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*Opera*

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# The Elgar Society Journal

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

*Front Cover: Elgar and Vera Hockmann at a Union of Graduates in Music dinner, March 1933*

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

### **Presentation of written text:**

**Subheadings:** longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Editorial

My first public task as editor of the *Elgar Society Journal* is the very pleasurable one of giving sincere thanks to my predecessor, Julian Rushton, not only for his considerable help in showing me ‘the ropes’ over the past few months, but also for all he has done over the past five years in making the *Journal* ever better. His truly will be a hard act to follow. It was with some trepidation that I accepted Steven Halls’s invitation to take over the editorial chair: there seemed to me some very good reasons why I was *not* suited to the task. But it was an invitation that I could not refuse and, like a newly elected Speaker of the House of Commons, I found myself outwardly appearing to resist propulsion towards the chair, whilst inwardly relishing the prospect.

What direction might the *Journal* take over the next few years? To a major extent that must be dictated by the contributions that are received. My personal leaning is towards people and what makes them tick rather than what they do. I am more social historian than music analyst, so am attracted by essays that set the music within the context of the period and the circumstances in which it was written. This must not mean that the analytical side of music is neglected: our understanding is deepened if we get a chance to look ‘under the bonnet’. But above all we must remember to listen to the music, and if our appreciation of the music can be enhanced by the variety of essays that the *Journal* offers, then I shall be content.

For some time contributors have had access to my computer database which contains more primary source information than anyone would reasonably want to know about Elgar. I am not a believer in historians duplicating research: what they do with it and the insights their work can give seems to me rather more valuable. Prospective contributors may be encouraged to know that help with essays will be freely and willingly given: they have only to ask.

An important part of the *Journal* since its earliest days has been the review section. Some have questioned why reviews are published of CDs that do not contain a note of Elgar’s music. My criteria are simple: if the music is by a British composer with a direct connection with Elgar it will be considered for review, especially if the music is likely to be unfamiliar. If reviewed, then that review should place that music in its Elgarian context. Elgar worked continually behind the scenes to encourage British composers young and old: it is my hope that readers will themselves be encouraged to broaden their exploration of those composers, and discover much fine music that has been neglected for too long.

2011 is the 100th anniversary of Elgar’s appointment as Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, and the orchestra has cooperated enthusiastically in enabling me to write on the subject. I am also delighted that Kevin Allen has produced something of a scoop: the publication in full of that most moving letter of June 1934 from Vera Hockman to Elgar which featured in John Bridcut’s recent film.

An unwritten part of the job description of *Journal* editor is to be the recipient of seemingly endless readings of the ‘Dorabella cipher’ and purported ‘enigma’ solutions. Their tortuous ingenuity never ceases to amaze! But Peter Sutton’s play *Elgar and Alice* (reviewed below) contains one that is both plausible and has the added merit of simplicity, unlike a present from Santa which offered a more than generous helping of pie in the sky thoughts.

But away with these ramblings! Having demonstrated my editorial prowess in reaching the bottom right hand corner of the page without hesitation, deviation or repetition, I now leave you to read the rest of the issue.

Martin Bird

# Tales from the Complete Edition – 5

## A Pageant of Empire

**John Norris**

How many songs comprise the *Pageant of Empire*? Not a question you will often encounter in a pub quiz, or one which many would get right. There is no single ‘correct’ answer: candidates range from seven to somewhere approaching one hundred depending on precisely how the question is phrased and the songs counted. But strangely the figure which most would give - eight, as this is the figure quoted by most of Elgar’s biographers - is not among the candidates. It is a figure which is difficult to reach from the music Elgar composed and points to a misreading of the surviving documentation. That such confusion should survive is in part down to our poor understanding of the event itself, and to the music publisher Enoch’s inconsistencies in advertising the songs written by Elgar for the event. But surely an equally significant factor, particularly for the Complete Edition, is the lack of Elgar’s orchestral accompaniment to all but two of the songs, so that it is only now, thanks to conductor Martin Yates’s (re)orchestration of six of the songs for Dutton’s pioneering new recording (CDLX7243, reviewed in *ESJ* Vol.16 No.5 [July 2010], 54-57), that we are again able to appreciate the songs in something close to the orchestral splendour in which they might have been performed at the Pageant.

So let us start with the event itself. Most are aware that the Pageant came about as a cultural adjunct to the British Empire Exhibition which ran at Wembley throughout the summers of 1924 and 1925. The exhibition itself, though fascinating, need not detain us for long. Through Elgarian eyes the very name conjures up the image of a vast patriotic extravaganza celebrating the might of the then still rampant Empire. Vast it certainly was, at that time the largest exhibition ever staged anywhere in the world, at a cost of £12 million and attracting 27 million visitors. Three huge exhibition halls - the Palaces of Industry, Engineering and the Arts - and sixteen smaller national pavilions were constructed out of the new wonder building material, reinforced concrete; a loop was constructed between the diverging lines of the Great Central Railway at Wembley to serve the exhibition campus; and new postage stamps were issued to commemorate the event. And celebration of the Empire’s strengths was certainly among the exhibition’s stated aims: ‘to ... strengthen bonds that bind mother Country to her Sister States and Daughters, to bring into closer contact the one with each other, to enable all who owe allegiance to the British flag to meet on common ground and learn to know each other’.

But there was a harder edge to the exhibition, its *raison d’être* being to stimulate trade. Sponsored by the Board of Trade and organised under the auspices of a steering committee chaired by Sir James Stevenson, a prominent civil servant and businessman, the pavilions displayed not so much the historic and cultural artefacts of the countries they represented but their most advanced manufacture and finest produce. In an empire still recovering from the debilitations of the First

World War, the event provided an opportunity to display British technological prowess and to help sell goods of British manufacture abroad.

The need for a Palace of Arts reveals that there was a cultural side to the static displays of the exhibition, but the main cultural event took place not in the Palace but in the nearby Empire Stadium, the largest construction on the exhibition site which, under its more familiar name of Wembley Stadium, continued to host sporting events until its demolition and replacement in 2002. The event was (to give it its full title) 'A Pageant of Empire: An Historical Epic' which was to be enacted daily at the stadium from 21 July until 30 August 1924. With a cast of 15,000 people, 300 horses, 500 donkeys, 730 camels, 72 monkeys, 1,000 doves, seven elephants, three bears and one macaw, the pageant took the form of a series of historical tableaux performed in rotation in a three-day cycle with, in addition, a number of Saturday matinees, and with Sunday a day of rest for visitors and macaw alike. To see the whole of the pageant thus required attendance on three consecutive days, and anyone with the stamina to attend on every evening throughout the pageant's six-week run could see the pageant in full a total of twelve times.

The pageant embodied far more of a celebration of the Empire than did the exhibition, with historical tableaux such as 'The Days of Queen Elizabeth', 'The English Fleet in the Mediterranean' and 'George III and the Departure of Captain Cook' intermingled with tableaux depicting the development of the main countries of the Empire: Canada and Newfoundland (an independent colony until 1949); South Africa and India; Australia and New Zealand. Proceedings were drawn to a close on the third day with two somewhat self-congratulatory tableaux: 'A Pageant of Heroes' and 'The Empire Thanksgiving', the latter concluding with Rudyard Kipling's 'Recessional', set to music by Herbert Henning.

Running through the whole of the three days was a linking motif, also based on an original idea by Kipling, which could be described as, literally and figuratively, an exercise in bridge-building. To quote *The Times*<sup>1</sup>:

The pageant itself is held together by a single motive, which runs through it, giving it meaning and reason. This is Mr. Kipling's figure of the Bridge of Empire - a bridge started by the heroes of the past and completed by the Dominions and Colonies, with their achievements and sacrifices for the common cause.

Spanning a harbour basin between great towers, the bridge is gradually put together by the devoted men and women of whose ideal, sometimes dimmed but never lost, it presents a symbol. Each episode is considered as a block of stone that is swung up on a scaffolding and placed in its position in the architectural scheme. Only at the end of the pageant is the bridge completed. Sacrifice, loyalty and love are the factors in its accomplishment. Now at last the peoples of the Empire can pass freely over in one humane fellowship. The 'Song of the Bridge', written specially by Mr. Kipling, harmonises the different events as they occur, singing into them their different significance in the full story.

Was this, one wonders, the inspiration fifty years on, for Pink Floyd's anti-establishment blockbuster *The Wall*?

As is apparent from the cast list and from other contemporary *Times* reporting, each tableau comprised more than just a succession of songs: 'In some ways [the Pageant] resembles a carefully and correctly constructed historical film. It is full of action, free from solemn and set speeches, and, like the film, has the advantage of being able to leap the centuries if need be.'<sup>2</sup> And 'An idea

1 *The Times* (23 April 1924), xii.

2 *The Times* (18 August 1924), 8.

of the scenery may be gathered from the promise of a large artificial lake in the stadium, of a full-size Cathedral front, and of the largest carpet ever made.<sup>3</sup> But ‘the difficulty of introducing much dialogue or spoken verse will be obvious to all who know somewhat of the Pageant... There is a great deal of music in the Pageant, and as little speech as possible.’<sup>4</sup>

Step forward Henry Jaxon, the Pageant’s musical director, who not only conducted the massed performers but, with assistance from I.A.de Orellana<sup>5</sup>, also selected and commissioned the music. Although most tableaux were scheduled to include, and usually begin with, one of the songs from what we now think of as his *Pageant of Empire* suite, all settings of words by Alfred Noyes, this was far from Elgar’s only contribution to the Pageant: the tableau commemorating ‘The Early Days of India’ also included the Introduction and the two Marches from Elgar’s *The Crown of India*; one of the concluding tableaux, ‘A Pageant of Heroes’, featured *With Proud Thanksgiving*, his shortened setting of Laurence Binyon’s ‘For the Fallen’; and elsewhere the Pageant included *Sursum Corda* and the *Imperial March* of 1897. And Elgar was far from the only composer called upon to provide music: Parry, Mackenzie, Coates, German, Coleridge-Taylor, McCunn, Bantock and Sullivan, along with a similar number of now all-but-forgotten names, were represented either through the inclusion of earlier works or the provision of newly-commissioned pieces. The full musical content of the Pageant is listed in the accompanying table.

To most Elgarians, the musical festivities surrounding the Exhibition are now best remembered for Elgar’s emotional outburst on the turf at Wembley as preparations for the opening ceremony continued around him. As he subsequently wrote to Alice Stuart Wortley:

... everything seems so hopelessly & irredeemably *vulgar* at Court ... I was standing alone (criticising) in the middle of the enormous stadium ... 17,000 men, hammering, loudspeakers, amplifiers, four aircraft circling over etc. etc. - all mechanical & horrible - no soul & no romance & no imagination. Here had been played the great football match - even the turf, which is good, was not their [sic] as turf but for football - but at my feet I saw a group of real *daisies*. Something wet rolled down my cheek - & I am not ashamed of it ... Damn everything except the daisy - I was back in something sane, wholesome & *gentlemanly* but only for two minutes.<sup>6</sup>

Of the music itself, a number of recordings have given the *Empire March* a secure position in the orchestral repertoire. Of the Pageant songs, while not lost, they remained essentially unperformed, unrecorded and unknown until Lewis Foreman’s and Mike Dutton’s pioneering efforts of the past few years made it possible for all to hear them. The two choral songs - *The Immortal Legions* and *A Song of Union* - on the CD accompanying Lewis’s 2001 book *Oh, My Horses!* are recordings of a 1975 performance using Elgar’s own orchestral arrangement, which survives. But the fate of the orchestral accompaniments to the solo songs has long been a mystery. And, as my opening paragraph suggests, even the number and identity of the songs themselves remains a source of some confusion. Let us deal with the latter first.

A study of the accompanying table reveals that there were ten new Elgar songs scheduled for

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3 *The Times* (18 July 1924), 12.

4 *The Times* (29 July 1924), xi.

5 The violinist, composer and conductor Ignatius de Orellana (1860-1931). Eric Coates said of him: ‘Orellana had a remarkable sense of the theatre, and being a sound musician, his arrangements were always delicately finished and in good taste’.

6 Elgar Birthplace Museum letter 9708, 16 April 1924.





Fig. 1. *Pageant of Empire*, a lithograph poster by Gerald Spencer Pryse (1882-1956).

performance in the course of the Pageant's three days: *Sailing Westward*, *Merchant Adventurers*, *Shakespeare's Kingdom*, *The Heart of Canada*, *Gloriana*, *The Cape of Good Hope*, *Indian Dawn*, *The Islands*, *The Blue Mountains* and *The Immortal Legions*. You will note that the list does not include *The Empire March* - quite rightly, because this was commissioned for the opening ceremony of the Empire Exhibition itself, not for the Pageant - nor, more intriguingly, *A Song of Union*. Why, then, do we consider the latter - a part-song, not a solo song - to belong to the *Pageant of Empire* music?

There are four factors which lead us to this view. Firstly, the words are also by Noyes and in similar vein, serving as a valedictory to the solo songs. Secondly, *A Song of Union* contains thematic material which the casual listener is inclined immediately to associate with the Pageant ... except that the glorious, rousing tune does not appear in any of the Pageant songs; it is in fact the trio from the *Empire March*. The symmetry Elgar creates by his re-use of the March trio would be more fitting if the song were intended to be used in a closing ceremony for the Exhibition itself, but there is no mention of *A Song of Union* in the programmes for these events either, for most of which the musical accompaniment was provided by massed brass

bands, not the orchestra for which the surviving parts provide.

The third factor placing *A Song of Union* within the Pageant itself is that it was marketed as such by its publishers Enoch. However, closer examination of Enoch's promotional material, mainly in advertisements printed on the last page of the sheet music of five of the solo songs, reveals that this is not in itself a reliable source, with Enoch casually listing all Elgar's Wembley music, including the *Empire March*, under the Pageant banner. There is even some uncertainty in their advertising as to whether the event's title - Pageant of Empire - should be preceded by the definite or indefinite article, or in one case no article at all. Such trivialities were not of prime concern to Enoch, whose aim was of course to sell Elgar's music, not to create a historically accurate record of its performance. But the vagaries of Enoch's listings deserve close scrutiny: not only do they seem to be the fullest surviving guide to what Elgar actually composed, but are also the source of most of the misunderstandings which seem to have arisen.

Common to all the listings are the *Empire March*, followed by six songs for solo voice - *Shakespeare's Kingdom*; *The Islands*; *The Blue Mountains*; *Heart of Canada*; *Sailing Westward*; *Merchant Adventurers* - and two for SATB - *Immortal Legions* and, again, *Sailing Westward* - a total of seven titles. But the listings are as much of interest for what they omit:

- no mention of *Immortal Legions* as a song for solo voice, an arrangement certainly published by Enoch;
- no reference to *Merchant Adventurers* ‘harmonised refrain, ad lib’, an alternative 31-bar choral ending which Enoch included in the sheet music for the solo voice arrangement;
- and the omission of *A Song of Union* from all listings except that on the back cover of *Merchant Adventurers*.

It seems odd that Enoch did not use the same printing plate on the back cover of all six solo songs, suggesting a change of circumstance rather than an accidental omission from five of the six listings, but the eventual appearance of *A Song of Union* at least appears to give us the eight Pageant songs quoted by most biographers - indicating the dangers of not reading the small print. The back page of *Merchant Adventurers* has the most complete of the listings. It is the line below the entry for the part-song arrangement of *Sailing Westward* which requires close scrutiny. It reads: ‘With four alternative poems: Indian Dawn, The Islands, The Cape of Good Hope, Gloriana’, alternative sets of words which allow the same tune to be re-used with specific relevance in five separate tableaux. And so it emerges that *Sailing Westward* and *The Islands* are in effect the same piece, leaving us with six solo songs, ten sets of words, and *A Song of Union* still to be placed.

I have yet to track down a copy of the part-song arrangement of *Sailing Westward*. It would be interesting to see how the four additional sets of words are accommodated since Noyes clearly did not feel constrained to provide stanzas which would map neatly onto the one score: although they follow the same basic meter, they differ in the pattern of repeated lines within each verse. In fact the words to *Indian Dawn*, *The Cape of Good Hope* and *Gloriana* proved remarkably elusive to track down. I eventually ran them to ground, without music, in the slim booklet provided for the third day of the Pageant. Because of their rarity, I reproduce them in full below.

And it was within the pages of the Pageant booklet that I also encountered the fourth, conclusive piece of evidence that *A Song of Union* was intended to form a part of the Pageant itself rather than some ancillary event. Not unlike concert programmes, each Pageant booklet comprises a single-page listing of the day’s programme, accompanied by an account of the day’s proceedings intermingled with the words of a selection of the works to be performed. And as the third day’s proceedings are drawing to a close, the description of the final tableau, ‘The Empire Thanksgiving’, begins with the words of *A Song of Union* under the heading *Empire March*.

This is not unlike printing the words of *The Kingsway* as if it were an excerpt from *Pomp and Circumstance* March no.4 - the parentage is immediately apparent, but they are by no means identical twins. For two works which at the time of printing had yet to be performed, the confusion can perhaps be forgiven. The greater surprise comes on consulting the programme of works for the day: despite the inclusion of the full words within the body of the programme, *A Song of Union* does not appear in the running order under either name, its position at the start of ‘The Empire Thanksgiving’ instead being taken by the *Anthem of Sister Nations*: words by Laurence Binyon, music by Nicholas Gatty. Why, one wonders? It could hardly be Elgar’s music that caused the apparent change of heart as the *Empire March* itself was performed at regular intervals throughout the Pageant. Did the organisers not like Noyes’ words and hurriedly commission a replacement ode from Binyon, with the all-but-unknown Gatty summoned to provide a setting? Or did *A Song of Union* fall by the wayside at the rehearsal stage?

At this point one begins to sense that everything did not go according to plan. Certainly the

## *Pageant of Empire*

### **Gloriana**

All the fleets of Spain are broken!  
All the streets of London cry -  
Gloriana! Gloriana!  
Gloriana draweth nigh.  
She that broke her heart for England,  
Broke the might of England's foes:  
And, when midnight closed around us,  
Like the star of morning rose.

Gloriana! Gloriana!  
(Clash the belfries near and far!)  
Riding on her milk-white palfrey  
Up to Paul's from Temple Bar;  
Hand upon the helm of England;  
Light of England through the war!  
Are there worlds beyond the darkness?  
Worlds of dawn beyond the darkness?  
Light and joy beyond the darkness?  
Look at England's morning star.

All their arrogant fleets are broken  
And the triumph rend the sky -  
Gloriana! Gloriana!  
Gloriana passeth by!

### **The Cape of Good Hope**

Round the Cape our storm-beat galleons  
Strove to find the old sea-way,  
Sailing round the coasts of darkness  
East, for India and Cathay.  
Here awhile they dropped their anchors,  
Here the sea-road eastward turned.  
Here a star of hope to cheer them  
Over Table Mountain burned.

Cape of Hope, Good Hope to guide them,  
Though they looked to eastward then,  
Here to northward, through the darkness,  
Rolled a world beyond their ken.  
Northward, o'er the glorious mountain,  
Dawns the hope they never knew.  
Are there worlds beyond the darkness?  
Mightier worlds beyond the darkness?  
Look, O, look beyond the darkness,  
And Good Hope shall answer you.

### **Indian Dawn**

Eastward now the sails of England  
Cleave their darkly shining way, -  
Royal sails that meet the sunrise  
Rolling westward from Cathay,  
Till the dawn-wind softly whispers  
Over scented Indian seas -  
'Queen of all the Gates of Morning,  
Take and guard our shinig keys.'

Now, like moons, the droning temples  
Over murmuring palms arise;  
Now, along the Sacred River,  
Flows a dream of deeper skies:  
Guard of all our Gates of Freedom,  
In thy hands our freedom lies!  
Are there worlds beyond the darkness?  
Worlds of dawn beyond the darkness?  
England looks beyond the darkness  
And the dawn is in her eyes!

Havelock, Outram, proud companions,  
In your souls the splendour glows;  
Every sun-rise as it wakens,  
Every sun-rise as it wakens,  
Deepening to an English rose.

Alfred Noyes (1880-1958)

unseasonal weather conspired with the tight scheduling of events in the stadium to threaten the organisers' plans. Prolonged bouts of torrential rain in the days leading up to the Pageant played havoc with rehearsals and, with the Pageant sandwiched into the stadium between a Rodeo (so successful that it was extended for a third week) and the Torchlight Tattoo, there was minimal leeway to schedule additional rehearsal time. In the event, the first four days of scheduled performance had to be cancelled and the Pageant was eventually launched on Friday 25 July with a performance of the second part: Eastward Ho!

It is easy to place the entire blame on the climatic misfortunes, and the resulting disruption of proceedings contributed considerably to the many column inches newspapers devoted to the

Pageant. Both the Pageant itself and the Exhibition were considered national events of some significance, on which *The Times* provided frequent progress reports and, under the heading *Exhibition Notes*, regular timetables of specific forthcoming events and important visitors. And yet, despite the extent of this reportage in tones far more measured and, one suspects, more accurate than would be encountered today, the reader is left with the impression that many of the reports were compiled in the comfort of Fleet Street offices from the various Pageant programmes and press releases than by direct observation of events from the rain-swept terraces at Wembley. While the reportage is long on description and rhetoric, with extensive quotation of Noyes' words for the Pageant songs, there is hardly any critical assessment of the performances. *The Times*' description of Kipling's 'Bridge of Empire', quoted in full above, suggests quite a spectacle ... which strangely passes without mention in all other *Times* reports. And on re-reading the description one is struck by its odd juxtaposition of graphic realism - the bridge 'spanning a harbour basin between [Wembley's] great towers'; the blocks of stone 'swung up on a scaffolding' - with hints of metaphor - 'Mr Kipling's figure of the bridge of Empire'; 'each episode is considered as a block of stone'. It is as if the reporter, constructing his account from the day's press release, is himself uncertain as to whether the bridge would ever take on physical form or would remain no more than a symbol of the unifying aspirations of the promoters.

And it is here among the press cuttings that we come across the most challenging anomaly of all. On 29 July, *The Times* published its third 'special section' on the Pageant in which one of the articles quoted above<sup>7</sup> records that 'Some of Sir Edward Elgar's music was composed especially for the Pageant and may become as popular as his "Land of Hope and Glory"'. And yet the bulk of the article comprises a listing of the musical numbers to be performed in each of the tableaux, identical in almost all other respects to the listings printed in the brochures for each of the Pageant's three days, but with one significant difference: *all* of the songs which Elgar composed especially for the Pageant have gone; not just *A Song of Union*, in whose intended position remains Binyon's *Anthem of Sister Nations*, but also the solo songs, which have been removed without replacement.

What happened? As elsewhere, *The Times* article, long on detail yet short on comment, is probably no more than a rewrite of a press release intended to stimulate interest in the Pageant. Appearing four days after the Pageant eventually got under way, the article presumably post-dates the printing of the official programme, leading to the only realistic conclusion that all of the Elgar-Noyes songs were dropped from the Pageant, for reasons which have now been lost to us. With no Elgar diary to help us<sup>8</sup>, we can only speculate.

The natural assumption is that the weather prevented adequate time to rehearse these numbers; and yet most are songs for solo voice, not choral songs which one might expect to require more rehearsal time, and plenty of the latter, including Elgar's *With Proud Thanksgiving*, survived into the Pageant. We must assume that Elgar completed his settings in good time for the voice-and-piano arrangements were published by Enoch simultaneously with the Pageant. And while, for equally obscure reasons, the organisers may have opted for Binyon's *Anthem of Sister Nations* in preference to *A Song of Union*, it hardly seems credible that they could have decided on artistic grounds to dispense with all of Elgar's songs. They may not be Elgar's best artistic endeavours in a metier which was not his forte but, now that the recent Dutton recording allows most of us to hear them for the first time, we find that they are certainly no worse than the songs he wrote for

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7 *The Times* (29 July 1924), xi.

8 Elgar's *Walker's Weekly Memorandum Diary Pad* survives for 1923 and 1925, but not 1924: Carice's 1924 diary makes no reference to the Pageant.

other comparable occasions, songs such as *A War Song*, *Follow the Colours* and *Fight for Right*. In any case, artistic merit would not be the prime guide to selection of works for inclusion in the Pageant, and Noyes' words were tailored to set the scene for the various tableaux in which they were intended to appear.

With the attendant publicity making great play of Elgar's contribution to the Pageant, it seems far more likely that the songs were dropped for technical rather than artistic reasons. As early as 12 June, *The Times* reported that:

The pageant had to go through the troubles which are apparently inevitable in the infancy of all large enterprises; and it is infinitely to be regretted that, owing chiefly to the inexperience of some of those who first had charge of the preparations, much precious work by both Mr. Kipling and Sir Edward Elgar was wasted.<sup>9</sup>

Audibility would seem the most likely culprit for, despite the introduction of electrical amplification some years earlier, *The Times* article quoted above, in referring to 'the difficulty of introducing much dialogue or spoken verse', also records that:

The music for the Pageant was not easily selected. Many considerations had to be borne in mind. One of them - a surpassing consideration - was the size of the Stadium. In that vast area, compositions might be charming if they could be heard, but lost in the air would be so much waste energy.

Was this a factor not fully recognised by those initially placed in charge of the preparations? If so, the lesson was not readily learned for, as late as 16 June, Binyon wrote to Elgar<sup>10</sup> as follows:

I am being bothered to write some verses for the Empire Pageant at Wembley, and as the verses are to be merely a vehicle for music I want to know if you are still doing anything for the Pageant or if you have retired in disgust like Kipling. They want, I gather, 3 sets of 4 lines to introduce each day. I'm not keen but feel I ought perhaps to try ... If you were collaborating I could put more heart into it ...

From Binyon's description, these verses were presumably intended to serve as replacements for those written by Noyes and set by Elgar. But the absence of anything marrying up to Binyon's description in the programme published in *The Times* suggests either that Binyon eventually declined the organisers' invitation or that such verse as he did provide was also discarded.

Such considerations bring us round to the final mystery relating to the Pageant and the matter of prime interest to the Complete Edition: the fate of Elgar's orchestral accompaniments. All of the songs Elgar composed specially for the Pageant are usually described as orchestral songs, but orchestral parts survive for only the two choral songs: *The Immortal Legions* and *A Song of Union*. Among those who have ever given the matter much thought, the general belief is that the parts for the solo songs were lost when, Enoch having been taken over by fellow music publishers Ashdown, the latter's premises were demolished following their take-over by Novello in the late 1960s. But this account avoids an explanation of how the parts for the choral songs came to survive and were available for hire from Novello after their takeover of Ashdown. It seems unlikely that Novello would choose to salvage the parts for the choral songs from their takeover of Ashdown while allowing the parts for the solo songs to succumb to the bulldozer. Generically, choral songs may have promised healthier sales but the choral movement preferred its part-songs unaccompanied:

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9 *The Times* (12 June 1934), 7.

10 EBM letter 5890.

**FIRST DAY - Westward Ho!**

Henry VII and J.S. Cabot

*Empire March*, 1924  
Old Folk Songs  
'Country Dance' (*Nell Gwyn*)  
'Doge's March' (*Merchant of Venice*)  
*Sailing Westward*  
*Coronation March*

Edward Elgar  
Ralph Vaughan Williams  
Edward German  
Frederick Rosse  
Edward Elgar  
Edward German

The Pioneers

*The Earl of Oxford's March*  
Prelude (*Garden of Allah*)  
'The Wedding Feast' (*Hiawatha*)

William Byrd  
Landon Ronald  
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

The Pageant of Newfoundland

*Marchaunt Adventurers*  
Melodies "Young England"  
'Admirals All'  
Gavotte (*The Rebel Maid*)  
Quadrilles (Cameronians)  
*Empire Song* (Choir and Orchestra)

Edward Elgar  
George Clutsam and Hubert Bath  
Hubert Bath  
Montague Phillips  
Old Melodies  
Percy Fletcher

The Pageant of Learning

Old Plain-Song (Organ)  
*Festal March*  
*Prince Ferelon* (March)  
*Shakespeare's Kingdom*  
Pavane (*Romeo and Juliet*)  
'Graceful Song and Dance' (*Henry VIII*)

George Elvey  
Nicholas Gatty  
Edward Elgar  
Edward German  
Arthur Sullivan

A Pageant of Canada

*Solemn March* (Organ)  
*Benedictus*  
*Sursum Corda*  
*The Heart of Canada*  
Folk Songs (*Maple Leaf, O Canada,*  
*For Empire and Our King*) (Choir and Orchestra)

Walford Davies  
Alexander Mackenzie  
Edward Elgar  
Edward Elgar  
  
Percy Fletcher

**SECOND DAY - Southward Ho!**

The Days of Queen Elizabeth

*Empire March*, 1924  
Prelude: "In the Meadows" (*Countryside*)  
'The Old Cryes', 'Cherry Ripe' (Choir and Orchestra)  
Dances (*Henry VIII*)  
'In a Country Lane' (*Summer Days*)  
'Spirit of Pageantry' (March)  
*Gloriana*  
'Long Live Elizabeth' (*Merrie England*)  
Te Deum in F  
*Imperial March*

Edward Elgar  
Eric Coates  
  
Edward German  
Eric Coates  
Percy Fletcher  
Edward Elgar  
Edward German  
Henry Smart  
Edward Elgar

The English Fleet in the Mediterranean

'Nero' March  
'Mariners of England' (Choir and Orchestra)  
'Plymouth Hoe'  
*African Dances*  
'Britannia' Overture

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor  
John Pointer  
John Ansell  
Montague Ring  
Alexander Mackenzie

A Pageant of South Africa	
<i>The Cape of Good Hope</i>	Edward Elgar
Old Hottentot Melodies	
Portuguese Melody	
Dutch Boat Song	
Old Huguenot Dances	
Bourrée	Mouret
<i>African Suite</i>	E D Barcroft
Camp and Kaffir Melodies	
<i>Livingstone Episode</i>	Hamish MacCunn
<i>Bamboula</i>	Coleridge-Taylor
From <i>War and Peace</i> (Choir and Orchestra)	Hubert Parry
'Land of Hope and Glory' (Choir and Orchestra)	Edward Elgar
The Early Days of India	
<i>Indian Dawn</i>	Edward Elgar
Introduction ( <i>Crown of India</i> )	Edward Elgar
'Mogul March' ( <i>Crown of India</i> )	Edward Elgar
'Persian Garden' (Scenes)	Liza Lehmann
<i>Indian Love Lyrics</i>	Amy Woodford Finden
<i>Old Indian Dances</i>	Shandar
March ( <i>Crown of India</i> )	Edward Elgar
<b>THIRD DAY - Eastward Ho!</b>	
George III and the Departure of Captain Cook	
<i>Empire March, 1924</i>	Edward Elgar
<i>Sylvan Scenes</i>	Percy Fletcher
Minuet	Philip Hayes
<i>Minuet and Pageant March</i>	Herman Finck
A Pageant of New Zealand	
<i>The Islands</i>	Edward Elgar
'God Defend New Zealand'	
Sea Chanties	arr. Richard Terry
'When the Yellow Kowbai Blooms'	William James
<i>Merrymakers</i> (Overture)	Eric Coates
<i>Benedictus</i>	Granville Bantock
'Waiti-Poi'	Alfred Hill
'Tangi'	Alfred Hill
'Pro Patria' (March)	J D Davis
<i>Harvest Dance</i>	Edward German
<i>Empire March, 1924</i>	Edward Elgar
A Pageant of Australia	
<i>The Blue Mountains</i>	Edward Elgar
<i>March Blanc</i>	Herman Finck
'Advance, Australia'	
<i>Stock Rider's Song</i>	William James
<i>Plantation Songs</i>	George Clutsam
<i>Soldiers of the Queen</i>	Leslie Stuart
<i>Imperial March</i>	Arthur Sullivan
A Pageant of Heroes	
<i>The Immortal Legions</i>	Edward Elgar
<i>Solemn March</i> (Organ)	Edwin Lemare
<i>Nelson Phrases</i>	
'With Proud Thanksgiving' (Choir and Orchestra)	Edward Elgar
The Empire Thanksgiving	
<i>Anthem of Sister Nations</i> (Binyon)	Nicholas Gatty
'Recessional' (Kipling)	Herbert Bunting

Novello would surely have taken the view that the choral songs from the Pageant were more likely to be performed with orchestral accompaniment as part of a complete cycle than in isolation, and the retention of a few additional sets of parts for the solo songs would take up little additional storage space.

The Pageant publicity machine and contemporary press reports drool over the large orchestral forces ('The orchestra of 110 musicians has been specially selected from the London Symphony, Royal Albert Hall, and Covent Garden Theatre (Opera) Orchestras') and massed choirs ('members of the Alexandra Palace, Crystal Palace, Royal Choral, Ealing Choral, Harrow Choral, Northwood Choral Societies, and Wembley Choir, etc'), but neither makes any mention of soloists (the solitary macaw apart) who might have performed the Elgar-Noyes solo songs. Nor, while the programme listing identifies several of the songs as for 'choir and orchestra', are any specified for soloist and orchestra. Is it not more likely that the problems arising from 'the inexperience of some of those who first had charge of the preparations' were surfaced at a sufficiently earlier stage, remaining unresolved at the time the Pageant brochures went to press but causing Elgar to stay his hand and, in the event, never to get round to providing an orchestral accompaniment? In other words, the orchestrations are not missing ... they have never existed.

Fortunately, this presents no great problem for the Complete Edition. We cannot publish what cannot be found; and we are committed to including in the Complete Edition only what Elgar himself composed so, as with the Third Symphony and *The Crown of India*, we shall not be publishing posthumous completions by other composers. And, also in line with *The Crown of India* volume, rather than scattering the available *Pageant of Empire* material across several volumes according to the forces it requires for performance, we shall be drawing it all together in a single volume to retain the cohesion between pieces that Elgar intended. But it is to Martin Yates's orchestrations and the Dutton CD we must turn to gain a better appreciation of how Elgar had intended the Pageant music to turn out, even if events at Wembley conspired to defeat his intentions. Seven songs with eleven sets of words, some possibly still awaiting their first concert performance: now there's a challenge!

*Acknowledgements:* My thanks go to Martin Bird for providing me with copies of *The Times* articles reporting on the Pageant and for drawing my attention to the letter from Binyon to Elgar; to Lewis Foreman who loaned me a copy of the brochure for Day 1 of the Pageant; to Carl Newton, whose work on performances of Elgar's music first sparked my interest in the fate of the Pageant songs at Wembley; and to the staff of the Brent Archives at Willesden Green library where much archival material on the British Empire Exhibition and associated events is held.



# Tales from the Complete Edition – 6

## Music for Strings

### Julian Rushton

John Norris has kindly assured me that ‘Tales from the Complete Edition’ is not his exclusive copyright, so that having edited Elgar’s Music for String Orchestra’ (Vol. 24 of the Complete Edition) I can share a few thoughts under the same rubric. I hope these remarks may interest readers who cannot readily access the handsome ECE volumes.

Vol. 24 contains the enchanting early *Serenade*, the central masterpiece *Introduction and Allegro*, and two short slow movements, *Elegy* and *Sospiri*, the latter with added harp and (optional) harmonium. The instrumentation of *Sospiri* resulted from the publisher Elkin’s request for short orchestral pieces. *Sospiri* was unpublished, perhaps as yet incomplete, in its original form for violin and piano; and it adapted well to this curious ensemble. Elkin wanted something lighter and Elgar sent *Sospiri* to Breitkopf & Härtel, who published it just before the war, together with the violin and piano original, now in ECE Vol. 37. The surviving sketches are for violin and piano. Studying these, although they are not of direct relevance to Vol. 24, I noticed that nearby pages in the same sketchbook strongly suggest that Elgar was planning a sequence of movements, possibly a suite or sonata for violin and piano intended to reward W.H. Reed for his help with the Violin Concerto (both published versions of *Sospiri* are dedicated to Reed, ‘in warmest friendship’). A sketch in D major is headed ‘Prelude’, and *Allegro*, suggesting a first movement, in which case *Sospiri* would, I suggest, have formed part of the slow movement.<sup>1</sup> *Sospiri* begins in D minor, but ends in F, as might the first section of a longer slow movement. There is also a curious short MS in the Birthplace Museum, previously identified as a sketch.<sup>2</sup> It is no such thing, being a neatly written version of eight bars of the melody, without the two-bar introduction but fully accompanied, and with several differences from the final version. It is headed ‘Absence’ and seems to have been prepared as a composition exercise for a student, possibly Reed himself, to continue or complete.

*Elegy* has the least complex genesis of the four pieces, in that none of its material is known to have belonged to any other project. It has been assumed to have commemorated the Junior Warden of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, the Rev. Robert Hadden, who collapsed in the street in

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1 British Library Add. Ms. 63156, 91-2. My conjecture is supported by the editor of Vol.37, Clive Brown, who revisited the sketches and also noted a similarity in style - the use of wide intervals - between the D major sketch and *Sospiri*. Clive spotted another violin and piano idea on p. 95 of the sketchbook. This, however, should be considered an addendum to Vol. 37, rather than material for Vol. 24.

2 Elgar Birthplace Museum MS 57; see Christopher Kent, *Elgar: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1993), 282 (he does not list the British Library sketch). My thanks to both libraries for their assistance.

June 1909.<sup>3</sup> But it is clear from correspondence kept by the Company with the MS that the work was not actually composed as a memorial to Hadden, whom Elgar did not know. Hadden's sudden death inspired Arthur Hill, following the funeral on 11 June, to suggest to Alfred Littleton (of Novello) that the Company ought to have some kind of dirge for use on such occasions; Littleton turned to Elgar. The title *Dirge* was used by the Company and Elgar expressed a preference for it, but *Elegy* remains the heading on the autograph of this miniature masterpiece, and its accepted title in the wider community.

In *Introduction and Allegro* the origins of the 'Welsh tune' have been further complicated by its identification as 'Pattern to a Bag Poet', as John Norris recently reported.<sup>4</sup> Another sketchbook entry with this tune is associated with *The Apostles*, but Elgar decided on other material for pastoral element in the oratorio.<sup>5</sup> Thus the melody was still awaiting a suitable home when he decided to include it in his 'string thing', choosing solo viola for the first statement, a plaintive timbre nearest to the 'cor ang[lais]' to which it is assigned in the *Apostles* sketch.

Vol. 38 of the Complete Edition contains over 20 pages of attempts at string quartet movements, some of them really promising. To these we may legitimately add at least two more. For a composer such as Elgar, steeped in classical and romantic traditions, writing a string quartet appears to have been even more daunting than a symphony. But that his one completed string quartet came more than a decade after the First Symphony may be explained in part by a general lack of demand (not least from his publisher) for serious works in a relatively esoteric genre. The quartet he completed has no scherzo, but two earlier attempts suggest that Elgar appreciated the quartet as a medium for such this kind of piece; one became the Scherzo of the First Symphony, another the fugue of *Introduction and Allegro*. A second unfulfilled string quartet project affected what we now know as the Serenade. The C major slow movement is clearly laid out, in some of the sketches, for quartet rather than string orchestra.<sup>6</sup>

The autograph fair copy of the Serenade is missing (there is no indication that it was returned from Germany after publication by Breitkopf). An autograph of the first movement in the Birthplace Museum (MS 137) is of uncertain date. Perhaps beneath numerous alterations - including some to the rhythm of the main theme - lies the first of the *Three Pieces for String Orchestra* performed in 1888.<sup>7</sup> But it is of little help in preparing an edition of the Serenade itself, as the printed score of the final version has greater textual authority. Although MS 137 might be presentable as a completed earlier working, much of it is nearly identical to the final version, and it does not represent the composer's final and (not necessarily the same thing) best thoughts about this material. Its reconstruction would serve no purpose other than as a lesson in how hard it is to

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3 I and the Elgar Complete Edition gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Worshipful Company of Musicians to study and transcribe the material in its possession, including a previously unknown sketch, and associated letters. A sketch in the British Library (Add. MS 63155) is headed 'Elegy' but bears no musical relation to the work in question.

4 This Journal, 16/3 (November 2010), 5-13; see pp. 7-8. The 'pattern for a bag-poet' is now available in Vol. 16 of the Complete Edition.

5 See Daniel M. Grimley, "'A smiling with a sigh": the chamber music and works for strings', in Grimley and Julian Rushton (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 120-38; see p. 125.

6 British Library Add. Ms 47900A, f.23.

7 On this MS, see Christopher Kent, 'Elgar the Composer', in *Elgar: An Anniversary Portrait* (London: Continuum, 2007), 79-103; see pp. 81-3.

get even such engaging music exactly right. And it would be hard to prove that these changes were not made well before 1892, even though not all changes conform to the final version.

The relationship of the 1888 *Three Pieces* and the *Serenade* thus remains uncertain, as the third movement of the latter cannot stem from the 1888 'Presto'. This seems to have disappeared, unless it was recycled in an as yet unidentified reworking. The third movement of the *Serenade* was presumably new in 1892, but it opens a further question as to Elgar's intentions at that time, for in its original form it ends in G major.<sup>8</sup> The ending has been reproduced by Christopher Kent, but he does not mention the note at the end which reads 'Segue No. ii or iv'.<sup>9</sup> Since 'No. ii' is written in ink, this suggests that the G major movement was originally a *first* movement - but of what? Certainly not for a work, like the *Serenade*, in the key of E. Elgar's adding 'or iv' (in pencil) suggests that it had become in his mind a third movement, but not the finale. G, relative major to E minor, is a standard choice of key for a *middle* movement and a fourth movement would no doubt have been back in E (major or minor). Instead, Elgar turned his manuscript paper upside-down and composed the ending we know, reverting to material from the first movement. Perhaps for 'iv' he had in mind a revision of the 1888 'Presto': or perhaps not. We may never know, and I also think that, as with a certain other enigma, Elgar, had he wanted us to know, would have left less space for conjecture.

*Julian Rushton, an academic and clarinettist, has been editor of this Journal, 2006-2010. He is joint editor with Daniel M. Grimley of The Cambridge Companion to Elgar and with J.P.E. Harper-Scott of Elgar Studies (also from Cambridge University Press). His own books include The Music of Berlioz and Mozart in the series The Master Musicians (both from Oxford University Press), and he edited Let Beauty Awake. Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Literature (Elgar Editions, 2010).*

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8 See British Library Add. Ms 49973B, ff. 9-10.

9 'Elgar the Composer', 83.

# A Letter and a Poem Unmasked: Two Documents from John Bridcut's film *Elgar: The Man behind the Mask*

**Kevin Allen**

After some years of an unhappy, unsettled, and generally uncreative widower-hood, Elgar found a final Muse in Vera Hockman. Married but separated, the mother of two children, she was an accomplished amateur violinist in her mid-thirties. They met at a performance of *Gerontius* at Croydon in 1931, a date so significant for both that Vera used it as a title for her poignant and revealing chapter of reminiscence, *The Story of 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1931*. This account takes us no further than the first month of their relationship, but is clear that it continued and that Vera became the 'spark [to] start a flame' in Elgar's private and creative worlds. A new energy was noticeable about him, like a dynamo beginning to hum, as the engineer Wulstan Atkins said. Vera became enshrined as the second subject of the Third Symphony's first movement - 'VH's theme' - and became, too, a 'non-negotiable' part of his circle of family and friends. Although those who knew of the closeness of her relationship with the composer were discreet, Elgar seems to have taken few pains to avoid being seen in public in Vera's company. Carice was understanding enough to accept her and build a genuine friendship with her, although I have heard it reported anecdotally that any question of marriage between Vera and her sometimes deliberately unconventional septuagenarian father was something she viewed with anxiety. Vera's written memories tell us nothing of the period leading up to Elgar's last illness and death, and we have no knowledge of what passed between them at this time; the composer's letters to Vera, a small suitcase-full, were subsequently destroyed.

All the more interesting, therefore, is the letter that Vera wrote to Elgar three months after his death, prompted by a complex of feelings on what would have been his seventy-seventh birthday. Through writing this recently rediscovered document, featured in John Bridcut's film *The Man Behind the Mask*, she relived the relationship, repeating some of the *motifs* apparent in *The Story* - the references to *Hyperion* and *Gerontius*, Elgar's sublime egotism, his need for sympathy and awareness of mortality, and the shared poetic conception of their love as the predestined meeting and merging of two souls in a vast eternity. It is interesting too, to note Vera's revealing reference to the summer odour of the pines rising 'like incense' in the garden of Robin Hill, her large house at Shirley near Croydon. Perhaps Elgar shared with her, as he had earlier shared with Alice Stuart-Wortley, childhood memories of the smell of the Scotch firs near to the cottage at Broadheath where he was born.

The letter confirms that Elgar stayed with Vera at Robin Hill for the last time in June, 1933, the time of his flight from Croydon Airport to Paris to see Delius. Throughout that uncomfortably hot summer, although he played sketches of the new Symphony, Opera and Piano Concerto to friends, he was unable to settle consistently to composition, and when he appeared at a Promenade Concert in August, he had to sit to conduct and was noticeably weak and thin. At the Hereford Three Choirs Festival that year, Billy Reed found that 'he did not move about very much or seem to want to go for walks as before.' A photograph of Vera, relaxed and happy as she sat close to Elgar, was taken

during a garden-party at the house he took for the Festival. It is a last image of the two together. Vera looks relaxed and happy while Elgar talks to Bernard Shaw; within weeks the composer suffered the onset of his last illness, and began a final journey 'outward bound'.

A letter to E.E. written at Robin Hill on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1934 (your birthday)

My Wondrous Being,

It would seem strange and unnatural when so many have written their reminiscences & eulogies of you - and how many have claimed an intimate knowledge of you when they have only known the reserved exterior - that I who have loved you best of all have been silent for all these tragic months.

The reason why is obvious to you and me. The thoughts & memories I cherish of you are far too intimate, too dear to me to be told to any but our nearest and dearest (such as Carice, May & James Reid).

Now is the loveliest moment of the year at Robin Hill, when the odour of the pines rises like incense from the peaty earth; when the slopes facing us are a miniature mountain range of purple and rose pink rhodos ... just as it looked a year ago when you last came to me, and in the silence of that, your last night at Robin Hill, you confided to me that you had picked up a scrap of paper on your lawn at Marl Bank and you found written on it just two words 'outward bound' - and you said to me in an awe-struck whisper - 'you know what that means.'

Now[,] my Hyperion ever glorious, is the moment to recall you so vividly that the memory of you is no mere memory but a living impression to comfort me in my bereavement. Supposing someone asked me 'what was there about E.E. that made his personality so unique even when in contact with those unaware of the grandeur & magnitude of his creative work?' I should reply 'he was the only person I have known who was absolutely natural in all his actions, spontaneous, grand & glorious in his supreme egotism.' For you were the most self-engrossed, self enamoured person imaginable, yet you loved yourself in such a lovable way that, instead of turning others away from you, your love of yourself was contagious.

No wonder you were in love with your brilliant dazzling self ('Ain't I clever?') You were too big to trouble to disguise from those for whom you had any genuine regard your admiration of your own stupendous brain, imagination, memory, genius ... any pose of modesty was for the un-understanding masses.

Yes, you were so self centred that even your kindly acts were often, frankly & unaffectedly a form of self gratification.

But you were so dependent on sympathy, understanding & appreciation that this dependence aroused in one the protective instinct & a sort of tender compassion that anyone so gigantic in intellect should be so childishly dependent on everyday mortals[.] You see, I have not idealized you, nor do I say as others have said, 'he was so reserved even to his nearest friends for anyone to claim to have known him'. For I really believe that I was so near to you that I was part of you at times. I was never afraid or overawed by your greatness because I was destined from 'millions of ages back' to know, understand & love you.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Nov, foreshadowed through the numerous leaping sevenths in your melodies, was that moment when two souls, after long ages of drifting towards each other, meet, merge & melt into a vaster being never again to be separated.

In *The Story of 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1931*, Vera recounted how Elgar had spoken 'so naturally of his "dear little wife" and of what a devoted & wonderful woman she had been'.

Another unfamiliar item highlighted in Bridcut's film, as heartfelt as Vera's although a harsh and ironic contrast, was an untitled poem by Alice.

Thy love doth fade, too like a winter sun;  
I watch it grow as cold;  
The summer joy is done,  
Although its radiant hours seem scarce begun,  
Dark night must it enfold

Deceive anew and smile as if no part  
Were thine in my lost life;  
Leave me my wasted heart  
And buy new joys from out the world's gay mart;  
Leave me the bitter strife

Alice was a 'devoted & wonderful' wife as we know, and there were times when she suffered through her devotion. Brian Trowell<sup>1</sup> considers that Elgar married 'without deep romantic love', and it has frequently been noted how Alice condoned and even encouraged her husband's friendships with younger, attractive Muses. Elgar's relationship with Alice Stuart-Wortley, 'The Windflower', was of course the most intense and open of these, and it has been justifiably pointed out that it must have caused Alice intense distress. But 'Thy love doth fade' is undated, and its pointed context in the Bridcut programme is a matter of conjecture. It may well have been written before the flowering of Elgar's relationship with Alice Stuart-Wortley, for example. One might even speculate that it came from a period before she met Elgar - much of her poetry does - and whether it relates to

**Fig. 1. Elgar and Vera at a dinner of the Union of Graduates in Music at the Florence Restaurant in London's Rupert Street on 30 March 1933. Vera seems to be wearing the sleeveless black velvet frock she was wearing on her first meeting with Elgar. She reported that he once asked her to change into it so that he could 'see those arms again'. EBM collection.**



1 See 'Elgar's Use of Literature' in *Edward Elgar, Music and Literature*, ed. Monk (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 191 and fn.48, in which *Thy Love Doth Fade* and another poem, *Love Would Give Itself* are reproduced in full.

an unhappy love-affair of her own. We know that Edward experienced several early unsuccessful relationships, and there can be no reason to suppose that Alice herself might not have done so.

Has she too often and too dismissively been castigated as a literary mediocrity? 'Thy love doth fade', like many of Alice's virtually unknown, largely unpublished poems, is a craftsman-like and moving piece, a totally convincing blend of form and feeling.

One wonders if it is not time that we had a full and complete publication of her writings, so that her overall achievement can be enjoyed and appreciated for its own sake, and its relationship to her husband's life and work more fully understood. For one thing, dedicated Enigma-hunters may like to know that Alice's novel *Marchcroft Manor* contains an interesting use of the 'E-word' in the context of a conversation about friendships and beginnings and endings. But that is another story.

*Acknowledgements:* I would like to record grateful thanks to Nina Driver for permission to reproduce Vera Hockman's letter to Elgar, and for transcribing it; and to Chris Bennett of the Elgar Birthplace Museum, Martin Bird, John Bridcut, and Wendy Hillary for their help in identifying Alice's poem.

### ***Editor's note***

Carice was with her father for much of that last weekend at Robin Hill, and the appropriate entries from her diary are given below.

[27 May 1933] Went to Croydon to be there to meet Father - Went with V. to Reeds about 3.30 He came about 4 - Very heavy shower - Went to Robin Hill for dinner where he stayed. V. took Mrs. Reed home later. Father had had another bad turn but seemed quite all right again.

[28 May 1933] Went to church at 8. Lovely quiet am. at Robin Hill - puzzle etc - Went to Mrs. Reed for lunch. I drove Father & Vera's car came too for luggage & saw him from aerodrome - wonderful to see it - photographers etc - & great excitement. Lovely weather. Got home about 7.30. Wine all safe.

Although Elgar's diary for 1933 survives, entries are few and far between. However, a few separate foolscap pages are preserved at the Birthplace on which Elgar has written comprehensive notes about his trip to Paris, starting with this weekend.

Mem. Saty May 27<sup>th</sup> 1933

Left (11.15) Marl Bank in Car (Dick driving) for Croydon: held up in Oxford in side street (by-pass) Sandwich & tea on roadside (usual spot) six miles beyond Oxford. Made several bad shots at the route after Feltham: arrd. Croydon (Mr. Reed's Froom 33 Chatsworth Rd) Mrs. Blake (Babs), who was staying with Mrs. Hockman was at 'Froom'. Mrs. Reed (Billy away) & I went over to Shirley to dine. Dick, after unloading, took the car to a Garage to remain until my return from Paris.

Sunday May 28th. Lovely day: rested & walked in morning. Lunch at Mrs. Reeds: at 2-45 Babs drove me to the aerodrome. Met Gaisberg. Aeroplane arrd. Paris 5.50. To Hotel Monceau, Av Hoche. Light dinner with Gaisberg.

*Kevin Allen has made a special study of various members of Elgar's circle, including August Jaeger ('Portrait of Nimrod,' Ashgate Press) and Winifred Norbury, her family and friends (forthcoming). His 'Elgar in Love: Vera Hockman and the Third Symphony' is available from the Elgar Birthplace Museum.*

# A very good idea at the time: Sir Edward Elgar – Principal Conductor, London Symphony Orchestra

## Martin Bird

2011 marks the centenary of the appointment of Elgar as Principal Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. It was not to prove the happiest experience for Elgar, and it was to end in tears. Sadly, Elgar did not choose to preserve his correspondence with the orchestra for the period of his tenure: neither has the L.S.O. kept any correspondence from that time. However, sufficient primary sources remain for a comprehensive picture to emerge.

The catalyst to the formation of the L.S.O. was the announcement by Robert Newman, Manager of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, that deputies would no longer be tolerated.

About half the Band has in consequence felt it necessary to resign. These performers, being, however, unwilling to lose touch with a public that has for many years showed the most generous appreciation of their abilities, have formed an organisation of their own under the title of THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA and have obtained the co-operation of a sufficient number of other Instrumentalists to complete an Orchestra which they venture to think is second to none in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The first concert was given in the Queen's Hall on 9 June 1904, and was conducted by Hans Richter.

... the effect of the performance under Dr. Richter was truly memorable. It is clearly impossible that the great conductor can accept the post of permanent conductor, and it is to be hoped that some Englishman will be found to possess the skill and experience to lead the new institution to the success for which every one must hope.<sup>2</sup>

## *The opening season*

Elgar was one of six conductors invited to conduct a concert in its first season.<sup>3</sup>

Dear Sir Edward,

We the undersigned Committee of the 'London Symphony Orchestra' knowing your kind interest in Orchestral Players, venture to address you on the following matter, and earnestly trust that you may be able and willing to extend to us your powerful aid and sympathy.

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1 L.S.O. programme, 9 June 1904.

2 *The Times* 10 June 1904.

3 The others were Edouard Colonne, Frederic Cowen, Artur Nikisch, Charles Stanford and Fritz Steinbach.



... In our scheme for the Autumn / Winter, we intend giving six Afternoon Concerts at Queens Hall, each of which will be Conducted by men of the greatest distinction we can obtain, and we have further discussed the possibility, with your sanction and kind aid, of giving 'The Dream of Gerontius' on Ash Wednesday March 8<sup>th</sup> 1905, and if you would consent to undertake its Direction, we feel that we should be playing a very strong card indeed.<sup>4</sup>

Elgar, in fact, first conducted the L.S.O. in Oxford on 8 February 1905, the day after he had received an honorary D.Mus. from the University.

E. to the Bodleian - Spooners took C. & May out. The Warden showed A. & the others, the boats &c - A. to tea at the [Richard Baxter] Townshends. All of us to E's rehearsal first of all. Orch. splendid. After dinner to Concert. Variations more splendid than ever. E. conducted superbly, & Orch. played superbly for him - Great crowd - & ovation -<sup>5</sup>

The concert was given under the auspices of the Oxford University Musical Club, and included the *Choral Symphony*, conducted by Hugh Allen, and *Blest Pair of Sirens*, conducted by Parry, as well as the Variations.

The hall was crowded throughout, and we understand that many more tickets could have been sold for some parts of the hall had there been room ... The London Symphony Orchestra engaged for the concert is a capable body of musicians, containing many of the best artistes of the Queen's Hall Band, and their playing of the *Variations* under the composer's direction was excellent, all the varied beauties and effects being well brought out. The audience listened spell-bound to the performance, and the conclusion of the work was marked by a sense of enthusiasm seldom seen at an Oxford concert. Dr. Elgar was recalled by tremendous cheers.<sup>6</sup>

The Queen's Hall concert on Ash Wednesday was not, after all, devoted to *Gerontius*, but to a miscellaneous programme comprising *In the South*, *Grania and Diarmid*, four of the *Sea Pictures*, *Cockaigne*, the Variations, and the first performances of the third *Pomp and Circumstance March* and the *Introduction and Allegro*. It was a great success, and was repeated on 19 March under the auspices of the Sunday Concert Society, with Schumann's Second Symphony replacing *Grania*, *Cockaigne* and the *Variations*.

E. dreffully badly. A. stayed to nurse him up. Went from bed to Queen's Hall, A. with bag of restoratives - Conducted splendidly. Back straight to bed -<sup>7</sup>



**Fig. 1. Thomas Busby, Managing Director and Secretary of the London Symphony Orchestra from 1905 to 1924.**

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4 Elgar Birthplace Museum letter 3221, 19 July 1904.

5 Alice Elgar diary, 8 February 1905.

6 *Oxford Times*, 11 February 1905.

7 Alice Elgar diary, 19 March 1905.

## ***The first U.K. tour***

The success of these concerts led to Elgar being invited to conduct the orchestra on tour in November, one of a series organised by the impresario Percy Harrison.

‘Daddy’ Harrison looked after us as only he knew how. He was a good-humoured soul who spent his days touring Great Britain with the world’s greatest artists - and was making young artists too, for he always engaged a young oncoming singer and pianist on all his Prima Donna tours. He was the real old type of concert manager. He would run three or four tours a season, losing heavily on the swings but occasionally making a good thing out of the roundabouts. I must say he did the thing handsomely and I never heard an artist murmur a word against him. He was a fresh-looking, dapper little fellow of uncertain age. We used to try to get to know how old he was but he never would tell us.<sup>8</sup>

Elgar was, of course, a conductor of considerable experience, and had been active in this role for many years, but it was this tour that first brought this facet of his musicianship to the attention of most people and, by and large, they were impressed. Furthermore, the tour played to packed houses, including 3,000 at the opening concert in Cheltenham.

Sir Edward Elgar had a great reception when he appeared upon the platform. Hitherto his reputation has been greater as a composer than as a conductor. We do not wish his star to wane in the first of these capacities, but we must record his advance in the second. He had his forces well in hand throughout, and though sparing in gesture, and entirely without fussiness, he obtained every shade of tone he wished, and every variety of expression. He certainly had magnificent material to deal with, but tone and animation do not always imply artistry; it was this last feature that was so conspicuous in all the performances. The merry little overture of Mozart went absolutely to perfection, and the crescendo of the strings toward the close was one of the finest effects of the evening - because it was so purely musical.<sup>9</sup>

Some critics sounded a note of caution but on the whole the positives far outweighed the negatives. In Sheffield, for example, the critic commented on the ‘noble performance’ of the Brahms, in which ‘the conductor aimed at a consistent, balanced picture, with broad sweeping outlines, and eschewed finicking point-making’, although contrasting this with the *Sea Pictures*, where ‘his stilted wooden manner, his lack of expressive gesture, and the peculiar trick of making the note of his beat occur at the very end of the stroke, all take away from neatness of ensemble.’<sup>10</sup>

## ***The retirement of Richter***

For the season of 1905/6, Hans Richter was in charge of a series of four Monday evening concerts, while the Thursday afternoon concerts were shared by other conductors.<sup>11</sup> This pattern continued in succeeding seasons, with Richter conducting the lion’s share. Then, on 13 February 1911, came the announcement of his retirement. At the end of the L.S.O.’s concert that evening, ‘conducted by Dr. Richter with all his usual fire and the wonderful magnetism in which he stands alone ... there was a

8 Henry Wood, *My life of music* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), 189. Percy Harrison was born in 1846.

9 *Birmingham Post*, 14 November 1905. The overture was *The Marriage of Figaro*.

10 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 17 November 1905.

11 Eduard Colonne, Frederic Cowen, Artur Nikisch, Peter Raabe, Wassili Safonoff, Charles Stanford and Fritz Steinbach.

remarkable outburst of enthusiasm on the part of the audience, no doubt meant as a special tribute to all that Richter has done for music'.<sup>12</sup> At the L.S.O. Board Meeting next day 'The question of Conductors for the 8<sup>th</sup> series of Symphony Concerts was noticed and held over.'<sup>13</sup>

Elgar had continued to conduct the orchestra: most recently on another U.K. tour in the autumn of 1909, and at Lincoln and Eastbourne in the autumn of 1910. He was at the height of his fame as a composer, and he had developed into a more than capable conductor.

Since his previous visit, when he attended to conduct that clever and deeply impressive work of his, 'The Dream of Gerontius', Sir E. Elgar has appreciably improved his style of conducting. There is greater animation and freedom in his method, and his power of control and of exacting the effects he wishes now leaves little to be wished.<sup>14</sup>

So it must have seemed fortuitous that, at the time when Richter's retirement had been announced, Edwin James, the Chairman of the L.S.O., should find himself in Hereford to give the first performances of Elgar's *Romance* for bassoon and orchestra, of which he was the dedicatee. On the morning of 17 February:

Mr. James, Mr. [Charles] Draper & Mr. [John] Austin to breakfast. All very happy & seemed to enjoy themselves immensely. Mr. James talked to A. with deep content of the idea of E. conducting the Concerts in Dr. Richter's place - Touching devotion to E -

At the L.S.O.'s next Board Meeting ...

The question of Conductors for the 8<sup>th</sup> series of Symphony Concerts was mentioned and held over, the chairman intimated that he had a conversation with Sir Edward Elgar, with respect to conducting some of the Concerts next season, and that his reply was favorable to the same.<sup>15</sup>

... and at the following one:

It was unanimously resolved to invite Sir Edward Elgar to be the principal Conductor in succession to Dr. Hans Richter and that he should be asked to conduct 6 Concerts, and that a letter of invitation be sent without delay, and that the question of his fee be asked.<sup>16</sup>

In March:

A letter was read from Sir Edward Elgar ... [he] mentioned that he felt honored by the invitation of the Directors, but that he would like a little time to consider the matter, and in the meantime he would like the Directors to inform him as to the fee, as it would influence his movements in the future.

It was resolved that the same fee as paid to Dr. Hans Richter, viz: 50 guineas per Concert be offered to Sir Edward Elgar, and that any consideration be discussed later.<sup>17</sup>

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12 *The Times*, 14 February 1911.

13 Minutes of Board Meeting 14 February 1911, L.S.O. Archive.

14 *Eastbourne Chronicle*, 17 November 1910.

15 Minutes of Board Meeting 20 February 1911, L.S.O. Archive.

16 Minutes of Board Meeting 25 February 1911, L.S.O. Archive.

17 Minutes of Board Meeting 13 March 1911, L.S.O. Archive.

Elgar must have been flattered to be offered the same fee as Richter, but it was a third less than was paid at the time to such conductors as Nikisch and Steinbach. At the first Board Meeting in April it was reported that Elgar had:

... asked that the dates on which he was to conduct at the next series of Symphony Concerts might be communicated to Messrs. Novello & Co., at the same time pointing out that he would allow nothing to interfere with his duties in regard to the London Symphony Orchestra, a remark which the Board considered highly satisfactory to the interests of the L.S.O.<sup>18</sup>



Fig. 2. Presentation to Hans Richter, 10 April 1911.

Richter's last Queen's Hall concert with the orchestra was on 10 April, and at the morning rehearsal he was presented with an illuminated farewell address, and with a silver three-handled loving cup.

Mr. E. F. James, speaking on behalf of the orchestra, said the presentations were some token of the deep regard in which they held Dr. Richter. They were glad that Dr. Richter had approved of their policy in inviting Sir Edward Elgar to conduct, and all the more because they remembered that when Dr. Richter produced one of Sir Edward Elgar's works, Sir Edward wrote thanking the doctor and the orchestra for all that they had done to make the work a success, and Dr. Richter's comment was: It is not he that has to thank us, but rather we who have to thank him for giving us so noble a work - and so they felt proud to have such a man as Sir Edward to succeed him.<sup>19</sup>

Elgar conducted the L.S.O. soon after in the second performance of the Second Symphony, in a concert for the International Musical Congress. The performance 'did not do justice to the work. There was scarcely a single pianissimo...' At a further performance on 8 June, when Elgar also conducted Berlioz's overture *Le Corsaire*, a Handel Concerto Grosso, and Brahms's *Haydn Variations*, it was 'distinctly painful to record the fact that the audience was numerically one of the smallest - if not the smallest - that has ever assembled in Queen's Hall.'<sup>20</sup> Alice noted: 'E. rather acutely feeling financial disappointments. Most chivalrously refused Fees for L.S.O. Concerts.'<sup>21</sup> He wrote to Alfred Littleton confirming he had done this, though the impression given by the L.S.O. minutes is that fees were indeed paid.

The orchestra now concerned itself with arranging the programmes for the coming season. At a meeting in July 'The programmes and Artistes for the 8<sup>th</sup> series of Symphony Concerts were discussed in detail and held over. It was agreed that the programmes so far as had been arranged be forwarded to Sir Edward Elgar'<sup>22</sup>, and in September 'A letter was read from Sir Edward Elgar in which he agreed to substitute a Brandenburg String Concerto for the Bach Sonata in the Symphony

18 Minutes of Board Meeting 2 April 1911, L.S.O. Archive.

19 *Worcester Herald*. 15 April 1911.

20 *Musical Standard*. 1 July 1911.

21 Alice diary, 9 June 1911.

22 Minutes of Board Meeting 31 July 1911, L.S.O. Archive.

programme on Nov : 6<sup>th</sup> 1911.<sup>23</sup> Elgar was to be in Turin just before the first concert of the season, and on 27 September:

A letter was read from Sir Edward Elgar, in which he intimated to the Board that owing to the alteration in the train service in Italy he would be unable to return to London in time for the first Symphony rehearsal at Queen's Hall on October 22<sup>nd</sup> and would the Directors appoint an earlier date, and choice of which he enclosed in his letter as being suitable to him.

It was agreed that the Managing Director try and arrange the rehearsal of Oct : 8<sup>th</sup> at 10-30.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Principal Conductor***

He left Turin on 20 October, arriving in London two days later. The following day, as Alice succinctly records: 'E. had his first Symphony Concert'.<sup>25</sup>

Truly Elgar was in an heroic vein last night, when, as successor to Hans Richter, he directed the opening concert of the eighth of the London Symphony Orchestra's series.

A most impelling performance of the overture to 'Die Meistersinger', opened the proceedings in most cheerful fashion, and subsequently this favourite masterpiece was followed by Liszt's Symphonic poem 'Die Ideale' ... and by Brahms's Symphony in F, the third of the four. But the emancipated Elgar, the Walter who has passed through the ordeal ordained by the master singers, was, if more than himself in the direction of these works, even yet more still in his conducting of the performance of his own Violin Concerto, the solo part of which was played by Fritz Kreisler as, frankly, we believe we have not heard it played before. Here the emancipation seemed to have raised Elgar to a point far beyond anything he has hitherto attained, for his manner accompanying was after the distinguished order of Nikisch, facile princeps as accompanist.<sup>26</sup>

At the second concert, on 6 November, he conducted Berlioz's *King Lear* overture, the third *Brandenburg Concerto*, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, and Brahms's Second Piano Concerto, in which the soloist was Donald Tovey.

As Mr. Tovey played it last night the tone was generally so thin that it was only in pianissimo passages that the piano contributed any colour at all. Because of its quietness the slow movement went best, and if it had not been for the tremulous emotion which the solo violoncellist put into the principal theme this movement would have been wholly enjoyable. One could enjoy, too, the crispness and delicacy with which Mr. Tovey played the happy melody of the finale, though towards the climax one wanted far more breadth. Another essential is the dovetailing together of the orchestra and piano, and this rests with the conductor. There were many places where the orchestra was a little late or a little clumsy, and all through the Scherzo the rhythm dragged badly.

The difference between Sir Edward Elgar's treatment of the Concerto and of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony was very marked. In the latter he had complete command of the orchestra, and secured a highly interesting performance.<sup>27</sup>

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23 Minutes of Board Meeting 23 September 1911, L.S.O. Archive.

24 Minutes of Board Meeting 27 September 1911, L.S.O. Archive.

25 Alice Elgar diary 23 October 1911.

26 *Daily Telegraph*, 24 October 1911.

27 *The Times*, 7 November 1911.

Elgar's next concert was on 20 November ...

... E. went to rehearsal. A. to some of it. Heard Kol Nidrei & Concerto Casals - E. rested - Evening the Concert - E. looked vey booful & conducted splendidly Most gorgeous Concert, Tschaik gorgeously performed. Casals very wonderful. E. accompanied splendidly. Muriel Goetz [Foster] came in to Langham after concert & stayed long time - E. not too tired & pleased with Concert. A. took Rose [Littleton] to Concert.<sup>28</sup>

... and again there were unfavourable comments on Elgar's ability as an accompanist.

With Señor Casals as soloist, M. Saint-Saëns' inspiring Violoncello Concerto in A minor could scarcely have failed to arouse enthusiasm at the hand of the London Symphony Orchestra. Sir Edward Elgar's own part in its success was not positive. His acquaintance with the score was obviously not thorough, and the Orchestra had practically its own way in this particular work - a way which fortunately gave Señor Casals all the freedom he needed.<sup>29</sup>

The final concert of 1911 was on 4 December. It opened with the overture to *Euryanthe*, after which Sir Alexander Mackenzie conducted his Scottish Rhapsody *Tam O'Shanter*. Tina Lerner was the soloist in Liszt's First Piano Concerto, and the concert ended with Elgar's Second Symphony. The critic of *The Times* noted that there was 'still a certain hesitancy in Sir Edward Elgar's beat when conducting the works of other composers, which produces uncertainty in the players. It was noticeable in beginning Weber's overture and in several places in Liszt's concerto, especially in the passages which link the various sections together.' In the symphony 'some rough playing on the brass' was commented on, 'and the strings were rarely softer than a mezzoforte ... There was considerable applause at the end, though the audience dwindled in numbers as the work proceeded.'

Formal reports of each concert were read at each Board Meeting of the orchestra. They do not survive, but one imagines that they must have echoed the reviews on occasions such as this. Before Elgar's next concert, the Board met again.

The meeting was convened for the purpose of discussing the Conductors for the 9<sup>th</sup> series of Symphony Concerts, ultimately after a lengthy and animated debate, it was resolved, that either Herr Nikisch, Steinbach or Signor Toscanini be secured for Oct : 28<sup>th</sup> Sir Edward Elgar Nov : 11<sup>th</sup>, Rachmaninoff for Nov : 25<sup>th</sup>, Safonoff for Dec : 9<sup>th</sup>, Elgar Jan : 13<sup>th</sup>, and Steinbach for Jan : 27<sup>th</sup>, the remaining dates being held over.<sup>30</sup>

**Fig. 3. The cover of the programme of Elgar's concert of 6 November 1911. Elgar Birthplace Museum.**



28 Alice Elgar diary, 20 November 1911.

29 *Morning Post*, 21 November 1911.

30 Minutes of Board Meeting 25 January 1912, L.S.O. Archive.

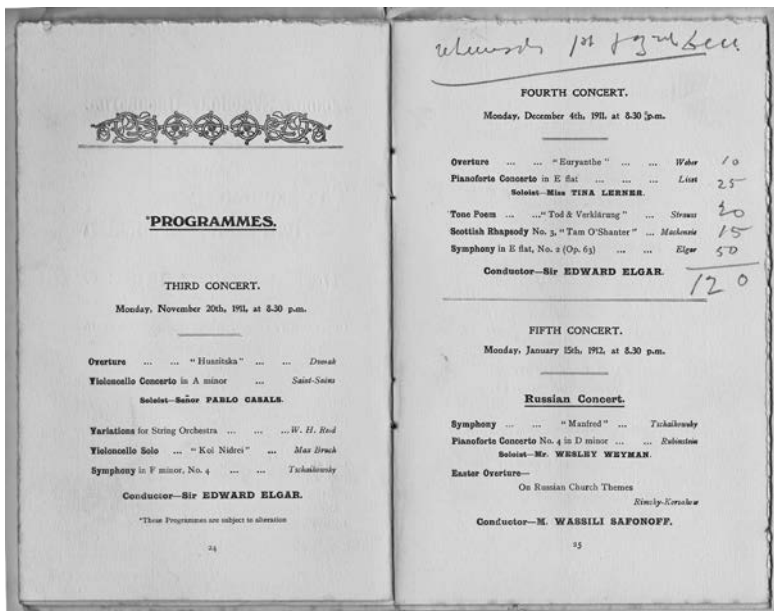


Fig. 4. Notes in Elgar's hand on a forthcoming concert with the L.S.O. Elgar Birthplace Museum.

It is evident from this that the L.S.O. was seeking bigger fish than Elgar to conduct its concerts in future.

He was back on form for his fifth concert.

The programme was excellently arranged, Elgar conducted, the orchestra played superbly, and the Queen's Hall was crowded - there, briefly, one has the bare facts. Bare facts may often suggest a romance, and last night by some strange chance the programme was romantic from beginning to end. First, a magnificent performance of Tchaikowsky's 'Romeo and Juliet' overture. Then followed a Recitative and Rondo from 'La Clemenza di Tito' of Mozart ... Sir Edward Elgar's 'Sea Pictures' afforded Madame Clara Butt splendid scope for her wonderful voice. These songs were made for her, and she sings them with evident appreciation of their deep subjective quality.<sup>31</sup>

The programme also included Mozart's 40<sup>th</sup> Symphony, and Hamilton Harty's *With the Wild Geese*, which the composer conducted. Afterwards he wrote to Elgar, saying:

I would like to send you my very sincere thanks for the splendid and kind way you helped me over the performance of my Poem last night - Alas! great people are not generally so good to their younger brethren - and I am very grateful. Your words of encouragement mean a great deal to me and I value them greatly.<sup>32</sup>

The Polish pianist, conductor and composer Juliusz Wertheim was the soloist in Elgar's final concert of the season. He rehearsed with Elgar on the previous day, which, being a Sunday, was the

31 *Daily Telegraph*, 30 January 1912.

32 EBM letter 1191, 30 January 1912.

occasion for a tea party at Severn House.

E. to Rehearsal - C. with him. A. & C. & May to Spanish Place - then to Queen's Hall - E. not too tired - Wertheim to tea - & Alice [Stuart Wortley] came - & Mr. & Mrs. D' Oily - who seemed to enjoy themselves & seeing the house so much.<sup>33</sup>

The following day:

E. to Rehearsal at 11.15. May with him - Returned all well. D.G. Rested.

To Concert. Brahms fine & Concerto successful. Wertheim agitating as he left out ½ bars, required a genius to keep it right. Schumann Symphony most noble & splendidly conducted. E. not the worse D.G.<sup>34</sup>

Again, the concert was a critical success.

The Symphony Concert at Queen's Hall last night was a most interesting one. It opened particularly well with a really fine performance of Brahms's 'Tragic' Overture in which every theme and every development had remarkably strong vitality. There were some passages which seemed to be carried forward more by the nervous energy characteristic of Sir Edward Elgar than by the more robust and muscular type which one associates with Brahms, but that is only to say that the conductor gave an individual reading of the music as it appeals to him, and it was one which it was well worth while to hear, for it was exceptionally free from conventionality of any kind.

The second part was given up to Schumann's Second Symphony (C major) which was admirably played under Sir Edward Elgar. As with Brahms's Overture, one felt that the conductor knew exactly what he wanted and got it easily from his players. The undulating rhythm of the Scherzo, the exquisite melodic development of the slow movement, and the healthy vigour of the finale were all excellently interpreted.<sup>35</sup>

The orchestra's Board continued on its leisurely way throughout the spring discussing conductors for the 1912/13 season. Finally, on 25 May:

After some discussion, it was agreed that Sir Edward Elgar be offered Nov : 25<sup>th</sup> and Dec : 9<sup>th</sup> 1912, Mr. Hamilton Harty Feb : 10<sup>th</sup> 1913 Herr Mengelberg May : 26<sup>th</sup> and June : 2<sup>nd</sup> 1913, and Herr Arthur Nikisch June : 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup> 1913.<sup>36</sup>

And so it was resolved that Elgar should conduct fewer concerts than Nikisch. It was as if the Board had quite forgotten that Elgar was their Principal Conductor. Nikisch had recently taken the orchestra on a triumphant tour of Canada and the United States, in which 28 concerts had been given in 21 days. The final concert had been in New York's Carnegie Hall.

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33 Alice Elgar diary, 11 February 1912.

34 Ibid, 12 February 1912.

35 *The Times*, 12 February 1912.

36 Minutes of Board Meeting 25 May 1912, L.S.O. Archive.



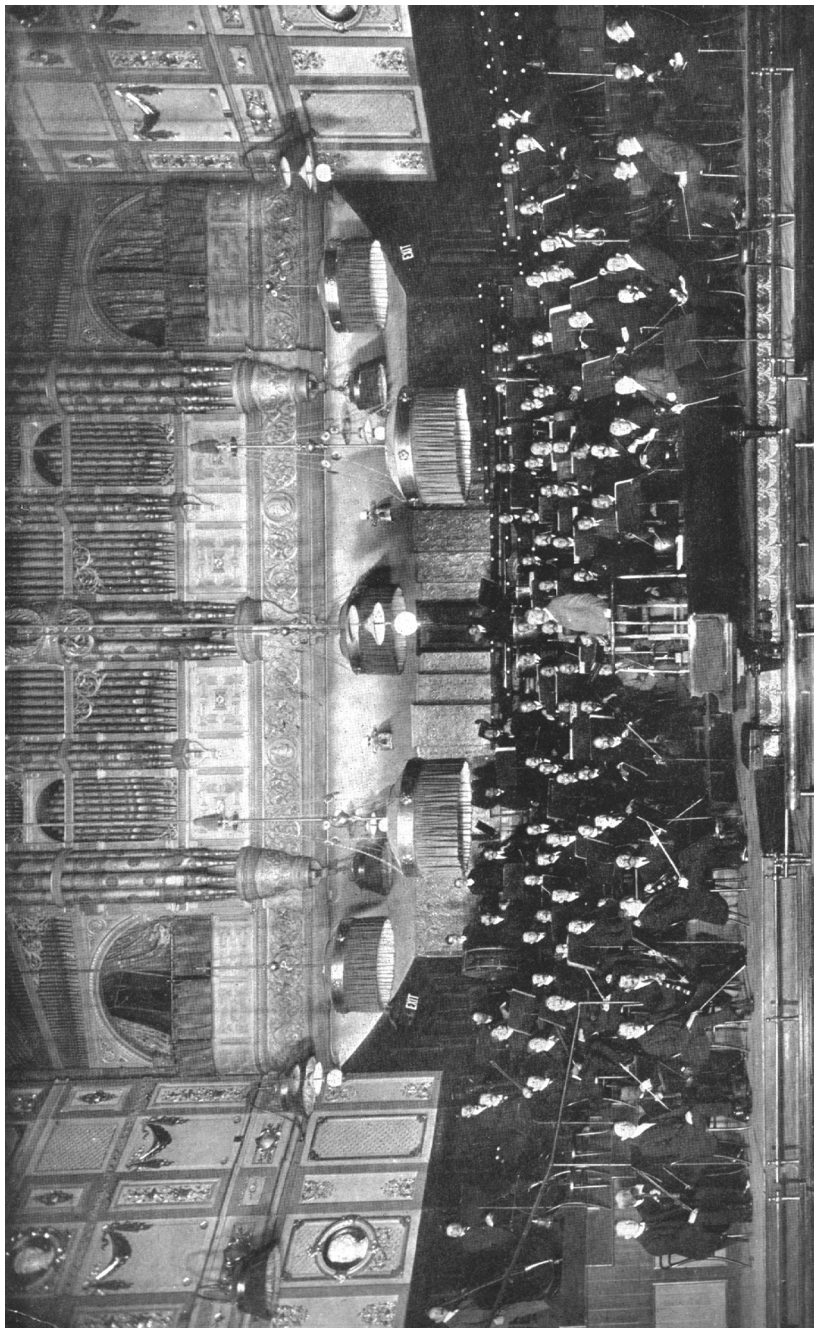


Fig. 5. Elgar and the London Symphony Orchestra at Queen's Hall in 1912. Arthur Reynolds collection.

The farewell appearance of Arthur Nikisch and the London Symphony Orchestra yesterday afternoon in Carnegie Hall proved to be a triumph for the great conductor, whose magic wand whipped up a tumult of enthusiasm such had seldom been known in the history of that big auditorium, and for the great English band, which played with a vigor, force, and temperamental impetuosity that almost lifted the listener out of his seat.<sup>37</sup>

Programmes were ‘discussed at considerable lengths’ at meetings in June and July, and ‘arranged subject to the approval of the various Conductors.’ At the end of July, a letter from Elgar was read ‘in which he requested an interview with the Secretary to talk over the matter’. Thomas Busby and Adolf Borsdorf went to Severn House next day.

Very windy & gale like still - Summer flying away - London S. Orch men to see E. about Concerts & Programmes -<sup>38</sup>

Two days later they reported back to the Board.

The Secretary intimated that in conjunction with Mr. A. Borsdorf he had interviewed Sir Edward Elgar with reference to his programmes for the Symphony Concerts on Nov : 25<sup>th</sup> and Dec : 9<sup>th</sup>, as suggested by the Board. Sir Edward agreed to all the items with the exception of the Cockaigne Overture and the Schumann Symphony which he desired to replace by the ‘In The South’ overture and the Caesar Frank [sic] Symphony in D minor, which the Board agreed to.

A verbal message from Sir Edward Elgar to the effect that he would like the L.S.O. to perform his new ‘Ode’ ‘The Music Makers’ at one of the Symphony Concerts was considered. Sir Edward asked how much the Board would agree to pay towards bringing up one of the big northern choruses, if he would guarantee the rest.

After a very lengthy discussion, the Board agreed that it would be far more dignified to the L.S.O. to propose the inclusion of the work in one of the Nikisch Concerts on the following conditions, viz: Sir Edward to provide the music and the Soloist and the L.S.O. to provide the choir.<sup>39</sup>

*The Music Makers* received its first London performance on 9 June 1913, with the choir of the Leeds Philharmonic Society and Muriel Foster the contralto soloist. Nikisch conducted the remainder of the programme: Beethoven’s *Coriolan* overture and the *Choral Symphony*.

In September ‘Billy’ Reed was appointed leader of the orchestra in succession to Arthur Payne - but not before the Board had written to Albert Sammons to ask if he would take the position. Conductor’s fees for the new season were also agreed: Nikisch and Steinbach were to receive 75 guineas per concert: Elgar’s fee remained at 50 guineas.

### ***Elgar’s second season***

In October Elgar returned from a short holiday in the Lake District, and his thoughts turned to preparing for his first L.S.O. concert. He enlisted Alice Stuart Wortley’s help in studying the Franck Symphony. She obtained a piano duet version, and over the next few weeks they played it together frequently. The day before the concert:

37 *New York Press*, quoted in Hubert Foss and Noël Goodwin, *London Symphony* (London: Naldrett Press, 1954), 70.

38 Alice Elgar diary, 30 July 1912.

39 Minutes of Board Meeting 1 August 1912, L.S.O. Archive.

To Q.'s Hall to E.'s booful rehearsal - Quite splendid. Dr. Baranjaski [sic] came to go through concerto & Philip B.J. [Burne-Jones] to tea & Mr. [Theodore] Byard & Mrs. Murray who stayed to dine. Baranjaski played Kol Nidrei E. played for him *most* booful - Very delightful afternoon - Philip played about & carried off inkstand for his picture & Byard was crazy over the house -<sup>40</sup>

The Russian 'cellist Serge Barjansky was the dedicatee of Bloch's *Schelomo*.<sup>41</sup> He played Dvořák's Concerto at the concert, which also included *In the South* and the *Introduction and Allegro*.

E. to his Rehearsal - A. & C. too very delightful. Very blowing. Gale by Evening & rain. To Queen's Hall in Eving. Lansdown car - Glorious Concert. E. looked splendid & conducted quite magnificently. Splendid reading of 'In the South' & String piece & C. Franck Symphony. Had a truly great reception. Winifred Murray & Miss Eadie to supper.<sup>42</sup>

Elgar's work on the Franck seemed to pay off, the critic of *The Times* commenting:

We were grateful to Sir Edward for the sympathetic performance of Franck's symphony, a work which the visiting conductors who preside over the majority of these concerts seem disinclined to give us. The Finale was the strong point in this performance, and the weaving together of the threads of thought from the three movements was skilfully managed.<sup>43</sup>

The critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, almost certainly Robin Legge, disagreed.

... it was in his own 'In the South' overture, and his delightful Introduction and Allegro, that he and his splendid band excelled. Better performances, indeed, the heart could scarcely desire. But when it came to the question of Cesar Franck's Symphony in D minor there was a different tale to tell. Franck, of course, never wore his heart on his sleeve, but he was, on the other hand, never quite so austere as Sir Edward Elgar made him last night. The performance certainly contained evidence of much earnest and sincere thought, but it was uninteresting and uninspiring, and it was impossible not to compare it in the mind with a certain brilliant interpretation of the music given by Colonne, which made the hearer realise, as Sir Edward never quite succeeded in making us realise last night, how noble, how human, and how beautiful is this very great Symphony.<sup>44</sup>

As might have been expected, Alice took exception to these remarks, and fired off a letter to Troyte Griffith!

Dear Troyte

... I wish you cd. have been at the Concert last night. It was really splendid & E. was so happy & conducted with the most electric magnetism - There was immense enthusiasm.

I am *enraged* with the D. Telegraph, the C. Franck Symphony was magnificent, it wd. be impossible for that lofty but rather conventional music to have had a more inspired reading & tremendous

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40 Alice Elgar diary, 24 November 1912. Burne-Jones completed his portrait of Elgar in March 1913. It now hangs in the Guildhall, Worcester.

41 Barjansky's Stradivarius 'cello is now played by Julian Lloyd-Webber, President of the Elgar Society.

42 Alice Elgar diary, 25 November 1912. Kate Eadie was Muriel Foster's accompanist.

43 *The Times*, 26 November 1912.

44 *Daily Telegraph*, 26 November 1912.

reception. It is so wicked to write like that & damaging, as people who do not *know*, would believe it. Then the cellist came in bars too soon & all say it was marvellous E. cd. have kept things going - If Legge wrote it, & he always professes so much, I cannot understand it, he hardly mentions the String Allegro, wh. was *wonderful* & made a great impression & has never been properly heard in England. I felt I must say all this & only wish someone would write & say it in papers. It is such a gross injustice about C. F. Symphony, telephone messages come saying it was magnificent.

... E's love wd. come if he knew I was writing. I hope he did not read the D. Tel - so do not remark to me about it -<sup>45</sup>

For Elgar's second concert of the season, an all-Elgar programme, Marie Hall was engaged at a fee of 50 guineas to play the Violin Concerto. She wrote to Elgar at the beginning of December.

Dear Sir Edward Elgar,

It is exceedingly kind of you to help me with your Concerto and I shall be so pleased to come on Friday morning at 11-30. Thank you and Lady Elgar very much for asking me to stay to luncheon which I shall be delighted to do.

With kind regards,  
Yours sincerely  
Marie Baring<sup>46</sup>

At the appointed hour 'Marie Hall played through Concerto with E. & stayed to lunch Played very well & was most nice'<sup>47</sup> Alan Lascelles, later Private Secretary to both George VI and Queen Elizabeth II, was present at the concert.

Marie Hall played the violin concerto; take it from me, that is a great work - a whole torso above anything else he has ever done. The symphony I found only sporadically interesting, and terribly commonplace as a whole; and didn't stay for the Enigma Variations. He's always feeling for something, like a man running after his hat; but he catches it right enough in the concerto, especially the beginning and end of the slow movement.<sup>48</sup>

Elgar continued to attend the L.S.O.'s concerts whenever he could. He had been feeling unwell towards the end of 1912, and this feeling persisted well into 1913. In February the family went to Italy in the hope that his health would improve, and in March he went to Llandrindod Wells to take the waters.

### ***The order of the boot***

Meanwhile, the Board of the L.S.O. were planning the 1913/14 season. In February they agreed twelve dates, and engaged Fritz Steinbach to conduct three concerts at a fee of 83 guineas per concert, and Safonoff another. In March they gave each of them a further date, while engaging

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45 EBM letter 7226/7336, 26 November 1912.

46 EBM letter 3632, 1 December 1912. Marie Hall had married her manager, Edward Baring, in 1911.

47 Alice Elgar diary, 6 December 1912.

48 Alan Lascelles diary, 9 December 1912, published in Duff Hart-Davis (ed.), *End of an era* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986).

Nikisch to conduct two for a fee of 100 guineas per concert. Mengelberg, Koussevitzky and Emil Mlynarski were each engaged to conduct one concert. From the evidence of the Minutes no serious thought was given to re-engaging Elgar; neither had anyone from the orchestra thought to discuss their plans with him. Then, out of the blue:

E. had letter from London S. Orchestra. It all hurt very much. A. most mis knowing it - A. had to go & try dress. C. stayed with E.<sup>49</sup>

That letter is now missing, but it is thought that the orchestra 'regretted that they must look for a man with a bigger public following as a conductor, and with better health.'<sup>50</sup> A statement was made at the Annual General Meeting of the L.S.O. the following month.

In opening the proceedings the chairman stated that he considered the position of the company at the present moment was both financially and artistically sound, but at the same time he called attention to the irreparable loss of Dr. Richter as Conductor of the Orchestra. Reference was also made to the severe losses sustained at the Symphony Concerts conducted by Sir Edward Elgar and Mr. Hamilton Harty, both of whom had been written to saying how much the Board regretted their inability to retain their services for next season.<sup>51</sup>

Carice wrote later of Elgar's state of health at this time:

It is really impossible to say that there was anything definite wrong with him; it stemmed from digestive troubles which in their turn sprang from the fact that things were not going well; if something favourable happened digestion was forgotten. In the same way, he would complain of a terrible headache but if one could find something to interest him or if something exciting happened, the headache would be quickly forgotten.<sup>52</sup>

I am indebted to Dr. John Harcup, who has made an in-depth study of Elgar's health, for the following note:

E.E. was not well at the end of 1912 and into 1913. He got noises in the ears in March 1912 which worried him a lot. On November 5 he began to be deaf and went to see Sir Maurice [Abbot-Anderson], his ENT surgeon. Earlier he had been dizzy and fallen down at Severn House. These three symptoms now spell Ménière's syndrome but Sir Maurice did not know that. He also became depressed over his health. I do not think it was psychosomatic despite what Carice wrote. His 'depression' was short lived, not deep and he could be bounced out of it, such were his mercurial moods. Spa treatment was no help in March 1913 and another consultant opinion was sought - this time on his digestion which was pronounced 'normal'. I suspect this was dyspepsia due to the worry of these other symptoms and remember he was still carrying around his persistently infected tonsils - they were not removed for another five years and would contribute to him feeling 'one degree under' some of the time.<sup>53</sup>

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49 Alice Elgar diary, 23 June 1913.

50 I have this quote in my archive, but unfortunately omitted to note its source.

51 Minutes of Annual General Meeting 24 July 1913, L.S.O. Archive.

52 Carice Elgar MS, quoted in Percy Young, *Alice Elgar; Enigma of a Victoria Lady* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1978), 171.

53 Email to the author, 29 December 2010.

It has not been possible to quantify the ‘severe losses’ made on Elgar’s two concerts during the 1912/13 season. It is hard to imagine that the loss on the concert of 9 December was of great significance. The *Pall Mall Gazette* noted next day that ‘The audience was large, and highly appreciative’, and the fees paid to Elgar and Marie Hall were half what would have been paid if, for example, Nikisch and Kreisler had been involved. With the two English artists, costs would have been covered with the sale of between 400 and 800 fewer seats out of a capacity of around 3,000.

Whatever the real reasons for his jettisoning, and poor health and lack of drawing power were at the least very reasonable excuses, it would seem that the L.S.O. had ceased to regard Elgar as their Principal Conductor after his initial season. When conducting works other than his own he was ill at ease by comparison with the best conductors, and in people like Artur Nikisch the orchestra had found the best. But their treatment of him in omitting to let him know that he was not being considered for the 1913/14 season does them no credit. When his appointment was announced in 1911 it was undoubtedly advantageous to the orchestra: he was extremely popular with both the general public and the orchestra; as a conductor he was more than competent; and his engagement at the same fee as Richter was cost-effective. It must have seemed like a very good idea at the time.

*Acknowledgements:* My thanks are due to Libby Rice, Archivist of the London Symphony Orchestra, Chris Bennett and Sue Fairchild of the Elgar Birthplace Museum, Dr. John Harcup and Arthur Reynolds for their considerable assistance in the preparation of this essay. Extracts from Alice’s letters and diaries are given by kind permission of the Elgar Will Trust.

# Did Elgar achieve a century?

**Stephen Lloyd**

One has so often heard, or read, the statement that Elgar's First Symphony received about a hundred performances in the first year of its existence, that the list of only 53 performances appended to Carl Newton's fascinating article in the November 2010 issue of the *Journal* came as something of a disappointment - and a challenge. Is this another of those myths that one would dearly love to be true but on closer examination finds, sadly, to be false?

Two acquaintances, Maurice Parker and Tony Benson, spent many years laboriously cataloguing the performances of Sir Thomas Beecham. The privately published outcome of their work details that infamous provincial tour in October 1909 when Beecham, allegedly, progressively cut the work as the tour proceeded. Tracing past performances in London and the big cities is a relatively straightforward matter if one has access to *The Times* on-line or to volumes of *The Musical Times* (which used to be a good chronicler of performances). But outside London poses problems, and one can sympathise with Carl Newton when a number of the performances on that Beecham tour were not included in his list. Since this added to his 53, I was encouraged to see what else might be found and attempt at least to find the 82 given by Michael Kennedy in his *Portrait of Elgar*,<sup>1</sup> remembering, as Carl pointed out, that this number refers to the whole of 1909 and does not include the performances in December 1908.

I am extremely grateful to Martin Bird for his help with some performances I might otherwise have missed, for supplying a number of references, and for indicating that the performance announced for 2 September 1909 at Devonshire Park, Eastbourne with Pieter Tas conducting the Duke of Devonshire's private orchestra did not take place<sup>2</sup>.

The table below identifies 83 performances within a year of the premiere, with the possible addition of a further four. Of Kennedy's 82 (in 1909), apparently seventeen were in London, suggesting that there could be another three that have eluded the table, and if those three took place before 1 December 1909 the possible total could be as many as 90. Incidentally, this documentation shows what an extraordinarily fruitful month October was for the symphony (and for its composer), with as many as four performances being given on one particular day, and with three days on which both Beecham and Elgar were touring the provinces with the work in different towns.

Further performances are known to have taken place in Berlin and Philadelphia, though the precise dates are not known. There is some uncertainty about the Chicago performances in October: Elgar wrote to Henry Clayton of Novello about a programme in his possession for two Chicago performances on 22 and 23 October 1909, but in reply Clayton says that he was informed

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1 (Oxford University Press, 1968) 190, or 227 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> editions.

2 Noted as 'abandoned', Henry Clayton memorandum 18 November 1909, Royal Academy of Music BA2006.1103.

of Chicago performances for 28 and 29 October (underlining the dates).<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to determine whether they are looking at four performances or, quite likely, there has been some confusion with the dates.

It seems unlikely that we will reach the fabled 100, but it would be interesting to see if any members, especially those abroad, can add to this number.

		<b>Place</b>	<b>Forces</b>	<b>Reference</b>
	1908			
	December			
1	3	Manchester	Hallé/Hans Richter	CAE
2	7	London	LSO/Hans Richter	CAE
3	19	London	LSO/Hans Richter	CAE
	1909			
	January			
4	1	London	QHO/Elgar	CAE
5	3	New York	NYSO/Walter Damrosch	<i>New York Times</i>
6	5	New York	NYSO/Walter Damrosch	EBM letter 3809
7	7	London	QHO/Elgar	CAE
8	8	Milwaukee	NYSO/Walter Damrosch	EBM letter 3807
9	10	Chicago	NYSO/Walter Damrosch	<i>Chicago Sunday Trib.</i>
10	16	London	QHO/Elgar	CAE
11	16	Brighton	Municipal Orchestra/Joseph Sainton	<i>The Times</i>
12	18	Toronto	NYSO/Walter Damrosch	EBM letter 3808
13	20	Vienna	Ferdinand Löwe	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>
14	21	St Petersburg	Alexander Siloti	RAM BA2006.1077
15	24	New York	NYSO/Walter Damrosch	<i>New York Times</i>
16	26	Blackheath	George Mackern	<i>Musical Times</i>
17	??	Cincinnati	NYSO/Walter Damrosch	RAM BA2006.1078
	February			
18	3	London	QHO/Henry Wood	<i>Musical Times</i>
19	11	Leipzig	Gewandhaus/Artur Nikisch	<i>Musical Times</i>
20	16	Birmingham	Birmingham SO/George Halford	<i>Musical Times</i>
21	20	Eastbourne	Duke of Devonshire's Orchestra/Hans Richter	<i>The Times</i>
22	23	Worcester	Worcester Festival Choral Society/ Ivor Atkins	<i>Musical Times</i>
23	26	Liverpool	Hallé/Hans Richter	<i>Musical Times</i>
24	26	Boston	Boston SO/Max Fiedler	<i>Boston Evening Times</i>
25	27	Boston	Boston SO/Max Fiedler	JNM
26	27	Bournemouth	Municipal Orchestra/Dan Godfrey	<i>Musical Times</i>
	March			
27	4	Manchester	Hallé/Hans Richter	<i>Musical Times</i>
28	4	Nottingham	Allen Gill	<i>Musical Times</i>
29	5	Bradford	Hallé/Hans Richter	<i>Yorkshire. Post</i>
30	5	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh SO/Emil Paur?	JNM
31	6	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh SO/Emil Paur?	JNM
32	12	Southport	Arthur Speed	<i>Musical Times</i>

3 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1987), Vol. II, 727-730.



33	24	London	New SO/Landon Ronald	<i>The Times</i>
	April			
34	7	London	LSO/Hans Richter	<i>The Times</i>
35	9	London	QHO/Henry Wood	<i>The Times</i>
36	17	Bournemouth	Municipal Orchestra/Dan Godfrey	<i>Musical Times</i>
	May			
37	3	Bristol	Bristol SO/Hubert Hunt	<i>Musical Times</i>
38	4	Louisville	??	JNM
39	10	Birmingham	Landon Ronald	<i>Birmingham Post</i>
40	13	London	RPS/Artur Nikisch	<i>The Times</i>
	June			
41	1	Sydney	Joseph Bradley	JNM
42	14	London	LSO/Artur Nikisch	<i>The Times</i>
43	23	London	New SO/Landon Ronald	CAE
	August			
44	17	London	QHO/Henry Wood	<i>The Times</i>
	September			
45	9	Hereford	Festival Orchestra/Elgar	<i>Worcester Herald</i>
46	29	London	QHO/Henry Wood	<i>The Times</i>
	October			
47	5	Birmingham	Festival Orchestra/Hans Richter	<i>Birmingham Post</i>
48	6	Cardiff	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	<i>Berrow's</i>
49	7	Exeter	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	TB
50	8	Torquay	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	TB
51	11	Reading	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	TB
52	13	Cheltenham	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	TB
53	14	Great Malvern	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	<i>Malvern Gazette</i>
54	18	Chester	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	TB
55	19	Sheffield	Hallé Orchestra	<i>Musical Times</i>
56	20	Lancaster	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	TB
57	20	Bolton	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	TB
58	21	Kendal	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	TB
59	21	Manchester	Hallé/Hans Richter	Hallé programme
60	21	London	QHO/Henry Wood	<i>The Times</i>
61	21	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	LSO/Elgar	<i>Newcastle Daily Journal</i>
62	22	Chicago	Chicago SO/Frederick Stock	JNM
63	23	Chicago	Chicago SO/Frederick Stock	JNM
64	23	Harrogate	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	TB
65	25	Belfast	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	<i>Belfast News-Letter</i>
66	25	Budapest	??	JNM
67	26	Dublin	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	<i>Musical Times</i>
68	26	Hull	LSO/Elgar	<i>North Mail</i>
69	27	Preston	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	<i>Musical Times</i>
70	27	Middlesbrough	LSO/Elgar	<i>Northern Star</i>
71	28	Hanley	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	<i>Staffordshire Sentinel</i>
72	28	Doncaster	LSO/Elgar	<i>Doncaster Gazette</i>
73	29	Nottingham	LSO/Elgar	<i>Nottingham Guardian</i>
74	30	Cambridge	Beecham SO/Thomas Beecham	<i>Cambridge Chronicle</i>
	November			
75	2	Leeds	Hallé/Hans Richter	<i>Musical Times</i>
76	3	Leeds	QHO/Elgar	<i>Leeds Mercury</i>

77	7	London	QHO/Elgar	JNM
78	7	New York	NYSO/Walter Damrosch	<i>New York Times</i>
79	11	Exeter	??	<i>Musical Times</i>
80	24	Dundee	Glasgow Choral Union/Frederic Cowen	JNM
81	25	Bonn	??	JNM
82	29	Edinburgh	Scottish Orch./Frederic Cowen	<i>Musical Times</i>
83	30	Glasgow	Scottish Orch./Frederic Cowen	<i>Musical Times</i>

**Key:**

CAE	Alice Elgar diary
EBM	Elgar Birthplace Museum
JNM	Jerrold Northrop Moore, <i>Elgar and his Publishers</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1987), Vol. II, 727-730.
RAM	Royal Academy of Music
TB	Tony Benson, <i>Sir Thomas Beecham Bart, CH. A Calendar of his Concert and Theatrical Performances – Supplement 2</i>

## BOOK REVIEWS

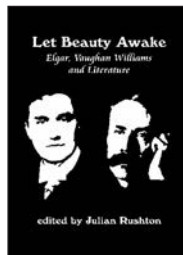
Edited by Julian Rushton: *Let Beauty Awake: Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Literature*

This volume, whose material is mostly collected from papers delivered at the Elgar and Vaughan Williams conference at the British Library in November 2008, is dedicated to the memory of Richard Hickox, who died a day after giving an interview at the conference. The full interview is included on a bonus CD. Together the essays offer a wide-ranging response to the music of both composers enlivened by the fruitful blending of the insights of some of the leading musicologists in the field with those of non-academics: an entirely admirable practice of the two composer societies who sponsored the event.

The book is arranged under two subheadings, 'Vaughan Williams and Others' and 'Vaughan Williams and the Poets', reflecting the generally greater focus throughout on that composer. Part 1 opens with Michael Pope's chapter, which offers suggestive hints on the influence of Parry's literary choices on the choices made, and genres worked in, by Elgar and Vaughan Williams. Pope notes, too, the reciprocal influence that Elgar had on Parry after he overtook his position in English musical life. Julian Rushton writes in his introduction that Stephen Johnson's essay, 'Elgar's literary choice', which follows, immediately 'reaches the heart of the matter' in this volume. Goes for the jugular, more like. Taking time to reflect illuminatingly on the text-setting of Mahler and Tippett, Johnson examines the benefit of Elgar's choice to set bad poetry in *The Music Makers*, *Sea Pictures*, and *The Dream of Gerontius*. It will surprise few to hear the poetry of the first two works disdained, but some may bristle at the suggestion that Newman's famous text is not great literature. Yet it is worth saying: the Pope may beatify who he likes but even had it been available to Newman, he would never have won a Nobel Prize. Johnson shows Elgar creating rousing effects out of Newman's metrical torpor where it serves a good purpose over a short, energetic span ('Sanctus fortis') or creating interest where there is none in the original when not to do so would have been disastrous ('Praise to the Holiest'). Pointing as it does to some of the best qualities in Elgar's text-setting (seldom, it must be said, unimpeachable), it is a welcome inclusion in the volume.

It has been remarked that British musicians who served in the First World War appear to have said less about it than their poet colleagues. Expanding on this thought, Andrew Neill argues that Vaughan Williams's 'Pastoral' Symphony in particular is a musical response to war to rank alongside the poetry of Sassoon and others - suggesting along the way that Elgar's own musical contribution in the war years may have lacked the insight that his younger compatriot, with authentic experience of that war, was able to bring to bear.

To close part 1, David Owen Norris contributes a typically effervescent essay that was doubtless liberally illustrated at the initial performance. The



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4-5. 150 pp + ix and  
accompanying CD.

link with the theme of this volume is one of Elgar's most 'literary' works, *Falstaff*. Norris too readily accepts the sniffy judgement of this work exemplified by a catastrophically unreflective *New York Times* review of an Andrew Davis performance in the 1980s, but his conceit that 'we might reach something more fundamental' about the piece by stripping away the orchestration (as in playing or hearing Karg-Elert's transcription for piano) is interesting - is, for me, completely unpersuasive.

Part 2 opens with Roger Savage's very useful scene-setting chapter on Vaughan Williams's direct connections to literary production in the figures of family, friends, and associates - these rather more than the big beasts of literary production in his own time. Beyond the influence it had on his music, this chapter demonstrates the extent of Vaughan Williams's personal engagement with literature, something that Hugh Cobbe's chapter tracing literary references in the composer's letters further amplifies. A helpful appendix to Savage's chapter documents the composer's literary involvement with three 'circles' of writers whose work fed into his music - those who died before 1890, those before the public c.1890-1905, and his friends, relations, and personal collaborators. It will be a handy reference point for future research.

The next four chapters - three of which examine Vaughan Williams's relation to particular writers, with the last one turning to rumination on Vaughan Williams's spectacular use of a commonplace musical gesture, are the core of the book and a model of how musicology can communicate its findings to a general audience. The first, by Alain Frogley, considers his encounter with Walt Whitman, perhaps his most celebrated influence. Frogley's focus is not on the thematic influence of Whitman on Vaughan Williams, which is already well known (particularly as a result of Frogley's own extensive researches), and his essay unfolds instead as a chronological survey of the Whitman-inspired works, particularly valuable for its consideration of a number of unpublished pieces, including one, *Whispers of Heavenly Death*, dated 1908, which was only discovered in 2000.

Byron Adams's stylish essay on Vaughan Williams's Elizabethan fascination brushes the cobwebs off a facet of English music's nostalgic attitude in the twentieth century - important, too, for Britten, of course - that has tended to be romanticized and idealized to the point of banality. As Adams notes, Vaughan Williams was neither sentimental nor uncritical of the 'heroes' of England's 'Golden Age', including the person of the virgin queen herself. His essay encourages us to hear music such as *Sir John in Love* with renewed vigour. Unsentimental, too, is the association between Vaughan Williams and Housman's poetry (and that poet's slightly antagonistic but realistically deferential attitude towards composers) in Philip Lancaster's rewarding essay on the Housman settings. It is a deeply sympathetic reading that takes one back keenly to the music.

Julian Rushton's chapter on Vaughan Williams's 'triadic magic' is a translucently communicative study of a particularly expressive trick open to composers in the early twentieth century, one which elevates the plain triad

- omnipresent in composers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - to a symbol of the numinous. It enables the non-specialist reader a privileged glimpse behind the magician's curtain and greatly enriches appreciation of such familiar pieces as the *Tallis Fantasia*.

It is entirely apt that the epilogue should be offered by Michael Kennedy, on whose shoulders much of the work in this volume stands (and to whom Byron Adams's chapter is dedicated). He reflects on the nowadays apparently secure critical position of both of the composers treated here, to which this handsomely produced and meticulously edited book is merely the latest warmly recommended testament.

J. P. E. Harper-Scott

### **Peter Sutton: Elgar and Alice**

Peter Sutton's play *Elgar and Alice* was first produced in 2007 at the Swan Theatre, Worcester. Despite my having a flat just ten minutes away, I obstinately refused to go to see it, not wishing to believe that any play about my beloved Sir Edward could ever do him justice. What a fool I was, especially as the part of Elgar was played by Gerald Harper, who in his 1960s role as Adam Adamant inhabited much the same topsy-turvydom that my mind inhabits as a researcher of Victorian and Edwardian England.

The script of the play has now been published, and, as I read it, not only did I find it very moving in itself, but it made me think more deeply about Elgar and his relationships both with Alice and with the other women essential to his persona. Peter Sutton has somehow got right under Elgar's skin, and the words that Elgar utters, and the manner in which he utters them, coagulate the disparate feelings that all of us must have about the precise nature of those relationships.

The main characters are Elgar, Alice, and Windflower, and while the play manages to give a potted and accurate account of Elgar's life, it inevitably focuses on his relationship with the two Alices. I am not going to spoil things by giving you details of the plot, but I will give you an instance of how it got me thinking more deeply about the surviving evidence.

There is no doubt in my mind that the nature of Elgar's love for his wife had changed over the years. Certainly by 1907 he was finding her tiresome, and was increasingly frustrated by her. His letters of this period to Carice are full of comments of a 'my wife doesn't understand me' nature, and not at all the sort thing one might expect to find written to a teenage daughter. And I have no doubt, too, that by 1910 and the Violin Concerto the relationship with Windflower was both deep and passionate. The feeling was demonstrably mutual, and their reactions to events during the composition of the concerto were certainly those of lovers past thinking of the effect their actions might have upon others. But as Jerrold Northrop Moore wisely said in John Bridcut's film when asked if it was innocent: 'What is innocence ...?'

At the end of September 1910 Elgar had tea with Windflower on his way



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to The Hut. He left later than he intended, and wired her from Paddington to tell her that he had missed his train, and followed it up next day with a letter.

My dear Windflower

I missed the train but took a later one ... I loved every minute of my visit yesterday - I can't tell when I come in again but if I can come to see the flat tomorrow a.m I'll wire or telephone.<sup>1</sup>

This is intriguing - why the reference to a flat? The Elgars had had their own flat at Queen Anne's Mansions for most of the year, and this sounds like a different one. Then, to the obvious surprise of both Alice and Frank Schuster he returned home to Hereford.

... Surprise, & delight, found E. had returned<sup>2</sup>

My dear Frankie

Here I am & find a pile of proofs. You see I did come home - I know you thought I was off!<sup>3</sup>

There must be the possibility that Elgar and Windflower were considering moving their relationship to a logical next step and taking a flat in London, but that Elgar, having poured out his heart to Frank Schuster while at The Hut, had had second thoughts, got cold feet, or come to his senses, and gone home to Hereford instead. I hope we'll never know - but the strength of Peter Sutton's play for me is that it gives life to events only hinted at it in archive material.

For me their relationship is consummated in the hymn tune they wrote together in 1914 - *O Perfect Love*. It looks clumsy on paper - surely the spread of parts is all wrong - sounds worse on the piano, and yet when sung is one of the most perfect pieces ever written. I defy anyone to hear it (it's on the Manfred Mann-inspired CD 'O Perfect Love') without feeling that theirs was a love which went far beyond the physical - and perhaps bypassed the physical.

As a by-product the play also offers an intriguing and entirely plausible solution to *the* enigma. A new production is being given at the Swan Theatre later this year. My advice is not to miss it, but at the very least buy the script - it will certainly get you thinking.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Elgar Birthplace Museum letter 4074 23 September 1910.

2 Alice Elgar diary, 29 September 1910.

3 EBM letter 6988 29 September 1910.

4 *Elgar and Alice* is being produced by On a Role at the Swan Theatre, Worcester in August 2011 (see [www.worcesterlive.co.uk](http://www.worcesterlive.co.uk)), one of the performances being part of the Three Choirs Festival ([www.3choirs.org](http://www.3choirs.org)). Copies of the play are available from the Elgar Birthplace Museum. Further information can be found at [www.petersutton.eu](http://www.petersutton.eu).

I am conscious that I have not written about the play from the point of view of its place as a piece of theatre: I know my limitations! I shall therefore hand you over to my wife, who not only has experience of the theatre as actor and director, but will be known to some of you for her role as Alice in our talks on the diaries.

Martin Bird

How do you review a play from the script, not the production? How do you recommend a good night out at the theatre from the written word? There are no actors, or visual design, no costumes, scenery or props to recommend.

I approached this task with some misgiving, for apart from being an avid theatregoer (thanks to my schoolteacher son, I have discovered the National Student Drama Festival - a youthful and inspiring annual event in Scarborough) I suppose I can claim some theatrical experience (amateur) both on stage and off. In order to select a play for direction, I have always asked myself 'Do I see myself working with this right through until curtain up?'

Here, the question is 'Do I want to see this play's next production?' The answer is 'yes'. There - I have blown the verdict at the start.

There are four characters: Edward and Alice of course; their maid Sarah, and Lady Alice Stuart of Wortley (aka Windflower). The setting is the Elgars' London home; the time is 1920 - near to Lady Elgar's death.

I am no Elgar expert, but Sutton's research is clearly very detailed. He brings together, in his well-balanced and easygoing dialogue, so many themes of the Elgars' life: their premarital backgrounds, the family disapproval (Alice's especially) of the marriage; the relationship of Edward and Windflower (apparently tolerated by Alice); Edward's perception of his father's neglect of his son's talent and much more. In addition each character is quickly drawn, not only through the quirky non-sequiturs (after explaining at length how music is in every object or location around us, Edward loudly protests 'There's no jam!'), but also from his escapism to the garden shed to 'take it out on his test tubes and Bunsen burners' (Alice).

And there is humour and wit, from both the main protagonists: 'Ivory Hatpins' being the Worcester Cathedral organist; 'I could have turned Pomp and Circus Tents into a symphony had I known then what I know now' (Edward).

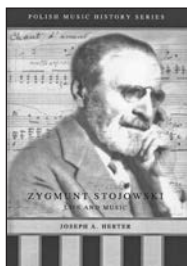
There is physical energy (Edward and Windflower's polka), and emotional tension with mental cruelty of Edward towards his long-suffering wife, ridiculing her writing. Later the deeply affecting conclusion is borne from the tenderness of 'Edoo' and Alice, whose disappointments on both sides are the stuff of us all.

Interwoven throughout is music. The 'Mazurka' from *Three Characteristic Pieces* is used as introduction. Reference to all Elgar's great works pop up throughout - entirely relevant to the themes and story.

This is a play which asks questions; it moves; it hurts; it is funny; it is intriguing; it is relevant to the study of Elgar. Its end even suggests an answer

to the eternal Enigma question. More than these it is a good play. I kept turning the pages.

Jane Bird



**Joseph A. Herter: *Zygmunt Stojowski, Life & Music***  
Polish Music History Series, Vol. 10

Los Angeles: Figueroa  
Press, 2007

327 pp + xxi

ISBN  
10-1-932800-26-3

Eagle-eyed readers will recognise Stojowski's name from the programme of Polish music played alongside Elgar's *Polonia* at its premiere in July 1915 and which ended part 1 of the programme. Stojowski's Suite for Orchestra, Op. 9 began part 2. At the American premiere of *Polonia* in 1916 in New York Elgar's work was programmed with Stojowski's Second Piano Concerto with Paderewski as soloist. Joseph Herter, whose chapter on *Polonia* was one of the more valuable contributions to the Society's *Oh My Horses!*, has written a fascinating and readable account of an important figure in 20<sup>th</sup> century Polish music, and I would suggest a musician with wider significance, too. Having said that his links to Elgar are tenuous, there being only four mentions of the composer in Herter's book.

Stojowski was born in 1870 in Strzelce near Kielce and died in New York (having taken American citizenship) in 1946. He is described as an 'undeservedly forgotten pianist, pedagogue and composer', to which might be added the appellation 'patriot'. During his life he met many of the leading composers of his time (Brahms admired his orchestration) and was a pupil of Paderewski with whom he worked to raise funds for Poland's cause during World War 1. He was equally active during World War 2 and, despite his fatal cancer; it is likely that the allied handing over of Poland to Russia at the end of 1945 hastened his demise.

For anyone interested in what was clearly a significant Polish musician and the history of Polish music this volume will prove very rewarding. The end notes, musical catalogue and bibliography are exemplary.

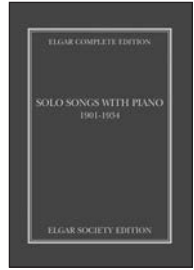
Andrew Neill



# MUSIC REVIEWS

## Elgar, *Solo Songs with Piano, 1901-1934*

Elgar Complete Edition Vol. 16, edited by Brian Trowell



Rickmansworth:  
Elgar Society  
Edition Ltd., 2010

186 pp + xx

ISBN  
978-1-904856-16-0.

Volumes in a Complete Edition present different types of problem according to content. At one extreme, an oratorio is immense and has multiple sources, but is at least a single work; at the other extreme, short pieces gathered into an anthology each pose individual questions. Clive Brown, editing the violin works, included one large piece, the sonata; this, he tells me, gave him the least trouble, while shorter pieces offered several varieties of headache. Songs are all short pieces, and editing them is additionally complicated by their literary inspiration.

Probably the ECE prize for the longest interval between conception and publication will eventually go to Vol. 15, the first volume of solo songs. It and this most welcome new arrival, Vol. 16, were first tackled by Geoffrey Bush, whose experience in editing English songs was unmatched.<sup>1</sup> Dr Bush died in 1998, but Elgar's songs were not left in limbo. Brian Trowell had already been invited to assist with literary aspects of the edition, and he inherited the editorship. There could have been no better choice than the author of the monumental and definitive essay 'Elgar's use of literature'.<sup>2</sup> His task would have been easier had Elgar turned more often to major poets, as did Parry and Stanford; but Trowell has taken immense pains to find sources for the words and to incorporate into the edition differences between what a poet wrote and what Elgar set.

The music is laid out handsomely. I find it mildly annoying to have to search for the tables of contents, which are not at the beginning; and my aesthetic sense wishes the setter could have ended each song at the foot of a page. Most of the resulting spaces are filled by words because, as in Vol. 37, each item is followed by the account of its sources and a commentary. Those who want only to sing and play the music may dislike the resultant separation of actual music, which divides works published under a single opus number. But as a library edition Vol. 16 maintains the high standards of recent ECE publications.

Although starting at 1901, after *Sea Pictures*, the volume covers the full spectrum of Elgar as song writer. Rather than attempting to group songs by type, the ordering is chronological. The first two songs, *Always and everywhere* and *Come, gentle night*, are among Elgar's lyrical settings,

- 1 Geoffrey Bush edited four volumes of songs for *Musica Britannica*: Vols. 43 (*English Songs 1800-1860*, with Nicholas Temperley), 56 (*Songs 1860-1900*), 49 (*Parry: Songs*), and 52 (*Stanford: Songs*).
- 2 In Raymond Monk (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 182-326.

charming, passionate, but not greatly consequential, a category that might include the highly successful *Pleading*, and the lovely *A Child Asleep*. No. 3 is the mysterious song from *Grania and Diarmid*, and thus drawn from a larger project, as is 'Quand nos bourgeois se rouvriront' from *Une voix dans le désert*. Three songs were not vocal in origin: *In Moonlight* is arranged from the 'Canto popolare' of *In the South*, and besides the familiar *Land of Hope and Glory* we have *The King's Way*, loosely adapted from *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 4.<sup>3</sup> There are patriotic pieces - *Follow the Colours* and *Fight for Right* - while the Church Militant is represented in *The Chariots of the Lord*.<sup>4</sup> Three of these are choral (unison) songs, but could form part of the kind of solo recital in which Clara Butt excelled, as is discussed in Trowell's fascinating introduction.

'Quand nos bourgeois se rouvriront' represents another aspect of patriotism, on behalf of Belgium. For some reason the original French text is placed beneath the English translation; there are numerous differences in vocal rhythms and those fitting the French are printed small. Yet performance in French is surely preferable. Elgar needed help with setting the language, but his characteristic empathy (also notable in *Polonia*) gave rise to some of his most French-sounding music. It would have been worth presenting the two versions on separate staves. Other un-English touches appear in the lightweight *Arabian Serenade* and Elgar's last complete song, *It isnae me*, written for Joan Elwes with a Scottish twang. Probably the most important works in this volume are those grouped in a single opus number, although none forms a cycle on the grand scale of *Sea Pictures*. Besides *Land of Hope and glory* and a sweet nothing (*Speak my Heart*), A.C. Benson's words were used for the markedly original Op. 41 songs, *In the Dawn*, with its splendid harmonic adventures, and *Speak, Music*, notorious for its quintuple compound metre. Op. 60 sets Elgar's own words under the pseudonym Pietro d'Alba; Op. 59 is half an intended cycle to poetry by the ex-colonial novelist and MP Gilbert Parker. Although reduced to only three settings, the Parker songs are Elgar's supreme achievement in song after *Sea Pictures*, even without their orchestral clothing.<sup>5</sup>

The ECE reports the existence of sketches for works that Elgar completed, but does not transcribe them (this would require mammoth companion volumes for most large works). Those that never ended as finished works are included, and Trowell has unearthed no fewer than 21 song sketches datable from the period covered by this volume. Once transcribed and printed, of course, these fragments no longer look like themselves; the precision of printed notation removes something essential to a sketch - its messy near-illegibility. These

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3 On *The King's Way* and much else in this volume see John Norris, 'Tales from the Complete Edition - 4: 'It Isnae Her': Elgar, Women, and Song', this Journal 16/6 (November 2010), 5-14.

4 I think the randomly dissonant piano A flat in *Follow the Colours* (bar 65) is a fourth too high: a rare lapse in accuracy.

5 The orchestral songs – several hitherto unpublished – will appear in Vol. 14.

fragments cannot be performed; they are incomplete in length and texture, and often discontinuous. A few words may be scrawled above the music but their connection to the notes is often far from obvious. With finished works we can trace a composer's refinements and learn how banal notations can turn into striking ideas and give rise to fascinating elaboration; Beethoven's sketches and continuity drafts become lessons in composition. Sketches for unfinished works have no such practical value. Those for the Parker cycle include songs left unfinished, but very little can be learned even about the abandoned settings themselves, and still less about Elgar's intentions for the cycle as a whole.<sup>6</sup> So why transcribe them? Yet while mulling over this question I studied the first sketch closely and, helped by the facsimile on an earlier page, I began to feel that there is some point after all. Several sketches are more than mere mnemonics, and should be of real interest to students of Elgar's practices.

Sketch XVIII was dedicated, although incomplete, to Adela Schuster; previously unidentified fragments of text led Trowell to John Davies's *The Soul*. Trowell also notes the earlier transcription by the late Percy Young, who, however, used six flats in his key signature to Trowell's five.<sup>7</sup> Trowell's transcription suggests that Young cut a few corners and almost certainly misread the eminently Elgarian penultimate chord. But all is not quite well. Elgar seems to have written this music out twice. Sketch XVIII(a) begins with bar 6 (of 11), as it comes from a torn sheet. Sketch XVIII(b) contained essentially the same music. Trowell refers to Young's conflation of sketches (b) and (c); but Young's transcription covers the same ground as sketch (b), and there is no sketch (c) in the new edition. Another niggle, I surmise, comes from a habit well-intentioned computers have, of providing bar numbers by default. Some of these give a false impression of continuity: the thirteen bars of sketch XIII (*The Prince of Sleep*) are numbered consecutively, but bar 9 does not follow bar 8 musically, neither the rhythm nor the harmony being connected. Trowell labels bar 9 '(b)', because Elgar's 'III' suggests it was intended for the third stanza. The bar numbering should have been overridden.

In some cases the poet cannot be identified and some sketches, while clearly meant for songs, contain no text at all. Sketch XV is tantalisingly entitled *Sea mist* and a few words are made legible thanks to the editor's experience and diligence. But the poet is 'Author unidentified', so we cannot know who briefly inspired another sea picture. Even were the text known, the music is too scanty to be developed. So why did Elgar not complete these songs when, as Trowell points out, they would have paid him better than symphonies or concertos? Probably all his first sketches were provisional, quickly notated so they would not be forgotten. On reconsidering their musical potential,

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6 My sense that the three complete Op. 59 songs form a coherent mini-cycle is given in 'Lost love and unwritten songs. Elgar's Parker cycle, op. 59', in J.P.E. Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton (eds.), *Elgar Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 270–283.

7 Percy M. Young, *Elgar O.M.* (London: Collins, 1955), 390.

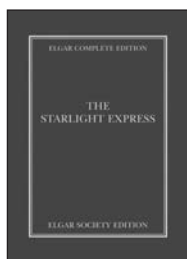
or the poetry he had in mind, Elgar perhaps found that after all they didn't greatly interest him. So what have we lost because he didn't force himself to complete songs for mere money? In some cases, including the odd bit of tub-thumping (sketches VII, XI), not a lot. Sketches I (poem unidentified but perhaps intentionally a bit mad, as Trowell notes) and VI (*In Memoriam*, poetry unknown) are too peculiar to make much of, the transcription implying harmonic experimentation and difficult voice parts. Their very strangeness makes them interesting, but understanding them is not helped by consecutive bar numbers when some notations are clearly meant as alternatives. *Moonlit apples* (VIII) and the Herrick setting (XXI) seem promising, and I regret the incompleteness for Op. 59 of Parker's love-poem 'There is an orchard' (XIX), and the companion to *Pleading, The Haven of Desire* (IV).<sup>8</sup> Only with *Ecstasy* (III), also written for Joan Elwes, do the sketches offer enough material for a viable completion. Elgar's words contain alternatives but are essentially complete, and the musical ideas are firmly etched. Elgar's song legacy is not large, but it is precious, and a companion to the completed 'It isnae me' would have added just a little lustre to the output of his last years.

Mezzo-sopranos and baritones should be warned that some songs in this edition are in higher keys than in some recent anthologies, by up to a minor third. In Jerrold Northrop Moore (ed.), *An Elgar Song Album for medium voice and piano* (Novello, 1984), *Pleading* is in G (the ECE is in A flat), and each Op. 60 song is a tone higher in ECE. In Vol. 2 of Barry Collett (ed.) *Edward Elgar: Thirteen Songs* (Thames, 2005), Op. 41 is lower, with *In the Dawn* in C and *Speak, Music* in A rather than the ECE's E flat and B flat.

Julian Rushton

### Elgar, *The Starlight Express*

Elgar Complete Edition Vol. 19, edited by Roger Dubois



Rickmansworth:  
Elgar Society  
Edition Ltd., 2010

344 pp + xlv

ISBN  
978-1-904856-19-1

There is no such thing as Elgar's *The Starlight Express*. Unlike Elgar's major works, it has no continuous performing history, having never established itself as music for performance beyond its original context in the Kingsway Theatre in 1915-16. It appeared as incidental music to a play of the same name, which was a peculiar stage adaptation by Violet Pearn of an equally peculiar novel by Algernon Blackwood (*A Prisoner in Fairyland*, London, Macmillan and Co., 1913). What survives as a record of *The Starlight Express* - a play typescript, which was changed in the process of composition, and a full score in Elgar's hand, plus sketches - is testament to a brief performance history after Christmas 1915, as passages were cut and altered and the spoken

8 Trowell notes that the introduction of 'The Haven of desire' was 'transferred' to 'Pleading' (both poems are by Arthur Salmon). 'Pleading' appears here in A flat major; 'The Haven of desire' in A minor. It is tempting to think that Elgar may have planned to use the introduction in both songs, marked by this interesting tonal relationship, and then publish them together.

dialogue bundled about to fit in different ways with the music. As (I guess: the layout of the volume isn't clear on this point) Jerrold Northrop Moore remarks, among the notes and emendations in the full score 'it is difficult to distinguish what comes from Elgar, what from the original conductor Julius Harrison, and what from later conductors and perhaps even producers' (xv).

What did the audience hear on the premiere, 29 December 1915? What did they hear in January 1916, before the end of the play's run? We can be sure that they were different things. What, then, is the 'real' *Starlight Express*? What should go into an edition? The version heard at the premiere? (Answering Elgarian questions like that in the affirmative would rule out the familiar ending of the *Variations*, op. 36, which was added later.) Or the last version that Elgar approved for performance later in the run? If the latter, how can we determine what that is among the accretions to the score that are so difficult to date or pin down to a particular person? If we don't want to privilege Elgar's 'original intention' (which in any case we can never obtain on any point, at least until time-travel and infallible means of mind-reading become possible), and can't tell what counts as his (as opposed to a later reader's) last thoughts, what are we left with?

Questions like this are what give all editors ulcers, but they are particularly sharply focused when the music in question is a stage work. Even pieces such as this - relatively small-scale, of very local interest, and with a short (actually, given Elgar's prestige, *embarrassingly* short) initial run and no significant full revival - can evolve with drastic speed as a result of input from performers, directors, playwrights, critics, and so on. The first question an editor of a paper edition has to answer, therefore is: 'do I want to produce a scholarly record of an "original" form of the piece (whatever that means, and for whichever reason I might want that), or do I want to produce an edition that could enable performances in the future, perhaps in the hope that it might give the music a new chance to be heard?' (This is a limitation of paper editions: online editions could present multiple readings that are easily switched between at the touch of a button marked *performance edition*, *Urtext*, or whatever.) Roger Dubois, the editor of this volume, does not make it clear which side of this question he comes down on (perhaps in conformity with the view of the General Editor, John Pickard, expressed on p.i: 'The Elgar Complete Edition is intended for both scholarly and practical use'). My own view is that music lives better in performance (real or recorded) than in libraries, and I am happy to say that with the aid of this very welcome new edition the possibility of performance is increased, although it would probably only be a performance of excerpts, since the play it accompanies would have negligible appeal today, except for those who are totally immune to innuendo ('He touches Daddy with his flaming pole') and sub-Disney saccharine. That said, the new edition is immensely welcome, and despite a few gripes, which are the curse of the act of reviewing, I greet its publication with enthusiasm.

Dubois, who is credited as 'the editor', and Moore (who has added only relatively small tweaks) have, as one would expect, taken certain editorial decisions that allow performers room for manoeuvre. For instance, where

spoken text has been marked by Elgar to be delivered at a specific point in the music, this is indicated by a solid bracket attached to an arrow. Where Moore has deduced his own links, the bracket is dashed rather than continuous. The editors admit that this might lead to over-precision, and I think their decision tends to overvalue the 'hand of the master' here. Viewing this from the perspective of performers, it is obvious that anyone performing this music with spoken text should feel as free as Moore himself has been in attempting to match text-delivery to the music, and should not feel beholden to Elgar's own designations - which were, let us remember, also just chosen for efficacy in the act of performance (and could have been written at any time during the play's run - or after - so we're back to the opening questions about exactly what kind of text is being presented here). From the perspective of a scholar or reader who wishes to access something like an *Urtext* or a definitive edition of the 'original', Moore's additions are of course totally out of place. This inconsistency of approach, half aimed at performance, half at documentation of an 'original', is typical of the edition, and perhaps an error of judgement.

There are also inaccuracies and confusions in both score and annotation. The general practice when Elgar indicates in the play typescript that a character X should sing music Y at point Z is simply to note the fact, but sometimes some musical notation is given. So, on p. xxx, documenting f. 25 of an unbound bundle of sketches (LBL Add.MS 69833), we find a 'sketch for **9**, in ink with pencil amendments; also a complete sketch in ink for **1a** in F major'. Various niggles emerge. Nothing in the score is marked as '1a', though the music quoted here is given (split without explanation into two pieces) on pp. 30-1 between nos. 1 and 2 of the full score, and this probably counts as '1a' in the editor's mind (but he should have made that clear to readers). The music is given in F major, presumably the key of its notation in the sketch, but in no. 41 it is in G major. The text is also different in the two cases (the sketch has 'Get out, you Morning Spider! You fairy cotton rider With my tiny nets of feather I collect the dust together And on strips of windy weather bring the day', while the full score has 'We shall meet the morning spiders the fairy cotton riders, Each mounted on a star's rejected ray. With the tiny nets of feather They collect our Thoughts together and on strips of windy weather Bring the Day'). Why, then, include the sketch incarnation of the music and text - which flatly contradicts what is presented elsewhere in the volume - when (a) the overwhelming majority of sketches are not included and (b) the express purpose of including this one is to indicate the music and text that Elgar said should be performed at this point in the play? There may be good reasons, but we are not told them. Here in this tiny detail we see the difficulty of taking editorial decisions on music such as this, but unless such things are to appear as editorial blunders the reason for the confusing presentation should be explained. (It would also have been useful to have been provided with a list of sigla used in the notes, since it is sometimes difficult to know exactly what something like 'TSE1' signifies without ruffling back through several pages.)

So might a scholar quibble, but any performer will simply perform what

is given in the full score. They should pay close attention to the editorial changes documented in the preliminary matter, and may particularly wish to consider their options concerning the use here of 'Sun Dance' from *The Wand of Youth*. Elgar simply indicated that this music should be used in the incidental music, but it was written for a larger orchestra than he used in the Kingsway Theatre, and if Elgar produced a reduced scoring for *The Starlight Express* it does not survive, so Dubois has had to rescore it. This seems to have been done sensitively but if there are no limitations on any future performance, it is not obvious that the full, original orchestration should not be used. And again the question arises: why change the orchestration at all? This is an entirely speculative reconstruction of music that Elgar might have heard in December 1915 or January 1916, but to what end is it included here: as a pristine (albeit completely inauthentic) record of an 'original' or with the intention that a future performance of the play with the same orchestra would require such a reduced instrumentation?

These riddles are difficult to resolve, yet despite them - and chucking scholarly questions aside at last - the final point is this: it is delightful to have at last an edition, very handsomely produced, of what is at times truly delightful music. Although it might never again be performed in its entirety (and Moore's patient decisions over the exact placement of spoken text might therefore prove a fruitless act of love), and it certainly does not reconstruct an authentic 'original' text (since nothing of the sort can honestly be imagined), it is finally somehow appropriate that the conundrums raised by its presentation both slot into a venerable Elgarian tradition of perpetuating enigmas and reflect the weird and ultimately ungraspable nature of this quite unique piece in its composer's output.

J. P. E. Harper-Scott



## DVD REVIEWS

**Elgar: Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85**

**Wagner: *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Prelude to Act 3**

**Brahms: Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68**

Alisa Weilerstein, 'cello

Berlin Philharmoniker, conducted by Daniel Barenboim

Euro Arts

2058068

This is a recording of the Berlin Philharmonic's Europa-Konzert 2010, given in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, on 1 May 2010, and features the young American 'cellist Alisa Weilerstein in the Elgar Concerto. She plays well, and had I been in the audience I would doubtless have enjoyed her performance very much, but it is not in the 'special' category. On a technical level her pizzicato playing lacks resonance, and she has an irritating habit when moving from first to third finger of interpolating an unwelcome grace note with the second. She does a good line in soulful looks, but I am not convinced that she and Barenboim see eye to eye at all times. Like the majority of soloists, she plays the bar before Fig. 5 and the bar before Fig. 16 in the first movement identically, despite Elgar's clear marking of *poco allargando* the first time, and (*in tempo*) the second: a particular bugbear of mine. On the plus side, I have never heard the transfer of the theme from violas to 'cellos at the start of the *Moderato* done so well, with perfect matching of tone colour.

The performances of the Wagner and the Brahms are admirable - in fact, rather more than that: they are well thought out and structured - and the orchestral playing, as one would expect, is again first-rate. If the concert was on CD, it would be as good a way of enjoying these works as any. But it's not, it's on DVD, and that for me brings with it certain disadvantages. Leaving aside the simple fact that my television doesn't offer the same quality of sound reproduction as my hi-fi, there remains the quandary that what I am experiencing as a passive observer of my television is inherently different to what I would have experienced as an actively involved member of the audience. The camera cannot resist the considerable beauties of the Sheldonian: understandable, but they do distract from the considerable beauties of the music. Neither can it resist Barenboim: but what comes across is a caricature of conducting when observed at second-hand rather than as part of the undoubted atmosphere in the theatre. He only smiles between movements, and I am left feeling that music is a Very Serious Business, and not something to be enjoyed too readily. There are other distractions, too. With the close-up of the leader in his solo at the end of the slow movement of the Brahms (stunningly played with the first horn), comes the realisation that his colleague on the front desk seems to have left his dark grey suit in Berlin, and is the only member of the orchestra wearing a dinner jacket. Then, as the symphony reaches its climax, the fifth double bass player finally finds



a couple of bars which he can play on open strings, thus enabling him to grab a handkerchief to deal with a nose which has been dripping for ... who knows how long? Deftly done, I admit, but a shame that it was at the precise moment that the director chose to pan across the bass section. If the idea of observing someone else's experience of the concert appeals, or if you are content to watch with your eyes closed, then by all means get this DVD (or wait until the BBC show it again - it's already been on BBC4 once). If you are primarily interested in the music, then this is probably not for you.

Martin Bird

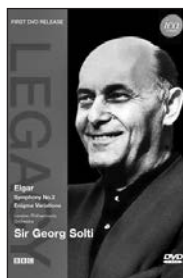
### **Symphony No. 2, Variations ('Enigma')**

London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Georg Solti

This DVD contains recordings from two concerts recorded by the BBC at the Royal Festival Hall. The Second Symphony dates from February 1975, and coincided with sessions for the well-known Decca audio recording. The Variations were recorded in September 1979. Great play was made at the time of the fact that Solti had listened to Elgar's recordings when studying the scores, and the essay by David Patmore in the accompanying booklet (how nice to have such comprehensive documentation with a DVD - by no means the norm) develops this theme. When Solti's first Elgar recording was released - of the First Symphony - I remember thinking that someone should have told him that Elgar's sudden unmarked increase in tempo at Fig.118 in the last movement was due more to the splicing of the first take of side 9 to the second take of side 10 than to any particular musical intent on the part of the composer: such are the pitfalls of copying the idiosyncrasies of recordings.

But too much can be made of Solti's 'fresh, energetic approach' in terms of sheer speed. At a little over 52 minutes this performance is almost identical in duration to Boult and the BBC in 1944, and nearly five minutes slower than Elgar in 1927. What is more important is the pacing of the music, and here Solti is masterly in encouraging a high degree of rubato within a steady pulse, surely one of the secrets of good Elgar conducting. And the result feels absolutely right. It helps that one can see Solti. His indications to the orchestra, often no more than a raised eyebrow, clearly signal to players and viewers alike the direction the performance will take: his purposeful stance before a note is sounded is an absolute declaration of intent. This is to be no lingering saunter through the beauties of Elgar's score, but a dramatic and intense experience.

The Larghetto is full of pathos, and nobilmente from beginning to end. In the rondo the percussion section is less than overwhelming where Elgar indicates that it should batter the senses, and the viewer can see all too clearly that it is the players rather than the engineers that are holding back. And, intriguingly, that seemingly innocent throwaway quadruplet (Fig. 106 onwards) trips up the first clarinet in the same way as it did the first



ICA Classics

DVD ICAD5011

oboe in Boult's recording with this orchestra twenty years earlier. This is an insignificant blip on otherwise superb playing of this fiendishly challenging score. The last movement is no less magnificent, and 'Hans himself' could wish for no better successor than Solti in this enthralling performance.

The producer has been content to let the music speak for itself, and has not felt it necessary to distract the listener's attention with visual delights (not that the Festival Hall offers the same temptations as the Sheldonian). For the first few minutes you see but a single shot of an orchestra with Solti at its helm, to the considerable enhancement of one's appreciation of the music. The sound, too, is excellent: leaner than on Decca's CD, but none the worse for that.

Visual presentation is similar in the Variations. Solti presents them in a more or less traditional manner: certainly one would be hard pushed to identify the conductor just by listening. Sadly, someone in the engineering team has taken fright soon after the start of the Finale and turned down the volume, but nifty work with the remote control on future viewings will get round that.

Grateful thanks are due to ICA Classics for their enterprise in making these performances available after so many years: even more thanks are due to the BBC of the 1970s for recording such riches in the first place.

Martin Bird

What a pleasure it is to have these two concert performances available on DVD. Georg Solti's Elgar recordings with the London Philharmonic Orchestra during the 1970s played a vital role in the Elgar revival, and these BBC telecasts let us see Solti interacting with the superb orchestral players who created those landmark recordings.

Their fervent reading of the symphony, one of the very best I know, has never been out of print since it appeared. The performance in the concert hall shares many of the qualities of the studio recording but with one curious difference: the 'live' reading of the *Larghetto* is nearly two minutes faster than in the studio. Did Decca producer Raymond Minshull persuade Solti that a more expansive approach served the music better? Or could it be that the playback session was Solti's first chance to hear his own interpretation, and that he decided to alter it himself? In any case, the studio version seems much more effective to me. Notice how rushed the oboe solo in the telecast sounds. (It begins at 23.52.)

The video quality from both concerts is excellent. You soon forget that you are watching a performance from more than three decades ago. The monaural sound, however, is rather cramped, and that's surprising, as by the 1970s the art of filming or videotaping a live performance was well developed.

But that's a mere quibble, given the intensity of the music making to be seen and heard on this DVD. Elgarians are in for a treat.

Frank Beck

## CD REVIEWS

### **The Kingdom**

Clare Rutter, soprano; Susan Bickley, mezzo-soprano; John Hudson, tenor; Iain Paterson, baritone  
Hallé Choir and Orchestra conducted by Sir Mark Elder



Hallé

DHLD7526 (2 CDs)

Fresh from the recent performance of *The Kingdom* with the LSO under Sir Mark Elder on 30 January 2011 I listened again to this recording and came away marvelling at Sir Mark's obvious commitment and love for the work which shines through in every bar. It is his guiding hand and his wonderful chorus and orchestra which are at the heart of the performance and for them alone these CDs can be recommended. Taking the leader, Lyn Fletcher, as an example, her beautiful and intelligent playing in 'The Sun goeth Down' helps to cement the section as part of the whole rather than the high point of what is usually the second half of a concert. Indeed the advantage of a recording such as this is that an interval break can be avoided and Elgar's sequences which begin part 4 seem a natural development from the excitement of part 3 rather somewhat anti-climactic.

Unlike the Hallé/Elder recording of *The Dream of Gerontius* this set is of a live performance (with perhaps some patching) and the engineers can be congratulated on the even sound they obtain with the organ well-balanced and the orchestral detail not obscured. For example the fabulous, almost eccentric horn writing in part 3 (2 bars after Fig. 113) can be heard within the orchestra rather than either dominating it or being 'in there somewhere'. The choir is just fabulous, again well-balanced, utterly attentive and uninhibited where necessary and 'swinging' with Sir Mark when asked.

So to the soloists and, as all Elgarians know, the key voices are the soprano and baritone. Clare Rutter sings brightly and with conviction, her voice soaring above Elgar's orchestra in 'The Sun goeth Down' and blending well with the other three singers. Susan Bickley is excellent as Mary Magdalene and Iain Paterson brings a splendid level of self-identification to the role of St Peter. His voice is wonderfully veiled and mystical where necessary (e.g. Fig. 97-99) and he castigates the poor Jews with great authority in part 3; no wonder they repented and were baptized! It is John Hudson, the tenor, I found uncomfortable, for there is a strain to his voice (above the staff) and he tends to swallow syllables and swoops up to higher notes. Despite these concerns it would be good if the same soloists could sing in the recording of *The Apostles*, which these forces are due to make next year. The consistency and inevitability this would bring would make the enterprise very special.

This is another splendid Hallé performance which, despite the reservations I have mentioned, can be recommended to all listeners.

Andrew Neill

Sir Mark Elder's vibrant account of the 'Prelude' to *The Kingdom* recorded in 2005 - coupled with Thomas Zehetmair's Violin Concerto issued last year - gave notice that his recording of the complete work would be an event eagerly awaited by Elgarians, and so it has proved.

Recorded live in October 2009 in the Bridgewater Hall, the performance shows once again that Elder is a passionate and sensitive interpreter of Elgar and he clearly believes in the work which has divided critical opinion. Like Boult his performance has warmth and conviction that brings out the glowing orchestral writing - 'gorgeous seas of sound' according to Alice Elgar - as well as the dramatic choral sections. The resplendent chorus 'O ye priests' and the big choral passages in Part III are expertly handled yet Elder is all too aware of Elgar's capacity to withdraw into himself and write music of introspection - Part II being the beautiful duet for soprano and the mezzo-soprano being one such passage - and this is beautifully crafted.

Part III Pentecost is the heart of the work. The soloists here do not disappoint. Iain Paterson is a strong St Peter who takes central stage with his dramatic solos calling upon the Jews to repent ably accompanied by Susan Bickley as Mary Magdalene. John Hudson as St John sings with fervour but to some may sound slightly restricted. Clair Rutter as the Virgin Mary sings the ecstatic soliloquy 'The sun goeth down' at the end of Part IV with memorable assurance.

The final section of the work, written when time was running out for Elgar, can sometimes seem to be the weakest part of the oratorio, but under Elder and his fine forces there is no sense of this. That Elder is a passionate advocate of this work cannot be doubted from this performance and this was similarly evident to those who attended his magnificent rendition of the work in the Barbican in January. Once again he and the Hallé have added another opulent, striking recording to their growing collection of Elgar's works.

Kevin Mitchell



### **Violin Concerto**

**Violin Concerto - alternative cadenza**

***The Crown of India* - Interlude**

**Polonia**

Tasmin Little, violin

Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by Sir Andrew Davis

Chandos

CHSA 5083

I've always blown rather hot and cold over Andrew Davis as an Elgar conductor: I appreciate his work, but have not always found it inspiring. With this recording his interpretations seem to have gone to a higher level. While maintaining his intellectual grasp of the music and the sheer technique to present it as the scores suggest it should sound, he brings to the music a sense of freedom, of adventure, and of discovery that has me thinking 'Yes, *that's* how it has to go ...'

It may be perverse of me to start with *Polonia*, but I have always had a

soft spot for the piece, finding it far more than a tub-thumping assemblage of Polish tunes. Davis gives a carefully thought out reading which at the same time revels in the sheer enjoyment of the themes and their orchestration. The recording, too, is superb. At first I thought that it favoured the brass at the expense of the strings: surely the large string section pictured in the booklet would make a fuller sound than this? However, after talking to another conductor who has worked with the orchestra in recent times, I am inclined to think that the balance is a remarkably true depiction of the sound for which the orchestra strives.

The Interlude from *The Crown of India* is a minor masterpiece, and is marvellously played by Tasmin Little. Those of you who have not yet acquired Davis's recording of the complete score (CHAN 10570) may well be inspired to on hearing this extract.

The USP of the CD is the inclusion of the cadenza transcribed as faithfully as possible from that played on Elgar's abridged recording by Marie Hall. Alice Elgar's diary for 16 November 1916 records that 'Mr. Cockerel came & played harp for Concerto on Gramophone -'. The harpist and pianist John Cockerill was born in 1890 and studied at the Royal College of Music. After the Great War he was appointed principal harpist of the London Symphony Orchestra, and eventually became its Vice-Chairman. Elgar had added a harp part for the recording to reinforce certain passages of the scoring, notably the 'thrummed' accompaniment of the cadenza. The transcription has been done effectively. However, I question the wisdom and necessity of recording just the abridged cadenza when the harp is audible, if discreet, throughout Marie Hall's recording. Andrew Neill's excellent booklet notes reveal that Miss Hall's cadenza was timed at 3' 39" - Miss Little takes 6' 17" with the same cuts. Seek out the original recording to get the full flavour of Elgar's additions.

And so to the concerto itself. In a word - stunning. Everyone will have his or her favourite recordings, and most will think 'Menuhin'. But, as with all great music, there are an infinite number of ways it can be played while remaining faithful to the letter of the score. Tasmin Little brings a classical feel to it - its distant roots in Beethoven's concerto are ever present, and she always has her emotions under control. That is far from saying that her playing of the music is not emotional; rather that head and heart are in immaculate balance in this interpretation. Andrew Davis and the orchestra match her in thought, word and deed every step of the way. Whatever favourites you may have in your collection, this will without question enhance it. Don't hold back!

Martin Bird



Dutton

CDLX 7259

**Concert Allegro (arr piano and orchestra by Iain Farrington),  
Symphony No. 2 (arr piano by Iain Farrington), Two Piano  
Improvisations (transcribed by Iain Farrington)**

Iain Farrington, piano

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by George Vass

Now that we have just about every note that Elgar penned available on CD, we seem to be inundated with arrangements of his music. Firstly the Elgar/Payne Third Symphony (which was a triumphant success), then the Elgar/Walker Piano Concerto (which wasn't), and latterly the String Quartet arranged for full string orchestra, and even the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches arranged for piano! Whatever next - *Cockaigne* arranged for recorder consort and viols? I'm told that I should rejoice that these new arrangements are bringing Elgar's music to a new and appreciative audience, which I doubt. I'm a purist in these matters (some, no doubt, would say a snob), but I have a naive belief that Elgar knew best what he was about, and that his works are quite acceptable as they are.

Which preamble brings me to the present CD. I must say at once that production standards are well up to Dutton's excellent level, with interesting, if arguable, notes by the pianist, and the recording quality is first rate, with beautifully sonorous piano sound. The *Concert Allegro* has had a chequered career. It is Elgar's biggest work for solo piano, and he was never entirely satisfied with it, revising it several times and even suggesting that it be arranged for piano and orchestra, which is what Iain Farrington has done. I have a soft spot for the original, and I do not feel that the present arrangement adds anything to it. It is skilfully done, although it doesn't always sound authentically Elgarian, but I am reminded of Liszt's similar arrangement of Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy*. In itself it is an excellent concert work, but the addition of an orchestra actually detracts from the thrill of a solo pianist battling the virtuoso demands of the work.

Novello asked the young German composer Sigfrid Karg-Elert to arrange Elgar's Symphonies and *Falstaff* for piano shortly after they were written, and of course Elgar made his own piano arrangement of *Enigma Variations*. But these were the days before broadcasting and recording, and the only way of getting to know the broad symphonic repertoire was by playing it at home on the piano, or even as piano duets. But I can't help thinking that Elgar would be astonished to know that piano recordings are being made of his *Variations*, let alone the Symphonies and *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches! This new arrangement by Iain Farrington of the Second Symphony is certainly a *tour-de-force* of the arranger's art, and, if you want this work on the piano, I can't think that it will be better done. But why? Why does anyone want to hear this masterpiece of orchestral wizardry reduced to monochrome by a piano? I must say that I have a distinguished Elgarian friend who claims that he has heard more counter-melodies in this arrangement than in any orchestral performance. Certainly the pianism is staggering - I have no idea

how Farrington gets around the myriads of teeming notes. But a lot of the effect goes missing: the shifting orchestral colours in passages like Figs. 23 and 28; the swirling mists that engulf the orchestra around Fig. 33; and how one misses the excitement of the trumpets' upward rush just before Fig. 41, or the rhythmic kicks from percussion after Fig. 42. And the heady, headlong final few bars lack the sheer heft of the orchestra.

I have my doubts, too, about the glorious slow movement. The use of piano *tremolo* to get over the long, sustained orchestral sonorities unfortunately brings to mind the silent cinema; the funereal drum beats lose their impact, and although Farrington magically captures the cascade of notes at Fig. 74, one really misses the refulgent glare of the horns at Fig. 76; and Fig. 79, that wonderfully imaginative web of orchestral colour, cannot be realized on the piano. The following scherzo is more successful, as the glittering, quicksilver music is more suited to pianistic endeavours, and I thought that much of the Finale also worked well, apart from the golden, sunset ending, which again the piano is incapable of capturing.

Despite what I said about arrangements at the beginning of this review, I wish I'd had a hand in the arrangement of this CD. I would have had Iain Farrington playing the original *Concert Allegro* as a solo, and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra playing the Second Symphony. That would have made me far happier.

Barry Collett

**Cello Concerto, Sospiri, Salut d'Amour, La Capricieuse**

**Dvořák: *Silent Woods*, Rondo for cello**

**Respighi: *Adagio con Variazione***

**Vasks: *Grāmata čellam***

Sol Gabetta, 'cello

Danish National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mario Venzago



RCA

8697630812

Perhaps I have heard too many performances of the Cello Concerto over the last few years (can that be possible?), but it now takes something really special to make me sit up and take notice. This one did. It is a magnificent performance from beginning to end. Sol Gabetta is a young, and very glamorous, Argentinean cellist of French and Russian parentage. The first thing one notices is the golden, burnished tone of her instrument, a rare and valuable Guaragnini of 1759. She penetrates right to the heart of this elusive work, setting a good speed for the first movement, a true Moderato, and playing with a passion that reveals the heartache in the music. The following scherzo is taken at a cracking pace, but her articulation is immaculate, every one of the hurtling semiquavers perfectly in balance and crystal clear. The Adagio is again heartfelt, with a real emotional pull in the withdrawn, hushed pianissimo tone at certain points. The finale has rhythmic bounce and virtuosity in plenty, which again dissolves into a most poignant epilogue,

passionately played, with a beautifully managed easing into the quotation from the slow movement. The Swiss conductor Mario Venzago and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra are in perfect accord with the soloist, Venzago making sure that all inner detail is audible, and clearly delighting in the pointillistic flecks of orchestral colour that are such a feature of the orchestral texture of the work.

Three more Elgar works are included, in arrangements by Soren Barfoed. *Sospiri* took me by surprise, as the cello weaves a countermelody through the piece, occasionally joining with the first violins in the melody. I have to confess that again it is beautifully played, with real rapt emotion. I enjoyed it more the second time! *Salut d'Amour*, though, is over-egged in this arrangement. I would have thought that the solo cello could have been worked against Elgar's original version for small orchestra, but this is too sophisticated for Elgar's wistful and delicate inspiration. *La Capricieuse* is more straightforwardly arranged for strings taking the original piano part. As a virtuoso violin piece it is a little gem. I'm not sure it suits the cello as well, but Sol Gabetta's wonderful bow control in the flying spiccato is certainly impressive.

The disc is completed by short cello and orchestra works by Dvořák and Respighi, ripely Romantic. There is a bonus CD of a solo cello work by the Latvian composer Peteris Vasks, which asks for the player to sing along with the cello at one point, until the music spirals off into thin air. Interesting, if not really my cup of tea.

The programme booklet is attractive, with several photos of the soloist, but I do take issue with the notes writer on a couple of points. After the Cello Concerto Elgar 'wrote hardly any more music worth mentioning'. Isn't it time this silly falsehood was dropped? Further 'the work ends on a confident and undaunted note'. Really? It has always struck me that the last few bars are a brusque brush off, far from confident. That doesn't matter, I strongly recommend this performance, no matter how many others you have in your collection, and it shows once again how foreign performers can shed new light on Elgar's subtle and masterly scores.

Barry Collett



**Cockaigne, Falstaff, Symphony No. 2**  
**Britten: *Matinées Musicales, Four Sea Interludes and Passacaglia***  
**from *Peter Grimes, Soirées Musicales, The Young Person's Guide to the***  
***Orchestra* (2 versions)**

**Walton: Symphony No. 1**

Sir Adrian Boult, narrator

London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult

First Hand Records

FHR06 (3 CDs)

Here, on three CDs, is a veritable feast of English music with a couple of dollops of Rossini's Italian sunshine added for good measure, all recorded



in the resonant acoustic of Walthamstow Assembly Hall by the American label Westminster in association with Nixa Records, and all but one, most unusually for the time, recorded in stereo only. The source tapes now held by EMI are incomplete and, in some cases, suffer from high hiss levels. The Westminster master tapes used for these transfers have been made available courtesy of the Universal Music Westminster archive at Gütersloh, Germany, and are here issued on CD for the first time.

Enough of the technical and historical background: what of the recordings themselves? First, Walton's Symphony No.1, an astonishing piece that time cannot dim. Boult has, as one might expect, a complete grasp of the structure of this work, though I wish that the obsessively repeated and powerfully accumulative fragmentary motifs of the first movement were played with more bite. It is all a little bit too polished - until the recapitulation, that is. From here onwards the playing is superb. The same could be said of the 'Scherzo' and though it is played to speed it could do with more menace or, as the tempo marking has it, malice. Apparently the outcome of an acrimonious break-up of a passionate love affair, this performance is not acrimonious enough. The playing is superb but one does not feel 'got at' at the end of it - excepting two short outbursts from the timpanist who obviously needed to get something off his chest. The haunting and melancholic slow movement is superbly and intensely played. Its final climax, built over an enormous tonic pedal point, is magnificently judged and leads to the final few bars of unresolved dejection. The Finale, completed over a year later, utterly changes the nature of the symphony which, with its inclusion, ends in jubilant, if a little forced, triumph. On this recording it is magnificently played, with crisply articulated rhythms. It is, for me, the best playing in the whole recording.

So to Elgar's Second Symphony. I was fortunate enough as a boy to go to school at Bishop's Stortford College. Here, well in advance of my arrival, a young teacher called Herbert Sumsion had named the Music Department, which was housed in a small cottage at the bottom of the College green (well out of earshot of the main school building!), after a composer he much admired and so it became known as 'Elgar House'. Later, when I was in mid teens, another young teacher called Christopher Bishop arrived at the school and persuaded me to do 'A' Level Music. In fact I did it twice (and scored better the second time!) and each time one of Elgar's compositions was a set work, first *The Dream of Gerontius* and then the second symphony. Ever since that day, Elgar's Symphony No.2 has been one of my favourite works and it was a great privilege to work on it with Christopher Bishop who later, of course, worked with Boult - and Elgar - at EMI for a number of recordings. The performance and recording in this set are marvellous. Boult just has that totally convincing pacing of the first movement, pushing on where needed and holding back when required. The opening is opulent and ebullient whilst the development starts with moments of really intense drama, later thrusting on inexorably to the recapitulation. I have always adored those wonderful horn passages in the first subject of the Exposition and here they are magnificently played. Special mention must be made also of the timpanist, whose playing

is admirably clear and refined not only here but throughout the symphony. The pace of the second movement is exquisitely judged, allowing the musical lament to be expressed but not allowing it to become maudlin. Lament this may be but it is edged, as is Siegfried's Funeral March from Wagner's 'Ring', with nobility and joyful gratitude. The instrumental balance of the main theme of the opening is particularly finely judged, with the bass clarinet just audible and adding the extra lower octave to the melody. It gives the music an apt throatiness which I do not recall from other performances. This movement really is superbly played, conducted and recorded. The third movement Rondo, with its wild cross rhythms and pulsating climax would be exhilarating if it were not so full of unease. The LPO's playing makes the cross rhythms sound so effortless (which they are not) that one quite easily loses sense of the beat entirely and the climax is so full of beatings and throbbings in the head that it is, as it should be, almost overpowering. The finale is beautifully played, with the fugue at the beginning of the Development particularly well executed. Having known and loved the symphony myself for only half of its lifetime, I can recommend whole-heartedly this recording, one worthy of a great symphony.

Elgar's *Falstaff* is, for me, his greatest orchestral work. Its complexity of invention, tautness of construction, virtuosity of orchestral writing and brilliant development of a number of well-wrought and highly individual and characterful themes and motifs, make a work that is one of genius on many levels. I had the privilege of rehearsing it during Elgar's 150th anniversary year with an amateur orchestra and got to know the work over a number of weeks from the inside. My admiration - and that of the players - for the work grew with each rehearsal. It is a magnificent work, and Boult had that ability to comprehend the tightness of construction which informs the whole piece and to be able to judge how all the constituent parts fit together. Here his sense of structure serves him marvellously well and a piece which in the hands of some conductors can seem disjointed here sounds totally 'right'. The playing throughout is glorious, brilliant, virtuosic. The performance is a joy from beginning to end: quite simply, superb.

*Cockaigne* is given a particularly affectionate and jolly account. This is London as it once was but never will be again. The performance, released here for the first time in the UK, is splendidly exhilarating and bold, with moments of tenderness for the lovers (though Boult never allows them to dawdle).

It seems to me that the music of Benjamin Britten is musical marmite - 'Love it or hate it'. But *Peter Grimes* is an undisputed masterpiece, from which Britten distilled five orchestral pieces for concert use. Serving a purely utilitarian function as pieces to be played during scene changes, Britten nonetheless constructs a masterful, symphonic set of movements. Here I especially admire the full-throated tone of the violins in *Dawn*, and the bells, woodwind chatter and string playing in the multi-layered climaxes of *Sunday Morning* are particularly fine. *Moonlight* is rich and warm, with a climax powerfully built. The *Storm*, as ever, is a virtuoso piece of orchestral writing to which the LPO respond magnificently. Their playing has a polish but also a

bite to it. This is no tame wimp of a storm; this is the mother of all storms: the brass playing in particular is exhilarating, horns whooping at the top of their register, trumpets shrill, trombones and tuba petulantly grouching and griping below; and the quieter part for once is not an insipid refuge from the storm but an uneasy and edgy lull before its shattering return. Inspired playing and conducting. The final Passacaglia, for me one of Britten's finest creations, is a tragic lament for the lost innocence that informs a large proportion of his output. The whole, underpinned by an asymmetrical eleven-beat theme, demonstrates Britten's mastery of variation form. It is infinitely resourceful and inspiringly orchestrated. Boult and the players respond with a powerful and almost overwhelming performance: savage brass, poignant string solos, enervatingly repetitive harp and percussion ostinati. And a final collapse to the theme alone. I have heard more technically brilliant solo violas than the one at the start of this recording but never one so gut-wrenchingly in anguish. This performance touches the heart of the piece.

Britten's Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell, another virtuoso work in the variation form, appears twice: once in mono with Sir Adrian Boult's own beautifully enunciated narration, and a second in stereo, without narration. The variations are played with great character and replete with fine detail, particularly in the fugal re-gathering of the orchestral elements at the end and the final appearance of Purcell's theme majestically re-stated beneath Britten's filigree decorations.

The Rossini-Britten *Soirées musicales* take us into a much lighter world: these are all trifles, vignettes, encore pieces. Again they are expertly played and conducted, demonstrating another side to the orchestra's and conductor's musical personality.

The booklet notes themselves are good on the recording history but rather inadequate on the music itself. There is a complete list at the back of the booklet of all tracks, timings and recording dates, issues and sources. There are also some interesting session photographs and colour reproductions of the covers of the original Westminster stereo LP releases. The re-mastered recordings themselves are for the most part excellent, clear, without hiss or other extraneous noise. Sometimes I feel that the wind section is a little too distant from the microphones and some may find the timpani and percussion occasionally too forward but on the whole I was able to enjoy the music without worrying about such technical matters. The balance is *Falstaff* is particularly good and particularly vivid.

Sir Adrian Boult was, of course, though not exclusively, famed for his conducting of English music and, particularly, as a renowned interpreter of the music of Elgar. His performances and recordings of Elgar must still be regarded as definitive. And as well as a series of recordings that have remained in the catalogue for three or four and even five decades, Boult's legacy includes his influence on prominent conductors of later generations, including Colin Davis and Vernon Handley, great Elgarians themselves. This set of recordings is a worthy testament to his memory.

Paul Adrian Rooke



Naxos

8.572291

**Ethel Smyth: Violin Sonata in A minor**  
**Elizabeth Maconchy: Three Preludes**  
**Irene Wieniawska: Violin Sonata in D minor**  
**Phyllis Tate: *Triptych***  
**Ethel Barns: *La Chasse***  
Clare Howick, violin  
Sophia Rahman, piano

On 11 February 1904, 'Mr. De Cordova came to interview E. for Strand.' Elgar told him:

My hope was that I should be able to get a musical education, and I worked hard at German on the chance that I should go to Leipzig, but my father discovered that he could not afford to send me away, and anything in that direction seemed to be at an end.<sup>1</sup>

His fortune was to be the future son-in-law of a Major-General: Ethel Smyth's was to be the daughter of a General.

... there was a discussion at dinner as to which Drawing Room I had better be presented at. Suddenly I announced it was useless to present me at all, since I intended to go to Leipzig, even if I had to run away from home, and starve when I got there ... It is no exaggeration to say that the life I proposed to lead seemed to my father equivalent to going on the streets; hence the strange phrase he hurled at me, harking back in his fury to the language of Webster's or Congreve's outraged father: 'I would sooner see you under the sod'.<sup>2</sup>

But Ethel, of course, was more than a match for a mere man. And so it was that in July 1877, while Elgar could only dream of Leipzig, his near contemporary, her presentation postponed until March 1893, went there to study at the Conservatoire. One of the results was this early Violin Sonata, which was premiered at the Gewandhaus in 1887 by Adolf Brodsky and Fanny Davies. Dame Ethel remembered, somewhat ruefully, that 'the critics unanimously said it was devoid of feminine charm and therefore unworthy a woman'. Undeterred, she sent the work to Joachim.

I am sorry to say that I have gained no other opinion to that I gave you in Leipzig, either as regards the Trio, or the Sonata, which I played through again with Miss Davies. In spite of talent here and there, many a clever turn, and a certain felicity, candour compels me to say that both work seem to me failures - unnatural, far fetched, overwrought and not good as to sound.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 Interview with Rudolf de Cordova, *The Strand Magazine*, May 1904.
- 2 Ethyl Smyth, *Impressions that remained* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1919), Vol.1, 123-124.
- 3 Letter from Joseph Joachim, 22 March 1888, published in Ethyl Smyth, *Impressions that remained* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1919), Vol.2, 172.

Oh that Elgar had managed to spend time studying in Leipzig, for this Sonata sounds to me just the sort of piece Elgar would have liked to write in the 1880s, but could not. Its mood is very much that of his late chamber music, and the restless spirit of the Piano Quintet is uncannily present throughout the first movement. This is the sort of discovery which makes one grateful yet again for companies such as Naxos: how music of this quality is all but unknown is a mystery. The Sonata alone makes this CD of 'British Women Composers' worth its modest price.

The violinist and composer Ethel Barns (1880-1948) was born in London. She studied at the Royal Academy of Music, where she later taught. She was married to the baritone Charles Phillips, who had sung *Through the Long Days* and *Like to the Damask Rose* at a concert in St. James's Hall, Piccadilly, in February 1897 'most booful'. She and her husband toured the country giving concerts, and were in Malvern in February 1903, when Alice went their concert. 'Tea at Mrs. Perrins to meet them. Very glad when it was over & to be home -'

Miss Barns handles her instrument with elegance, her playing is facile, and correct, and her tone is sweet. In the second instance an encore was asked and conceded. Miss Wild, too, is a very skilful executant, and manifestly has had a superior training. As to Mr. Phillips; we have before had the pleasure of hearing his fine baritone voice in Malvern, and he sings with good enunciation, refinement, and excellent taste. Accordingly it will be seen that a very enjoyable concert was provided. The attendance was only moderate, but the audience did not lack in appreciativeness.<sup>4</sup>

Intriguingly, *La Chasse* was in the programme that day: a violin piece by the Italian composer Nicola Porpora (1686-1766). Ethel Barns's is but a trifle, redolent of Edwardian drawing rooms of the more refined kind. It was not published until 1928. It makes a pleasant encore to this well recorded recital, which is excellently played by Clare Howick and Sophia Rahman. I would tell you what the other pieces were like, but every time I place the CD in the tray I find myself going back to the first movement of Ethel Smyth's Sonata. One day ...

Martin Bird

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4 *Malvern Advertiser*, 7 February 1903.

All these DVDs and CDs, with the exception of the Naxos issue, are available now from the Elgar Birthplace Museum. Remember that buying from the Birthplace is a way of contributing directly towards its finances at this difficult economic time. You may shop online at:

**[www.elgarfoundation.org/trolleyed/2/88/index.htm](http://www.elgarfoundation.org/trolleyed/2/88/index.htm)**

# LETTERS

## ***The Enigma of Elgar's Violin Concerto***

*From Norman Rosenberg*

The quotation '*Aquí esta encerrada el alma de .....*' heading the score of Elgar's splendid Violin Concerto has remained something of a mystery ever since its publication 100 years ago. The translation is; '*Here is enshrined the soul of .....*'

Over the years Elgar's biographers and others have generally suggested that the five dots represent the Christian name of a close feminine friend of the composer. Names mentioned include Helen (Weaver), Julia (Worthington) and Alice (Stuart-Wortley). Michael Kennedy's *A Portrait of Elgar* particularly advocates Alice, who was no doubt a source of inspiration for themes in the concerto. However, Mr. Kennedy also concludes that 'No matter whose soul it enshrines, it enshrines the soul of the violin and the composer'.

I first heard the concerto almost seven decades ago (Yehudi Menuhin's 1932 recording with Elgar conducting) and subsequently many performances by other soloists. I have always felt that it reflects the composer's own life, and that the five dots represent Elgar himself.

Elgar's dignified appearance hid a very complex nature. Deeply sensitive, there were undoubtedly some profound matters which he never divulged to anyone. Is it likely that he would openly name himself as the 'soul'?

We know that he was fond of puzzles, particularly word-play containing hidden meanings and keeping people guessing. Lady Elgar's Christian names were Caroline Alice. If we take the first three letters, 'CAR', and join them to the last three letters, 'ICE', we find the origin of the unusual name given to their daughter, Carice (the dedication 'à Carice' for his composition *Salut d'Amour*). Used as a precedent, might this point to a very simple way of solving the mystery of the five dots?

With few exceptions, Elgar's composition inscriptions are in English. For the Violin Concerto he chose Spanish. Was there a special reason? Elgar took the quotation from the novel *Gil Blas* by Alain Le Sage. In the full original version it reads: '*Aquí esta encerrada el alma del licenciado Pedro Garcias*'.

Now, if we take the fourth word, 'EL', and add the first three letters of the last word, 'GAR', placing them in the position of the five dots we have: '*Aquí esta encerrada el alma de ELGAR*'.

One could imagine him sitting back with a smile wondering 'will they spot it?'.

## 100 YEARS AGO ...

Edward was back in London on 26 November and four days later conducted Kreisler in the second performance of the concerto, which was received with 'immense enthusiasm'. Whilst in London he continued work on his new symphony, returning to Hereford on 8 December. But five days later he and Alice left for Krefeld in Germany where Edward was to conduct his symphony. As so often the accommodation was inadequate: the room had '... a huge gas stove full on without *any* ventilation. We nearly fainted and fled'. He complained and they moved to another hotel. The first rehearsal went badly, and Edward wanted to go home. However, the concert on the 17<sup>th</sup> was a great success with 'immense enthusiasm'. They left Krefeld the following day and called in for lunch with the Buths in Düsseldorf on the way home

Alice Elgar was determined that their last Christmas in Plas Gwyn would be successful and enjoyable, so to counteract Edward's usual depressed state at this time she invited several guests: - Alice Stuart Wortley, Troyte Griffith, and Madame Lèry.<sup>1</sup> Her plan worked: the diary comments 'E. so much happier than ever before over Festival'. But Elgar was not well and unable to hear the next London performance by Kreisler on the 28<sup>th</sup>, with Henry Wood conducting. On the 30<sup>th</sup> he was well enough to go to Liverpool to conduct the concerto, again with Kreisler, on the 31<sup>st</sup>. Back home, he continued work on the Symphony: Professor Sanford Terry came to stay and they discussed the music Edward has composed thus far. Ivor Atkins came to stay on the 6<sup>th</sup> for several days to discuss his new edition of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* which Elgar was helping him with. On the 14<sup>th</sup> he went to London to conduct Kreisler once more on the 16<sup>th</sup>. He stayed at Queen Anne's Mansions and worked on the symphony. Alice and Carice joined him, and for the next few days looked at houses in the Home Counties whilst Edward worked on the first movement. He returned to Hereford on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and five days later the movement was completed. Just over a week later he finished the second movement: the diary commented: 'A. hears lament for dear Rody [Rodewald]'. In London again on 8 February he heard Kreisler play the concerto once more, with Henry Wood conducting. Two days earlier came the news of Richter's retirement, and Edward wrote to him: 'More than half my musical life goes when you cease to conduct'. On 15 February he finished the third movement, describing it to Alice Stuart Wortley as 'very wild & headstrong'. The following day in Hereford he conducted the premiere of his Romance for Bassoon, played by the dedicatee, Edwin James, Chairman of the London Symphony Orchestra, who as Chairman of the LSO talked to Elgar about the possibility of his becoming the new conductor of the orchestra in place of Richter.

On 28 February the diary triumphantly proclaimed: 'This is a day to be marked. E. finished his symphony.' The sense of relief is palpable: before the planned premiere at the end of May, Elgar was due to go to North America in April to conduct the Sheffield Musical Union in several concerts as part of their six-month tour of the Empire. He also conducted the first symphony in Brussels on 12 March.

Elgar was not well enough to travel with the rest of the Sheffield party on 17 March, having 'an awful cold & chill' as he told Alfred Littleton. He finally left on the 25<sup>th</sup>, arriving in New York on 1 April. Two days later he was in Toronto - 'this awful place' - and the following day conducted the choir in *The Dream of Gerontius*: it was to be his only visit to a part of the British Empire. Further performance of the *Dream* took place in Cincinnati (18<sup>th</sup>), Indianapolis (21<sup>st</sup>), Chicago (24<sup>th</sup>), and St Paul (28<sup>th</sup>). He returned to New York on 1 May, and sailed on the *Mauretania* two days later. He would never return to North America.

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1 Madame Lèry had given Carice French lessons at the Berlitz Language School in Rome at the end of 1907.

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