information is detailed firsthand from the composer himself. *The Apostles* is no exception, Elgar's explanatory notes showing that he undertook the demands of his vision with extreme seriousness and, at times, utmost sensitivity. In light of such documentation the work can no longer remain perceived as a mere 'patchwork of lines from scriptures',¹⁴ but a carefully crafted realisation of the vision first conceived in his schooldays. Elgar employs several highly original features seldom found in any of his other works; most notably his own compilation of text, and the use of authentic Jewish music. These unique contributions to the composer's output ensure *The Apostles* is recognised as one of Elgar's greatest artistic

endeavours, something his own commentary can only serve to confirm.

1. E. A. Baughan, 'The Apostles and Elgar's Future', in *An Elgar Companion*, edited by Christopher Redwood (Ashbourne: Sequoia, 1982), p. 236.
2. Mrs Richard Powell, 'The first performances of *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*', in *Musical Times*, 101 (1960), p. 22.
3. Rev. Henry Latham, *Pastor Pastorum, or the schooling of the Apostles of our Lord* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co., 1902), p. 235. Elgar Birthplace Museum, 54.
4. In a meeting with Wulstan Atkins two years ago, he told me it was this effective portrayal of Judas which, in his view, made *The Apostles* the greatest of the three large choral works.
5. Powell, p. 22.
6. Although Wagner is understandably frequently credited with influencing Elgar's use of leitmotifs, in an article for the *Musical Times* in 1900 Elgar claimed that his first experience of 'representative themes' came in the music of Mendelssohn and 'long before [he] had heard a note of Wagner'. See *Musical Times*, 41 (1900), p. 647.
7. In an article for the *Strand Magazine* in 1904 Elgar claimed that the proportions the project would one day encompass were along his 'original lines'. This statement may be true, Elgar may have previously considered a multi-work format during the 1890s, but there is no definite mention of the later works until after the première of *The Apostles*. When Jaeger persuaded Elgar to amend the passage dealing with the momentary vision of God in *Gerontius*, Elgar then claimed that the amended version was in fact 'what [he] thought of first'. His claim over the subsequent works in the 'Apostles project' may be perceived in a similar way.
8. F. G. Edwards, 'Dr. Elgar's new oratorio *The Apostles*: an interview with the composer', in *Musical Times*, 54 (1903), p. 229.
9. For a more detailed discussion of the construction of the libretto and early stages of composition, see Christopher Grogan, 'The Apostles: some thoughts on the early plans', in *Edward Elgar, Music and Literature*, edited by Raymond Monk (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), pp. 10–34.
10. Letter from Clayton to Elgar, dated 30 June 1903. He suggested that another work on similar proportions to *The Apostles* be produced at the 1906 Birmingham Festival. Elgar went one better and eventually decided to write two further oratorios on the subject, what we today know as *The Kingdom*, and the never to be completed *The Last Judgement*.
11. BL Add. MS 47904 B f. 1.
12. Ernst Pauer, *Traditional Hebrew Melodies Chanted in the Synagogue and the House selected, harmonised and arranged for the Pianoforte* (London: Augener, 1896?).
13. August Jaeger, *The Apostles, an oratorio by Edward Elgar, Book of Words with Analytical and Descriptive Notes* (London: Novello, 1903), p. 13.
14. Baughan, p. 237.

NICHOLAS HAWKER recently completed his M.Phil. thesis on The Apostles at the University of Birmingham, where his supervisor was Paul Rodmell. His research into The Apostles also formed the basis of his paper at the English Music, Concert Life, and Theatre (1830–1960) conference at Stratford-upon-Avon earlier this year. He is currently a choral scholar at Truro Cathedral.



Alfred Edward Rodewald (1862–1903)

Alfred Edward Rodewald (1862–1903)

John Kelly

'I am utterly broken up,' wrote Elgar to Jaeger in the wake of the death (one hundred years ago) of their mutual friend Alfred Rodewald, a talented and enthusiastic amateur conductor who had recently played a role in the completion of the Apostles project: 'I used to pass him every sheet as I finished it... & heard his criticisms & altered passages to please him'. In this tribute to Rodewald, the author fleshes out the portrait of the friend Elgar described as 'my best & dearest'.

The 9th November this year marks the centenary of the death of Alfred Rodewald, an event which sadly is unlikely to be remembered by many in his home town of Liverpool, or even by Elgarians, although most of us will be aware that it was his sudden illness—from which it was said he would be unlikely to recover—which caused Elgar to dash by train from Malvern to Liverpool, only to find the man he called his 'best friend', to whom he had dedicated his most famous tune, had died whilst he was on his journey. Indeed, it seems likely that, had Elgar not poured out his feelings of grief in letters to Newman and Jaeger that evening and in the days following, the passing of this special friend at the early age of forty-one would have warranted little more than a footnote in biographies of Elgar. But, partly as a result of that correspondence and the light it throws on Elgar's mental state in the presence of severe shock, the events of Elgar's own '9/11' have offered the opportunity for authors to say a little about Rodewald, and for at least one writer to engage in an amateurish psychoanalysis of possible reasons, other than the obvious, for the depth of Elgar's despair. Thus, for instance, De-la-Noy suggests that Elgar's outbursts were not caused by the loss of his friend, but because Elgar had come face to face with 'Death', which he had feared and shunned ever since the loss in childhood of his young brother Joe. De-la-Noy bases his theory on the statement that Joe would have been *exactly* the same age as Rodewald had he lived, but unfortunately on that point he is wrong, being three years adrift!

Alfred Edward Rodewald was born on 28 January 1862, which means that he was forty-one when he died, even younger than all the biographies and press reports of the time tell us. Moreover, in criticising Elgar for dallying for forty-eight hours after he heard the news of Rodewald's illness before going up to Liverpool, De-la-Noy ignores the messages which passed between Malvern and Liverpool over the Saturday and Sunday. On the Monday Elgar was due to go to London, but on hearing from Newman that he and Bantock might go to Liverpool to find out what had happened, and more especially when Alice heard on the Monday morning from Hilda Rodewald, Alfred's twenty-nine-year-old sister, Elgar took the decision to change his plans and to catch the train from Worcester to Liverpool. It must have been the contents of Hilda's reply to Alice's letter or telegram which made up his mind. She wrote of Alfred being unconscious, of all the family being at his bedside, and that if her brother rallied and was allowed to see anyone, she would forego seeing him herself, so that Edward could see him, as that would be the best for Alfred. Her offer of such a sacrifice tells us much about the relationship between Rodewald and Elgar, and surely kills any suggestion that Elgar's grief for Rodewald was superficial and not genuine.

When Elgar wrote that Rodewald was his 'best friend', and when Bantock wrote to Elgar that, 'He was more than a brother to you', they encapsulated in these brief phrases the profound relationship which had established itself over a very short period of time. Rodewald and Elgar only knew each other for four years and four months,

but this was long enough for a very special friendship to develop. In the first sixteen months of that period, the two only met on two occasions, if the entries in Alice's diary are a complete record, but from then onwards the two men were constantly seeking out each other's company. In the following three years, they met or were together on twenty-one occasions, totalling one hundred and twenty-two days, in whole or in part. This represents eleven percent of their time, a remarkable figure. And this was a period when Elgar was particularly busy, finally receiving his due recognition as he emerged from provincial obscurity, when he was composing and attending many early performances of his major works, including *The Dream of Gerontius*, *Cockaigne*, the first two *Pomp and Circumstance* marches, *Grania and Diarmid*, and *The Apostles*. Between 1899 and 1903 Elgar visited Rodewald in Liverpool on five occasions, staying at 66 Huskisson Street (which is still standing, close to the 'new' Anglican cathedral). He also went once to Rodewald's 'cottage' at Saughall, a few miles north-west of Chester, where the garden of one-and-a-half acres was large enough for Rodewald's guests to play cricket and tennis! In 1901 and 1903 Rodewald invited Elgar to 'Minafon', another large house which he used to take for the summer months, in the south of the Conwy Valley at Betws-y-Coed. It was there that Elgar worked on the orchestration of *The Apostles*, in between walks on the hills and cycle rides, when they were not using a less reliable means of transport—a car nicknamed the 'Shover', or by Alice 'The Mouldy Buzzer', as it was constantly breaking down in those pioneering days of motoring.

When the Elgars went to Düsseldorf for the Lower Rhine Festival performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*, Rodewald was in the party of friends and critics who accompanied them. He had already played his double bass in the festival in previous years, performing his task 'efficiently enough' according to Hans Richter, who was a friend and—as Richter's daughter told Jerrold Northrop-Moore—Rodewald's conducting teacher. After Rodewald's death, Richter wrote that Rodewald 'was one of the most zealous and most intelligent of the frequenters of Bayreuth. I shall never forget the tall fine fellow with open-hearted, kindly and loyal nature that he was... He was an artist in living of the first order and a man of truly distinguished character.' Indeed, Richter and others put it to Rodewald that he should give up his business career and concentrate on music and conducting, but Rodewald did not do so, although had he lived longer this could have become a reality. So, as one obituary put it, he turned to his music from the traumas of the cotton market with the ardour of a schoolboy being let out of school.

After the Lower Rhine Festival, the Elgars stayed on in Germany for two weeks, and Rodewald was with them as they travelled about, taking delight in showing them places he knew well. This was the country of his German ancestors, his father having been born in Bremen, an important cotton trading town, from where, as a young man, he had gone to New Orleans, Mississippi, where he married Alfred's American mother. Alfred, too, often had cause to travel to Germany in connection with his business affairs.

Rodewald visited Malvern nine times, spending Christmas 1902 there; though he stayed at the Essingham Hotel, he would dine and take part with Elgar in events and walks during the day.

This brief recital of their meetings and the statistics derived from Alice's diary of their 'togetherness' show how the two men 'hit it off', not necessarily at once when in 1899 they probably met for the first time at one of Bantock's concerts at New Brighton, just across the estuary from Liverpool, but certainly from 1900, when Elgar went to Liverpool to hear Rodewald conduct the Variations in the Philharmonic Hall. Their friendship certainly grew closer after Elgar's holiday in North Wales in the early summer of 1901 where at 'Minafon' Elgar met Rodewald's sister and his associates in the Liverpool Orchestral Society, which by that time Rodewald had built up into one of the leading orchestras in the country.

As a boy, Rodewald had been taught piano and violin; whilst at school at Charterhouse, or shortly afterwards, he took up the double bass, an instrument which well suited his height, for he stood three or four inches above six feet, towering above his orchestra when he later turned to conducting.

At Charterhouse, Rodewald's academic record was not outstanding, and in a school which promoted boys not by age but on merit, he ended his years there only half-way up the ladder at age seventeen. But he was happy to return regularly as an old boy, and played the bass on five occasions for the annual oratorio

performances at Easter-time. Whilst he was at school and playing the violin in a quartet, another member of that ensemble (who also composed for it) was Edward Capel-Cure, who later in life became a clergyman, and wrote the words for Elgar's *The Light of Life* and advised him on the text of *The Apostles*. In 1919, Capel-Cure was married for the third time, to Hilda Fitton, the sister of Isobel, the sixth 'Variation'. Whether Elgar and Rodewald were aware of their mutual connection with Capel-Cure, I cannot say, but it is interesting to speculate that they might have realised the coincidence, perhaps when they were together in North Wales at nearby Capel Curig, with its similarity of name, particularly as Elgar was always one to play with words. At school, Rodewald would have known another pupil, Robert Baden-Powell, but Vaughan Williams arrived a few years later.

Rodewald was not destined for a career in music, and after leaving school and spending a couple of years on the continent (possibly with his French grandmother's family, or his father's German family), he briefly took up a position as a commercial clerk in a bank. Then he joined his father's cotton brokerage in Liverpool. After his father retired in 1881, Alfred's brother John, born in America, took over as head of the firm; but John, too, was to die tragically young at age thirty-five, and so Alfred took over the running of the business in 1892. By this time, he was a well-known figure in Liverpool, particularly in musical circles, and became a director of the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company. Rodewald also took up the cause of bimetallism and was the secretary of the Liverpool branch of the Bimetallic Society, probably influenced by the strength of feeling for the use of silver and gold as monetary standards in the United States, where he had relatives and to where he travelled on business.

Shortly after moving back to Liverpool from the family home in London, Rodewald, aged about twenty, had offered his services as a bass player to a group of musicians who formed an orchestra to play at free concerts organised by a prominent Catholic priest, Father Nugent. These concerts were run to draw away the working classes from the public houses. Rodewald soon took over as conductor, and brought to his new role an infectious enthusiasm and dedication which caused the orchestra to grow to a size and quality he never dreamt it would achieve. In 1890, this People's Free Orchestra was reconstituted as the Liverpool Orchestral Society, when Rodewald began to attract the services of professional musicians, many from the Hallé in Manchester. Soon the orchestra, with between seventy and one hundred members, became known as the most significant in the land for the integration of amateurs and professionals, and for tackling modern compositions by such composers as Dvořák, Berlioz, Tchaikovsky, Strauss and Wagner. Indeed, it was Rodewald who drew the attention of Liverpool to the music of Wagner. All these new works were no easy challenges for an amateur conductor, yet it became every musician's ambition to be invited to join this pioneering ensemble, whose objectives were so clearly set out in its beautifully produced programmes. These stated that the object of the Society was the cultivation and practice of high-class orchestral music, with an emphasis on playing the works of modern composers. Rodewald bore much of the cost of performances himself, and after his death it also became clear how generous he had been on a personal level to his fellow musicians.

He offered finance to Elgar so that he might concentrate on composing a symphony (an offer Elgar rejected), and he was generous in his hospitality to many friends in Liverpool, Saughall, and Betws-y-Coed. It was Rodewald who, with Bantock, organised a collection amongst friends to enable Doctor Elgar to appear suitably gowned in his public appearances after he received his Cambridge doctorate. Elgar was genuinely overcome, and wrote that he didn't know who or what he was as he emerged into the public gaze after years of provincial obscurity.

Yet it was not money which attracted Elgar to his new friend. He found in him a parallel sympathy of understanding of the many parts of life which he valued most. Rosa Burley relates in her book how Elgar had once mentioned how he felt thoroughly understood when discussing Caroline poetry—amongst other subjects—with Rodewald. For though an academic non-achiever as a boy, Rodewald was a remarkable student as a man. He would read philosophy long into the night and study scores until dawn, going to the Exchange at the usual time.

Yet in other respects the child was the father of the man, for at Charterhouse Rodewald had been praised

for his thespian activities when he played the part of Baron Balderdash in a performance of *Cinderella*, entering into the fun of the part and 'always ready to break into a dance on the smallest provocation and often on no provocation at all.' This spirit of fun was seen at age forty when he entered fully into the nonsense of the 'Skip The Pavement' society (S.T.P.) and the imaginary Gold Exploration Company, of which A.E.R. was to be treasurer and 'bag the cash'. Elsewhere, too, during a serious conversation he would often break off without warning, tell a funny story, then apologise profusely to his listener before returning to the business at hand.

There is no doubting his love for Elgar. 'Rodey', as Edward and even Alice called him, was always pressing them to visit, or arranging to meet at concerts in various towns throughout the country when Elgar's music was to be played. His regular correspondence to Elgar is a delight to read with its opening greetings, from 'Dear Mr. Elgar', 'Dear Elgar', 'My Dear Elgar', 'My Dear Good Friend', to 'Dear Old Cocky' (after *Cockaigne*), and 'Dear Curse Book' or 'Kurse Buch' (when the S.T.P. had been formed, and Elgar was the keeper of the record of transgressions). On one occasion he wrote in June to 'Lady Elgar', two years before her husband was knighted, wishing her a happy Christmas!

Rodewald summed up Elgar in a short phrase which encapsulates his love of the music and his friend: 'Ah Dear Boy,—you write from the heart and not only from the brain—there's the secret'. Equally, Elgar's love for Rodewald can be seen by the fact that he was ready to dedicate his *Pomp and Circumstance* March no. 1 (which he knew contained a tune that came only once in a lifetime) to a man whom he had known for only a comparatively short time—two years, at that point.

Rodewald's illness was sudden. In October he had conducted the first concert of the season for his orchestra, and he already had Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* in rehearsal. He had also just attended the first performance of *The Apostles* in Birmingham. Then, out of the blue, he was taken. He felt so ill he thought he had typhoid, but was told it was influenza. Then, shortly after sending an optimistic note to Elgar, he became paralysed from the waist downwards, and as the paralysis moved upwards he sank into unconsciousness, dying five days later from what the doctors recorded as 'acute diffuse spinal myelitis'. The cause is not known, but the origins may possibly have been a cycling accident which Rodewald suffered earlier. If so, it is ironic to think that Elgar's enthusiasm for that activity and his encouragement of his friend could have been an indirect factor in his death.

Elgar, as we know, was distraught, and Liverpool was shocked. Members of the Exchange stood in silence when it opened. Amongst many glowing appreciations, a local priest referred to Rodewald as 'the Apollo of our City, so handsome in physique, so radiant of countenance, and the incarnation of enthusiasm'. A mutual friend in Manchester wrote to Alice, asking if there had ever been a more beautiful nature, 'So frank, so true, so inexpressibly kind'. The president of the Liverpool Orchestral Society, who had known Rodewald personally for over twenty years, wrote that everyone had lost 'a brother in affection, as well as art'. They had memories of many years of unselfish devotion, boundless sympathy and willing toil in the cause they all had at heart, he said. Rodewald had laboured unceasingly with the single aim of giving to others the benefit of his work, and to that end he had devoted his high talent, unsurpassed energy, his time, his money, and possibly his life.

There were suggestions in the press that Elgar should compose an elegy in memory of his friend; indeed, Bantock wrote to Elgar, saying that only he could express everyone's feelings in music, the highest form of art. 'We must not allow his memory to fade,' he said. But Elgar did not compose anything, and was soon off to Italy, although it was at this time that he sketched ideas for what eventually became the *Larghetto* in his great Second Symphony some eight years later. Alice recognised there a lament for 'Dear Rodey and all human feeling'.

Bantock took over conducting the orchestra for the remainder of the season, apart from a memorial concert in December when Richter conducted Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung*, and Muriel Foster sang 'The Angel's Farewell' from *The Dream of Gerontius*. At the start of the following season, Elgar returned to Liverpool and conducted his new overture *In the South* and the Variations. The concert also contained the overture *Froissart*. But the days of the orchestra were now numbered, and whilst it managed to carry on for a while with a legacy from Rodewald, giving many excellent concerts, and on one occasion attracting Sibelius to conduct his First

Symphony, by the end of the decade its ability to function effectively came to an end. In 1911, a body called the Rodewald Concert Club came into being, with its name being changed in 1916 to the Rodewald Concerts Society. This was a chamber orchestra organisation which had as its president Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. When Stanford died in 1924, Elgar was asked to take over the post, but he declined, writing a very curt letter saying that the only proper way to honour Rodewald's memory was to maintain an orchestra in his name. Liverpool's failure to do so was an everlasting reproach to the city!

There is now an attractive suite in the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool named the Rodewald Suite, but the explanatory notice contains mistakes. More recently, as part of the millennium celebrations in the year 2000, a plaque was erected on Rodewald's former home in Saughall, now a vicarage.

But Rodewald's everlasting memorial will be 'his tune', *Pomp and Circumstance* March no. 1, dedicated to him and the Liverpool Orchestral Society by his best friend. Yet how many people will be aware of this dedication and this fine man, when the music, itself so well known, is played or sung? Is it not up to Elgarians to make this better known, and to follow Bantock's call to Elgar himself: 'We must not allow his memory to fade'?

JOHN KELLY spent his early years in 'Cottonopolis' (Manchester), and is a retired banker. He has been a member of the Elgar Society since 1981, and was its Acting Secretary from 1995 to 1996. At London Branch he served as Treasurer for twelve years.



*Rodewald, Elgar and Granville Bantock
(reproduced courtesy of the Elgar Birthplace Museum).*

'Watchmen'—But What of the Knight? Elgar and the musical press

Geoffrey Hodgkins

Published last year, Meirion Hughes's The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850–1914: Watchmen of Music painted a new and disturbing portrait of Elgar as a skilful manipulator of the musical press. By re-examining the evidence on which Hughes based his views, and broadening the scope of the investigation, the author presents a detailed critique of Hughes's conclusions, and offers his own interpretation of Elgar's relationship with the 'watchmen'.

It is good to see that retirement has not dulled the powers of my old friend Carl Newton, but that he is as stimulating and provocative as ever ('Waving or Drowning?', *NEWS*, March 2003, pp. 10–11). His suggestion of a 'definitive biography' of Elgar is ambitious and appealing, but ultimately it is surely as elusive and unobtainable as El Dorado or the end of the rainbow. Newton would like it to be 'a co-operative effort based on thorough and critical analysis and re-examination of the sources, integrating the significant research of the last 20 years... [each] section written by an expert, using not only their own research but that of a multitude of contributors, the whole brought together by an editorial board of high scholarly reputation'. He feels it would be a worthy project 'to mark the 150th anniversary [of Elgar's birth] in 2007'. Experience suggests to me that a more realistic date for the completion of such a scheme would be the bicentenary in 2057. Who would select the 'experts', the 'multitude of contributors', and the 'editorial board of high scholarly reputation'? And who would have the final say? For even after the 'thorough and critical analysis and re-examination of sources' there will inevitably be differing reactions to, and interpretations of, the data. The problem is compounded by the lacunae in Elgar's life and career which are unavoidable in any historical research.

I think we should all be grateful for the integrity of the major writers on Elgar. Personally, I rejoice in the various 'slants' which different writers have brought to bear on him. I may not agree with all of them, but I see this multiplicity of views as a strength, rather than a weakness, as Newton seems to. Certainly, as he suggests, we may need to challenge long-held assumptions; and he is right that 'even the most distinguished scholars are not necessarily conscious of their re-interpretations being influenced by contemporary mores'. Hence the need for maximum objectivity and a passionate desire for the truth. Sadly, these virtues do not seem a high priority among certain deconstructionist writers. I have recently read Meirion Hughes's *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850–1914: Watchmen of Music* published by Ashgate in 2002 in its 'Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain' series. Dr Hughes is joint author of *The English Musical Renaissance 1860–1940: Construction and Deconstruction* (Manchester University Press, 1993). (Interestingly, when the book was brought out in a revised edition two years ago, the title was changed to *The English Musical Renaissance 1840–1940: Constructing a National Music*. Was this because the use of 'deconstruction' was felt to be unhelpful?)

Watchmen of Music deals with the rise in importance of music critics during the latter half of the nineteenth century, their impact on the 'renaissance', and on three composers in particular—Sullivan, Parry, and Elgar. The book was extensively and perceptively reviewed by Lewis Foreman in the *JOURNAL* (November 2002),

who questioned some of Hughes's observations on Elgar. In looking at the chapter 'Elgar: "Self-Made" Composer' in more detail, I hope to make us think carefully about deconstruction and re-evaluation (I have confined my comments to this chapter). That Hughes is an intelligent man and an able writer makes this all the more essential. Perhaps I should add that I have never seen it as my role in life to defend Elgar (or his music) from criticism. As is generally accepted, he was not an easy man to like, a man of moods whose sensitive and nervous nature, his insecurity and defensiveness sometimes led to boorish behaviour and rudeness. My objection to the writing on Elgar in *Watchmen of Music* is the way in which it completely misrepresents him: Hughes's selectivity and subjectivity with regard to data have created an Elgar that is far removed from what we know of the composer. Take this from the first paragraph:

Elgar realised early on that, above all, he needed the support of music journalists for his career to succeed. The watchmen were crucial to him, and he used them with subtlety and resource in two ways: first, to disseminate positive information about himself and his work; and second to voice his opinions about life and musical matters. Elgar was ahead of his time in using the press to market his 'persona' and to construct an image of himself which was both flattering and profitable. Elgar established a productive relationship with most of the watchmen of his era. No other composer of the day took such an interest in the reception of his music nor went to the same lengths to influence the way journalists reported his life and music.¹

Nothing is produced from the wealth of archival material to justify such bold assertions, save the existence of fifteen volumes of press clippings at Broadheath. They are similar in appearance to accounting ledgers, '...a similarity which vividly underscores the powerful fusion of art and business in the composer's life. In these pages is found a balance-sheet of the successes and failures of the composer's career, the profit and loss account of a "self-made" composer'. But as Foreman points out, 'such coverage was the norm at the time'. Furthermore, Elgar's role in the production of these books is open to question. They were compiled by Alice, who handed the job over to Dora Penny, and her account of this in her book is interesting. Elgar called the cuttings 'mouldy rubbish', Dora's job 'a waste of time', and suggested that she use them for cat bedding, or put them on a bonfire. Clearly he could have been teasing her, but Dora added that while Alice 'would turn the pages over with almost childish pleasure... E.E. never looked at it—in my presence at any rate—he just said something disparaging.'² Elgar is on record on many occasions that after 1900 he never read any criticism of his own work (presumably a response to the pain of the *Gerontius* première); and while this sounds fanciful, over the years I have come to believe that it is true, partly because he said it so many times, often publicly, and also to close friends like Ivor Atkins, who would surely have known if he was lying, and taken him up on it.

But if it could be shown that Elgar was behind the cuttings books, what does that prove? Is it not rather a passive occupation for one who, we are asked to believe, set out to subtly manipulate the critics to build up his reputation? Where is the evidence of sweeteners, palm-greasings, freebie lunches? Are there no letters of complaint over bad reviews, or obsequious notes to critics asking for a kindly mention? Well, yes, one: a letter of late 1889 to Joseph Bennett, chief music critic of the *Daily Telegraph*:

I have been requested to write a short orchestral work for the Worcester Festival. I am afraid my name is unknown to you, but I thought you would forgive my writing (not wishing to prejudice any criticism of the committee's choice you may make) to tell you that I am a native of Worcester and have written several orchestral works (including a suite of four movements for full orchestra and a set of pieces for string orchestra) which have been produced at Mr Stockley's Birmingham concerts and other by Mr Manns at the daily concerts of the Crystal Palace.

You were kind enough to notice the production of my first work at Birmingham in the 'Musical Year'; and since that time I have produced many things, some of which are published by Schott & Co.

I hope you will not think I am writing from egotistical motives, but it is a crucial time in the career of a young musician and I was afraid you might question the committee's action in asking me to contribute to their scheme.

The fact of my being a professor of music in my native town till last May and my having produced many things somewhat successfully locally has been the cause of their choice.³

To me the letter does not seem remarkable at all, being neither grovelling or pushy. It is the sort of letter that any aspiring young composer might have written. And a single letter from the period before he was famous is flimsy evidence on which to build a theory of press manipulation. Hughes goes on to quote favourable reviews from the 1890s as proof that the press were in Elgar's pocket. It is a bizarre and unconvincing approach. Yet, we are told, his increasing fame was 'a development to which the composer eagerly responded and he took every opportunity that came his way to promote and project himself in the press'.⁴ This extraordinary statement is not expanded upon. There is no indication that the initiative for interviews and articles came from Elgar. When he was in London there are no references in the diaries to meeting critics, only visits to Novello, to his club, to friends like Basil Nevinson, to concerts, theatres and art exhibitions. Hughes cites interviews given to two musical journals in November 1896 as 'further evidence surely that the composer himself was manipulating his own press coverage'.⁵ But 'surely' it is only evidence of manipulation if it can be shown that the initiative came from Elgar, and Hughes does not. It could be argued more persuasively that any musical journal worth its salt would want to interview an up-and-coming composer who had recently been given two successful premières (*The Light of Life* in September, and *King Olaf* in October), and that the suggestion for the interviews came from the 'watchmen'. If reviewers wrote enthusiastically about Elgar works, could it not mean that they actually *liked* them, and felt that they were of some merit? This is never suggested by Dr Hughes.

Another article made much of by Hughes is the 'biographical sketch' in the *Musical Times* for October 1900, to coincide with the première of *The Dream of Gerontius*. Even Hughes has to admit that the impetus for this did *not* come from Elgar; nevertheless, he was thrilled to receive such an accolade—who in his position would not have been? 'The resulting... sketch is pure hagiography', Hughes states with triumph, conveniently overlooking the fact that most of these composer sketches in the *Musical Times*—a series started in 1898 by the Editor F. G. Edwards—were just as eulogistic, especially if the composer concerned had music published by Novello, as Elgar did. It is simply not on to conclude, as Hughes does, that this is 'in every sense, an example of the Elgars' ability to manage the press', for the *Musical Times*, as Novello's house journal, was hardly dispassionate towards Elgar. The Elgars' corrections of Edwards' galley proofs is again made much of. But, given the opportunity, who would not have ensured that the sketch was given the required emphasis? Journalists have always been notorious for mistakes in the details. The passage from Elgar's letter accompanying these corrected proofs, quoted by Hughes, undermines his position further.⁶ Edwards is requested to remove a reference to Elgar's background in 'trade', although Elgar says 'I don't care a d—n!... but to please my wife do what *she* wishes' (emphases mine).⁷ As to the reception accorded *Gerontius*, the enthusiastic review written by the German Otto Lessmann was translated into English and later appeared in the *Musical Times*. However, the initiative for this came from Jaeger, who asked Alice Elgar for a translation. His letter of 7 November 1900 to her deserves quoting for what it shows of the 'watchmen' and the attitude of the majority towards Elgar:

Kindly send on your translation, and I will see what I can do about it. I feel sure they won't print that sentence about Parry and (especially) Stanford, though. The translation might also be sent to the other musical papers & perhaps to the people who write columns of 'Musical Notes' in the Dailies (the *B'ham* papers especially, who made such asses of themselves) might like to have it, e.g. P. Betts of the 'Daily News', Baughan of the 'Musical Leader' (his column is *widely* read) Herbert Thompson (Yorkshire Post) &c &c. Of course I can't say whether they *would* quote the whole article, but I think it's very likely. Papers like the D[aily] T[elegraph], Times & others are hardly likely to quote it. They have such 'great' critics of their own, that they don't want any mere foreigner's opinion, especially if the composer is not a 'College' or 'Academy' man.⁸

Clearly Jaeger believed that Elgar did not possess all this knowledge about the 'watchmen' and the workings of their various papers; whereas if Hughes's theory is correct, the information would have been already known

by the 'manipulative' composer. Notice also that the initiative for the suggestion to publish Lessmann's article came from Jaeger. Furthermore, and significantly, Jaeger—who was certainly *au fait* with the musical scene—believed that there was still hesitancy among the 'watchmen' towards Elgar, who of course was not a 'College' or 'Academy' man. Most of the critics *were*, however, and were thus more likely to be circumspect about Elgar, out of deference to Pary and Stanford.

It does seem that the première of *Gerontius* was the watershed in Elgar's relations with the watchmen, as suggested earlier. The following is an extract from an article written on the composer in 1907 by Norah Clegg for a Manchester music club. She was the sister-in-law of Canon Gorton of the Morecambe Festival, and no doubt her writings reflect his opinions, presumably from Elgar himself.

In 1900 *The Dream of Gerontius* was produced at Birmingham. It was a perfect fiasco, so badly was it given.

Nearly all the English critics, with a few exceptions, notably Mr Arthur Johnstone and Mr Ernest Newman, went against it. It was too revolutionary, too new! If the German critics had not been present and recognised its worth, it would have been a bad day for Elgar. To the London critics Elgar owes nothing. To Dr Richter and to Dr Manns he owes enormously, and... he owes much to the English people themselves, who, despite the critics, will have his music.⁹

There is virtually nothing in Hughes's chapter about the personal relationships between Elgar and the various critics, despite the sweeping (and unproven) assertion that he 'established a productive relationship with most of the watchmen of his era'. This is surely because as a group they did not loom large in Elgar's circle of friends: he was far more interested in working musicians, both amateur and professional—the Three Choirs organists, Adolf Brodsky, Hans Richter, Charles Buck, Nicholas Kilburn, Billy Reed, Swinnerton Heap, Landon Ronald—and in those wealthy and/or influential people who would sponsor or encourage the performance of his works—Edward Speyer, Frank Schuster, Alfred Rodewald, Henry Embleton, Lord Northampton, the Colvins, the Warrenders, the Beresfords, the Stuart-Wortleys, and others. By comparison, he was close to very few fellow composers—only Granville Bantock, Walford Davies and, for a time, the young Havergal Brian—and very few critics. Hughes has nothing to say about Alfred Kalisch (1863–1933), who wrote for *The Star*, *The World*, the *Morning Leader*, and later the *Daily News*. He and Percy Pitt were, with Jaeger, probably Elgar's closest musical friends in London during the years of his fame when he was still living in the West Midlands. Neither does Hughes mention Herbert Thompson (1856–1945), who for over fifty years was the critic for the *Yorkshire Post*: he wrote an analysis of *Caractacus* in 1898, and a spirited defence of Elgar when the *Musical News* published several anti-Elgar pieces in 1904 (see below), but apart from a few letters there seems to have been no regular contact between the two men. Joseph Bennett Elgar certainly admired, but again relations appear to have been cordial rather than close. He was certainly not in Elgar's pocket; in 1907, although having retired the year before, he attacked Elgar over some remarks made at the Morecambe Festival in a long article in the *Daily Telegraph* entitled 'Of Elgar and the North'.

Four other critics (plus Kalisch and Bennett) were singled out for praise in Elgar's Birmingham University lecture on critics on 6 December 1905. Arthur Johnstone (1861–1904) was someone Elgar greatly admired for his musicianship, but they seem to have met infrequently (mainly at the Morecambe Festival), and sadly the younger man died before their relationship had really grown. Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) is external to this discussion, as he did not meet Elgar until years later, probably 1918.¹⁰ That leaves E. A. Baughan (1865–1938) and Ernest Newman (1868–1959). Baughan is referred to by Hughes as 'the composer's friend',¹¹ but I can find no evidence that they were ever on intimate terms, and Hughes does not present any. Baughan also 'projected Elgar strongly in his columns';¹² whereas in fact, Baughan often spoke critically of Elgar's works on their appearance—*Caractacus*, the *Variations*, *The Apostles*, *The Kingdom*, and even the Violin Concerto, one of Elgar's greatest successes. In Baughan's 1906 book *Music and Musicians* there is a chapter entitled '*The Apostles* and Elgar's Future', in which the work is described as 'a glorious failure',¹³ and he attacks Elgar's attitude towards religion: 'The sentiment of Elgar's music in both [*The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Apostles*] is

almost grovelling in its anguish of remorse... I detect the hysterical prostration of the confessional'.¹⁴ Not much knee-jerk adulation there, then. And Elgar himself had little respect for Baughan as a musician, telling Gerald Cumberland that he could not 'hum a melody correctly in tune'.

Ernest Newman is an interesting case. He and Elgar seem to have first met in Liverpool in October 1901 when the first two *Pomp & Circumstance* marches were premiered, introduced by their mutual friend Alfred Rodewald. Elgar recognised Newman's ability which marked him out from the run-of-the-mill critics, and he soon became a member of the jokey 'Skip The Pavement' society, along with Bantock, Rodewald (the founders), Elgar, Ivor Atkins, and others. Given the two men's personalities, it was perhaps inevitable that they should clash. Gerald Cumberland, in his vitriolic but absorbing book, *Set Down in Malice*, describes Newman as 'a first-rate intellect functioning with absolute sureness... for fearlessness and inflexible intellectual honesty, he has no equal'¹⁵—a man unlikely to be 'bought off' by a manipulative composer, one would think. Cumberland goes on: 'Though, on occasion, a stern and relentless critic, he reacts morbidly to criticism of himself. He is highly strung, imaginative, rationalistic; he believes little and trusts not at all, loves intensely and hates bitterly'.¹⁶ Newman's disparaging remarks on *The Apostles*, and his criticism of Elgar's advocacy in the Birmingham lectures of absolute music as the highest form of the art, in light of the fact that the composer had not (at that stage) written any, was bound to offend one who also reacted badly to criticism. In the Birmingham lecture quoted above, Elgar said of Newman, 'It is true we do not agree on several points, but I have never found difference of opinion make daily intercourse with real strong men less possible'. That was the public utterance; in private he later wrote to Professor Fiedler of Birmingham University: 'Newman appears to have deserted criticism to make personal attacks on such men as Richter... & seems to want to get cheap notoriety by abusing individuals'. To Canon Gorton, who wanted to get Newman on the Morecambe Festival Executive, Elgar described Newman as 'the evil one', and said that he would have nothing more to do with Morecambe if Newman became involved. Yet eventually the two men were reconciled, and Newman became one of Elgar's closest confidants and the dedicatee of the Piano Quintet.

It is amazing that Dr Hughes makes no mention of Elgar's most famous remark on the press (except that it undermines his premise). In writing to Canon Gorton after the 1903 Morecambe Festival, where he had adjudicated, Elgar spoke of his surprise at the quality of the music performed there: '...it is rather a shock to find Brahms' part-songs appreciated and among the daily fare of a district apparently unknown to the sleepy London press... Some day the Press will awake to the fact... that the living centre of music in Great Britain is not London, but somewhere further north'. The letter was for inclusion in the Report Book of the Festival, and when the relevant part was quoted in the *Musical Times* for July 1903 it caused strong reaction in the press. Joseph Bennett said it was a pity that Elgar did not mark his letter 'private', obviously unaware that the composer had *meant* it to be published. The *Musical News*, the *Morning Post*, and the *London Musical Courier* all attacked the composer. (The press reactions are included in detail in my forthcoming book on Elgar and the Morecambe Festival, *Somewhere Further North*.)

It might have been presumed that this whole affair was disastrous for one trying to keep the critics on his side, but Elgar seems not to have cared at all. Indeed, on further visits to Morecambe in 1904, 1905 and 1907 he again made reference to it, on the last occasion commenting, 'Believe me, you want London reports, but you don't want London criticism'. This provoked an article by the retired Joseph Bennett (as mentioned above) and a comment from the *Musical News*, which spoke of 'a new edition of [Elgar's] annual diatribe against the unfortunate metropolis'. *Musical News* had been openly hostile to the composer since 1903, and had used the Elgar Festival at Covent Garden in March 1904 to write derogatory articles on four consecutive weeks in March and April. The final piece prompted a reply from Herbert Thompson on 15 April, which concluded: 'The article... coming after other essays whose aim seems to be to belittle Dr Elgar's achievements, leaves behind it an impression of spitefulness not altogether pleasant'.

The scars from the 'somewhere further north' affair took a long time to heal; and some of Elgar's unguarded remarks in his Birmingham lectures in 1905 opened the wounds again and led to castigation from many of the

critics. After the inaugural lecture Elgar wrote to Professor Fiedler: '...all the remarks I have seen by [the critics] are absolutely beside the point & futile to a degree more than ordinary even in musical criticism'.¹⁷ In the valuable volumes of letters produced by Jerrold Northrop Moore we find references to critics and the publications they wrote for—almost wholly negative. Jaeger wrote to Alice in March 1904 to say that he was surprised to see an interview with Elgar in '...what E. E. called "that Rag"—alias the Daily News...'.¹⁸ In June 1898 the composer wrote to Jaeger: 'Who is the ass who writes "criticisms" in Mus; Stand[ar]d? A vulgar-minded pig'—a certain J. H. G. Betts had written an unfavourable review of *Chanson de Nuit*.¹⁹ The following February, Elgar wrote to F. G. Edwards: 'There is no word of truth about doing Perosi at Worcester—I think it is only a publisher's dodge & I think the Daily News & Truth *only* started it—I suppose Betts still trails over both'.²⁰ Of the same incident he wrote to Jaeger: 'I could not think where that pig Betts got his yarn from on Friday & his wicked joke'.²¹ Jaeger obviously was no friend of Betts either, writing to Elgar in August 1900: 'That ass Betts has been at it again in the D. News talking about a *massive* 8 part chorus as a Finale to "Gerontius" & last Friday he talked of Gerontius being done at the Albert Hall. I think it's a lie'.²²

There is other material in much the same vein which I could have quoted, but I trust the point has been made. A few books of press cuttings, a single letter, and some complimentary interviews seem unconvincing by comparison. The simple truth is that Elgar did not possess the social skills to wheedle the critics onto his side. As Jaeger's letter implies, many were probably hostile or equivocal towards Elgar because of his lack of formal musical education, and he was too thin-skinned to take kindly to any criticism, however well-intentioned. He once told Jaeger: 'I ask for no reward—only to live and hear my work'.²³ He had sufficient faith in his music to believe that it would succeed, so long as it was played; critical acclaim, if it came, was a nice bonus.

My conclusion then is that Hughes's case is conjectural and completely untenable. His evidence is largely circumstantial and, as I stated earlier, he is selective and subjective in his use of material. The weight of evidence is heavily against him, and the picture of Elgar he purports to show is at odds with all that has been written about the composer over the years. His basic assumption implies that Elgar's recognition as a composer was due less to the merit of the music he wrote and more to its ecstatic reception by the critics. In his JOURNAL review, mentioned earlier, Lewis Foreman spoke of 'a snide tone of voice' in the book; and it appears that Hughes does not like Elgar very much. His contribution to the book *Music and the Politics of Culture* (London, 1989) is entitled 'The Duc D'Elgar: Making a Composer Gentleman'.

I close with a quote from Arnold Bax's autobiography, in which Elgar is described as '...a shy captious man, [who] suffered neither fools nor anyone else with consistent gladness'. The young Bax visited Elgar at Birchwood in 1901:

He was still sore over the *Gerontius* fiasco at Birmingham the previous autumn, and enlarged interestingly upon the subject. 'The fact is,' he said, 'neither the choir nor Richter knew the score.' 'But I thought the critics said...,' I started to interpose. 'Critics!' snapped the composer with ferocity. 'My dear boy, what do the critics know about anything?'²⁴

1. Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850–1914: Watchmen of Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 161.
2. Mrs Richard Powell ('Dorabella'), *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation*, fourth edition (Aldershot: Scolar, 1994), p. 57.
3. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 31–2.
4. Hughes, p. 165.
5. Hughes, p. 166.
6. Hughes, p. 171.
7. Letter of 19 September 1900 (see Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 240).
8. *Elgar and his Publishers*, p. 255.
9. *A Record of Musical Evenings* (Manchester: Buckley & Bland, 1909), p. 126–7, reprinted in *The Elgar Society Journal*, vol. 12 no. 2 (2001), 86–90 (p. 88–9).
10. See Ronald Taylor, 'Shaw and Elgar', in *Elgar Studies*, edited by Raymond Monk (Aldershot: Scolar, 1990) pp. 214–20, (p. 217).
11. Hughes, p. 165.
12. Hughes, p. 193.
13. E. A. Baughan, 'The Apostles and Elgar's Future' in *Music and Musicians* (London: Bodley Head, 1906), pp. 189–209 (p. 200). (Reprinted in *An Elgar Companion*, edited by Christopher Redwood (Ashbourne: Sequoia, 1982) pp. 236–44.)
14. Baughan, pp. 202–3.
15. Gerald Cumberland, 'Edward Elgar' (Chapter 7) in *Set Down in Malice* (London: Grant Richards, 1919), pp. 79–87 (p. 146). (Reprinted in *An Elgar Companion*, edited by Christopher Redwood (Ashbourne: Sequoia, 1982) pp. 130–6.)
16. Cumberland, p. 147.
17. Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music*, edited by Percy M. Young (London: Dennis Dobson, 1968) p. 68–9.
18. *Elgar and his Publishers*, p. 549.
19. *Elgar and his Publishers*, p. 73.
20. *Elgar and his Publishers*, p. 108.
21. *Elgar and his Publishers*, p. 111.
22. *Elgar and his Publishers*, p. 222.
23. *Elgar and his Publishers*, p. 244.
24. Arnold Bax, *Farewell, My Youth* (London: Longmans, 1943), p. 31, 30.

Geoffrey Hodgkins was Editor of the *Elgar Society Journal* from 1991 to 2002. He edited the *Gerontius companion*, *The Best of Me* (1999); and in partnership with Dr Charles McGuire is currently writing a book on the origin of the libretto for the *Apostles project*.

REPORTS

Fourth Biennial International Conference on Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain

School of Music, University of Leeds, 24–27 July 2003.

The new School of Music at Leeds proved an excellent venue and the route from the station passes the Town Hall where a crucial Elgar première took place in 1898. Many buildings he could have seen, including several which survived to Pevsner's West Riding volume in 1959, have disappeared. He did, of course, decline a professorship in Leeds before accepting one in Birmingham; it took Leeds nearly fifty years before a professor was appointed (there are now six). As interpreted by academic conferences, 'long' centuries raid the adjacent decades. Elgar could be under discussion in conferences on nineteenth- or twentieth-century music. Into the former fell more than half his life-span; most of his greatest music was composed within the latter, not least the symphonies, concertos, and another Leeds commission, *Falstaff*. The biennial conferences on music in nineteenth-century Britain are characteristic of today's scholarship in concentrating more on the ambience of music than on the music itself, developing our knowledge of concert life, audiences, and reception rather than of the music played in those concerts. On the whole this is a healthy tendency, but the awkward fact remains that of the music heard in nineteenth-century Britain which may be considered to have survived the test of time, the majority is of foreign origin (even if, like *Elijah*, premiered in Birmingham).

Four papers on Elgar might be expected to reverse this trend; in the event, unfortunately, Corissa Gould was unable to attend to deliver further thoughts on *The Crown of India*, with some of which, however, readers of this journal will already be acquainted. There was a well-attended Elgar session on the first day, with the undersigned in the chair. Matthew Riley, whom we must wish well in his recent appointment to Birmingham University, is preparing a study of Elgar and childhood: not just of Elgar's childhood, but of the significance of childhood for Elgar. He engaged our attention by showing the entirely fictitious horse-riding sequence from Ken Russell's film as an example of myth-making; other myths were perhaps made by the composer or with his consent and the support of biographers (Moore was respectfully invoked here). With the inter-related *Wand of Youth* and *Starlight Express* as musical examples, Matthew queried the view that Elgar's career played out what had been laid down in his earliest years, suggesting rather that his preoccupation with childhood things mined an entirely adult and very productive seam of nostalgia. I can only convey the argument thus inadequately, but the eventual book is one I look forward to with great keenness, as I do to future publications by Paul Harper-Scott, the second speaker, whose kind of thinking is very different but who noted impromptu intersections with Matthew's paper; Paul's subject, *Falstaff*, is much affected by nostalgia (and not only in the interludes). The main thrust of the 'symphonic study', however, is tragic; Elgar's view of the fat knight, the prince, and their relationship is revealed as gloomy, even cynical. Paul's programmatic interpretations are founded on a sophisticated musical analysis which needs more time to digest than is allowed by the tight confines of a conference paper; he nevertheless managed to cover its relation to sonata form and deformations thereof, and thematic rotation (a useful descriptive tool promoted by James Hepokoski), as well as the remarkable tonal daring of the close.

The third paper of this session, by Peter Horton, traced the relationship between Elgar and Hugh Blair, dedicatee of *The Black Knight*. Peter provided details of Blair's continuing compositional activity, by no means all in church music. His usefulness to Elgar in first performing the organ sonata was reciprocated by Elgar's collaboration on the orchestration of his cantata 'Blessed are they who watch', a manuscript of which Peter identified in the library of the Royal College of Music. We also heard of Blair's difficult relationship with

his superiors at Worcester Cathedral; his appointment there was severed in part because of a Falstaffian vice—perhaps he took insufficient bread for an intolerable deal of sack (or the late nineteenth-century equivalent). A pity that this peccadillo did not join Dr Sinclair's dog as a variation in Op. 36, but one supposes Alice would not have approved.

There were many other excellent papers, and the conference was well enough populated to run parallel sessions. I will mention only a few which relate less tangentially to Elgar's cultural and musical background. One of Stanford's recent biographers, Paul Rodmell, assembled fascinating material on opera in Dublin. Ian Taylor, Leanne Langley, and Simon McVeagh made contributions to understanding London orchestral life. A London concert database is being prepared at Leeds partly under the tutelage of the conference organiser, Rachel Cowgill, whose assistant and Ph.D. student Ann Royle spoke on the development of the orchestral conductor early in the nineteenth century. Aidan Thomson, who recently completed a fascinating Oxford doctoral thesis on critical reception of Elgar in Germany, presented a portrait of a critic slightly senior to Elgar, Charles Maclean, whose support for Parry led him at times into judgements on Elgar few readers of this journal would share; yet Maclean was perceptive enough to base his critique on elements which serve, for us, to define Elgar's originality, even his greatness, and he did write appreciatively of the First Symphony, by no means an easy work to swallow (its early critical reception notwithstanding).

Several welcome contributors from the USA and Europe demonstrated that this land is no longer perceived from abroad as being without music; one of these, the well-known Elgarian Charles McGuire, spoke on the transformation of the oratorio from an élite to a popular, even working-class, genre. Papers by the nearly homonymous David Knight (of the Council for the Care of Churches) and David Wright (of the Royal College) were concerned with the coronations of monarchs from William IV to George V, the latter in connection with Elgar's younger contemporary, Frederick Bridge. There were two splendid keynote addresses, by the Rev. Dr John Lowerson and Professor Ruth Solie; there were short piano and vocal recitals, a concert of music by the Yorkshire Moravian composer Latrobe, and a delightful brass band session at Armley Mills Industrial Museum, a Leeds location probably not frequented by Elgar. The tapestry of nineteenth-century British musical life was always richly detailed but had become neglected and obscured by mists and grime over the years; these conferences serve to clean and carefully to restore it.

Julian Rushton

Stirred, not Shaken

Stirring the Spirit, an entertainment by Justin Pearson
Sarratt (Herts) Festival, Sarratt Village Hall, 27 September 2003

Is this really the man whose music we Elgarians love? Set in the South Bank Nursing Home, Worcester, in the months before Elgar's death after diagnosis of the inoperable malignant tumour, Justin Pearson's 'play with musical interludes', commissioned for this year's Sarratt Festival, portrays an ailing Elgar reminiscing about his life—the personal highs and lows, and the changing world that he knows he is shortly to depart. The portrait is largely of an irascible, even embittered old man railing against lost opportunities and the march of progress, and the uninitiated could be forgiven for assuming that the author has developed a somewhat exaggerated caricature for the sake of dramatic entertainment. And yet... the words, by and large, are Elgar's own outpourings, well documented by Kennedy and other biographers.

Admittedly, to sustain interest over the whole two hours or so, the author plays free and easy with the chronology, enabling him to bring forward earlier quotations so that the play at times sounds like a recitation of an Elgar Editions sales leaflet: '...The Best of Me...', '...Oh, My Horses...', '...Chivalry...'; only the 'Awful Female' is missing. But the author's skilful interweaving of outpourings often in reality widely separated in time adds to the dramatic impact without significantly distorting the truth, leaving this reviewer at least to conclude that we are seeing an accurate, even affectionate portrayal of the pent-up frustrations of a creative genius who knows his days are numbered. Irascible, maybe, but lovable nonetheless—an undeniable 'Portrait of Elgar', warts and all.

Not that the evening is all doom and gloom—far from it, even if Elgar's playful japes with a whoopee cushion are not well documented elsewhere! Elgar is assisted by Carice, his carer Nurse Harrison and an on-stage piano quintet which provides the musical interludes between the numerous short tableaux. Naturally, most—possibly too many—of these are taken from the Piano Quintet, and for me the evening's two most glorious moments come when the author looks elsewhere for musical accompaniment. Elgar's reminiscences about his long lost friend Jaeger lead inevitably to a rendition of 'Nimrod', played here in a string quartet arrangement which succeeds because it avoids the trap of slavishly emulating the full orchestral 'Enigma'; the climactic ending is shunned in favour of a more gradual, wistful fading away, far more appropriate to both the arrangement and the circumstances. And as Elgar, possibly hallucinating under the influence of pain-killing medication, provides a vivid description of a Middle Eastern bazaar, the piano introduces a lyrical account of *In Smyrna*—a touch of genius! It is hard to credit that this most beautiful of miniature tone poems lay all but lost until twenty-five years ago. Any reader who does not know it should stop reading here and reach for the Elgar Editions order form to purchase a copy of the David Owen Norris CD.

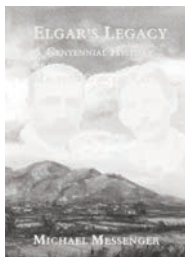
There are other excursions beyond the Piano Quintet—the familiar violin and piano arrangement of *Salut d'Amour* and the less well known (and rather less satisfying) cello and piano arrangement of the first movement of the Cello Concerto. Perhaps the one disappointment is that, as the end nears, Carice picks up Newman's poem and reads aloud the words of 'Softly and gently'; Elgar follows with the familiar section from Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, and our hopes are raised that we are about to be treated to a chamber arrangement of the *Angel's Farewell*, but it is not to be: instead, the play ends with yet another excerpt from the Piano Quintet, a minor disappointment in what has been a hugely entertaining and absorbing evening.

The intention here is to review the play rather than the performance but it is only fair to add that all involved in this première performance—David Graham as Elgar, Serena Evans as Carice and Nurse Harrison, and a strengthened London Piano Trio—gave exemplary performances. We understand that

further performances are planned and have asked the author to keep us informed of dates and venues which, if received in time, will appear in the News. If it comes to a theatre near you, be sure not to miss it.

John Norris

BOOK REVIEWS



Elgar Editions, 2003
448pp.
Hardback
ISBN 0953708276
£25.00

Elgar's Legacy: a centennial history of the Malvern Concert Club

by Michael Messenger

This centenary project was already on the agenda when I joined the Concert Club committee in 1998. The concern then, and always, was a marketing one and we can be pleased that Elgar Editions has taken the plunge. (I believe I had a minor role in suggesting this!) Other potential publishers might well have tried to steer the project to a 'popular' booklet rather than a thorough history of major interest to the musical world.

The book charts the Club's activities in the context of changing tastes, the locality—redolent of Elgar, the music profession, and the careers of the artists who have performed for it. Here are all the great names in British—and wider—music, with the Club often showing the necessary knack of spotting emerging artists before they become 'too expensive'.

The story begins with EE and Troyte Griffith, the latter the leading figure for forty years, and continues unbroken to today. The good and bad times are equally chronicled, with low points of membership under one hundred and highs of over six hundred, and also the many necessary changes of venue. For the past thirty years a pattern of six major concerts a year has been followed and currently a fine, though expensive, venue helps to attract audiences in excess of four hundred (essential to get somewhere near to covering costs).

Reading the book, parallels between the fortunes of the Club and of music in Britain generally are, unsurprisingly, obvious. Being able to sense these changes is essential to successful management. Continuity in the Club's existence has been matched by that of its officers—four secretaries cover the one hundred years! This has enabled the Club to deal better than most with the ever-present financial conundrums. How 'safe' to be on artists and programmes? How much to depend on non-box office income? How to have the essential good relations with press and venue? These questions are constant themes in the book, as relevant in 2003 as in 1903. They probably explain the Club's gap in commissioning new works: from John McCabe's *Time Remembered* in 1973 through to Anthony Payne's Edward Thomas song-cycle this year. However, the Club's record on scheduling contemporary and late twentieth-century works bears comparison with its peers.

Michael Messenger, archivist and librarian by profession, has mined the records—a tribute to successive secretaries and the Elgar Birthplace—as a labour of love. His affection for the Club and his knowledge of all things Elgarian shine through. His skill with words has produced an exciting read from what on the surface might seem a dry subject of but specialist and local appeal.

The book is handsomely produced with a splendid dust-jacket based (a little loosely, I am told, as far as colour goes) on a commissioned painting by Peter Wale,

and is a credit to the ever-developing skills of Elgar Editions. The illustrations are numerous, and well chosen and reproduced. I would have liked to have seen them listed; and also a Roll of Honour of the officers who have served the Club so well.

Carice Elgar Blake (Chairman 1949–58 and President 1961–70) is quoted as saying that 'she liked to think that in the year 2003 people then looking through the records would look upon this concert [the 1953 Jubilee] as an example'. Michael's book fulfils this hope.

By the nature of the topic the story will always need updating, and Michael has said that he is amenable to the idea that a supplementary booklet may be produced to mark the Club's five-hundredth professional concert a few years hence. The book should appeal to all Society members, and indeed their support by purchase is needed for its success.

Ernie Kay

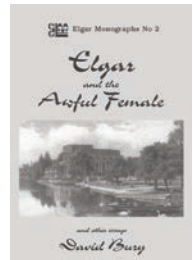
'Elgar and the Awful Female' and other essays

by David Bury

The title of this second offering in the series of monographs published by Elgar Editions leaves us in no doubt about the sort of author we are encountering. Seekers after cosy keeper-of-the-flame commentary will not find it here. On the other hand, readers with a taste for the tart skepticism of a witty *agent provocateur* can look forward to a good read accompanied by an unusually large number of intriguing illustrations.

The six essays included in this book admirably demonstrate what can be accomplished by a dedicated amateur with an incurable case of Elgarophilia. These are deeply personal musings on several nooks and crannies of Elgar's life. London Branch members who know David will recognize his inimitable diction and syntax. The style is conversational, but we are not having a casual chat here. David's erudition is deep and wide. His sentences are packed with odd bits of information, much of it calculated to bring his characters to life. In 'Elgar and The Two Mezzos', the opening essay on Marie Brema's losing battle with Muriel Foster to become Elgar's suprema diva, we learn that Miss Brema started out life as Minny Feldman, whereas Miss Foster became Mrs Goetz and then reverted to Foster when anti-German sentiment during the Great War induced her husband to change his surname to her maiden name. In the next essay, 'Elgar and the Potteries Choir Master', David illustrates the rigour of James Whewall's discipline by informing us of '...his ban on corsets among the choristers since this he believed was prejudicial to good breath control.'

David's lightly worn learning will leave the reader with a smile, tickling an interest to know more. No matter how many times you have listened to *The Music Makers*, you'll want to listen to the piece again after reading David's third essay, 'Elgar and the Reluctant Zoologist—Some Thoughts on *The Music Makers*'. When I came to the end of the fourth essay, 'Elgar and Queen Mary's Dolls' House', I felt moved to rush off to Windsor to see the wretched thing. I had never felt the urge to visit Ottawa until I read the fifth essay, 'Elgar and the Canadian Carillon'. The final essay, 'Elgar and the Awful Female' had me reaching for both my *Falstaff* CDs and my volumes of Shakespeare.



Elgar Editions, 2003
96 pp.
Softcover
ISBN 0953708268
£5.99

The 'awful female' is Elisabeth Scott, architect of the Stratford Memorial Theatre. David argues that Miss Scott's creation was a pretext for Elgar to withdraw an impractical offer of incidental music for Stratford, but the incident is actually a pretext for David to offer us his thoughts on Falstaff, Shakespeare's as well as Elgar's.

My only cavil concerns what seems to me to be a lack of clarity with respect to dating and updating. It would have been helpful if each essay had been introduced with a single italicised sentence giving the date and circumstances (Journal piece, Branch talk, etc.) of the essay's first appearance, either orally or in print. The first three essays date from the 1980s, but David tells us in his foreword that updating amendments have been made. The final two are undated because they appear in print for the first time. 'Elgar and the Awful Female' has been amended to include a reference to Kevin Allen's *Elgar In Love*, published in 2000. But the piece begins with a lament that so little has been said or written about the symphonic study. As for London Branch, 'In all the talks I have attended there in the past twenty plus years I don't know if I have ever heard an excerpt from it [*Falstaff*], and certainly it has never been central to the evening's theme.' These remarks presume the essay predates the *Falstaff* talk I gave to London Branch eight years ago, not to mention the significant recent scholarship devoted to the work in recent years. Cavils aside, in the first essay George Bernard Shaw is quoted as saying, 'One likes grit in an artist...'. If you like grit in an author, you'll find it here in abundance.

Arthur S. Reynolds

Parrottcisms: the autobiography of Ian Parrott

Author of a biography of Elgar (Dent Master Musicians; London, 1971), a long-standing vice-president of the Elgar Society, frequent contributor to the JOURNAL, indefatigable lecturer at Society branches, Ian Parrott will be well known to countless Elgarians. Now we have this modest book, a memoir rather than an autobiography, and a delightful record of the achievements of a significant musician and a fine man.

My chief 'complaint' is that the reader is left wishing for more. In a matter of less than forty pages we trace Professor Parrott's career from his birth in 1916 in south London, via Harrow School (where 'any individual talent in music would receive lukewarm encouragement') to the Royal College of Music and New College, Oxford as organ scholar. One longed to learn more about all these episodes, and so too of what followed—teaching at Malvern College, the War in Egypt, an academic appointment at Birmingham University. In 1950 Ian Parrott was appointed Gregynog Professor of Music in the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, where in a thirty-three year long incumbency he transformed the College's musical life virtually single-handedly, and played a crucial, dominating role in the development of Welsh music and music in Wales. It is a remarkable achievement made plain in this book.

Two of the appendices in the book, 'Globetrotting' and 'Thirty Three Years in Welsh Music', both reprints of much earlier articles (1961 and 1983 respectively) by Professor Parrott, add to the autobiographical information, albeit with some small repetition.

What we do get in *Parrottcisms* is a very strong sense of Ian Parrott; his zest and enthusiasms, his many-sidedness, his likes and dislikes. Among the latter we can number Victorian hymns, the Cagney/Rooney film of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', and especially 'Muzak'—'if music is worth listening to, it should be in the foreground.' I

counsel Society branches to be careful when so much as testing the audio equipment in advance, if Professor Parrott is the visitor! Interestingly, he has no 'aptitude' for 'popular music'—'I cannot even remember any of it.'

Among composers, Professor Parrott is much in favour of Sullivan, Bach, Warlock and Cyril Scott. Bartók, whom he heard as a soloist in his own Second Piano Concerto, too, even though 'taking to (Bartók) was like a cold plunge'. But what of Elgar? The young Ian Parrott duly noted Elgar's death in his diary in 1934 ('8am on February 23'), though at that time the music had made no great impression. Two years later the diary included an unflattering view of *The Music Makers*. Also in 1936 he attended the Three Choirs Festival at Hereford and found *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* preferable to *Gerontius*, where the influence of Wagner 'is unfortunately of the immature "Tannhäuser" period'. However, I like the anecdote of Elgar leaning over in the middle of conducting *Gerontius* and whispering to the front violas, 'I still like this, you know'. Better still, albeit non-Elgarian, is the story of the horn player who allegedly played *The Merry Widow* undetected while Nikisch was conducting Richard Strauss's Domestic Symphony!

One is not surprised that Professor Parrott touches on his well-known views regarding the 'Enigma' Variations, and it is interesting to read of his having met Troyte. There is mention, too, of his wife Elizabeth's paintings of Brinkwells and Plas Gwyn, the latter presented to Sir Adrian Boult in March 1979 just before his ninetieth birthday. The painting was, in fact, commissioned by the Elgar Society (see JOURNAL, vol. 1 no. 2 (May 1979), pp. 6–7). Where is it now, one wonders?

Truth to tell, as this book makes clear, Ian Parrott has myriad interests and enthusiasms, and, though the most loyal and supportive of vice-presidents, Elgar must take his place among the rest.

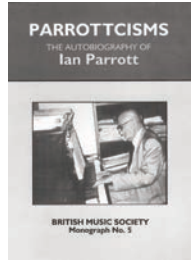
A fascinating appendix is titled 'Influences on My Music' and is taken from an article originally written in 1983. One is not surprised to discover a section devoted to 'Wales', though there is nothing parochial about Professor Parrott's overview of Welsh musical life and he clearly regrets that 'there are still (in 1983) signs of conservatism in the more worried nationalist corners of Welsh life'. He is, however, proud of having in 1959 achieved 'O' level Welsh with 'oral proficiency', though confessing to subsequent lapse. The other influences—'Egypt', 'New Zealand' and 'Psychical Research'—are, perhaps, more surprising.

Further appendices list Professor Parrott's compositions, both published and unpublished, his writings—some ten books and dozens of articles on all sorts of subject—and recordings of his works. His compositions—orchestral works, chamber works, choral works, songs, operas, etc.—are extremely numerous. Recordings are less plentiful, especially in CD format. Surely this music should be more available?

This well-produced little book, nicely illustrated with family photographs, is not meant to be a 'best-seller'. However, it will delight the very many friends and admirers of Ian Parrott in the Elgar Society and beyond. It is a fitting tribute to a man who, as he writes, has always tended 'to prefer being up in the air to being down to earth'.

David Bury

(Copies of Ian Parrott's autobiography, *Parrottcisms*, are available for £8.10 each—10% discount—to Elgar Society members who state the JOURNAL as their source of introduction from: British Music Society, 7 Tudor Gardens, Upminster RM14 3DE.)



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Letters and Diaries of Kathleen Ferrier

edited by Christopher Fifield

It is now fifty years since Kathleen Ferrier died. Not many will remember her on the concert platform but her gramophone records have kept her memory alive, and her tragic death from cancer at the age of forty-one, when she was at the height of her powers, has made her something of a legend.

Christopher Fifield has commemorated this anniversary by editing her letters and diaries and they will be of interest to anyone who wants to learn more about the life and personality of this great contralto. For Ferrier as well as being a great singer was a loveable person. Tributes written after her death by friends and colleagues like Bruno Walter, John Barbirolli, Benjamin Britten and Gerald Moore are still very affecting to read. They are in fact eulogies written as a memorial to a great human being as well as a great artist.

There are just over three hundred letters dating from 1940 (when she was twenty-eight years old) until the year of her death in 1953. The diary, which was mainly an engagement diary, rather than a personal one, dates from 1942 to 1953 for her professional career lasted a little more than ten years.

Little is known of her married life except that it was not a happy one. In her biography of Kathleen her sister Winifred is very discreet and in fact from these letters and diaries we learn almost nothing about her love life. Like one of her iconic heroes, George Frideric Handel, she seems to have concealed these matters from prying eyes, and for that we can be grateful. But it was not from any prudishness for as these letters show she had at times an almost Rabelaisian wit and a total lack of inhibition. She loved the cinema and the theatre and after seeing a performance of Congreve's *Love for Love* she writes in her diary, 'Very naughty'. One suspects she revelled in it. Neville Cardus wrote of her, 'she would tell a ribald tale with all the taste and refinement of a fine lady in a Restoration comedy'.

Like Elgar, she loved word-play and indulged in puns and spoonerisms and the occasional saucy limerick. She once wrote to inform her agent that she intended to sing Mendelssohn's 'O rust in the Lard' in a forthcoming broadcast, and writing to thank American friends for presents she called them 'woody blunders'. I hope they understood. Some of this high spirits comes out in her incomparable folk-song recordings.

Her marriage did not last. Her husband was called up during the war and the marriage was annulled in 1947. He is a shadowy figure throughout the book, but we do owe him gratitude for one thing. When Kathleen entered the piano competition at the Carlisle Festival in 1937 he bet her a shilling she would not dare enter for the singing competition as well. She took up his challenge and won both competitions. That event was the turning point of her life. Within ten years she had an international reputation as a singer.

The last years of her life make poignant reading. There were numerous cancellations due to the cancer that was destroying her. She could no longer travel to America where she had many friends and admirers. But her optimism and life-force only gave out in the last nine months. Just six months before her death we find her writing to decline an invitation to appear with Casals at the Prades Festival because

she had a prior engagement to go to Rhodesia with the Hallé Orchestra! Her courage was inspiring and her friends said they visited her to be cheered up.

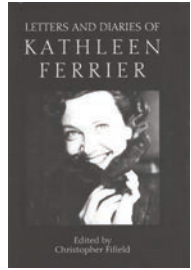
At the second performance of *Orfeo* at Covent Garden in February 1953 her femur, eroded by secondary growths, fractured. The crack could be heard throughout the auditorium. She didn't retire but completed the performance leaning against the scenery. It was the last time she appeared in public. Two days before her death she was to have sung *The Apostles* under Sargent and on the day of her death Delius's *Mass of Life*. A sad irony.

All three Elgar oratorios were in her repertory. *Gerontius*, *Messiah* and *Das Lied von der Erde* were her favourite works. She also sang *The Music Makers* and *Sea Pictures* (of which she sometimes left out one or two as being less suitable for her voice) and she gave a famous performance of *Land of Hope and Glory* at the re-opening of the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, under Barbirolli, in November 1951. (This is available on record and comparison with Clara Butt makes an interesting study in social history.)

Barbirolli and Bruno Walter were her favourite conductors and both were also close friends. She had a gift for friendship but was very discriminating. One who became a close friend in later years was the surgeon who had treated her. He joined her musical circle—but then he did play a Stradivarius. These musical evenings were of immense pleasure to her and a great consolation when she could no longer sing in public. On a typical evening she might play the piano; Barbirolli the cello; Evelyn Rothwell the oboe; and her surgeon friend his Stradivarius violin.

Another conductor she felt a special affection for was Alan Kirby, the Croydon business man and amateur choral conductor who had been a friend of Elgar and who conducted the oratorios regularly at the Civic Hall in Croydon. It is probable that he would have reminisced about the composer to her and her great love of *The Dream of Gerontius* would have made her a very attentive listener.

Bernard Hill



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CD REVIEWS

British String Miniatures, vol. 3

Royal Ballet Sinfonia conducted by Gavin Sutherland
Sospiri, op. 70, plus music by Gilbert Vinter, Peter Warlock, John Fox, Haigh Marshall, Cyril Scott and Gareth Walters.

There appear to be two different series of CDs devoted to the vast and entertaining wealth of British music composed for string orchestra, with confusingly similar names. 'British String Miniatures' is on the White Line Label, and 'English String Miniatures' on Naxos. However, interestingly, the producer of both is the indefatigable Philip Lane, whose sterling efforts to restore 'light' music to its rightful place, after its wholesale destruction by the BBC several decades ago, deserve our undying gratitude. Lovers of

British music should explore these CDs—they have so much to offer.

Elgar's *Sospiri*, op. 70 is played in both series, but the one under review is on the third British String Miniatures. I first heard (and played) it in the late Forties, when the inspiring but underrated Clarence Raybould conducted it with the National Youth Orchestra of Wales. Being a Welsh orchestra, it boasted no fewer than seven young harpists! These were coached by that magnificent Russian harpist, Maria Korchinska. The effect on a fifteen-year-old, using a huge string section in this piece, was overwhelming. The following year we did the Adagietto from Mahler's Fifth Symphony, also for strings and harp(s), but that is another story! I insist that I can hear an echo of Mahler in the second subject of *Sospiri*...

The piece was written just before the Great War began, and maybe Elgar intended to capture a sense of the mounting uneasiness. Henry Wood conducted the first performance in the Queen's Hall on 14 August 1914, ten days after war was declared against Germany. Alice Elgar wrote that *Sospiri* was 'lovely like a breath of peace on a perturbed world'. There is a touch of harmonic genius in the opening bars where over a chord of D minor (D, F, A), the violins open the melody with two 'wrong' notes—E and G. The 'sighs' of the title, together with an undercurrent of tension, are subtly illustrated in the music. The playing of the Royal Ballet Sinfonia under Gavin Sutherland is warm and expressive.

From the rest of the recording, two works stand out. *Entertainments* by that master of light music, Gilbert Vinter, is a gem. Good tunes, unexpected harmonies, and exciting rhythms make one wonder why this work is not better known. The amusing slow movement, entitled 'Taproom Ballad', is a portrait of a drunken singer (a viola solo—what else?) in a pub! The last work on this CD is the sixteen-minute *Sinfonia Breve* written in 1999 by Welsh composer Gareth Walters. This is a serious, profound, and very enjoyable piece with occasional faint fingerprints of Hindemith, Rawsthorne, and Bartók, and makes an excellent grand finale to this well recommended CD.

Jack Slater

Elgar Cathedral Music

Ave verum corpus; Ave Maria; Ave Maris Stella; The Angelus; I sing the Birth; Lo! Christ the Lord is Born; Great is the Lord; Ecce sacerdos magnus; O Salutaris Hostia (three settings); *Fear not, O Land; 'O hearken thou'; Give Unto the Lord.*

Choir of Worcester Cathedral conducted by Donald Hunt
Adrian Partington (organ)

Recorded in Worcester Cathedral in May 1988, probably the most significant building of several associated with Elgar's music, and this despite the paradox that Elgar was a staunch Roman Catholic, the music on this CD spans some forty-two years of Elgar's life, from roughly 1872 to 1914 (the date of composition of 'I sing the Birth' is unknown). The works (reissued from LP) not only range from brief, occasional pieces of two or three minutes' duration to a couple of anthems lasting nine, but also reflect the different sizes of the ecclesiastical venues for which the music was conceived, from St George's

Catholic Church in Sansome Place, Worcester to the big London shrines of Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral. Elgar was a devout Catholic, like his mother but unlike his father, who despised any form of organised religion. The association with the Anglican cathedral of his home city remained strong throughout his life: there, as a child, he would have heard anthems and motets, later playing violin in the orchestra of the Three Choirs Festival, and finally conducting his own music. He started by writing for the choir of St George's (where his father was organist from 1846 to 1884, Edward taking over after being his assistant for some ten years).

The music is extremely beautiful and performed with exquisite care by the cathedral choir, discreetly accompanied from the organ loft by Adrian Partington, and all under the meticulous direction of Donald Hunt (who edited Elgar's three settings of *O Salutaris Hostia*, a first recording when issued fifteen years ago). Phrasing has lovely shape, dynamics are finely judged, and while diction tends to get fogged in the vast space of the building, this same quality also provides the essential ingredient of a timeless and ethereal atmosphere for the music (having the texts printed in the booklet helps). By the seventh track, the music has become more energised and harmonically imaginative in the 1912 ceremonial work *Great is the Lord*, written for the 250th anniversary of the Royal Society, with its echoes of the first movement of the Violin Concerto composed two years earlier. Track eight has the much earlier (1888) and relatively immature attempt at occasional music, *Ecce sacerdos*, written for the blessing of a statue by the visiting Archbishop of Birmingham. After the more subdued mood of the three components comprising *O Salutaris Hostia*, the harvest anthem *Fear not, O Land* brings another welcome injection of energy and a livelier mood. 'O hearken thou' (its length erroneously listed at 14' 25 instead of 4' 25) is a simple but beautiful anthem written for the 1911 coronation of King George V, with more reminiscences of the composer's orchestral music, this time the recently premiered Second Symphony. To conclude is the majestic *Give Unto the Lord*, commissioned for the 200th Festival of the Sons of the Clergy at St Paul's Cathedral. This is as definitive a disc of Elgar's cathedral music as you'll get.

Christopher Fifield



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LETTERS

From: Walter Hurst

Thank you so much for an excellent issue (JOURNAL, July 2003) dealing with so many aspects of a wonderful composition. I first heard The Apostles at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on 29 March 1947 conducted by the then Dr Malcolm Sargent—the soloists were Elsie Suddaby, Kathleen Ferrier, Alfred Hepworth, Roy Henderson, Roderick Jones and Norman Walker. I found the experience overwhelming and have taken every opportunity to hear the work again. It was broadcast in the 1950s from the BBC, again with Sargent conducting, and with Dame Joan Hammond as soprano soloist and (I think) Owen Brannigan and others.

All the major Elgar choral works were given on a regular basis by the Liver-pool Welsh Choral Union whose regular conductor was Malcolm Sargent and choir master Dr Caleb Jarvis, both of whom were Elgarians through and through. So we in the North-west got to know and love Gerontius, Apostles and Kingdom, and The Music Makers which were played on a fairly regular basis in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, and indeed right up to Sargent's death—in fact the last work he conducted in Liverpool was The Kingdom. The most recent performance of The Apostles in Liverpool was conducted by Vernon Handley—sadly the audience was such that I do not expect there will be a repeat performance too soon.

From: David McBrien

Since I wrote to you about a possible Elgar mass (JOURNAL, July 2003), through the good offices of John Weston, grandson of the grocer who was "attacked" by Elgar and Martin Grafton with pea-shooters (see Jerrold Northrop Moore's biography), who still lives in Bromsgrove and is a member of the congregation of St Peter's church, I was put in touch with Michael Lloyd. He had played the organ for the church in the early 1950s and has taken a particular interest in Elgar's relationship with William Wolstenholme, the blind composer. Mr Lloyd drew my attention to the correspondence between the two men, which was published in an article by K. Shenton in the JOURNAL (Vol. 8, No. 5, pp. 200–7).

In a letter to Wolstenholme dated 2 February 1888, Elgar says, 'I am ashamed I have not sent your Gavotte yet, I have done some of the copying and hope to complete it in a few days now, but I have had so much writing to do during the holidays—have finished that unaccompanied Mass—distinctly barn-door but easy, and several other things which I will play to you when we meet.' At the time of writing Elgar was living with his sister Lucy and her husband Charlie Pipe at 4 Field Terrace in Worcester, and had succeeded his father as organist at St George's Roman Catholic church in Worcester. Elgar's sister Pollie and her family moved to Stoke Prior in 1883 and would have become members of the congregation of St Peter's in Bromsgrove from that date, but it would seem unlikely that a mass written in 1888 would have been specially for Bromsgrove. What Elgar meant by 'barn-door' is unclear. It must have meant something to Wolstenholme however, since Elgar used the same expression in a later letter referring to his Froissart overture. Writing on 10 July 1890 from 51 Avonmore Road, West Kensington, he says, 'My Dear Willie... I want to know if you are going to the Worcester Festival: you know I have written a [sic] overture for it and hope to be there of course it won't be right unless you are there to hear it and call it bad names! It is slightly barn door but will make what in old days, we should have called a snorting noise: I call it Froissart...'. K. Shenton does not say where the correspondence was lodged and how he got to see it, and Jerrold Northrop Moore's and Percy Young's publications of Elgar's correspondence do not quote from it. The reference to the mass had escaped the

notice of Elgar's biographers, none of whom mention it, even as a lost work.

After writing to you earlier this year, but before Michael Lloyd reminded me of the Wolstenholme correspondence, I wrote to Jerrold Northrop Moore and Michael Kennedy, but neither felt there was much chance of discovering a 'new' Elgar work. In particular it was felt that if the Mass existed it would have been unlikely that Elgar's daughter or his nieces May and Madge, who lived long enough to collaborate with a number of Elgar's biographers, would have neglected to mention it. Also since I wrote, but before I had had the opportunity to contact her and ask about it, Miss Ellen Neenan (to whom the manuscript of the Mass had allegedly been offered in 1948) died aged ninety. Tom Banks, the Bromsgrove organist who offered her the music, died in 1954, and his last surviving relative in 1964. Michael Lloyd spent some time a couple of years ago conducting a search in and around the church in Bromsgrove without finding anything, and the present parish priest has only been in post since 1991 and has no information he can offer. At this point I felt I had reached the end of the search. However, the BBC Music Magazine in June 2003 included an article which conceivably keeps the door open, albeit slightly. It reported that Sixties rock legend Manfred Mann had bought some years ago a collection of manuscripts at a Sotheby's auction, some of which were said to be in Elgar's hand. Mr Mann said he had wanted to take them home and play them straightaway, but they turned out to be a number of choral part-books from St George's, Worcester dating from 1878. 'Three of the hymns are original works by the young Elgar and three others appear to be in Elgar's hand. I put them on one side, and couldn't seem to get anyone interested in them [until] earlier this year [when] my business partner contacted the Elgar Society, who checked them out and said they were the genuine article.' Mr Mann has arranged for the hymns to be recorded and they will shortly be released on Mann's Creature Classics label.

When I read this item, I contacted Mr Mann's partner to ask when the date of the sale had been, whether any other items from St George's had been on offer at the same time and, if possible, to tell me who had sold the items and how they had originally left the church. Sadly, they were unable to offer any further information, not even having a record of the date of the sale. Sotheby's no longer has records for sales from so long ago; apparently they are now lodged with the British Library. And so that is where my search currently rests. I have not yet had time to go to the British Library to see if the Sotheby's records hold any useful information.

From: Carl Newton

I feel I must respond to your editorial in the March JOURNAL and to Dr Moore's piece in the July issue regarding the Novello archives. It has always been known in the archive community that publication raises the commercial value of manuscripts, and it is astonishing that Dr Moore produced his edition of the Elgar-Novello letters for the opposite reason. Moreover, the fact that the four volumes which he edited are extensive but not comprehensive means there is now little chance of ever having a complete scholarly edition of the 'correspondence and writings' of Edward Elgar. It is also important to remember that any form of publication cannot be a total substitute for the original; even the watermark may be a vital piece of evidence. As is now obvious, many purchasers of the originals were hoping for a chance to re-sell at a premium, but I suspect that it is the current state of the market and the economy which is depressing prices, rather than the fact that some of the letters are in print.

The fundamental fact is that a collection of such national importance should not be simply treated as disposable family silver. Sale should only take place after professionally qualified opinion has been involved and the possibility of purchase by, or transfer to, a public repository with a reduction in corporation tax liability has been thoroughly exhausted. The recent sale of the Royal Philharmonic Society archives is a case in point. The Society was public-spirited enough to take a lower price to ensure retention in the UK. Novello seems to have forgotten its key role in the history of English music. Your editorial is so apposite that I have copied it to the working party on new archive legislation, with a recommendation that sales such as Novello's be subject in future to the procedure adumbrated above. If that should happen, at least there could be a useful outcome from an exceedingly unhappy event.

From: Christopher Fifield

I was trawling through the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's orchestral library, as one does, and was shown the flute part of Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations by its super-efficient librarian Helen Harris. 'Nimrod' is annotated around the single page with pencilled dates added over the years by occupants of the principal flute chair. These dates record the occasions on which it was solemnly played before a concert upon the death of someone of national or local fame. There are the Kings George V and VI; the Duke of Kent ('an air accident 23rd Aug 1942'); Henry Wood ('19th Aug 1944'); local Bournemouth musicians Sir Dan Godfrey ('20th July 1939'), Monty Birch and Percy Whitlock; an orchestra member ('Dunsworth, Bass, 21. 12. 50'); and Sir Charles Groves the last in 1992. Among them, however, a plaintive cri de coeur appears at the final bar from flautist J. Waugh on 17 January 1945 with the words: 'Not feeling so good myself'.

Correction: In the second paragraph of Jerrold Northrop Moore's article 'A Word to the Wise' (JOURNAL, July 2003, p. 3), Novello's company secretary is twice referred to as 'Powell'; his name was in fact Harry Fowell. The editor apologises for this error.



100 YEARS AGO...

September 1903 found Elgar still involved with preparations for the *Apostles* première, but before that came the Three Choirs at Hereford where their house party included Alfred Rodewald and Frank Schuster. Elgar's *Te Deum* was given at the opening service; but the highlight of the week was the performance of *Gerontius* in its original (i.e. unedited) version, conducted by Sinclair. Another highlight of the week was the première of Coleridge-Taylor's *The Atonement*, which was badly received. One wonders whether Elgar had been concerned that an oratorio on the life of Christ would upstage *The Apostles* the following month. He wrote to Jaeger: 'Taylor's work was a disgrace to any civilised country: the utter want of education is the curse of the chap [although Coleridge-Taylor had attended the RCM]. The clergy condemn it as blasphemous'.

After returning to Malvern on the 14th, attention turned to *The Apostles*. Elgar went to a rehearsal in Birmingham on the 21st, which Alice said was 'very thrilling... much enthusiasm'. Other rehearsals followed, in Birmingham and London, and meanwhile he was correcting orchestral parts; on 4 October he told Schuster, 'I am dead with fatigue'. The Elgars went to Manchester on 5 October for orchestral rehearsals, and on to Hewell Grange near Bromsgrove to stay with Lord and Lady Windsor.

The *Apostles*' première had been eagerly awaited, and was a complete sell-out. Alice wrote: 'Wonderful performance & wonderful impression on audience, the quiet & silence at the end of 1st part, the highest tribute. Last chorus overwhelming. E. happy. A. & C. to Ld. Mayor's to lunch. Everyone saying Marvellous...'. The chorus-master R. H. Wilson quoted Richter describing it as 'the greatest work since Beethoven's Mass in D'.

During the Festival Alice Elgar suggested the idea of an Elgar Festival to Frank Schuster, who spoke of it to Harry Higgins, managing director of Covent Garden. The idea appealed to him, and before long a three-day festival of Elgar's music was arranged for the following spring, to include Richter giving the London première of *The Apostles*.

Any elation Elgar felt after the success of *The Apostles* was tempered by two events. First, Novello proposed to reduce the agreed figure, as the work had been cut short; yet Elgar pointed out that it was more than two hours long—the original agreement. 'E very worried over finance settlement of affairs', Alice wrote on 22 October. However, within a week, this had been amicably sorted out, thanks in part to the intervention of the Birmingham chairman, G. H. Johnstone.

Then, on 7 November, the Elgars were horrified to hear that 'our dear friend A E Rodewald was they feared hopelessly ill'. Elgar was 'perfectly restless and miserable', and two days later decided to go to Liverpool, only to find that Rodewald had just died. Elgar was devastated, walking the streets of Liverpool, 'heartbroken' and 'utterly broken up', as he told Jaeger. He returned to Malvern the next day; 'he could not really bear to be there', as Alice wrote to Jaeger.

The Elgars had planned to go to Italy for the winter, but before that Edward went to Manchester with Schuster on 19 November for another *Gerontius*, conducted by Richter. Alice wrote: 'Immense impression & applause, people discovered E. (Richter did not know), who had to bow & at end no one took any notice of Richter or performers & all turned & applauded him'. The Elgars left London for Italy on 25 November.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

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