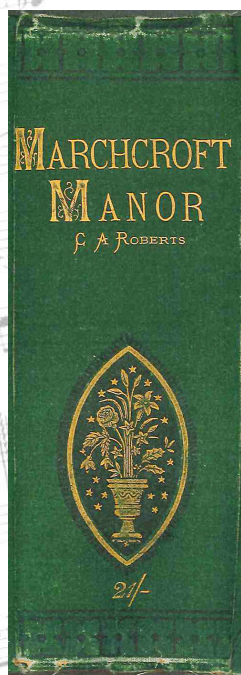


The *Elegar* Society
JOURNAL



April 2020 Vol.22, No. 1



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April 2020 Vol. 22, No. 1

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

Front Cover: Schemboche's 1885 studio portrait of Caroline Alice Roberts (Arthur Reynolds' Archive) alongside the cover of the 1882 novel Marchcroft Manor.

Notes for Contributors. Please adhere to these as far as possible if you deliver writing (as is much preferred) in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format.

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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*.

At the end of the essay, add about a hundred words about the author, please.

Full version of the 'Notes for Contributors' please see:

https://elgarsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Notes-for-Contributors_longer-version_February-2017.pdf

EDITORIAL

Alice Elgar died aged 71 years on 7 April 1920 at Severn House, Hampstead. In this issue we have two specific pieces concerning Alice - first, an article on her 1882 novel *Marchcroft Manor* when she was C.A. Roberts - and the second by Richard Westwood-Brookes, using letters published for the first time between Alice and her London housekeeper, Mrs Signe Wright and her husband Joshua, showing Alice's skills at household management in attempting to run Severn House at a distance, from their rural Sussex retreat at the end of the First World War. Recently discovered letters also provide the focus of an article by Arthur Reynolds on the friendship between Elgar and an elegant young lady, Miss Doris Johnson, which grew from an engagement to conduct *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* at Hanley in October 1932. We are pleased to have a contribution from the European scholar Tihomir Popović, a Serbian who is Professor of Music History and Theory in Lucerne, who has written an in-depth study of *The Crown of India*.

We are fortunate that in recent months many new recordings have been issued, both here and abroad, together with a number of books - including the latest volume from the Complete Edition - and a DVD from Sir Simon Rattle and the LSO. I thank the contributors who have reviewed these and the other items included in this edition.

The '100 Years Ago' column is longer than usual given the importance of events in the first months of 1920 and 'Recording Notes' deals with the three visits that Elgar made to Hayes between May 1919 and February 1920.

This is the first issue under the aegis of the new editorial team, following the retirement of Meinhard Saremba as Editor. We are grateful to him for his encouragement, help and support during the transition process. This has been invaluable as we learnt how to assemble the *Journal*. Geoff Scargill has provided a deserved tribute to Meinhard and we also thank Meinhard for his excellent work as Editor since 2017 and wish him well in his future musical endeavours. We also extend our thanks to Mike Byde for his sterling work in formatting the *Journal* and assembling its contents.

Kevin Mitchell

with the editorial team of David Morris, Andrew Dalton and Andrew Neill

Meinhard Saremba – an appreciation

Many Elgarians will have read with sadness that the December 2019 issue of the *Journal* was the last to be edited by Meinhard Saremba. In the four years since the Society's former chairman, Steven Hall, put forward Meinhard's name to succeed Martin Bird and Julian Rushton he has taken forward with distinction the tradition of Elgarian scholarship which the *Journal* represents. He has brought a wide perspective to its pages, with a special emphasis that Elgar always saw himself as a European composer, even though he was a patriotic Englishman. In his final editorial Meinhard pleaded again that music is not a national possession: 'I never think of British music, especially Elgar, in terms of "Englishness" but always in terms of good, sometimes even great music'. That echoes Daniel Barenboim's words at the end of a Prom concert last year that most people in the world can read Shakespeare and Goethe only in translation. 'Music,' he said, 'needs no translation'.

Although aware of his four years as editor of the *Journal*, many Elgarians may not know how far back Meinhard goes in his love of Elgar. In a letter he wrote in 2014 he referred to an Elgarian cartoon which he bought in Malvern in 1994, the year he published a book 'Elgar, Britten & Co, a History of British Music in twelve Portraits', which was reviewed in the *Journal*. When I wrote in 2013 to everyone I could think of in Germany to see if there was interest in promoting the Elgar cause there, the start of what became the 'Elgar in Deutschland' project, Meinhard's was one of only two replies. But out of that, and after an invitation to Paul Grafton and myself to visit him at home in Mannheim and with the support of the Elgar Family Trust, Meinhard organised a conference on British Music (including his beloved Sullivan) in Mainz.

That success led to a wonderful Festival of British Music organised by Meinhard in Bamberg the following year, when a party of Elgarians enjoyed a musical holiday in that beautiful city. At the end of the final concert Meinhard was presented with the Society's Certificate of Merit by Paul Grafton (who made an excellent speech in German!), together with Wolfgang-Armin Rittmeier, another great German Elgarian and founder of the Friends of Elgar in Germany, whose patron is Daniel Barenboim.

Steven Hall's proposal in October 2015 to offer Meinhard the editorship of the *Journal* grew naturally from the deep Elgarian roots, scholarship and amazing command of English that Meinhard has shown over so many years. We owe him a debt.

It is a shame that someone with such a profound love of Elgar should now see, in his own words 'no future for any further commitment for British culture in continental Europe'. His sadness over Brexit is shared by most Germans, who believe that the European Union is something more than just a trading bloc.

Thank you, Meinhard. We hope to see you again in happier times.

Geoff Scargill

Marchcroft Manor

Kevin Mitchell

The novel *Marchcroft Manor* by Caroline Alice Roberts (later, as most readers of this article will know, Alice Elgar and Lady Elgar) was published in two volumes by Remington and Co., 134 New Bond Street, London in 1882. She signed a contract on 22 April 1882, and subject to a payment of £70 (now equivalent to over £6,000) to be paid in two instalments of £35, the first on signing the agreement and the second on publication, Remington undertook to print 400 copies, with the option of another 300 for a second edition, and then further 300 depending on demand. Alice and Remington were to share any profits after deducting advertising costs, and when the demand for the book had died out, Remington was free to dispose of any remaining copies as it saw fit.¹ Such an arrangement was not unusual.²

Alice had been writing for approximately ten years before the novel was published, mostly poetry and children's stories, her most substantial work being a long blank-verse narrative poem *Isabel Trevithoe*, printed by the Charing Cross Publishing Company in 1878, probably at her own expense.

It is not known what Alice's motivation was in writing the novel. Who were her mentors? Presumably she was familiar with Austen, the Brontës, Mrs Gaskell and George Eliot and other major fiction writers of the nineteenth century – she was widely read and a lifelong member of the London Library.

Characters

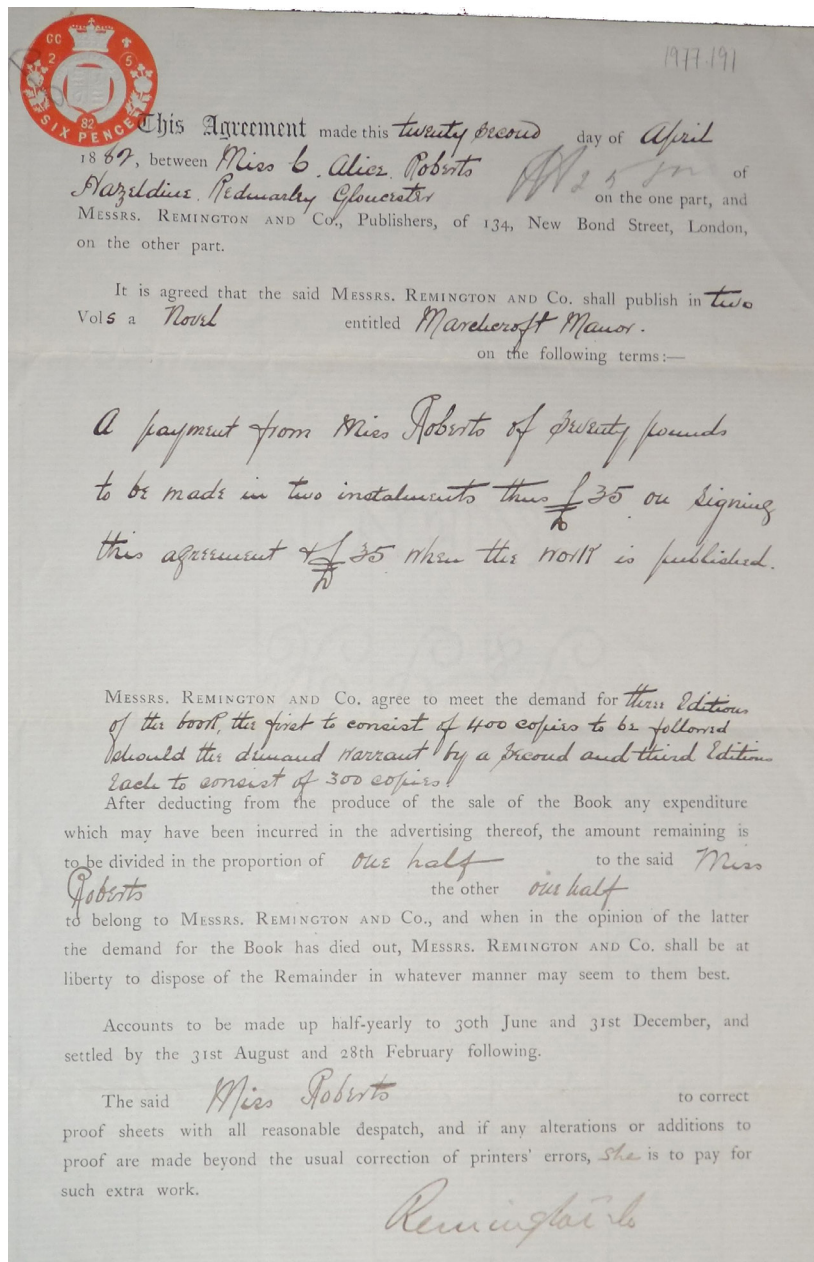
The novel revolves around four main characters, Julian, Roger, Olive and Ella.

Julian De Tressanay, inherits Marchcroft Manor and works at the Foreign Office. His duties are irksome, yet he persists as he requires the additional income and is able to have the advantage of living in London: 'This was a weighty consideration, for he had thrown his whole soul into the stirring questions of the day, the improvement of the lower classes, the progress of humanity, and in London he found friends who sympathised with his aims, and scope for expounding his ideas.'

Alice describes him as 'unusually tall, his dark hair and olive complexion pointing to his foreign extraction. The expression of his face was singularly mobile, the dark eyes and rather

1 I am grateful to Chris Bennett and the Elgar Foundation for providing a copy of the contract. The novel was sold for 21 shillings (now about £90).

2 In May 1870, Tinsley Brothers offered to issue Hardy's first published novel *Desperate Remedies*, on receipt of £75. 500 copies were published in March 1871 and at the final account in March 1872, Hardy received £59. 12s. 7d. Richard Little Purdy, *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study* (London, The British Library, 2002), 4 -5.



Contract dated 22 April 1882 (The Elgar Foundation)

irregular features lighting up with fire and excitement when speaking with eager gestures on subjects on which he felt strongly.' In some ways this prefigures her future husband as Philip Leicester recorded of Elgar: '...eyes open & shut rapidly & continuously ... hands small ... & nervous – right hand shakes nervously ... complexion rather dark, almost olive colour... Speaks rapidly, sharply & distinctly.' but unlike De Tressanay, Elgar's features could be described as regular.³

His older friend, Roger Osborne is a barrister, with a taste for pictures and choice books and grew 'more absorbed in the pastime of culture as years rolled on ...' and 'his literary tastes gave him more pleasure than did the strict exercise of his profession.' This aestheticism is viewed with disfavour by the staff at the Manor as both Roger and Julian are not inclined to 'go out and kill something' by indulging in hunting, shooting and fishing. Roger is of middle height 'his features were finely cut, his eyes clear and grey, his whole appearance was that of a refined gentleman...'. Elgar also aspired to be considered a gentleman.

Olive Malloney and her younger sister Ella, are unsophisticated, naïve, spoilt, pretty, young women. They are likeable and attractive but with no streak of vanity and it was 'natural to them ... to rejoice in beauty.' Like some of Austen's heroines, although not intellectual they have cultivated domestic accomplishments and Ella can sing and play the piano, yet they are seen to be idle and enjoy life like butterflies. One theme of the novel is their gradual improvement and education at the hands of Julian and Roger.

The Plot

The novel opens with Julian De Tressanay informing Roger Osborne that he has inherited landed property and Julian with his radical reforming zeal, sees this as an opportunity for an 'attempt at progress which will distinguish the nineteenth century from other epochs.'. Roger, whose legal practice seems as undemanding as Dr Watson's medical duties, leaves immediately with Julian to travel to Marchcroft, just as Watson was easily able to accompany Holmes to a crime scene.

The train takes them through 'the rich inland counties of England in the early days of August'. Alice describes it thus:

The foliage is dark and heavy from the summer sun, but it is relieved here and there by fresh autumnal shoots; the grass fields are smooth and green after the recent mowing, while richest and most beautiful of all are the fields of golden corn and waving barley. A breath of peace and content seems to pervade the whole atmosphere; and if below the surface there are wrongs and miseries awaiting redress, yet it must be confessed that the land is fair and that one might do worse than spend one's days on the soil which is free from oppression, and which has been so long untrod by the foot of foreign invaders.

Apparently, the agricultural depression experienced in England during the last quarter of the nineteenth century had little effect in the idyllic, pastoral landscape evoked in the novel. The beauty of Marchcroft leads Roger to predict that Julian will find it difficult 'to keep your indignation against the landed class of society at boiling pitch.' as it would soon cool. They meet the rector of the parish, Mr Selby, a cultivated man, whose genial, bantering manner acts as a welcome chorus

³ Philip Leicester quoted in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 562. Sir Adrian Boult noted: 'When he was telling a story or speaking of something which interested him particularly, it all came out in rather a rush – the words tumbled over one another.' Adrian Boult, *Boult on Music* (Toccatta Press, 1983), 33.

to events. He advises that there will be no scope for Julian's reforming energies as 'every cottage in the place is well built ... [and the] tenants ... attached to old fashions and customs'. The harvest matters more to them than the benefits of the franchise. Was the rector based on the Revd. William Symonds of the parish of Pendock, near Alice's home in Redmarley d'Abitot, whom Alice assisted with his geological studies and compiled the index to his book on geology? ⁴

Julian and Roger quickly visit Marchcroft Rectory and meet Olive and Ella who are staying with their Aunt and Uncle, and after a convivial evening, the young men realise how fortunate they are to have such neighbours. There follows considerable interaction between the Manor and the Rectory. Julian, ignoring the pleas of his bailiff to attend to estate business, turns to more pleasurable occupations. The ladies come to Marchcroft to fish and he finds it 'unexpectedly pleasant, idling with these pretty, original girls', while at the Rectory he engages Mr Selby 'in long conversations concerning the welfare of the people of the place'. A picnic is arranged to a local forest, but it is a far milder affair than that to Box Hill in *Emma*, or to the Florentine hills in *A Room with a View*. However, the young couples soon disengage themselves from the main party and from each other, where 'much pleasant conversation ensued between these several pairs.'. Both Julian and Roger begin to suspect they are falling in love but are disturbed in this realisation as Olive and Ella are utterly different from them, and they feel that an ultimate union is not possible. Roger is convinced he has finished with love: Julian is yet to experience it!

Wishing to make a sketch of the Rectory, Roger draws Ella in the Rectory garden and also persuades Olive to attempt a painting. The annual cottage garden flower show is moved to Marchcroft Manor and all are involved in the preparations; the local gentry and farmers descend on the Manor. In a comment worthy of Jane Austen, Roger is required to escort 'a portly elderly lady, the horizons of whose mind seemed bounded by the events of the neighbourhood.'. Eventually he and Ella wander off alone and he asks her to be his wife. Ella is thrown into confusion and admits that she 'never thought of marrying anybody': she makes him promise that the subject will never be mentioned again between them and that 'they were to be friends, just as they were before'. Roger is stunned, informs Julian of the day's events and resolves to depart for the Tyrol. So far there has been little action or drama and what there is now happens 'off-stage'. Details of an accident are reported at the Rectory by Job, Marchcroft's butler. Driving the dog-cart with an unruly horse, there is an accident and the injured Roger is taken off to a hotel in a nearby town. Julian rushes away to care for his friend.

Ella, in distress, confesses to her sister of Roger's proposal and admits that she did care for him, but 'now perhaps he will die, and never know I did care.'. The girls' father, Dr. Malloney now descends on the Rectory. He is the only serpent in this Garden of Eden, and wrongly concludes that Roger was in love with Olive, but she not with him, and that Ella, was in turn, in love with Roger. On making some recovery Roger and Julian leave for London, but after further convalescence, Julian returns to Marchcroft, meets Olive and in the Rectory garden on a moonlit winter's night, they realise their love for each other: '... the light of a pure and deep love shed its all-surpassing glory in their hearts.'.

Dr. Malloney visits Roger in London and is so taken with him that he resolves 'to bring Olive to reason' and bring about a supposed reconciliation. He then discovers by letter from his sister,

4 Alice shows her interest in geology with this authorial comment in chapter two: 'Mountains rise on the face of the earth, and valleys are furrowed on her surface, islands grow up in the midst of the seas, and the aspects of the continents shift and change; but all this is... wrought slowly and silently; ages pass away and time and the slow-working laws of nature carry out these changes unmarked by convulsions and sweeping catastrophes.'.

Mrs Selby, that Julian admired Olive and 'she was not quite indifferent.'. The Doctor orders his two daughters home. His muddle is confounded when he receives a letter from Julian seeking consent to his engagement to Olive, which he curtly refuses to sanction. Eventually, after Roger's intervention, the misunderstandings are resolved, and the marriage takes place.

There was the usual flutter of veils, and the rustle of satin, the usual alternation of expectant stir and solemn hush in the church, the usual number of spectators who took a hearty and genuine interest in the proceedings, the usual sprinkling of those who declare they dislike weddings, and pronounce them an unendurable bore, but who yet may be found accepting invitations to be present on these important occasions to the end of their lives.

There only remains the union of Roger and Ella, which is brought about when, at the instigation of the newly married couple, both are brought to Marchcroft Manor, and their proximity brings about a recognition of their mutual feelings. Alice concludes that Julian 'became a distinguished politician and speaker' who attained 'high honours and distinctions' whilst Roger 'took it into his head now and again that he would do great things and become a distinguished member of his profession'. Significantly 'it is Ella who is ambitious for his sake, and who stirs up the sparks of activity which flicker fitfully through his *fainéant* tendencies', thereby anticipating the role that Alice herself was to adopt after her marriage. But the novel concludes that 'we do not know if Roger Osborne ever became Lord Chancellor'.

Aspects of the Novel

Alice Roberts gives an indication of her wide reading by judicious, appropriate quotations from poets and essayists as chapter-headings. Thus, she quotes from Tennyson, Emerson, Dante, Hans Anderson, Matthew Arnold, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Homer, Spenser, and several from Chaucer and Shakespeare. The chapter-headings summarise the chapter ahead. Thus, Spenser provides the quotation for the resolutions found in the final chapter.

Now, strike your sailes, yee jolly mariners,
For we be come unto a quiet rode.

Knowing what we do of Alice's later life and opinions, the streak of mild radicalism and the need for social change, with the desire to improve the lot of the tenants on the estate, which she invests in the character of De Tressanay, is unexpected, but the theme for redressing social inequality runs as a background throughout the novel, so that the conservative traditions are challenged, and in retrospect 'more than one of his audacious theories [were] carried out ... benefitting the community at large'. At one point Roger argues that Julian's vision of Utopia does not permit time and leisure for the arts to flourish: 'Pray recollect that paintings and statues and symphonies have not the material value in supporting life as for instance, a crop of wheat, and yet it is these things which make existence bearable'.⁵

A surprising and successful feature of the novel is Alice's portrayal of the rustic characters, starting with the old coachman Jacob, who collects Julian and Roger when they first arrive near

5 Julian's wish that everyone should have a small property and be able to cultivate their own plot of land, is akin to the idea that labourers should have 'three acres and a cow', later adopted by G.K. Chesterton in his distributive theories.

Marchcroft, and who provides an amusing commentary on the ideas propounded by the young men, preferring the ways of 'Th'old master' who owned the Manor previously. When confronted with a scheme for new houses, Jacob growls 'Th' old master never wanted no buildin' down here.' and every such new idea has to battle with the opinion of the old dead master, and is greeted with a negative response from the Manor's staff. Other such characters are Job the butler, Richards the bailiff, and the housekeeper Mrs. Mitten, whom Julian finds 'very alarming'. Alice, taking her example from Hardy, should have introduced more of the rustic episodes, which would have provided some welcome comic relief and a chorus to the main events.

It is not known how much personal experience Alice put into the novel, but as many first novels do contain some autobiographical elements, this cannot be discounted. She was thirty-four when the novel was published and therefore it is very probable that she drew on some aspects of her earlier life. In particular, the thwarted love between Roger and Ella and the heartache and pain so caused rings true, so it may be the case that the writing does reflect some personal experience – emotion not recollected in tranquillity!

Although born in India, Alice spent much of her early life in the West Country and therefore it is not unreasonable to state that for the topography of the novel, she drew upon the landscape she knew. Whilst it may now be impossible to ascertain if Marchcroft Manor or other localities, were based wholly or in part on actual buildings and places, it can be argued that Marchcroft Rectory with its 'gables and chimneys [and] the profusion of creepers which climbed its walls' may have been based on Alice's home in Redmarley. The Rectory garden boasted 'a grand old cedar' tree, as did the garden at Hazeldine.⁶

Reviews

For a first novel by an unknown writer, *Marchcroft Manor* garnered a significant number of reviews, which Alice collected, both positive and negative.⁷ *The Academy* review concentrated on the pastoral aspect:

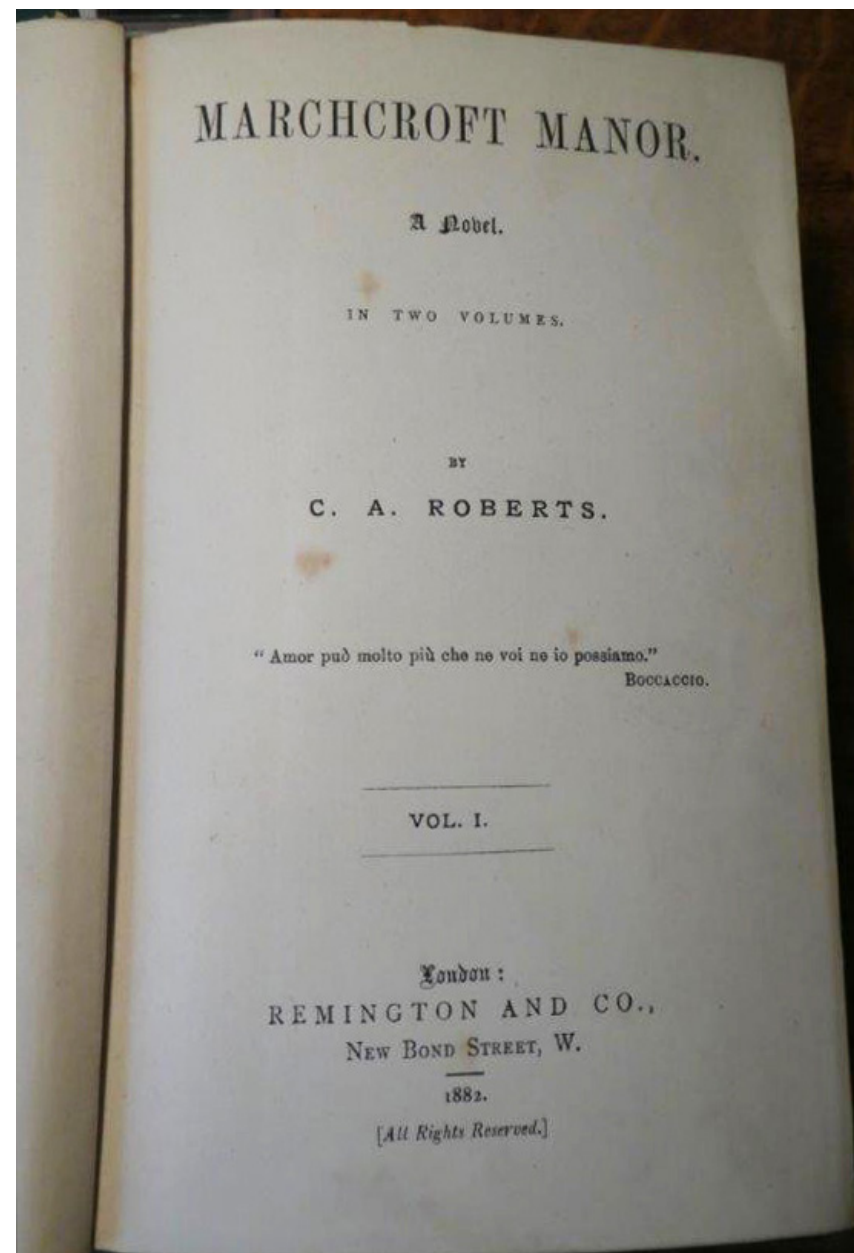
'Marchcroft Manor' is only to be described as an idyll of the affections. It is a somewhat measured and formal idyll, it is true and an idyll of modern years, with an aesthetic barrister for one of its heroes, and an accomplished and engaging vicar to look on and play chorus. But its sentiment is idyllic, and its savour distinctly Arcadian. The scene is somewhere in the countryside. The two heroes go down and fall in with the two heroines. They talk much seriousness and stately English together; and they fall in love. There are complications ... but these are of an innocent and strictly Arcadian type. Everybody's moral tone is elevated, and everybody is married. What more could the most inexorable novel-reader desire?⁸

The Athenaeum found that the novel '... is a pretty love-story in which a double thread of interest is well sustained ... and the heart's history of four exceptionally nice and fortunate young people is told with freshness and simplicity.' The reviewer thought De Tressanay a terrible Norman name and noted that the couples' course of love

6 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar: a life in photographs* (Oxford University Press, 1972), 19 shows a photograph of Hazeldine House adorned with creepers. A cedar tree can be seen in the garden of Hazeldine in Ken Russell's film, *Elgar*. 1962.

7 The newspaper reviews which Alice Roberts collected are to be found in a notebook held at The British Library.

8 29 July 1882.



Title Page of *Marchcroft Manor* (Peter Nixon)

...is interrupted by more than one misunderstanding, caused by somewhat exaggerated scruples and points of honour. In the end ... all comes right and the reader is allowed to put down the book in good humour with everybody. The author is a decided optimist, inclined to make too light of certain difficulties in plot, construction, etiquette, and even English grammar; but in spite of all this 'Marchcroft Manor' leaves a good impression.⁹

Another reviewer, considered it 'a graceful and unpretentious love-story, showing a vein of tenderness, and a kind of humour...' but went on to say except for 'a fresh and pretty scene in a library, there is nothing new in incident or circumstances, and this is also true of the misunderstandings which cause the happily short-lived misery. The merit of the novel is wholly in the treatment of familiar scenes and characters, and in the kindly tone of the writer.' The reviewer puzzled over the sex of the author but concluded 'Julian has too close a likeness to the prudent prig of the lady-novelist. Roger Osborne, the able and lazy young man, is a type of character often attempted, too rarely as successfully drawn as in the present instance. The characterisation wants sureness, owing perhaps to the author's doubt of ... her powers ... [but] the next time we shall expect to find individualities more strongly declared. An unaffected style, only seldom showing the 'prentice hand, and a quiet humour, too little indulged, make smooth the reading of a novel which is the precursor, we hope, of higher achievement.'¹⁰

The Standard of 22 August 1882 thought that De Tressanay's love for Olive Malloney being happy and prosperous, hardly 'afforded incident for a two-volume novel.' but Roger and Ella provided an alternative course:

Roger proposes to Ella ... why, neither she herself, nor the reader has any notion – rejects his suit, so peremptorily, so decidedly, so irrevocably, that they both become miserable and pine away. Of course, all comes right in the end. There was no reason why anything should ever have gone wrong except to enable C.A.Roberts to write a pretty and very readable novel.

The Scotsman of 17 August, 1882 stated: 'There is no pretence of profundity about the book, and the dialogue is not always of the brightest, but on the whole, the interest is well sustained, and the story is not one which any but a very *blasé* novel-reader will be inclined to yawn over.'

The Glasgow Herald for 14 September 1882 stated: 'We feel it is very difficult to do justice to the singular charm of 'Marchcroft Manor'. The story is slight, the characters few, there are no startling incidents, and yet there is a quiet brightness and sunniness which are very attractive.'

However, *The Morning Post* for 3 October 1882 was very critical. It thought the love tale was mawkish and the portrait of Roger Osborne a 'literary and artistic dilettante, drawn in the usual style of feeble novelists.' The Selbys, the two heroines and De Tressanay 'belong to the goody-goody and unreal world of fifty years ago.' and the only character 'traced with a little life is that of the servant Jacob, whose constant allusions to the merits of the "old master" are amusing enough.' The reviewer thought that no nineteenth-century girls could resemble Olive and Ella, and concluded: 'There should be bounds beyond which the patience of the habitual romance reader ought not to be asked to go, and it is to be deplored that writers who have not more to say than the author of 'Marchcroft Manor' should insist upon rushing into print.'

The Saturday Review of 12 August 1882 was the most critical but devoted many columns to its review. In taking up 'a new novel in a pretty cover' the reviewer 'felt gratitude towards the

author whose work only consists of two volumes instead of running to three'. There was much 'tall talk and a very plentiful lack of matter.' and dismissed the male protagonists thus: 'We have never before been brought in contact with two such insupportable itinerant Dissenting preachers turned inside out as these phenomenal young men.' Olive and Ella 'commit the heinous sins of not knowing more than is necessary for their well-being and of betraying a healthy indifference to things that are beyond their comprehension ... and the unconsciously suffering maidens must of necessity be delivered by these wonderful nineteenth-century knights.'

However, a more positive note was struck as 'there is much that is fresh and pleasant in the description of the family at the rectory, and the characters of the girls and their aunt, are hinted at with real ability.' Admittedly Ella and Olive are nice girls – 'far nicer than most girls in second-rate novels' – but the reviewer loses all interest in Olive. Ella fares little better as the reader 'had to wade through many pages of commonplace writing, in which this proud young lady is made to say or do some haughty things.' before reaching the end where 'nothing remained to complete the happiness of the undeserving humbugs who are the heroes of this unoriginal story, but for things to be eminently set straight.'

After recommending the author to aim 'at simplicity of style, and to leave ardent reformers and over-cultivated idiots to go their own way in peace', the reviewer did conclude: 'It is much in favour of 'Marchcroft Manor' that, in spite of a worn-out plot and a good deal of detestable writing, it is still possible to read it with a certain amount of interest.'

Conclusion

The novel is not a lost masterpiece and it would be foolish to claim this. The reviews were mixed – some saw too much in it, others too little. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Michael Kennedy thought the novel 'still worth reading'¹¹ and I would agree. Undoubtedly it is a period piece, prolix in places – the two volumes run to 604 pages - with lengthy conversations expressing views that do not accord with today's thinking, but it was the type of novel that Alice Roberts wanted to write, reflecting her own rural world of parish and Manor.

And yet... Given its shortcomings and fully recognising its limitations, the novel does hold one's interest and even though the denouement is never in doubt, one does read on to see it achieved, and yet it must be recognised, keeping in mind the path her life was eventually to take, it does perhaps have more interest for Elgarians than to others.

Alice continued writing up to her marriage in 1889 and beyond, although it decreased in volume and intensity in later years: she never produced another novel. Personally, I believe she had the potential to do so and if she had given herself time and had found the right subjects, she may have attained some modest success.

At some point she may well have wished for immortality through her poetry and prose – this was not to be - although the poetry she wrote for Elgar to set was recognised. In recompense she diverted the bulk of her energies and creativity into encouraging, supporting and cajoling her husband to write the music of which she knew - somehow – he was capable, which partly needed her belief in his powers to come to fruition. By these means she obtained vicarious immortality for as Michael Kennedy perceptively observed 'were she to return today and see the position Elgar still occupies, the number of broadcast and concert-hall performances and the growing collection

9 18 July 1882.

10 Alice Roberts did not record the date or source of this review.

11 Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 41.

of superb recordings, she could say: “All this you owe to me.” And she would be right.’.¹²

On 24 January 1914 Alice allowed herself a backward glance at her former literary ambitions by reading her 1884 story *Two Summers* ‘... to E. who was very moved ... felt this a great appreciation – regretted muss not to have written more. Consoled by wise dictum “the care of a genius is enough of a life work for any woman”’.¹³

But is it correct that much of her writing is forgotten? At the end of his life, following the successful publication of three volumes of his diaries, to great acclaim, Harold Nicolson ruefully commented that of all his books, the only ones that would be remembered were the three he did not realise he had written.¹³ Cannot the same be said of the on-going publication of Alice Elgar’s diaries, chronicling over thirty years of the Elgars’ marriage? With their wealth of information on their daily lives, and as a commentary on Elgar’s life as a creative genius, are we not now beginning to see that these diaries are her true literary legacy?

I acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Andrew Dalton in allowing me to borrow his copy of the novel. I thank Chris Scobie and his colleagues at The British Library, Chris Bennett and the Elgar Foundation, together with John Norris. I have been assisted by Arthur Reynolds and Andrew Neill and I owe a considerable debt to David Morris and Peter and Lyn Nixon who read through earlier drafts, and offered valuable, constructive comments and amendments.

Note the novel is available in a modern re-print but unhappily only the first volume is reproduced – caveat emptor.

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12 Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 147.

13 Nigel Nicolson, *Long Life* (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), 16.

Alice Elgar at Brinkwells

Richard Westwood-Brookes

Elgar’s love of Brinkwells, the remote West Sussex cottage which was his final inspirational powerhouse, is well documented. But what of his wife Alice?

When they moved to Severn House, their London mansion, in 1912, she took to the opulent metropolitan lifestyle with relish. It seems it was the apotheosis of everything she had striven to achieve throughout their marriage.

As a visiting *Daily Express* reporter enthused:

Lady Elgar, wife of the great composer, dispenses much informal hospitality at their beautiful home in Hampstead where one of the most striking features is the huge music room, where Sir Edward may sometimes be persuaded to sit at the grand piano on a Sunday afternoon and improvise for the pleasure of intimate friends who drop in for tea.

In the billiard room – billiards is one of Sir Edward’s chief recreations – Lady Elgar has arranged a fascinating collection of wonderful trophies presented to her husband at the various musical festivals at which his works have been produced.

Most attractive of all is the Blue Study – Lady Elgar’s special pride – where carpet, chair-covers and hangings are all a lovely shade of deep blue, blue-bound books abound and some fine specimens of old blue Bristol glass give a note of glorious colour. Deep blue flowers are chosen and even the blotting paper in the wide writing pad is a deep shade of blue.¹

Elgar however may not have been as enthusiastic about leaving the ‘beloved borderland’ of his birth for metropolitan living.

Only a few months after the move, he wrote gloomily to his former Malvern cycling companion Rosa Burley, of his nostalgia for the places he had left behind:

I remember all the sweetness of it – I suppose I shall never see it all again or cycle over the old places. How lovely the Marsh must be – I envy you seeing it & living in it all again.

During the two moments I have spent in M[alvern] all the people seem to disappear & only the elemental hills & all the memories of the old loveliness remain...²

Severn House was expensive to maintain, so Elgar was obliged to take on West End theatre commissions to pay the bills. It hardly inspired and eventually caused dismay, when in 1917 his Kipling settings, *The Fringes of the Fleet* topped the bill in, of all things, a touring music-hall variety show.

1 *Daily Express* report May 1913.

2 Letter to Rosa Burley dated from Severn House 16 July 1913.

Newspaper ads enthused: ‘Come and see Sir Edward Elgar conduct *in person*’ – and he did just that, twice nightly and at two matinees a week for six solid months, appearing alongside comedians, impressionists, magicians, a female boxing act, a ‘screaming farce’ called ‘It’s up to you’ and Mademoiselle Dalmere’s table-top animal circus of cats, rats, monkeys and canaries.

It was little wonder the musical world was alarmed. As one reviewer commented: ‘Some folk of old-fashioned notions probably think that artistic dignity has received a rude shock through celebrated musicians having consented to perform at music-halls’.³

When the shows came to an end in December 1917, the culminative physical and mental strain took a dire toll on his somewhat fragile health, and sensing alarm, Alice found the sanctuary of Brinkwells.⁴

She must have known immediately what relief it brought him. Its woodland setting was uncannily reminiscent of Birchwood Lodge, which had inspired ‘Gerontius’ all those years before, and it is little wonder that by the early spring of 1918 the old creativity had returned – leading, in quick succession, to the Violin Sonata, the String Quartet, the Piano Quintet and finally the Cello Concerto.

But for Alice, this remote little place, two miles from civilisation, with cramped conditions and basic sanitation could not have been more different to the London life she had hitherto enjoyed. There were no grand, spacious rooms, redolent with the sounds of social entertaining and no room for servants. Amenities were sparse – just local farmer Thomas Aylwin to provide horse-drawn transport whenever possible and handyman Mark Holden.

It may have been ideal for Elgar, infusing himself with the inspirations of wild earth on his long woodland walks, but hardly the sort of estate Alice had striven to achieve.

It seems remarkable that she would have so willingly exchanged living there to the spacious opulence of Hampstead, but it is testament to the devotion that she felt for her husband and his career that, despite the privations of living in such a place, she was nevertheless prepared to put up with it for his sake.

Living at Brinkwells while trying to maintain Severn House also provided a further challenge which fell entirely on her shoulders.

Elgar might have relished his new-found country existence - writing enthusiastically to his muse Alice Stuart-Wortley of his lifestyle of carpentry, wood-chopping, gardening and furniture repair,⁵ while seeking inspiration in the Sussex sunshine - but someone had to take command of the day-by-day necessities of life at the cottage, while at the same time ensuring that Severn House was also running as smoothly as possible.

Given the communications of the time – there was hardly a telephone at Brinkwells in those days - this could only have been achieved through letters to whoever was holding the fort at Severn House and personal visits. But Hampstead in 1918 was a good day’s travel away – and only then if Alice could get transport from farmer Aylwin to take her to the station at Arundel some nine miles

3 Review in the *Illustrated Leicester Chronicle* during the run of the show there in October 1917

4 They actually took up the lease on Brinkwells in May 1917, but commitments with the music-hall tour prevented quality time there until the following year.

5 Referenced in letter to Alice Stuart-Wortley dated Brinkwells 12 May 1918: ‘I rise about seven work till 8.15 – then dress. Breakfast – pipe (I smoke again all day!) work till 12-1.30 lunch (pipe) – rest an hour – work till tea (pipe) – then work till 7.30 – change – dinner at 8 bed at 10 – every day practically goes thus – of course instead of work, which means carpentering of the roughest kind, sawing wood, repairing furniture etc etc and weeding, we go on lovely walks – the loveliest walks really – The woods are full of flowers, wonderful – some anemonies still left but just leaving us a for a year, bluebells & primroses etc...’

away, or to Pulborough, where there was the option of a branch line service to Fittleworth station. Otherwise, she was marooned at the cottage.

Source material for Alice’s feelings and opinions have largely been based on the extensive diaries she kept, but some years ago I came across a series of hitherto unknown letters she had written from Brinkwells during this crucial period of her husband’s career.

They were written to Mrs Signe Wright (1894-1984) who, with her husband Joshua, acted as Housekeeper at Severn House during that summer of 1918.

Written in Alice’s somewhat idiosyncratic grammar – there is little punctuation – they demonstrate her remarkable ability to administrate her husband’s affairs, leaving him free to compose, but they also show her more personal side. Having read them over many years, I cannot escape the impression that she comes across as a warm but also somewhat lonely person – someone who had devoted so much to her husband over their 30 years of marriage, and by doing so had sacrificed much of herself on his behalf. I may be wrong in this impression, but it is one which has remained with me since first reading them.

The practicalities of trying to organise a large home through letters to Signe in Hampstead while herself being a day’s travel away, must have been a constant strain – and this was not helped by the fact that almost as soon as they had moved in to Brinkwells in May 1918, Elgar made what must have been an infuriating demand:

Brinkwells
Sunday [no date]
Signe
Sir Edward wants to have the piano now in the drawing room sent down here & has asked Messrs Ramsden New Bond St. to send for it to Severn House & has asked them to ring up & let you know when they will come – Ramsden is on the telephone you will see N° in book, so if you want to know you can easily ask them.

When Grace [Jones the parlour maid at Severn House] comes please ask her from me to put down dust sheets, newspapers, etc to cover the precious carpet – I hope it will not be any trouble to you if Grace puts down dust sheets they can stay down till the Piano is gone. Miss Carice has been here for a day but has to leave this evening I by two am going today. I hope you are all well, so glad of a fine day. Yours C A Elgar.

Anyone who has visited Brinkwells will know that, even today, the process of removing a precious grand piano from a house in Hampstead to remote Sussex, and then somehow manhandling it down the rough track that leads to the cottage and then across the garden to where the study once stood, would be to say the least a daunting task. But in 1918 with rural roads unmetalled, and transport via horse and cart, one is bound to marvel as to how they managed it.

A further concern for Alice was that Signe was in the early stages of pregnancy and as the next letter shows the added problems that this provided did not escape her consideration:

Brinkwells
Monday [no date]
Signe
Only a line to thank you for your very nice letter. I am so glad for you to have the car & hope there will be no difficulty in getting it & I shall be much disappointed if you cannot – I am so glad you are going to a nursing home & hope it will be most comfortable for you – I am glad to say the Piano arrived all safely this morning & the men managed to get it across the garden into the studio & Sir Edward has been playing some lovely things already.

Sunday

Brighton

Signe
Sir Edward wants to have the
Piano now in the drawing room
Laid down here & has asked
Messrs. Ramsden, New Bond St.
to send for it to Lever House,
has asked them to ring up
& let you know when they will
come - Ramsden is on the telephone
you will see h.c. in book so if
you want to know you can easily
ask them.

When Grace comes please ask her
from me to put down dust sheets,
newspapers, etc to cover the green
precious Carpet - I hope it will
not be any trouble to you if
Grace puts down dust sheets
they can stay down till the Piano
is gone -

Miss Carice has been here for a day
but has to leave this evening I
am sorry to say - Hope you are
all well, so glad of a fine day.
V. C. an Elgar

Lady Elgar to Signe Wright - undated (Richard Westwood-Brookes' Archive).

I am very sorry about the cottage but as you have taken rooms, am so glad they are near & hope as soon as you return & are able we shd be able to make some nice plan for you to look after the house & to come and help when we are there again. I think Miss C[arice] is coming for some things perhaps tomorrow, if she should come today, would you find her shoes I believe in her bedroom, & get your husband to post them. I want them so much for Grace. She has to sleep at the farm.

Best wishes and remembrances

Yours C A Elgar

Grace is so good, she is cook, such a good cook & everything else as Mrs H [i.e. Fanny Hunt, cleaner at Brinkwells] is away.

So sorry I forgot PS – Pugh promises to let you hear & to send 4 tons of coal.

Brinkwells
Fittleworth
Sussex
30 May 1918
Signe

I am so glad all is settled about the hospital for you & I send you every good wish for health & safety. After all is, as I hope it will be, happily over, let me hear before you settle plans, as I may be very glad for you & your husband to be caretakers for us, if you shd like to do so. I do not know what we may wish to do by that time. I hope you are all well & comfortable. Grace will tell you all about Brinkwells

Yours truly
C A Elgar

I am sorry top curtains in my room are not up please get them out & Grace will put them up tomorrow, the sun will spoil.

In the wake of World War One, with so many young men killed and women for the first time taking on better paid work in factories and offices, domestic staff became scarce and at a premium. Consequently, one cannot escape feeling that Alice was careful in her dealings with Signe, as demonstrated in the rather effusive apologies in the next run of letters regarding a misinterpreted date:

Brinkwells
13 June 1918
Signe

I enclose cheque for your wages which are I think due today & hope you are all well.

Grace arrived all safely & I am very glad to have her. Thank Davey for her note & I hope she will get off comfortably – kind remembrances to you & Davey.

C A Elgar

Great haste. Just going out. Can you remember how many of my small old linen sheets I brought. You cd tell by seeing if any are left, there are 3prs of that age & did I bring 2 or 3 prs of old cotton wh Sir E always had – I shd be so glad to hear – I thought you had brought 2prs of my old linen sheets but seem only to have 1 –

Brinkwells
16 June 1918
Signe

I enclose 15/- [75p] for week's board. [About £44 in today's money]

I think I cannot have brought more than one pair of the old linen sheets. If so, would you post a pair to me as soon as you can & I will send postage I want the old ones not one of the new pairs. I hope you are keeping well & that Davey has got off comfortably. Grace is here all safely.

Kind remembrances
V truly
C A Elgar

Brinkwells
Fittleworth
Sussex
24 June 1918
Signe

I enclose cheque for the week's board.

I shall be very glad if you & your husband will stay on at Severn House till the 8 of July.

Many thanks for sending sheets recd quite safely, they were so nicely packed.

Grace is to return on Friday. Chilly blowing weather today. Hope you are all well.

V truly
C A Elgar

Brinkwells
Tuesday 2 July 1918
Signe

I am so sorry I made an entire mistake as to the date I thought you had to go to Hospital on 8th – Please not think of going till you are obliged to go into Hospital, we are so glad for you and your husband to be at Severn House – I am writing in haste as to send telegram & be sure of posting this, I will write again & arrange all because I am so glad if you can be Caretakers.

So glad you liked the flowers do not think of going away, it is my mistake about the date & I thought you had to go to the Hospital.

Yrs C A Elgar

Brinkwells
Fittleworth
Sussex
2 July 1918
Signe

I wrote in great haste to make sure of a post this morning & am writing again to say I am so sorry I made a mistake in the date of course I remember now it was the 15th you might have reminded me ! The days slip away so fast here & dates seem so alike

Now also I thought you had to enter the hospital on the 8th or 15th but as I suppose from your letter you need not do so till the end of August , why need you & your husband leave Severn House ? I am so glad to know you are both there knowing that all will be properly cared for – what shall we arrange ?

I should like you to be Caretakers, what would satisfy you in that position – of course now you wd not

do housework, except just airing & and your own washing, would firing and light & use of bed linen & washing of it be satisfactory to you ? Think it over & let me hear, I am sure we could arrange some good plan – I should be so sorry to lose sight of you & so glad if your husband wd sleep at the house when you are in the Hospital. So glad you are keeping well – Let me hear & please do not think of leaving. You see how my mistake arose.

V Truly C A Elgar.

While Elgar was composing his great works in the peace and tranquillity of West Sussex, the day-to-day running of Severn House was a constant concern for Alice – there was coal and wood to order for the winter, the garden needed upkeep, rooms needed maintaining and what staff there were needed paying:

Brinkwells
Fittleworth
Sussex
15 July 1918
Signe

We are glad to hear that you & your Husband can stay on at Severn House – I quite thought you had to go to stay at Hospital so soon but I did mistake the date 8th instead of 15th – Now I enclose a cheque for your wages to 15th July, as that was the date I mentioned, I think it is five weeks & 2 days from 7th June to 15 July & 1 week's board wages –

	£	S	D
5 weeks wages 12/- [60p]	3	0	0
2 days at 2/-[10p]		4	0
1 week board		15	0
	3	19	0

Now I think that makes it all clear, if not correct, let me hear – as I said 15 July, I do not think it wd be right not to keep to it.

If you care to return to S. House when I hope all will be happily over for you, I shd probably be very glad for you to do so unless the house shd be let from a little time. No doubt we cd arrange about rooms etc. I send cheque now as it will save sending another later on. I hope to send you a little box of fruit out of the garden.

On Monday & Tuesday, it depends wh day it can be posted 2 miles away, some days no chance – let me hear you receive this.

[The amount quoted in the letter would be the equivalent of about £240 in today's money]

Brinkwells
12 July 1918

Signe, thank you for your nice letter & so glad you liked the fruit. It was picked just in time before the rain.

I enclose postage for the parcel of stockings wh I quite forgot they came quite safely.

I am writing to tell you a large quantity of wood, 400 logs are to come to the house from Castle's & I much want the men to put them in the Coke room on the right hand side away from the coke that

is left so as to leave any room for the coke we may have – I have put away the key of the coke room so would you see & let me know at once if the coal cellar key, or the through door or any key would open the coke room door, if not I must have the key got out. We have had nice rain but such a high wind – hope all well, kind remembrances

Yrs trly C A Elgar

Brinkwells
Fittleworth
Sussex
15 July 1918
Signe

Thank you for letting me hear. I now enclose the key of Storeroom. Would you please take the Coke Room key from Store Room you will I believe find it on shelf opposite window, a large key labelled Coke Room – I so hope the wood will not come till this reaches you as it wd make such a mess & confusion. Please get the man or men to put it into the room so as to leave room for coke later. Please give them whatever sum 1/- or 6d etc or what you think necessary & I will send it you & any postage.

When it is all in, I ordered 400 logs, please lock up key again in Store Room & send it back to me. This will make everything all right I know – still wet but looks clearly.

Kind regards C A Elgar.

Brinkwells
27 July 1918
Signe

I am so glad you were pleased with the little thing Miss Carice brought you - & hope you are keeping all well.

I am so sorry the logs have been rather worrying if they have not arrived the telephone No is 3389 Victoria. The name is Castle's Ship Breaking Co – you could telephone & inquire, they promised me to warn Severn House when they were coming.

I think you know Grace is to come on Tuesday next & will be 2 nights at S House. I hope it will not give you trouble.

Do you think her bed will want airing. Do not do anything heavy yourself.

Miss Carice said you had a talk about plans. I would be so glad if your Husband will sleep at S House while you are away & I feel sure some rooms cd be managed for you when you come out of Hospital. I should think you could be quite comfortable in the Servants' Hall, pulling the table out somewhere & you wd be close to water, kitchen etc then when quite well you might go into the maid's rooms perhaps. Of course Miss C's sitting room wd be very comfortable but I am afraid of the chilliness for you, it might be dangerous, unless thoroughly warmed with gas fire & I shd not like that left burning before you came with no one in the house, otherwise you are welcome to use it – remember the warmer the day outside, the colder the room feels – I think the Servants Hall wd meet the case at the beginning – if you want anyone to help move things I wd pay for it, perhaps you cd get nice Mrs Mac for a day.

Think it over, there is plenty of time to decide about it.

Yours very truly
C A Elgar

Brinkwells
8 Augt 1918
Signe

I thought it was quite time to order some coal so I have written to Pugh, Buckingham Palace Road, to send me 6 tons – I have expressly insisted that he shd let you hear when it is coming. Would you have some put under the stairs on the left hand side of the coal cellar door – then it will be there as you need some, & then the coal cellar door can be locked & you can put the key away somewhere. I hope this will not be a trouble – I hoped F Keith was going to see Miss Carice on Tuesday but she did not arrive, I am so sorry – our local cook is going away for a fortnight which is very trying & soon has to leave altogether. It is so uncomfortable not to have a settled cook. It is rainy again today I am sorry to say we do want fine weather so much – I enclose 2/- you gave the men with the wood 1/- & the other you will want for the coal men. To begin with. Hope you are keeping well.

Yrs Truly
C A Elgar

I do hope you will return to Severn House after Hospital. I am quite happy about everything when you & your husband are there.

Brinkwells
10 Augt 1918
Signe

Thinking over plans I am writing to ask if you & your Husband would like to think of going into the “cottage”, the rooms over garage when you are ready to settle anything.

I wd hire a gas cooking stove, then gas and electric light in the living room & the bedrooms are sunny comfortable little rooms of course you can decide nothing I know at present but I thought I wd ask if you cared for the idea.

The house might be let for a while but I think it very unlikely especially as to little coal wd be allowed - & if let the tenants might be glad for that part to be occupied. I shd of course move carpenter's bench out & you cd have yr own things & the rest cd be moved out.

Such lovely weather so beautiful for harvest

Yr truly C A Elgar

Of course it wd be rent free & later all being well you might be able to help housemaid for us.

Brinkwells
Monday
12 Augt 1918
Signe

I am thinking of you & wondering if when you go to Hospital it might help you to have Lansdown's car instead of a taxi, if Lansdown had an available car it wd be much easier for you to get it & more comfortable they are such nice kind men & we would most gladly pay for it – so if you like the idea you could let Lansdown have this note telling them to send you a car if they have one when you telephone for it & to send the bill to us – I do so wish this might be a help to you & so glad if it is.

I hope you are liking the idea of the cottage –

It is lovely hot weather & the harvest so beautiful.

We expect the piano before long.

I trust you are all well

Yrs truly
C A Elgar

Brinkwells
24 Augt 1918
Signe

Only a line to tell you I had a most kind letter from Lansdown saying they would do all possible to get you when you let them hear, so hope you will have no difficulty.

Miss Carice arrived all well & the parcels.

Miss Carice tells me your Husband is kindly going to look after the letters if there is anything I can do to save him trouble let me hear. It is a lovely day again after a little rain

Best Wishes
Yrs very truly
C Alice Elgar

Signe's baby was born in early September and shortly afterwards Alice wrote to Joshua, her husband:

Brinkwells
Fittleworth
Sussex
8 September 1918
Mr Wright

Many thanks for your letter. I am so very glad to hear Signe & the little son are all well, please give her my kindest remembrances & best congratulations & hope the little boy will be a great joy to you both – I thank you very much too for going to Severn House I am so glad to hear it is all right – I do not know if the washing was done at the usual Laundry or not, so enclose P[ostal]O[rder]. If it is the usual Laundry please put PO in enclosed letter & post, if not, keep the order & pay whoever did it –

I hope your hand is getting better & I shall be so glad of a card later to hear how all is – yrs truly C A Elgar

Brinkwells
Fittleworth
Sussex
11 Sept 1918
Mr Wright

I send a line to say I hope Signe & the little boy are all well & that you will have them home very soon. I also write to say I have asked [James]Diamond, the gardener who comes to Severn House to send us some grapes if they are ripe – I hope he will be able to do this, we shd be so glad to have them. I have also asked him when doing it to let Signe have a nice bunch. Do hope the storm & rain have not done any harm.

Yrs truly
C A Elgar

Brinkwells
21 Sept 1918
Signe

I was glad to hear of you from Grace & hope you are getting quite strong again –

I was much vexed to hear the rain had come in billiard room & had written to Messrs King asking them to clear out spout in anticipation of heavy rain – I do hope they have done it, I should be so much obliged if yr Husband wd go in and see if is all right &, as a precaution, put some basins, he can take them from anywhere to catch the water in case of any more – it might do so much harm – I wd of course make up for his time & trouble & hope he will be able to look in at once – I think I will be at Severn House for a little time towards the middle of next month & so much hope you may be well enough to come down and help us a little.

Kind remembrances
Yrs truly C A Elgar

Brinkwells
Fittleworth
Sussex
28 Sept 1918
Signe

Thank you very much for your nice letters & very many thanks to your Husband for looking into the house every day. I hear King write that they will send in a week or so & have the outlet cleared out again.

We hope to come up in about a fortnight or so, & I shd of course be delighted if you cd do anything, but I do not think it wd be wise for you & your baby to be there till it is warmed.

I should be so afraid you might get a chill. I will see what I can arrange nearer the time & get it warmed and dusted up a little - & then I could see to everything as it is not long – I hope you will soon get strong again you must take care of yourself. We are so sorry to hear of the theft of the bicycle. What a cowardly disgraceful thing – I do hope your Husband may get it back – Kind remembrances

Yrs tly C A Elgar.

Brinkwells
Saturday
5 Oct 1918
Signe

We are hoping to come up on Friday next & it is so very puzzling to know how to get the rooms first aired and warmed – Grace is coming up from Felixtowe for the fortnight & so we expect to be in town.

I asked her to come up on Wednesday & stay with a friend if she cd & spend all day Thursday & Friday at S House & come to sleep on Friday but I am so disappointed that Mrs Mac cannot come as I hoped on Thursday – I do not like Grace to be there alone & she will need help. Could you be there some of the day ? If you had a fire in Servants Hall it wd soon be warm for you as I ask Diamond to light up furnace on Thursday morning & I thought Grace wd see it was all safe before she left – or do you know any nice reliable person who cd go in & help Thursday & Friday ? I do so wish you might, it must be somebody really reliable as there is everything about – I send you the key of Storeroom so that Diamond can have key of coke room & wood will be wanted for fires – if there is no firewood for

lighting could you order some in just to begin with & some fire lighters & a little soap & matches & soda. I suppose there is none & if possible a little paraffin – I fear all this is troublesome, but it is so difficult at this distance for me – Mrs Mac wd have been such a help. I shd bring our cook on Friday but I do not want Sir Edward to come to S House till Saturday when it will be more ready – He is to go away for a visit all being well on Monday

I do hope you are feeling better & strong - & shall hope to see you soon.

Yrs truly
C A Elgar
I should bring tea, sugar, butter, ham & eggs so bread & milk wd have to be ordered
I shall be so grateful for yr help only you must not do anything to tire yr self

Brinkwells
Tuesday – [otherwise undated – context suggests at this time]
Signe

I hope Grace will come on Thursday morning & she wd of course call on you for key – I am so sorry Mrs Mac is engaged but I have written to Mrs Manley who has been a great deal with Lady Petre & asked her to come & help & asked to come first to you & wait for Grace do not want her to go to the house alone, she wd not know what to do – I wd not allow her to but hope Grace will be there & meet her.

I hope we are not giving you much trouble & that you are better.

Please let Grace have enclosed [not present]

Yr tly C A Elgar

Brinkwells
10 Oct
1918
Signe

Would you please let Grace have enclosed – I hope you are all well, do not try to do anything to tire yr self or be in the cold. We are to go to Langham Hotel tomorrow night & hope to be in S House Saturday night,

Yr
C A Elgar

The next letter was written from Frank Schuster's Thames-side home, where years before Elgar had written some of the Violin Concerto.

The Hut, Bray, Berks
27 Oct 1918
Signe

Many thanks for your nice letter. We are spending the week end here & are to return to Severn House tomorrow.

We hope to go back to Brinkwells the end of the week or as soon after as possible & shall be so much obliged if your Husband would send our letters on again & of course he shd have a key & I shd be

so grateful if he cd first look over the house – I do not know how long the weather will let us stay at Brinkwells – I hope you are all well & enjoying a change, kindest regards

Yrs Truly C A Elgar

Brinkwells
Saturday
Signe

We have to come up to London on Wednesday next the 4th for a couple of nights – If we decide on coming to Severn House should you be able to ask Diamond to light furnace early on Wednesday morning & let him have Key, also let him have key of Coke room which is on the window ledge in the Stationary cupboard out of music room. We shd not lunch or dine at home & shd only want some bread and milk, wd bring eggs & butter so I cd easily manage breakfast & shd not need kitchen fire, if you cd render these 2 things and put hot water bottles in our beds on Wednesday morning I think we shd do quite well – Please send me a line to say if you cd manage this. I wd send you a telegram on Tuesday at latest. I think Diamond is to be heard of at that Vegetable Shop in Heath St. next to Newson's but his home address is

15 S Thomas Gardens
Queen's Crescent
Havenstock Hill

I do hope you are all well. It has been so nice & mild, such a help to the winter – Kind remembrances

Yours very truly
C A Elgar

Telegram dated 3 December 1918
Going to Langham. Could you meet me Severn House about 4.15 tomorrow
Elgar

Severn House
Thursday [postmarked 5 December 1918]
Signe

I came for 1 or 2 little things & I think the door lock is all right so have told King not to send till we return – you were such a help yesterday. I have put the coke key back in stationery cupboard.

By the end of the year, the three great chamber works which Elgar had composed at Brinkwells were finished and were with the publishers in advance of their premieres during the spring of 1919. Just the Cello Concerto needed completing – and once again Alice's practicality made it possible – great composition could not be completed without the necessary manuscript paper.

Brinkwells
Fittleworth
Sussex
8 Dec 1918
Signe
Sir Edward much wants some more music paper as soon as possible. Would you kindly get it for him

from Severn House & post it. I shall be so much obliged if you can do this. The paper is on the seat at the end of the billiard room, I send a pattern & Sir E wd like about 30 sheets if you could pack them flat & send them. I enclose 6d in stamps & will pay if it is more of course. I find my waterproof cape is left in the outer hall at S House wd you put it upstairs for me – Kind remembrances & hope this will not be a trouble.

Yrs Truly C A Elgar

Letter card dated 13 Dec 1918
Brinkwells

So many thanks for sending the paper. It was beautifully packed & came so quickly – still such mild weather. Hope you are all well

C A E

Brinkwells
18 Dec 1918
Signe

I was so sorry to hear your boy was unwell & hope he is much better – I thank your Husband so much for all his help yesterday – I hope Diamond & his daughter are comfortably settled at S House but I had so little time to put things out nicely.

I enclose a cheque for £1 [about £60 in today's money] – if you do not feel that is quite adequate do say so – I had not time to ask Grace if I owed anything for her food &c, I paid for it for her I know but there might be some little things – I hope to hear all is safe now at S H . Kindest remembrances
Yrs trly C A Elgar.

Brinkwells
21 Dec 1918
Signe

I thank you for your letter. I send a letter to say I am so sorry you had such an uncomfortable time going to S House, it never occurred to me to tell Diamond about yr going as I thought they wd quite understand you & yr Husband going & I asked them to send on letters as I thought yr Husband might not go perhaps & anyway save him trouble – The list of clothes can easily wait – only sorry for the disagreeableness – We shall hope to be back soon after Christmas I must try & arrange for some house cleaning should you be able to take in Grace for one or two nights?

Yrs truly with again best wishes C A E

This was the last complete letter in this collection which were sent to Signe though she did send the following brief note in the early new year, after a break-in was discovered:

The Police want a list of missing things – I had no time to examine suits in Sir E's wardrobes – Would it be giving you or Mr Wright too much trouble to send me a list of coats & trousers &c wh are on the shelves then I cd say what is gone. It wd be a great help – I left the room as I found it in case a detective shd want to see it -

By 1919 with Elgar's work at Brinkwells virtually done, the necessity to be back in London to organise performances of the chamber works in May and the concerto in October meant that less

time was spent at Brinkwells and the correspondence with Signe appears to have come to an end.

And following the completion of the cello concerto, the wood magic which had inspired such great works also appears to have waned. Elgar himself gloomily wrote to a friend after the completion of the concerto: 'my pen has been idle for months – so much the better for prosperity and posterity'.⁶

Alice herself was also terminally ill – though Elgar hardly recognised it. Only weeks before she died he wrote, somewhat enigmatically it has to be said, to his close friend Nicholas Kilburn: '...my dear Alice has been really ill (since Nov 2) & is only now beginning to be her active self – she gets out much as usual but easily tires, however she is progressing well while I *retrograde in evil – perhaps...*'.⁷

Alice's letters to Signe thus not only provide an insight into the Elgars' domestic life but they also show what a meticulous and caring manager Alice was for her husband. She did everything, right down to the smallest detail, to allow him his freedom to compose, and it is questionable whether he ever realised exactly what she had done for him during the 30 years of their marriage.

Following her death in April 1920, Rosa Burley wrote: 'That Alice had devoted her whole life to Edward is beyond question. She really did worship him with a blindness to his faults and indeed to his occasional cruelty to her, that seemed almost incredible. But it is equally true that, while relying on this devotion he was in the first place rather impatient of its blindness and in the second uncomfortably guilty over his debt to her'.⁸

Perhaps these sacrifices had weighed heavily on her. But the privations of living so remotely in a cottage with such spartan facilities coupled with the extra burden of running two homes simultaneously during this crucial period could hardly have benefitted her failing health.

Richard Westwood-Brookes is a journalist who has assembled a large collection of Elgar's letters, manuscripts and ephemera. In 1998 he established a memorial to Elgar at Wolverhampton Wanderers football stadium, where Elgar had been a supporter. He has written extensively about Elgar and his music. He has recently published Elgar and the Press: A life in newsprint.

6 Letter to Nicholas Kilburn dated November 11th 1920.

7 Letter to Nicholas Kilburn dated November 11th 1920.

8 Extract from Rosa Burley and Frank C Carruthers, *Edward Elgar; the Record of a Friendship* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 211.

Edward, Doris and What Might Have Been

Arthur Reynolds

In December 2019, I bid successfully on a lot of eight hitherto unknown letters from Sir Edward Elgar to Miss Doris Johnson offered by an auction house near Billingshurst, Sussex. Written between October 1932 and August 1933, the correspondence had its origin in Elgar's acceptance of an invitation to conduct *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* with the North Staffordshire District Choral Society at Hanley on 27 October 1932.

Previous to this performance, the last time Elgar had conducted *King Olaf* in the Potteries was its première during the 1896 Hanley Festival. Arguably Elgar's turning-point triumph as a composer, the impact of that first performance was summed up by Reginald Nettel (a member of the orchestra on the occasion) in his published reminiscences:

By the time the opening chorus was over the audience was in a state of high expectation, and when the second chorus burst upon them, 'The Challenge of Thor', they knew that they were on the verge of a new age in music - that this young man who had fiddled among them had now found his true vocation. Men who are now hardened veterans of the orchestra speak of the intensity of the atmosphere at that concert as an unforgettable experience.¹

An attempt to recall Elgar to Hanley for a 25th anniversary performance in 1921 had ended in failure, owing to what Henry Clayton, Elgar's concert agent at Novello & Co., called the 'distinctly mean' response on the part of the Choral Society's patron, Mr. Twyford of Twyford's Sanitary Pottery. Clayton had proposed Elgar's standard conducting fee of 50 guineas; acting for Twyford, one Lieutenant Wood responded with an offer of 15 guineas, protesting that a sum any larger represented, 'the mercenary point of view'. Sir Edward was not amused: '...all these presidents do nothing for the society,' he wrote to Clayton, 'except lend their names & think they are helping the cause by boring me to death by making me stay in their dreary houses!'.²

All that was to change eleven years later, when Elgar received this letter:

23 September 1932.

Received: 24 September 1932

Dear Sir Edward Elgar

Mr. Sampson Walker, the President of the North Staffordshire District Choral Society tells me that we are to have the pleasure of entertaining you during your short stay in the Potteries, when you come for the Concert on October 27.

We shall be pleased to put our saloon car entirely at your disposal, unless you prefer to bring your own chauffeur over, in which case we can find him accommodation.

1 R. Nettel, *Music in the Five Towns* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 41.

2 J.N. Moore, *Elgar and His Publishers, Vol. II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 814.

Would you kindly let me know which day to expect you.

Yours sincerely
Doris Johnson (Miss)³

Edward replied two days later:

25 September, 1932
Dear Miss Doris Johnson

It is most kind of you to give me the pleasure of staying at The Upper House during my short visit to Stoke on Trent. I am not sure of the times of the rehearsals, but you shall hear directly when these are settled.

I hope to motor up & my chauffeur will remain with me, but I shall be greatly obliged if your own car may convey me to the Hall as you kindly suggest.

With many thanks
Believe me to be
Yours sincerely⁴

This time the conducting fee negotiations had proved successful. Thomas Hammond, the Choral Society Secretary, offered 35 guineas. Clayton countered, requesting 100 guineas. They settled at 60 guineas plus a hero's welcome. Hammond wrote to Elgar:

17 October, 1932
Dear Sir Edward,

The Lord Mayor of Stoke-on-Trent, Alderman Miss Farmer, together with the members of my Committee, think that your visit to the City next week is of more than ordinary interest, and therefore ought to receive a little more than ordinary recognition.

Your former associations with the musical life of the district, and the high esteem in which you are held throughout North Staffordshire, has prompted a suggestion that you should be given a Civic welcome by the Lord Mayor on behalf of the Citizens.

I have received a message from her this morning, stating that she will be delighted to carry the proposal out if you will kindly sanction it.

If you agree, we suggest a gathering in the Mayor's parlour at seven o'clock, before the concert commences, with the Officials and Committee of the Society, and the ex Lord Mayors of the City present.

Barlaston is only a few minutes run in the car from Hanley, and Miss Johnson will do all possible to assist.

We shall esteem it a favour if you will consider this favourably, and give us an opportunity of expressing our regard for you. Can you oblige me with an early reply, so that I may send the invitations out?

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,
T. Hammond⁵

3 MB transcript letter book 265.

4 MB transcript letter book 265.

5 MB transcript letter 4361.



The Upper House today
(Upper House Hotel Archive)

There was nothing dreary about the house or its occupants that greeted Elgar when he arrived on 26 October. The Upper House was built in 1845 by Josiah Wedgwood for his grandson Francis. Situated on a site overlooking the Trent Valley at Barlaston, it was now home to the children of Henry James Johnson (eldest of the four Johnson brothers who founded one of Staffordshire's most prosperous potteries). Johnson Brothers manufactured tiles and tableware for both British and worldwide markets. Following the death of their mother in 1929, and their father in 1931, Doris and her five siblings inherited Henry Johnson's house and fortune.

Born in 1889, Doris was 43 when she and her dog Sandy welcomed the 75-year-old composer to The Upper House (today a hotel).

The concert came off brilliantly, judging by the *Staffordshire Evening Sentinel's* account published the following day:

Without doubt last night's Elgar concert in the Victoria Hall, Hanley produced the finest dramatic singing that North Staffordshire has heard for a great many years.

Sir Edward Elgar himself conducted the North Staffordshire District Choral Society, and we who were privileged to hear will remember the occasion as a high light in our musical experience. The works performed were "King Olaf", written in 1896 for the North Staffordshire Musical Festival, and then also conducted by Sir Edward himself; the "Sea Pictures"; and the choral work, "The Music Makers."

In "King Olaf" the choir grasped its opportunity with enthusiasm. With the Challenge of Thor we had the first taste of the colour and quality of the singing. Fine bold phrasing, a swinging rhythm, and a sense of power made that chorus distinguished. The mystic passages were sung with admirable control, and there was nothing more delightful than the lilting three-four chorus, "A little bird in the air," which fairly danced along. Where Elgar painted strife and bustle the singling was flexible and mobile, and the singers revelled in the music as Elgar must have revelled in the composition of it 36 years ago.

The solo singing, too, attained distinction. Mr. Frank Titterton, who had the heavy tenor part gave us both dramatic and lyrical vocalism of the highest order.

Miss Joan Elwes – cousin of the late Gervase Elwes – gave a notable performance. Her easeful voice, and her evident appreciation of the dramatic demands of the work made her singing a memorable part of the evening. Mr. Frank Phillips dramatised the baritone singing finely in the early Pagan part....⁶

Elgar was more than pleased with the performance. He sent an inscribed photo to his co-conductor John James and wrote to thank Joan Elwes, whose top C at the end of *King Olaf's Epilogue* clearly thrilled him.

13 November 1932

Dear Joan

I have been rushing wildly about or I should have sent a note to thank you for your singing in K. Olaf at Hanley. It was like the good old times to hear a chorus like that. I think the part suited you & your high C was noted with joy.

All thanks
Yours sincerely,
E.E.⁷

But what apparently was most memorable to him was the hospitality shown by the young lady and her dog. That Doris and Sandy enchanted Elgar is clear from the letter he wrote to her dated the day after the concert:

28 October 1932

Received: 4 November 1932

My Dear Miss Johnson:

I've made a very quick journey to Worcester to send most hearty thanks for the kindest & sweetest hospitality I have ever experienced. Thank you sincerely for my kind care. Marco is very pleased with his ball and sends his respects to Sandy: to these please add my kind regards to your sister and brother. My love to you and that marvellous dress.

Believe me to be yours sincerely,
Edward Elgar

Evidently, they had talked about meeting again in Manchester, where Elgar was engaged to conduct the Hallé in a performance of *Gerontius* on 26 January 1933. Doris makes mention of the prospective concert in her reply:



Doris and Sandy
(Upper House Hotel Archive)

6 MB transcript press cuttings.

7 Louise Grattan Collection 016.

6 November 1932

Dear Sir Edward Elgar,

Thank you for your letter. I am glad you had such a good journey home.

It was a great honour & pleasure to have you with us, & I feel so much the better for having met you.

I thought you might be interested to read the enclosed. Everyone said how good the Broadcast was.

I hope you are feeling more rested.

Your dogs would give you a great welcome. Sandy sends his love to Marco & is pleased to hear he likes the ball.

With kindest regards, & we shall look forward to seeing you at the Hallé Concert next year.

Yours very sincerely
Doris Johnson⁸

Edward lost no time issuing an invitation on the headed paper of The Worcestershire Club:

8 November 1932

Dear Miss Johnson

Many thanks for the newspaper paragraph about the wireless. If you wish please come round to the Artist's room at Manchester.

Yours very sincerely,
Edward Elgar

Edward's budding attraction to a kindred dog lover is suggested by his next letter to Doris, written on Master of the King's Musick stationery:

23 December 1932

Dear Miss Johnson

Your Christmas greeting to Marco and his slave (me) is so charming that I must be allowed to send thanks for it.

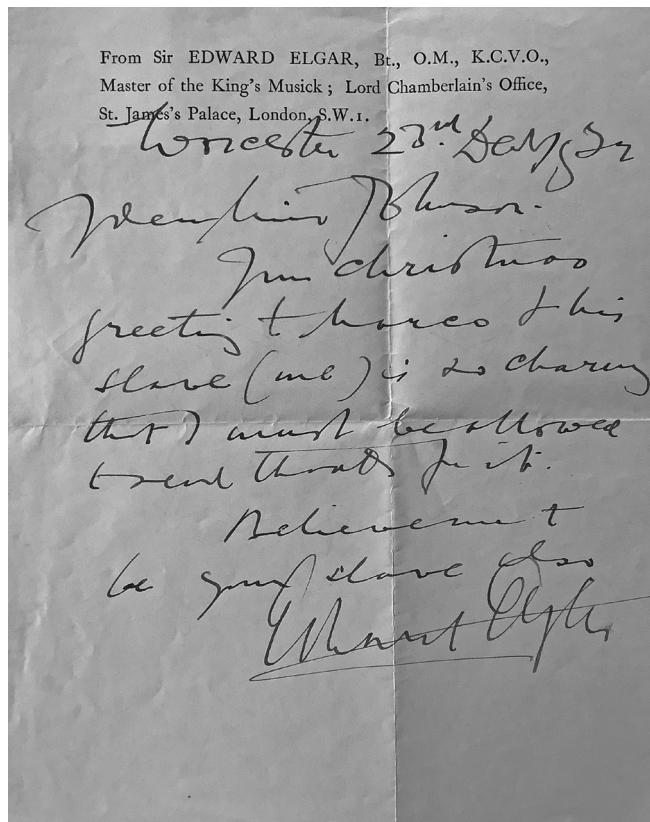
Believe me to be your slave also,
Edward Elgar

Doris was growing interested too. In mid-January she wrote (her letter now lost) proposing that they meet for lunch in Manchester on the day of the concert. Elgar wrote back:



Elgar with Marco 1932
(Arthur Reynolds' archive)

8 MM transcript letter 4324.



**Elgar to Doris Johnson,
23 December 1932
(Arthur Reynolds' Archive)**

I thrilled as of yore to every towering climax and to every precious touch of intimate reticence. There stood John Coates approaching seventy, grasping the back of his chair, living through every phrase with all the intensity of feeling we first experienced thirty years ago - it was grand to renew that early association of composer and singer. Muriel Brunskill and Roy Henderson, too, both sang from memory in a mood of sustained spiritual exhalation.⁹

Three days after the concert, Edward wrote again to Doris on Marl Bank stationery:

29 January 1933
Dear Miss Johnson

I found as I feared, a great accumulation of - well rubbish which had to be dealt with. I hasten to send this thanks to you for making my journey to Manchester and back possible, and for converting what promised to be a dismal affair into a most pleasant expedition. Marco and Mina, who are both well now, gave me a wild greeting - I wish their rabbiting holiday were possible,

With kindest regards to your [illegible] and to you especially,
Yours very sincerely,
Edward Elgar

When Doris joined a spring party of friends in Spain, she sent Elgar a postcard. Edward replied:

17 April 1933
Dear Miss Johnson

I was delighted and uplifted by your card which you most kindly sent from Spain. I hope you and your party had a very enjoyable tour. I always hear of Spain with the greatest interest and long to go there, but that will never be possible.

The next best thing is to hear from friends their experiences. I hope your friend Sandy (is that right?) [illegible] & welcoming. On your return you will find England looking its best to greet you,

With kindest regards & the dogs' love in which I furtively join.
Believe me to be, yours vry sincerely
Edward Elgar

Please distribute suitable greetings to your brother & sister

Doris wrote again but that letter too has been lost. The subject seems to have been one of congratulation on his airborne journey to and from Paris, together with an invitation to lunch; here is Edward's reply:

11 June 1933
My dear Miss Johnson

It was most kind of you to write. I have been overwhelmed with silly business & a vast accumulation of letters & I should have thanked you at once. I hope you are back and that you all have the happiest memories of Spain.

My journey was very enjoyable, and the 'air' passage [illegible]...no oily odours, no dust, only calm. I left Paris at 9:00 am was at Croydon (speckless) at 10:50. My daughter met me in her car and I drove straight away here. Marco & Mina greeted me and all is well. I fear there is little chance of being able to come to lunch - I am too much occupied, alas!

9 Cooper, 'Music in Manchester,' *Musical Times*, 74 (April 1933), 305.

16 January 1933
My dear Miss Johnson

It is most kind of you to think of luncheon, but I have to travel from London to Manchester. I am looking forward very much to seeing you again.

With kindest regards from yours very sincerely,
Edward Elgar

The occasion would prove to be the last time Elgar would conduct the Hallé Concert Society. The *Musical Times* gave the concert a glowing review:

The two concerts of distinction in the second half of the Hallé season just concluded were both choral - Elgar conducted *Gerontius* and Harty the *Mass of Life*. Once again Elgar wrought the miracle of compelling from a strange chorus and band perfect obedience to his own emotional reactions to his own work, and he did it all while seated!

‘Steel-blue light’ and ‘golden glow’: Introductory Movements of *The Crown of India*¹

Tihomir Popović

Edward Elgar’s Masque *The Crown of India* (1912) is one of the composer’s least known works, even if today we cannot speak of an ‘almost universal neglect’ of the music, as Corissa Gould could in the pages of this journal back in 2003.² Several authors have discussed the Masque since the 1990s,³ the music was published in the Elgar Complete Edition in 2004⁴, and an integral CD recording with reconstructions by Anthony Payne was released in 2009.⁵ Even so, many aspects of this work have not yet been the subject of musicological scrutiny.

There has been some debate regarding Elgar’s colonial or imperialistic⁶ attitude in *The Crown of India*. This focused on the question whether Elgar was really a fervent imperialist and the

Masque thus the expression of his true beliefs, or whether it was just a lucrative, but by no means authentically Elgarian, project.⁷ Interesting as this question is, it will not be discussed here again: enough has already been said on the subject; Nalini Ghuman’s argument is especially plausible.⁸ If there were apologetic voices regarding Elgar’s motives, no one really questioned the imperialistic, oriental tone of the Masque itself: it was only Elgar’s personal attitude in this matter that caused the mentioned controversy. That the music and the text of *The Crown of India* are full of expressions of colonial and imperialistic ideology, whatever their background might have been and however deeply or shallowly they were rooted in Elgar’s worldview remained, rightfully, undisputed.

The present article seeks to analyse some of the music of *The Crown of India* without re-opening the said debate and without judging the composer’s personal attitude towards colonialism and imperialism. It is an attempt to describe and interpret some of the compositional means of Elgar’s music without valuing the depth or the ‘authenticity’ of their motives. Some parts of the Masque, of course, have already been analysed.⁹ However, these analyses concentrate mostly on the best-known movements of Elgar’s Masque, such as Agra’s song ‘Hail, Immemorial Ind’ or the ‘March of the Mogul Emperors’. This article will thus discuss two movements of *The Crown of India* which have hitherto not been the focus of musicological analysis, at least not in the English-speaking world: the introductions for the first and second tableaux.¹⁰ These opening movements offer singular opportunities to understand the music of the Masque as a whole. Before the analysis, a short synopsis should remind the reader of the plot of *The Crown of India*.

A Tale of Two ‘Other’ Cities

The Masque was commissioned by Oswald Stoll for the London Coliseum to celebrate the Delhi Coronation Durbar of 1911 for King-Emperor George V.¹¹ Henry Hamilton wrote the text for which Elgar composed the music. The 1911 Durbar was a unique spectacle, as George V was the first (and only) British ruler who came to India for his imperial coronation. Among other activities already described in the pages of this journal and elsewhere, this event also included a proclamation by the King-Emperor, in which he announced that Bengal, partitioned under Lord Curzon, was to be reunited and that the new capital of British-India was to be Delhi.¹² This second decision was a highly symbolical one. It made clear that the British imperial authority was claiming, i.e. constructing, a kind of continuity with the older history of Indian monarchs. It also offered the central motive for the plot of Elgar’s and Hamilton’s Masque.

- 1 The author would like to thank Elise Scheurer and Meinhard Sarembea for their very kind assistance during the work on this article.
- 2 Corissa Gould 2003, ‘Edward Elgar, *The Crown of India*, and the Image of the Empire’, *The Elgar Society Journal*, 13/1 (March 2003), 25.
- 3 Robert Anderson, ‘Elgar’s Passage to India’, *The Elgar Society Journal*, 9/1 (March 1995), 15-19, Robert Anderson, ‘Foreword’, *Elgar Complete Edition* (London: The Elgar Society Edition in association with Novello 1982-), Vol. 18, *The Crown of India*, ed. by Robert Anderson (2004), VII-XXXI, Ana Nalini Gwynne, *India in the English Musical Imagination, 1890-1940* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest Information and Learning Company, 2003, = PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley), Gould, ‘Edward Elgar, *The Crown of India*’, *The Elgar Society Journal*, 13/1 (March 2003), 25-35, Gould, “‘An Inoffensive Thing’: Edward Elgar, *The Crown of India* and Empire”, in: Martin Clayton, Bennett Zon (Eds.), *Music and Orientalism in British Empire, 1780s-1940s. Portrayal of the East* (Aldeshot: Ashgate, 2007), 147-163, Nalini Ghuman, ‘Elgar and the British Raj: Can the Mughals March’, in: Byron Adams (Ed.), *Edward Elgar and His World*, (Princeton University Press, 2007), 249-285, Joe Pellegrino, ‘Mughals, Music, and *The Crown of India* Masque: Reassessing Elgar and the Raj’, *South Asian Review*, 31/1 (November 2010), 13-36, Andrew Neill: ‘The Empire Bites Back. Reflections on Elgar’s Imperial Masque of 1912’, *The Elgar Society Journal*, 17/4 (April 2012), 24-41, Nalini Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj. India in the English Musical Imagination, 1897-1947* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 53-104, Tihomir Popović, *Der Dschungel und der Tempel. Indien-Konstruktionen in der britischen Musik und dem Musikschritium 1784-1914* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2017), 238-313.
- 4 *Elgar Complete Edition* (London: The Elgar Society Edition in association with Novello 1982-), Vol. 18, *The Crown of India*, ed. by Robert Anderson (2004).
- 5 *Sir Edward Elgar. The Crown of India*, BBC Philharmonic, Sir Andrew Davies, Chandos CHAN 10570(2).
- 6 These concepts have been closely examined by the present author in: Popović, *Der Dschungel und der Tempel*, *passim* (for further references: *Ibid.*).

- 7 Cf. i.a.: Julian Rushton: ‘The A.T. Shaw Lecture 2006: Elgar, Kingdom, and Empire’, *The Elgar Society Journal*, 14/6 (November 2006), 22, J.P.E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 19 (and the literature cited therein), on the one side and Gould, ‘Edward Elgar, *The Crown of India*’, *The Elgar Society Journal*, 13/1 (March 2003), 154, and Gould, “‘An Inoffensive Thing’”, in: Clayton, Zon (Eds.), *Music and Orientalism in British Empire*, (Aldeshot: Ashgate, 2007), *passim*, as well as Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj*, 90-92, on the other.
- 8 Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj*, 90-92.
- 9 Cf. references in footnote 2.
- 10 For the German speaking world cf. Popović, *Der Dschungel und der Tempel*, 238-313.
- 11 If not stated otherwise, the following information on the Masque is based on literature stated in footnote 2.
- 12 Regarding the Durbar of 1911, further information and references to literature from other research areas can be found in Popović, *Der Dschungel und der Tempel*, 239-243.

The Crown of India consists of two tableaux.¹³ The first one is an allegorical representation of the Masque's ideological background, whilst the second is a transposition of the real Durbar of 1911 onto the music hall stage. In the first tableau, Mother India is assembling her daughter cities. She greets them and Agra responds to this greeting with the famous song 'Hail, Immemorial Ind'. However, two prominent daughters of India, Delhi and Calcutta, are late. When they arrive, they quarrel about the question as to which one of them should be the capital of India.

The Mughals support the claim of Delhi, whereas high-ranking officers of the Honourable East India Company arrive in support of Calcutta. St. George, the patron Saint of England, is then asked to decide, but he answers that it is the King who should do so. In the second tableau the King does decide, giving his herald orders to proclaim Delhi the capital of India and Calcutta the 'premier city'. Delhi is crowned accordingly and the anthem 'God save the Emperor' is sung.

The construction of typical colonial binarisms in the plot and the text of the Masque is obvious: almost all personages representing India are female (the figure of India herself and her daughter cities), whilst Britain is mainly represented by male characters. There are of course also male Indian figures, e.g. the Mughals who support the Delhi cause. However, they neither speak nor sing. The singing representative of India is Agra, one of India's daughters, whilst St. George sings for Britain.

Henry Hamilton's texts for the songs of St. George ('Rule of Britain') and Agra ('Hail, Immemorial Ind') contain another colonial binarism, obvious from the very titles. Whilst Agra uses the archaic 'Hail', praising her mother India as 'Immemorial' and calling her 'Ind', the title of St. George's song is all realism and explicit expression. There is no attempt at poetic language, no ambiguity in the 'Rule of Britain'. Translated into Agra's tone, the song would probably have borne a title like 'The Sceptre of Albion': but there is no place for such stylistic figures when Britain is represented in *The Crown of India*. The colonial binarism of a masculine, enlightened, straightforward and resolute force from the West on the one side and a feminine, mystical, poetic and exotic world of India on the other is consequent in its colonial ideology and – fitting to the music hall audience of its age – easy to grasp.



Coliseum Theatre (Arthur Reynolds' collection)

Culture and nature, modernity and antiquity: Introduction to Tableau I

In the music the colonial binarisms can be observed throughout the Masque and, in a nutshell, in the introductory movements to the two tableaux. The introductions are both conceived in a binary form, the first part of which remains the same (with slight modifications). This first part of the Introduction to Tableau I (bar 1-18) is based on pre-existing musical material from *The Moods of Dan*, and is thus initially not connected to India or a musical vision of it. On the contrary, it has distinctly British associations, as the Dan in question was the bulldog of George Robertson Sinclair, the Organist at Hereford Cathedral,¹⁴ of the XI. Enigma Variation fame.¹⁵ The musical tone of this first part of both Introductions can be described as Elgar's well-known pomp and circumstance style. This section of the introduction has, in the vocabulary of the classical form, a sentence-like structure with a basic idea, its transposed repetition and fragmentation. Thus the form is of great clarity, as is the metrical character and the rhythm. The section is neither too chromatic for the period nor is it drastically diatonic; its musical style represents rather a balance between those two extremes. It also contains elements of contrapuntal writing:



Edward Elgar, *The Crown of India*, Introduction to Tableau I, bar 1-4.

These characteristics of form, harmony and counterpoint would not sound particularly interesting were the second section not the exact opposite in every respect. It is radically homophonous, with a melody developing over a drone. It can be described as extremely diatonic and modal 'in D', with a short excursion into the 'Neapolitan' harmony (E-flat major). The leading tone is missing and the seventh scale-degree is a C natural. The key is a minor one (it could, at the beginning, be described as Hypodorian) whereas the first part begins in the major. Differences to the first section can also be found on the level of rhythm: with triplets, slurs and a *sostenuto*

13 The following summary is based on Henry Hamilton's Libretto: *Elgar Complete Edition* (London: The Elgar Society Edition in association with Novello 1982-), Vol. 18, *The Crown of India*, ed. by Robert Anderson (2004), 2-20.

14 Anderson, 'Foreword', *The Crown of India*, ed. by Robert Anderson (2004), X, XV, Byron Adams, 'Elgar and the Persistence of Memory', in: Adams (Ed.), *Edward Elgar and His World*, (Princeton University Press, 2007), 83.

15 Julian Rushton, *Elgar: 'Enigma' Variations* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 48 f.

the rhythmical structure is obliterated. The form also consists of groups of bars not particularly characteristic of the classical form: 3+4. Finally, the dynamics of the two sections are also in contrast to one another: the first part begins in *forte* and develops towards *fortissimo*, while the second section begins *fortissimo*, develops towards *piano* and ends *pianississimo*.



Edward Elgar, *The Crown of India*, Introduction to Tableau I, bar 19-25.

These binarisms are summarised in the following table:

First section	Second section
Major beginning	Minor beginning
Balance between chromaticism and diatonicism	Extremely diatonic
'Classical' form	Uncharacteristic form
Clear rhythmical structure	Obliterated rhythmical structure
Fully harmonised and slightly contrapuntal, full orchestra sound	Melody over a drone, reduced sound
Major-Minor tonal	Modal
Allegro	Andante (Quasi <i>recitativo</i>)
<i>Forte</i> beginning	<i>Fortissimo</i> beginning, towards <i>piano</i> ,
<i>Fortissimo</i> ending	<i>pianississimo</i> ending

The motif of the second section is, later in the Masque, clearly attributed to India (e.g. in 'India Greets her Cities', bar 21 ff). It is, in fact, India's *leitmotiv*. Thus it does not seem far-fetched that its counterpart, the first section of the Introduction, symbolises Britain, especially as the material already pre-existed in a very 'British' context. Explicit binarisms of this kind are a pre-eminent element of the entire work, as will be shown. Understood in this light, between the representations of the Self and the colonial Other, the extreme differences between the two parts of this very short Introduction become understandable. It seems obvious that the 'Indian' part of the introduction corresponds with the colonial stereotypes usually attributed to India, whilst the 'British' part can be connected with the self-description of the colonial overlords. The 'British' section of the introduction is harmonic and contrapuntal – thus complex and highly organised – whilst the organisation in the second section is much more simple, 'closer to nature'. The formal organisation, the metre and the rhythm of the first part are 'classical', clear, strict. The smaller formal units are gathered in groups of 4 or 2 bars; a classical form 'law' is prevalent here. The 'Indian' section is 'free' in this respect – i.e. it is a construction of formal freedom by the described musical means.

The light effects described in the libretto support the musical binarisms:

After a Musical prelude, the Curtain rises on darkness, upon which a faint steel-blue light gradually dawns, warming by degrees to amethyst, which slowly changing to rose, is finally succeeded by a golden glow which deepens and increases till all the scene is flooded with full light.¹⁶

The change between the steel blue of the beginning and the golden glow at the end can be interpreted as a parallel of coming from a cold, rational tradition of the West to a warmer, opulent world of the East. It seems to be the equivalent of the musical image of 'Occidental' order and organisation (contrapuntal, harmonic, metrically and rhythmically precise music of the first part) into the world of 'Oriental' nature (quasi *recitativo*, *sostenuto*, unclassical rhythmical and formal structures in the second part). These and similar stereotypes were, of course, widely spread in the colonial discourse. To illustrate this, one need only consider the music writing of the period. The following passage from Arthur Henry Fox Strangways's *The Music of Hindostan* (1914) seems particularly revealing. In it, the author tries to create a binary contrast between the 'harmonic tune' of the 'Western art music' and the 'melodic tune' of India (and other non-Western areas):

But since harmony gives importance [...] to this or that note of the tune, the 'harmonic' tune will in its turn tend to travel along the most telling points of the harmony and to reinforce its crises; and the significance of such music will be the result of the conflict between melodic idiosyncrasy and harmonic necessity. The compromise between these two impulses will lead to closeness of structure and make for unity, because each checks the tendency of other to free improvisation. 'Melodic' tune, on the other hand, contains its law in itself, and it has merely to display that law, not to conflict with some other. Provided the 'laws' of melody are not transgressed, one particular structure seems no more desirable than another; and this leads easily to a variety and elaboration of detail, which blunts the sharp outline of *tune* and throws the weight rather upon definition of *mood*.¹⁷

16 Elgar *Complete Edition* (London: The Elgar Society Edition in association with Novello 1982-), Vol. 18, *The Crown of India*, ed. by Robert Anderson (2004), 3.

17 Arthur Henry Fox Strangways, *The Music of Hindostan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1914, reprint 1965), 4 f.

This binary contrast of a ‘natural’, Eastern ‘melodic tune’ and the highly organised Western one, involved in the complex system of harmony, is a reflection of the same stereotype expressed through music in the Introduction of the first tableau. Fox Strangways describes Indian music principles of ‘melodic tunes’ as a kind of Kiplingesque jungle law, whereas the ‘Western’ music law is to be understood as much more elaborate and humanly cultivated. This is the binary difference between the concepts of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, which clearly places the static colonial Other far below the ‘development’ of the Western Self.

Another passage in Fox Strangways’s treatise puts this even more plainly: there it is stated that beauty of the ‘melodic music’ (such as is to be found in India) is the beauty of briony and gossamer, contrasting to the artificial music of the West.¹⁸ There are also very similar binary descriptions of Indian and Western music to be found in other music treatises of the colonial era¹⁹. Of course, these ideas were reflections of the common discourse in which India is often (if not exclusively) constructed as a world of wild nature. It is hardly a coincidence that perhaps the probably best-known book in English on India is about a jungle – the world of nature par excellence – and its inhabitants.

Ronald Inden described the jungle topos in the colonial discourse as a means to construct a contrast between the enlightened culture of the West and the ‘Hinduism’ (which, as a uniform concept, can in itself be regarded as a colonial construction). Whilst the principles of Enlightenment are ‘mutual exclusion, unity, centredness, determinacy and uniformity’,²⁰ the Western concept of Hinduism ‘does not consist of a system of opposed but interdependent parts, but a wide tangle of overlapping and merely juxtaposed pieces’.²¹ Thus, it is hardly a surprise that a jungle is, according to Inden, the most frequent colonial metaphor for Hinduism.²² The binary descriptions of the ‘two worlds’, the Indian nature and the British culture and order, the Other’s jungle law and the orderly state law of the Self, resemble very strongly Fox Strangways’s definitions of the ‘melodic music’ of India and the ‘harmonic music’ of the West. The musical means with which Elgar chooses to begin his Masque can be interpreted as musical reflections of these discursive formations. The ‘Indian’ motif in the second part of the Introduction of *The Crown of India* is a very ‘natural’ one, lacking the complex characteristics which, in the colonial discourse, symbolise the Western Self.

Further postcolonial readings of the Introduction to the First Tableau of *The Crown of India* seem possible without excluding the first one. The slow, archaic, Hypodorian melody over a drone in the ‘Indian’ part of the introduction, and the fast passages in a tone which may be described as one of Elgar’s standard tones in the first part, seem to be the musical equivalents of yet another binary stereotype. They are the images of a ‘dynamic West’ vs. ‘static East’, ‘development’ of the Occident against the ‘fixity’ of the Orient.²³ The two very different musical styles in the Introduction to the first tableau can also be regarded as ‘modern’ vs. ‘archaic’, which corresponds to the colonial idea of a Western power whose mission was to ‘develop’ and ‘improve’ an Orient still living in the

18 *Ibid.* 5.

19 Cf. Popović, *Der Dschungel und der Tempel*, 39-135.

20 Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 88.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*, 86; s. also: Don Randall, *Kipling’s Imperial Boy. Adolescence and Cultural Hybridity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2000), 74.

23 Regarding the concept of fixity cf. e.g. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge 1994), 66-84.

‘times immemorial’. It is certainly not a coincidence that India is explicitly called ‘immemorial Ind’ in the title of Agra’s song mentioned above.

For the understanding of the colonial and imperialistic aspect in Elgar’s music, it matters but little whether all these discursive elements were central aspects of the composer’s personal philosophy, or just a way of attracting the paying audience by way of stimulating through musical equivalents of the stereotypes well known to them. They are there and they very obviously correspond with the discourse of their era.

The Warriors enter: Introduction to Tableau II

The Introduction to Tableau II begins in the same Elgarian manner as the first one: the first section of this binary movement is composed in much the same manner as in the first Introduction and requires no further discussion. The second section, however, is very different from its equivalent in the Introduction to Tableau I, although it also stands in strong contrast to the first section. It is written in a style that can best be described as ‘free-tonal’ (bar 17 f). At first, we hear a call of the stage trumpet in A-flat minor, but then the melodic line becomes much more complex and develops without a clear tonal centre. This melodic line, which accompanies the ‘Entrance of the Warriors’, is then varied and repeated. (Admittedly, the warriors are not explicitly called ‘Indian warriors’, but the thought seems self-evident, as British warriors are called ‘soldiers’ in the Masque.²⁴) Several chords interrupt this trumpet line, but they are also not easily put into a tonal context. Thus, the entire section makes the impression of an artfully created tonal chaos. Like the ‘Indian’ section of the first introduction, this section is composed as a single melodic line (accompanied by a tam tam this time). The dynamics of the two parts are also organised differently: The first part begins *piano* this time, whereas the second one is played *fortissimo*.



Edward Elgar, *The Crown of India*, Introduction to Tableau II, bar 17 f (Entrance of Warriors).

The following table summarises the binarisms in the Introduction to Tableau II:

First section	Second section
Major beginning	Minor beginning
Balance between chromaticism and diatonic composing	Extremely chromatic
Fully harmonised and slightly contrapuntal, full orchestra sound	Melodic line with tam tam accompaniment
Major-minor tonal	Simulated free tonal
<i>Piano</i> beginning, developing towards forte	<i>Fortissimo</i>

24 Cf. ‘Entrance of John Company’, *Elgar Complete Edition* (London: The Elgar Society Edition in association with Novello 1982-), Vol. 18, *The Crown of India*, ed. by Robert Anderson (2004), 5.



ACK Ware's photograph for the *Daily Sketch* of Tableau II 'Ave Imperator' in the Coliseum Production of *The Crown of India*. India touches the scepter of the Queen Empress. The costumes were designed by Percy Anderson (Arthur Reynolds' collection).

The 'Indian' sections of the two introductions are more closely connected than one might think upon hearing them for the first time. Their common function seems to be to create a strong contrast to the first section. Partly, this contrast is achieved in the same manner in both movements: by reducing the music texture to a melodic line with the simplest possible accompaniment. The melodic lines in these two sections are, of course, very different. The first one is radically diatonic, the second one extremely chromatic and almost atonal. These characteristics, however, have something important in common: they stand at two tonal extremes, whereas the first section balances chromaticism and diatonicism and clearly represents one of Elgar's standard compositional styles.

The obvious differences between the two 'Indian' sections have to do with the dramatic concept of the Masque. The first tableau begins in the atmosphere of an archaic, mystical and latently erotic Orient; it contains the 'Dance of Nautch Girls', as well as the aforementioned discussion between the allegoric figures: India and her cities. The second tableau plays on a much more realistic level and represents a musical and dramatic transposition of the Delhi Durbar of 1911, which was, above all, a great display of military power. Thus, it is no wonder that the Introduction to the second Tableau ends with the 'Entrance of Warriors'. However, although the sound quality of the 'Indian' section of the second Introduction may seem very different from that of the first one, the idea behind it is the same: constructing an audible, easily discernible binarism between the Orient and the Occident, between India and Britain, between the Other and the Self.

The stereotype employed in the second Introduction is, of course, different from those in the first one. India is, in the colonial discourse, not only a distant, un-modern, archaic world we encounter in the second section of the first Introduction. It is also a country of peril, of strange and incomprehensible dangers. It seems that it is this stereotype that finds its resonance in the 'Indian'

part of the second tableau. It is one of the well-known colonial stereotypes. Rashna Singh writes about the representation of Indian landscapes in the colonial literature as landscapes of great beauty, but also of great perils.²⁵ Thinking of the British literature concerning India, we may remember Kipling's Shere Khan, or the unknown peril that Adela Quested does or doesn't encounter in the Marabar caves in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). In the Introduction to Tableau II of *The Crown of India* we can also discern the colonial stereotype of the 'chaotic' Orient, as we encounter a tonal chaos accompanying the warriors.

These aspects – the chaotic, the perilous and the natural – are by no means disconnected. On the contrary, it is exactly the chaotic and the unpredictable – which we believe to find rather more in nature than in culture – that seem to make the (imaginary) difference between the Occidental and the Oriental perilousness. A good example for this is Forster's novel mentioned above. It connects all these elements – the chaotic, the natural, the dangerous – and the topos of mystical India. Forster writes in a letter to William Plumer: 'I tried to show that India is unexplainable muddle by introducing an unexplained muddle – Miss Quested's experience in the cave. When asked what happened there, *I don't know*.'²⁶

In a letter to Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, he writes:

My writing mind therefore is a blur here – i.e. I will it to remain a blur [...]. This isn't a philosophy of aesthetics. It's a particular trick I felt justified in trying because my theme was India. It sprang straight from my subject matter. I wouldn't have attempted it in other countries, which though they contain mysteries or muddles, manage to draw rings round them.²⁷

The element of 'muddle' and 'mystery' seems here to be an essential part of India. The irrational and inexplicable is contrasted to the ratio of the West, in a way similar to the hypnosis scene from Kipling's *Kim* in which Kim finds his rational balance in English multiplication whereas he had previously been thinking in Hindi.²⁸



Nancy Price as India (Arthur Reynolds' collection)

25 Rashna B. Singh, *The Imperishable Empire. A Study of British Fiction on India* (Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1988), 54.

26 Quoted in: Peter Childs (Ed.): *A Routledge Literary Sourcebook on E.M. Forster's Passage to India* (London: Routledge 2002), 22 (emphasis in the original).

27 *Ibid.*

28 Suvir Kaul, 'Kim, or How to Be Young, Male, and British in Kipling's India', in: Rudyard Kipling (ed. by Zohreh T. Sullivan), *Kim. Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Criticism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 430.

The Crown of India is of course very different from *Kim*, *The Jungle Books* or *A Passage to India*. However, we find in it the same elements of colonial ideology that are also found in the colonial literature or in the general discourse of the period. This pertains not only to the two introductory movements. They are just exemplary for what seems to be the crux of the Masque: the binary portrayals of Great Britain and India. Some of the binarisms have already been mentioned in previous literature on *The Crown of India*.²⁹ The binary contrast between ‘British’ movements in major keys and ‘Indian’ movements in minor ones can be found almost everywhere: John Company, the symbol of the East India Company and supporter of Calcutta, enters the stage accompanied by an Elgarian *nobilmente* in E-flat major. His equivalents, the Mughals, who enter to support Delhi’s cause, march to music in B minor. The two extensive orchestral songs, Agra’s ‘Hail, Immemorial Ind’ and St. George’s ‘Rule of Britain’ also demonstrate this binarism: Agra sings in D minor, St. George in G major. The ‘March *The Crown of India*’ and ‘Ave Imperator’, i.e. ‘God save the Emperor’ are, of course, composed in major keys, whereas ‘India Greets her Cities’ or ‘The Crowning of Delhi’ are in minor keys.

The effect of tonal chaos found in the ‘Indian’ section of the Introduction to Tableau II is not found elsewhere in the same form – a simulation of atonality – but ‘The Crowning of Delhi’ is composed in a highly chromatic *turba* manner, which is, of course, not like any coronation music of the ‘West’. Also, the idea of a formal disorder can be observed in the famous ‘March of the Mogul Emperors’.³⁰ The British equivalent, ‘Entrance of “John Company”’ is, of course, composed in the strictest ternary form. The contrast between chromaticism and diatonicism is present, but it does not really seem to correspond to the contrast between India and Britain, as Corissa Gould suggests.³¹ Several crucial moments of the Masque pertaining to India are composed in a diatonic manner: such is the case with the motive of India in the Introduction to Tableau I, which reappears during the Masque, or with the greater part of the ‘Dance of Nautch Girls’, one of the central moments of representation of India. It is rather the contrast between the *extremes* of the ‘Indian’ music of the Masque – i.e. extreme diatonicism and extreme chromaticism on the one side – and the *balance* between these extremes in the ‘British’ music that seems to be crucial.

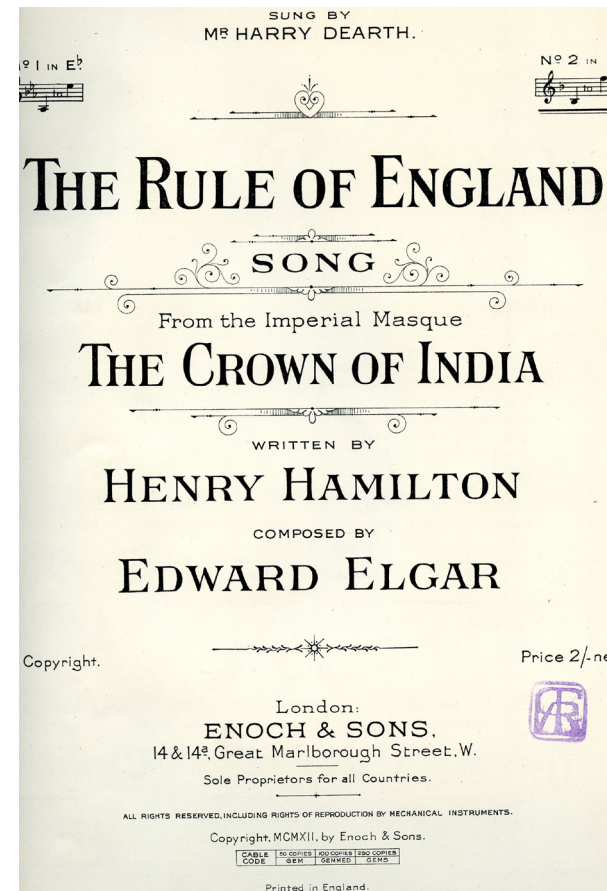
The stereotype of India as a ‘world of nature’ is best observed in the movement ‘India greets her cities’, where there are references to the river Ganges (bar 35), ‘sandal sweet’ (bar 48) and ‘Nilgiri Hills azalea-crowned’ (bar 52-54). Agra also sings of ‘Himalayan snows’, ‘roses of Kashmir’ and ‘groves of Tamarind’ in her song ‘Hail, Immemorial Ind’ (bars 36-43). The music accompanying these sections is, in both movements, slightly reminiscent of Smetana’s *Vltava* or even the beginning of *Das Rheingold*, both with strong and obvious nature associations. The British side is, quite contrarily, symbolised by sounds of culture: there are marches, a processional minuet of ‘John Company’ or the sounds of the tune ‘The Campbells are Coming’ in ‘India greets her cities’. The Indian attempt at marching in the ‘March of the Mogul Emperors’ has already been described as unsuccessful.³²

29 Especially in the texts by Gould and Ghuman (cf. footnote 2).

30 Corissa Gould is right in writing that it is composed as a march ‘in the form on Western art music’ (Gould, ‘Edward Elgar, *The Crown of India*’, *The Elgar Society Journal*, 13/1 (March 2003), 30) if this means the movement as a whole, but the simulation of formlessness is found on a micro level (cf. Popovic, *Der Dschungel und der Tempel*, 279-283).

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*, 29, Ghuman, ‘Elgar and the British Raj’, in: Adams (Ed.), *Edward Elgar and His World*, (Princeton University Press, 2007), 249-285, and Ghuman, *Resonances of the Raj*, 82-89.



Song for St. George
'The Rule of England'
(Arthur Reynolds' collection)

The consequent colonial representation in ‘The Crown of India’ can hardly be doubted, even if we could perhaps argue about Elgar’s motives for composing it in the way he did. A closer look into the music of the Masque, such as has been attempted in the present article, can help towards understanding how detailed and profound the binary colonial thinking was during the period and what particular forms it could take in music. It is also a very clear demonstration as to how the ‘meaning’ of music can be constructed, how the standard elements of musical composition, such as conventional form, exact rhythms, diatonicism and chromaticism, can get new and politically relevant connotations.³³

It is a pity that we hear the music of *The Crown of India* so seldom nowadays. This is, perhaps, not the best approach if we want to study and understand it. We should not avoid performing it: after all, we do not avoid performing the ideologically problematic sections of Wagner’s *Meistersinger*

33 This question is treated much more thoroughly in Popović, *Der Dschungel und der Tempel*, *passim*.

or, going back in music history, playing the court music of the 18th century, which glorifies regimes we would probably neither find agreeable nor approve of today. To avoid playing a work by Lully because it served the regime of Louis XIV would probably be seen as preposterous today – quite rightfully so. The problem with *The Crown of India* might lie in the fact that the times of Elgar and the Delhi Durbar of 1911 are much closer to us – chronologically and ideologically – than we like to think they are. Moreover, the colonial binarisms – especially those in the text – are sometimes only too explicit. This, however, should be yet another reason *not* to avoid performing *The Crown of India*, listening to it, talking and writing about it. It is not by avoiding them that the problems of the past are solved.

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Popović was born and grew up in Belgrade, Serbia. He studied piano with Bernd Goetzke, a pupil of Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, and composition with Ladislav Kupkovič at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover. He took his doctorate in musicology at the Humboldt University in Berlin where his supervisor was Hermann Danuser. Later, he also took his habilitation at this University.

At the Hochschule Osnabrück, Popović was deputy professor and head of the department of Composition, Music Theory and Aural Training. He was also lecturer at the Humboldt University in Berlin and is currently a member of the Senior Common Room of Wadham College, University of Oxford.

Popović's particular research interests are English and British music, music theory of the Renaissance, discourse analysis, musical archaism, exoticism and global history of music. Recent publications include the books Mäzene – Manuskripte – Modi. Untersuchungen zu My Ladye Nevells Booke (Stuttgart: Steiner 2013) and Der Dschungel und der Tempel: Indien-Konstruktionen in der britischen Musik und dem Musikschrifttum 1794-1914 (Stuttgart: Steiner 2017). Popović is also active as lyricist (in German), children's book author and travel writer (in Serbian).

BOOK REVIEWS

***England Resounding - Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Britten and the English Musical Renaissance* by Keith Alldritt**

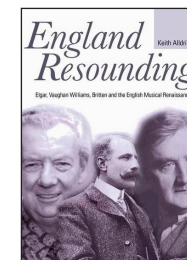
In its 170-odd pages, this book presents three essays on the three titular composers in a field that is quite crowded. Clearly the biographical and musicological aspects of all three composers have been extensively covered elsewhere with major biographies and innumerable essays and monographs. The author deals with this on the first page: 'The story I will tell will be something other than a musicological history. I will seek to place the achievements of these three principal figures of the great revival of English music in a much larger context, one that illuminated their relationships with the other arts, particularly with literature, and with the historical forces that impinged on their lives'. Elgarians will certainly know of Elgar's relationship with literature, dealt extensively but not exhaustively in the volume on the subject edited by the late Raymond Monk, and aficionados of Britten and RWW have access to similar tomes.

The intention is therefore lofty but if we accept that three essays can encompass such a large subject, then they will have to be tightly wound round the author's thesis that this musical renaissance was 'centrally a continuity of enterprise, sometimes of riposte' running through the three, who all 'explored music's frontier with philosophy' and 'probed the psychological impact of the unprecedentedly violent century in which they practised their art'.

I have dwelt on the ambition of the volume because I approached the book with interest in seeing how Keith Alldritt, the most recent biographer of RVW, would synthesise the multifarious intentions of the volume. I was particularly concerned that I disagreed with him *ab initio* when I read that this book offers 'an account of the spectacular revival of serious music in England that began at the start of the twentieth century'. I simply do not accept that Elgar began the British musical renaissance nor that this renaissance was a single current that ran principally through these three, great though they were.

That said, each essay offers a sketch of the subject's life that is cogent, entertaining and a reasonable, albeit incomplete, primer on the salient musical progression and historical context of the composer's existence. He places particular emphasis on Birmingham as a musical nexus for Elgar's musical education and an enduring presence in his early and middle life. It is a view that certainly gave me pause for thought as I usually thought of any polarity as existing between the rural West Midlands and London.

He points out their acutely sensitive approach to literature, although their respective use of and views on literature both of type and time would bear closer and more detailed analysis. Furthermore, I am not persuaded although I was interested, in the argument, that American literature was an influence on



Robert Hale, imprint of The Crowood Press Ltd, Marlborough, UK, 2019.

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978 0 7198 2975 8

Elgar and Vaughan Williams of importance equal to that of Britten's sojourn there. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the important but differing roles of literature in the outlook and output of each composer is one that is worth making.

The book tries within its limited pages to draw out the influence of other art forms on the composers as well as political and historical events and movements that may have had more or less significant bearings on the three creative lives, although it is axiomatic that any composer in a society will be influenced by contemporaneous events, currents and social change. Keith Aldritt has not really 'probed the psychological impact of the unprecedentedly violent century in which they practised their art', nor do I believe these disparate influences from different times can really be posited as a continuing and enduring thread passing through all three as the twentieth century progresses, a conceit supported by the 85-years-old RVW when he wrote to Edmund Rubbra of his gift giving a 'feeling of continuity to the great art' and ensuring 'the line goes on unbroken from generation to generation'.

Surely a much stronger point to emphasise is that Elgar did not appear from nowhere – that would insult Stanford, Manns, Parry and Stockley *et al* - but brought British classical music to the highest level within the German Romantic tradition (just when it was ceding to the developments of the Second Viennese School) and I believe Walton was a better example of a direct successor to Elgar. However, Elgar's sheer ambition and high quality achievement in symphonic, choral and concerto writing inspired (and perhaps intimidated) younger composers, of whom there were many fine ones emerging from the music colleges. The English Folk Revival, with RVW one of its great practitioners, modified the British musical language and Alldritt rightly considers RVW's symphonic output one of the glories of twentieth-century music. The excellence exhibited by Elgar was matched by Britten in his domination of the 'non-British' medium of opera but Alldritt's contention that the rise of RVW and BB was *propter hoc* rather than *post hoc* does not convince this reviewer.

Steven Halls

**Edward Elgar: Collected Correspondence (Series II Volume 3) -
Ridgehurst Friends**
Edited by Martin Bird

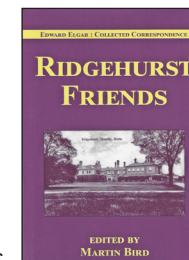
If the world of Elgarian research has to lose someone as vital (in every sense) as Martin Bird, then his legacy is ensured through books such as this. It is a fine example of his contribution to our understanding of Elgar's life, his relationships and the insights these give us into his creative genius. It is also a reminder of how important Elgar research was and is through the work of Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore, some going back over many decades. This is now partially the work of Chris Bennett and John Norris who brought this volume to fruition. It is dedicated 'with gratitude' to Arthur Reynolds without whom the publication of this volume would not have been possible. Arthur is another Elgarian whose work as collector and scholar has done so much to demonstrate the importance of Elgar as the foundation for and of 20th century British music. Despite the diligence of all those involved no photograph of Edward and Tonia Speyer has been found which, if it exists, would enhance our appreciation of them both and their Elgarian legacy. This book is as much about them and their home as it is about the composer whose existence created our interest.

So that this volume can be placed in context I quote from the fly-leaf: "Ridgehurst", in Hertfordshire, was the home of Edward Speyer (1839-1934) and his family. The Speyers had been Frankfurt bankers since the middle of the 17th century. Edward . . . knew a vast range of musicians, from Mozart's son Carl, Rossini, Spohr, Mendelssohn and Liszt to Brahms, Joachim and Clara Schumann. . . . He married Marie Antonia (Tonia) Kufferath (1857-1939), a soprano much admired as an interpreter of Schumann and Brahms. In 1894 the family moved to Ridgehurst, a small estate . . . which became a mecca for musical gatherings. He and Tonia first met the Elgars in 1901, and a lifelong friendship ensued'.

Although, at its heart, the volume contains the correspondence by the Speyers and the Elgars and that between them 'it also includes correspondence with the many people, not all musicians, that the Elgars met on their visits to Ridgehurst: Frank Bridge, Henry Hadow, Hubert Kufferath, Henry Oppenheimer, William Shakespeare, Donald Tovey and Emile Vandervelde among them'.

To begin at the end: Bird includes a number of appendices. The first on Frank Bridge relates, as far as is possible, the contacts he had with Elgar and a summary of his life. This is followed, in a similar vein, by ones on Sir Henry Hadow and Sir Donald Tovey whose 1934 tribute 'Elgar, Master of Music' published in *Music and Letters* is also included. Finally, an appendix covering the lives of Henry and Clara Oppenheimer, William and Louise Shakespeare and Derek and Verena Shuttleworth complete the appendix.

This is a complex book with a myriad of characters passing through the lives of the Speyers and the Elgars as their worlds interacted over nearly



Elgar Works, 2019

Rickmansworth

415 pages

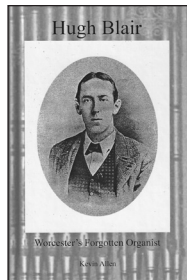
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34 years. Readers will know what occurred in most of these years but it is Bird's ability to drill down past an event such as the dedication to Edward Speyer of the separated 'Dream Interlude' from *Falstaff* and the 'persecution' of Edgar Speyer that was one of his particular abilities. Bird begins, as a prologue, with a long quotation from Edward Speyer's *My Life and Friends*. Here Speyer recalls his first meeting with Edward and Alice Elgar at the 1901 Leeds Musical Festival. This demonstrates a perceptive understanding of Elgar's personality and his musical sympathies. Elgar was still hoping to visit the Speyers at Ridgehurst during the summer of 1933, but his fatal illness intervened and, anyway, Edward Speyer died aged 94 in January 1934 a few weeks before the composer whose genius he recognised and had done so much to encourage. His wife Tonia wrote to Carice Elgar Blake on 27 February: 'Now the two Edwards are gone! Are they meeting now, in that other world and combining that wonderful friendship in an even more wonderful way?'

Elgar was fortunate in his friends and supporters for most of his life even if he did not always recognise his good fortune. There is little doubt, though, that he recognised the value and love of the Speyers, and we are fortunate, too, in being able to see this through the pages of this invaluable book. I commend it to all Elgarians and those interested in the musical life of this country in the early years of the last century. It is a worthy tribute to the memory of Martin Bird and a demonstration of why he will be missed.

Andrew Neill



Hugh Blair: Worcester's forgotten organist

Kevin Allen

Elgar was on friendly terms with the Three Choirs organists of his day, and no account of his career would be complete without due mention of the roles played in it by Atkins, Blair, Brewer, Hull, and Sinclair. Blair is a somewhat shadowy figure, however. For a few years he was much involved with Elgar, but in 1897 he left Worcester under a cloud, and he appears to have played no part in the great sequence of works that began two years later with the *Variations on an Original Theme*, Op.36. Elgarians are already indebted to the indefatigable Kevin Allen for studies of Jaeger and the Norbury sisters. The debt continues to mount, for Allen has now focused his energies on Blair and compiled a detailed account of his life.

Like Elgar, but unlike the other organists referred to above, Hugh Blair was a Worcestershire man, born in Worcester itself in 1864. But his family occupied a stratum of Victorian society somewhat loftier than the one inhabited by the Elgars. His father, a Cambridge-educated clergyman, founded Worcester College for the Blind, and there was enough money to put Blair through King's School, Worcester and thereafter Cambridge, from where he obtained the degrees of MA and BMus (and after the turn of the century DMus). He became assistant organist of Worcester Cathedral in

1887 and succeeded to the full post in 1895, on the death of William Done, whose articulated pupil he had been. By this time, Blair and Elgar were firm friends, and it is a measure of Blair's personal gifts that the relationship came about, for one imagines that Elgar was deeply conscious of the social differences between them and perhaps resentful of Blair's patrician education. Blair acted as midwife in connection with *The Black Knight*, *Sursum Corda*, *The Light of Life*, and the Sonata for Organ, Op.28, and through his work for the Worcester Festival Choral Society, to say nothing of his activities at the Cathedral, he did much to raise the standard of music-making in Worcester. In 1897, however, misconduct obliged him to step down from his post, and although he never had a cathedral job again - except possibly a spell as assistant at Bangor - his misdemeanours were not sufficient to prevent him from gaining employment as Organist of Holy Trinity, Marylebone and, for just a few years, Organist and Music Director to the Borough of Battersea. But the essentially unremarkable nature of his post-Worcester career is underlined by Allen's being able to cover its 35 years (more than half of Blair's life) in just 60 pages of a volume comprising a total of 320. The dedication of *Cantique*, Op.3, No.1 shows that the friendship with Elgar was maintained, facilitated from 1912 by the move to Severn House, but Blair was no longer in a position to offer the kind of help he gave the composer in the Worcestershire days, and their post-1897 relationship appears to have been almost entirely social in character, billiards often taking the place of music. Blair died in 1932, in a south coast nursing home; he was only 68. What was his legacy? Elgarians think of the very valuable midwifery referred to above. Church musicians think of his B minor setting of the evening canticles (described to me by Harry Bramma as 'masterly'). Organists are dimly aware of a few pieces for the instrument, such as the five-movement suite published in 1920, but none of them rises much, if at all, above the general level of the organ voluntaries of the day. Organ historians think of Blair's role, whatever exactly it was, in connection with the Hope-Jones organ at Worcester Cathedral (rebuilt in 1925) and the Hope-Jones-style organ at Battersea Town Hall (recently restored). Blair lived into the age of recorded sound, but there do not appear to be any recordings of him, and he was not in any event a noted performer on the organ (it may be significant that he does not appear to have held a diploma of the Royal College of Organists). It seems an unpromising basis for a biography, and there is of course the problem facing anyone writing the life of a church organist - a life dominated by church routines and occasional concerts is not generally the stuff of a ripping yarn. Sometimes there is an interesting quirk. Parratt was an expert chess player. Walter Alcock had a model railway (as Vaughan Williams discovered). Norman Cocker was a brilliant amateur conjurer. Sometimes, as here, a triennial festival prizes the organist out of the organ-loft and thrusts him into the limelight. Sometimes there is a deeply flawed personality (S.S. Wesley). Sometimes there are grave misdemeanours followed by lurid headlines in the press. Blair's misdemeanours were to do with drink and cannot be said to have plumbed the depths of moral turpitude. Such limelight as the Worcester Festivals brought him was short-lived. He

Alverstoke:
Kevin Allen
2019, 320 pages,
ISBN
978-0-9531227-7-6

applied himself obsessively to composition and conducting (admittedly, not a bad thing for a professional musician) but his focus was narrow. Allen provides an appendix containing an impressive list of compositions, but weariness came over me as I worked through it, and I wondered in particular whether it was really necessary for Blair to set the evening canticles seven times. His place in the Elgarian scheme of things is secure, but he does not come across as an especially interesting figure, and it would not be entirely unfair to say that only his friendship with a great composer makes him stand out from his contemporaries in the organ-loft. But Allen is a good stylist and makes a workmanlike job of enlivening an essentially rather dry, sober narrative. This he does partly by means of numerous quotations from the many and varied primary sources he consulted, and although this gives the reader a very strong flavour of the period, the considerable length of some of the quotations suggests that Allen may from time to time have had difficulty finding enough to say about Blair himself. There is for example rather too much information about the appointment of Atkins to the Worcester post (though one is glad to have printed confirmation of his having sometimes been as unpleasant as anecdotes suggest). But I hope that this volume will be read from cover to cover rather than quarried when something Blair-related arises in an Elgar context. Whether Allen's enthusiastic advocacy causes unpublished works to be published, and published ones to be performed and recorded, remains to be seen. He thinks of Blair as 'a progressive musician' whose music is 'ripe for rediscovery'. I am in no position to contradict him, but I have come to be wary of phrases like 'new light' and 'unjust neglect'. Perhaps we sometimes need the courage to declare that certain works should be allowed to remain in honourable obscurity, and to admit that neglect is occasionally not entirely unjust. Not a few truly distinguished musicians are remembered for just one composition, or for a handful of them. 'Blair in B minor' is not a bad work for a minor figure to be remembered by - listen again to the magnificent Neapolitan chord near the end of the *Gloria Patri* - and perhaps Blair enthusiasts should be satisfied.

Ted Hughes told Craig Raine that every book should have a 'leavening of misprints'. Allen is for the most part a careful self-editor. 'High Blair' (p.33) caught my attention (an unconscious reference, perhaps, to Blair's fondness for a particular mind-altering substance) and I note that Isabel Fitton's name is still as much of a problem as it was in Robert Anderson's day. 'Isobel' appears on page 88, 'Isabel' in the index. An editor might have tried talking the author out of the quaintness of 'on the morrow' and 'a certain Ivor Algernon Atkins' as well as embarrassing modernisms such as 'team player', 'workaholic', and 'comfort zone'. But these are tiny blemishes on a large canvas, and no Elgarian should be without this handsomely produced volume (spoiled slightly by a grumpy-looking Blair on the cover).

Relf Clark

The book can be obtained from Kevin Allen, 2 Milford Court, Gale Moor Avenue, Alverstoke, Hampshire, PO12 2TN or he can be contacted on allenkevc@aoi.com

MUSIC REVIEW

Elgar Complete Edition Volume 20 edited by Sarah Thompson

Elgar: *Recitations*, *Carillon*, *Une Voix dans le Desert*, *Le drapeau Belge*, *The Fringes of the Fleet*, *Inside the Bar*

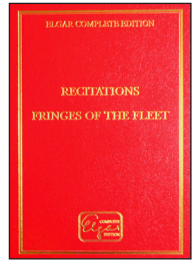
Contemplating this important score from Elgar Editions – the first time these works have appeared in full score – I realised that it is half a century since I first made the acquaintance of these pieces. At that time the enterprising firm, Pearl, began issuing LP transfers of Elgar's acoustic 78 rpm recordings made between 1914 and 1925. Their policy of transferring these acoustic recordings unfiltered was a perfectly valid one, even though the sound was not easy on the ear. It was only in 2007 when Mike Dutton issued a digitally remastered version of *The Fringes of the Fleet* that I started to enjoy the discs. Since then Lani Spahr has done splendid work by transferring all of Elgar's acoustic recordings, allowing us to enjoy Elgar's original interpretation of *Carillon*. The less popular *Une Voix dans le Desert* and *Le drapeau Belge* were not set down, and none of the four works in the present volume were recorded by Elgar when the electronic process was introduced.

This is not to say that Elgar's War Music remained unheard on record. In preparing this review I listened to Barry Collett's pioneering 1986 digital recording, which allowed many Elgarians to re-evaluate and enjoy these works in modern sound. Since then Somm has issued further versions and I do not forget Sir Adrian Boult's 1974 recording of *Carillon*, but that was shorn of the spoken recitation. (I asked Christopher Bishop, who produced virtually all of Boult's 'Indian Summer' EMI recordings, why this was, but after 46 years he could not recall the reason).¹

Sarah Thompson's editorial commentary is full of information, maintaining the exemplary standard we have come to expect, occupying 41 pages out of the total of 118. The three recitations are settings of original poems by the Belgian poet, Emile Cammaerts and were translated into English by his wife Tita Brand Cammaerts. The first to appear was *Carillon*, published as 'Après Anvers' in *The Observer*. Cammaerts sent Elgar a hand-written copy in order to interest him in a planned concert in aid of the Belgian Relief Fund. Elgar's original intention of setting the words to music was abandoned. Rosa Burley, always forthright in her opinions, noted: 'Edward's attempts at fitting words to music had never been happy and had not grown happier with the passing of the years, as we had seen with *The Music Makers*.'

The Times' critic said of the premiere in December 1914: 'A few soft phrases for strings during the quieter parts of the poem are skilfully worked

¹ Michael Kennedy in his notes for the 1974 LP wrote: 'The concoction exactly suited the public's mood, which of course can never be recaptured.'. That could explain why only the orchestral part was recorded. Ed.



Rickmansworth:
The Elgar Complete
Edition, 2019

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978-1-904856-20-7

in but if this is all that the tragedy of Belgium can bring from a musician it seems a small tribute'. Despite this Fred Gaisberg and The Gramophone Company were keen to record the work, which was carried out on 25 January 1915, with Henry Ainley reciting.

By mid-July the following year, Elgar had completed *Une Voix dans le Desert*. It is scored on a smaller scale, mostly for string orchestra only, and is partially declaimed by a male speaker with a sung soprano part at its centre. In my view, Elgar seems to be more involved here than elsewhere – maybe the feminine voice inspired him. It was first performed at the Shaftsbury Theatre on 29 January 1916. Cammaerts wrote to Elgar that he 'wept a little' when the composer played it to him on the piano.

The third recitation is *Le drapeau Belge*. Its premiere in April 1917, aroused less interest than the former works – Ms Thompson suggests that the public's attention was focused on birthday celebrations for the King, rather than on this recitation.

The final work is *The Fringes of the Fleet*. In November 1915 Rudyard Kipling published a booklet entitled *The Fringes of the Fleet*, dedicated to Admiral Lord Beresford, which was a mixture of poetry and prose. Beresford wanted Elgar to set some of the poems and the composer was sufficiently encouraged to discuss with the impresario Oswald Stoll mounting a West End review featuring the songs. The resulting performances were an enormous success, but Kipling was less than enthusiastic about his lines being declaimed in a common music hall and eventually withdrew the performing rights. Although the spirit of Stanford looms large – and none the worse for that – the music is splendid and studying the score reminded me of Sir Thomas Beecham's famous dictum that 'Good music enters the ear with facility and quits it with difficulty'. Surely this work is due for revival, despite the expense of hiring four baritones for only twenty minutes of music.

In listening to Elgar's own recording made on 4 July 1917, I recalled that Charles Mott, the principal baritone, was killed in action on 12 May 1918. He wrote to Elgar only hours before his death: 'There is one thing that 'puts the wind up me' vey badly and that is my being wiped out and thus miss the dear harmonies of your wonderful works'.

Although I did not set out with a Beckmesser – like zeal to spot errors, I did notice that in the list of instruments preceding *Carillon*, the second harp and organ are missing, while in *Le drapeau Belge*, by way of compensation, a phantom harp is listed which appears nowhere in the work. Others may cope more easily than I with the miniscule type size of the spoken texts, but all else was 'Werry Capital'. Those of us who are able to collect these splendid volumes will need no reassurance from the present writer that the editorial standards, together with the actual presentation are, as always of the highest standard and I warmly commend this volume as a welcome addition to your bookshelf.

Neil Mantle

CD REVIEWS

Elgar from America : Volume 1 Enigma Variations (op 36)

NBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Arturo Toscanini

Cello Concerto (op 85)

New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli
Gregor Piatigorsky cello

Symphonic Study in C minor: Falstaff (68)

New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra conducted by Arthur Rodziński

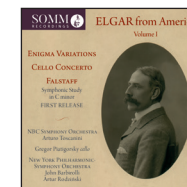
Somm's splendid compilation of these three broadcast recordings on a single CD offers a penetrating glimpse into the American music making community's attitude toward Elgar's works during the turbulent 1940s, when the arbiters of programming there were chiefly refugees from Hitler's Europe. The hidden-gem rarity of these offerings testifies to the out-of favour status Elgar's oeuvre suffered at the time.

It was not always so. Producer Lani Spahr's admirable notes trace an early history of passionate admiration for Elgar's music at a time when the determiners of musical taste in America were Elgar's friends and champions. Samuel Sanford and Horatio Parker at Yale University, Theodore Thomas and Frederick Stock in Chicago, the Damroche brothers in New York among others shared an unalloyed delight in the incomparable beauty of Elgar's compositions. By 1940, the early-days admirers were gone, succeeded by music makers whose programming priorities had taken a more selective turn.

Arturo Toscanini, for example, limited his broadcast repertory to two Elgar works: the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*, and the *Enigma Variations*. The Maestro performed the latter work regularly from 1905 onwards. Lani's notes tell us that there exist recordings of at least five of his broadcast performances of the piece, including this superb 1949 version with the NBC Symphony Orchestra. Lani's restoration virtually eliminates dryness, an unfortunate feature of 1940s Radio City studio recordings. Spoiler alert: Toscanini's broadcast performance of the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* will be included in **Elgar from America : Volume 2**.

Why Toscanini never recorded other Elgar works is a mystery. When the Maestro died in 1957, his legatees found in his music library a copy of Elgar's Symphony No. 2 score marked up for performance...what might have been.

Gregor Piatigorsky never made a commercial recording of Elgar's Cello Concerto, so we are left with only two broadcast accounts of the work by an artist who ranked among the greatest cellists of his time. Here we hear the November 1940 Carnegie Hall broadcast with the New York Philharmonic-



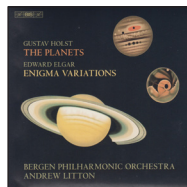
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Symphony Orchestra conducted by a young John Barbirolli. A brilliantly matched pair, conductor and soloist draw out the bitter-sweet reticence of the work at a pace quicker than comparable renderings, particularly in the *allegro* sections of the finale. Lani's talent for audio restoration is manifest here. In 2010, a CD set produced by West Hill Radio Archives featuring the performance is marred, in my opinion, by a relentless acetate hiss. Lani's restoration nearly eliminates the surface hiss and renders the audience noise negligible.

Barbirolli's successor as conductor at the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, Artur Rodziński, programmed a cut-down version of Elgar's *Falstaff* as a feature of his inaugural NYPSO concert in October 1943. Elgarians used to listening to a full-score performance may find jarring this rendering that reduces the score's length by 291 bars, probably to fit the concert's broadcast slot. Nonetheless the sound is splendid and enticing.

In my view this CD is a bargain at mid-price and a welcome addition to every Elgarian's library.

Arthur Reynolds



BIS 2068

Elgar: *Enigma Variations* Holst: *The Planets*

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Litton

It is good, as ever, to see 'foreign' orchestras and recording companies performing and recording Elgar's music. The Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra are no strangers to this composer. They appeared on the recent Andrew Davis *King Olaf* recording, and I saw a splendid First Symphony with them at the Edinburgh Festival a couple of years ago. The American conductor Andrew Litton is also a proven Elgarian, and holder of the prestigious Elgar Medal. It comes as no surprise then that they turn in an admirable account of the *Enigma Variations*. From the first the string section exhibits warmth of tone and suppleness of phrasing. The opening Theme is beautifully done, and they are suitably nippy in the tricky Variation 2. BIS's recording is, as usual, a model of clarity, allowing the woodwind detail to shine through, and capturing soft timpani taps. In fact the timpani are particularly well-focused, from the quietest rolls to more thunderous passages. The *WMB* and *Troyte* variations are suitably boisterous, while *Nimrod*, slow but not dragging, is rapt and impressively solemn.

I particularly enjoyed the warmly expressive cello playing in *BGN's* variation, and the Finale builds to a really exciting climax, with the organ suitably prominent, and the orchestra revelling in Elgar's virtuosic orchestration.

It seems ages since I listened to *The Planets*, mainly, I suppose, because I don't much care for it. But I did enjoy catching up with it again with this performance, which comes across in resplendent sound with BIS's excellent

recording. But with an attractive folding cover, clocking in at an amazing 82 and a half minutes, and a mightily impressive *Enigma Variations*, this CD can be safely and enthusiastically recommended.

Barry Collett

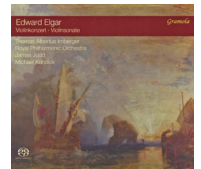
Elgar: *Violin Concerto in B minor (op 61)*

Violin Sonata in E minor (op 82)

Thomas Albertus Irnberger (violin)

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / James Judd

Michael Korstick (piano)



Gramola 99141

Gramola is an Austrian recording company, based in Vienna. I have one other Gramola CD on my shelves, which co-incidentally I listened to recently – fine performances of piano trios by Goldmark, Zemlinsky and Hans Gal. The violinist then was Thomas Irnberger, so I looked forward to hearing this Elgar CD from the same source. The dedicatee and first performer of the Concerto was also Austrian, Fritz Kreisler, so Irnberger is following in some mighty footsteps. The coupling together of Elgar's two masterworks for the violin seems so obvious that I am surprised it hasn't been done before (or at least I think it hasn't) so full marks to Gramola for their enterprise.

The performance of the Concerto I enjoyed very much. The fearsome difficulties of this lengthy work seem to present no problems to the soloist who, as so often on record, is spotlit in the recorded balance, but at no real cost to the orchestral detail. The RPO and the conductor James Judd are no strangers to Elgar's music, and their contribution is admirable throughout. Irnberger plays with clean articulation and a solid technique, and he and the orchestra follow Elgar's meticulous markings with detailed precision. I have heard more passionate, emotional, performances but there is nothing wrong with a slightly cooler interpretation of what is anyway deeply emotional music.

The slow movement is finely shaped and quite lovely, while the virtuosity of the finale brings the expected drive and excitement. The cadenza, with its mysterious shimmering background of *pianissimo* 'thrummed' strings and muted horns, is deeply felt and evocative, before the vigorous coda ends the work with splendour.

I am less convinced by the performance of the Sonata. The recording is partly to blame, making the piano sound rather dull and lacking in presence. The first movement, despite some fine moments, is rather prosaic and literal, and surely there is a wrong top note four bars after Fig.11. The second movement seems to me too slow. It is marked *andante*, not *adagio*, so loses some of the fanciful grace and delicate wistfulness for which the music calls out. For example, the semi-quaver triplets in both violin and piano around Figs 22 and 27, are furtive, darting rhythmic flickers, and are too literal here. The middle section, with its beautifully heartfelt melody, is finely done. But

in the final bar Elgar's instructions, as so often, are ignored. The piano is marked quite clearly to come off its final chord before the violin, thus leaving that instrument's final note hanging in the air unaccompanied. It even has *lunga* marked above it.

The last movement is good and makes a fine climax to the work, although I am not convinced, three bars from the end, of the accuracy of the first chord of the final double-stopped semiquavers.

Gramola's production standards are high, with a lavish booklet with photographs, detailed notes on the artists, and interesting notes on the works, although why, these days, it seems necessary to rehearse Elgar's background in the Victorian Empire period eludes me. Surely he and his music transcend this narrow and stifling 'Britishness', and the fact that this Austrian CD of the Violin Concerto joins on my shelves CDs of this work from Germany, Bavaria, Holland, Spain, Poland, Russia and Kazakhstan only confirms his credentials as a major European composer.

Barry Collett



Erato
01902 95424336

Elgar: Sea Pictures
Chausson: Poème de l'amour et de la mer
Joncières: La Mer
 Marie-Nicole Lemieux
 Orchestra National Bordeaux Aquitaine / Paul Daniel

I am delighted to welcome this French CD coupling Elgar's song-cycle *Sea Pictures* with two works about the sea by French contemporaries. Delighted, because *Sea Pictures* is one of my favourite Elgar works, and also because Chausson is one of my favourite composers, and the coupling of their works seems so obvious that I'm surprised it hasn't been done before. The performances are uniformly excellent, in fact this has become perhaps my preferred recording of the Elgar, preferable to the iconic Janet Baker/Barbirolli recording which at times is, for me, too leisurely. Here, Paul Daniel secures wonderfully atmospheric playing from the Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine, and sees to it that all Elgar's subtle and imaginative orchestral effects are heard. Listen, for example to the soft washes of sound from harp, gong and bass drum in the first song colouring the orchestral texture.

The soloist, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, sings with a rapt intensity that brings out fully the meaning of the words, and all without a trace of a 'foreign' accent. Her lower register, down to low G, is particularly warm and vibrant, and her voice is beautifully even throughout its range, without any suggestion of the 'plumminess' that can sometimes disfigure the alto voice. All five songs are taken at ideal tempos, and the recording is spacious and detailed, the voice nicely placed within the orchestral fabric. My only criticism is that the soloist's climactic final top A at the end of the final song is rather squally. A pity, but it doesn't detract from my enjoyment and appreciation of this fine

performance.

I have seen Chausson described as the 'French Elgar' – or was it Elgar as the 'English Chausson' – not sure now, but I'm fairly sure it was the former. No matter, but the fact remains that their music has much in common, not least the dark orchestral colouring of some works, and the aching melancholy and nostalgic longing for things just out of reach or memory that suffuses so much of their music.

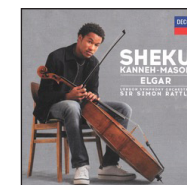
Unlike Elgar's five songs, Chausson's work consists of two lengthy orchestral songs separated by a short orchestral interlude. The heady, perfumed, poetry of *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* is by his friend Maurice Bouchor, and Chausson's music brilliantly captures its dark, brooding intensity. A wonderful performance of a wonderful work.

The bonus is a short piece, *La Mer*, by the now obscure Victorin Joncières (1839-1903) in which soloist and orchestra are joined by the Choeur de l'Opéra National de Bordeaux. Its four short sections move from calm, to contemplation, to a storm, to a final Epilogue. After an imposing opening the first section rather reminds me of Arthur Sullivan, but the storm is impressive, especially the orchestral writing, and the whole work a welcome addition to anyone interested in the byways of French Romantic music.

The booklet is attractive with full texts and photos of the composers, and fine notes by Alexandre Dratwicki who gives fulsome praise to Elgar and his work. All in all, enthusiastically recommended, not least for an especially pleasing *Sea Pictures*.

Barry Collett

Trad: Blow the Wind Southerly (arr. Kanneh-Mason)
Elgar: Nimrod (arr. Parkin)
Cello Concerto in E minor
Romance in D minor (arr. Parkin)
Bridge: Spring Song (Arr: Parkin)
Trad: Scarborough Fair (Arr: Parkin)
Bloch: Prelude for string quartet
Prayer No.1 "From Jewish Life" (Arr. B & S Kanneh-Mason)
Faure: Elegie in C minor (Arr: Parkin)
Klengel: Hymnus
 Sheku Kanneh-Mason (Cello)
 London Symphony Orchestra
 Conductor Simon Rattle



Decca 4850241

The latest CD issue from the one family music factory that is the Kanneh-Mason household is from cellist Sheku and features Elgar's iconic Cello Concerto in E minor. Whilst there is no shortage of recordings of this work, it was inevitable that Kanneh-Mason, who has been playing this music in concert frequently over the last few years, would add his name to a distinguished roster of performers. Indeed, this concerto is in many ways a

rite of passage for any cellist, particularly a British one.

From the very first notes one is aware that here is a musician of great musical sensitivity and one whose technical assuredness is not to be doubted. His playing in the opening movement of the concerto shows the considerable affinity that he has with this music and the accompaniment afforded by the LSO under Simon Rattle, provides a rock solid foundation. Whilst the overall timing of the opening movement is marginally shorter than many recordings, my overall impression is that I miss a sense of forward momentum that can often be found regardless of tempo.

As the first movement blends into the second, things start to really liven up. In the hands of these performers the *Allegro molto* becomes a *tour de force* that shows both soloist and orchestra to the best possible advantage.

It is not difficult to imagine Elgar's frame of mind whilst writing the slow movement of this concerto. The sense of longing for a world passed can be heard in every bar and in this recording soloist and conductor capture the mood perfectly. For many, this movement forms the heart of the work and I cannot imagine that it will disappoint here.

The final movement of the concerto in this recording is the most satisfying to my ear. It is a full blooded, no holds barred interpretation. The excellent recording quality does much to enhance much of the orchestral detail that is often found lacking and, of course, the LSO under the direction of Rattle is pinpoint precise. As the movement progresses a slight swagger can be heard in the soloist's approach, which to me is in keeping with the mood of the music. At rehearsal cue number 59 (4 min 54 sec), Elgar marks the score "tempo 1". Both soloist and conductor resist the temptation to slow the music down to the point where it almost comes to a halt, as is the case in many recordings. Elgar himself takes this passage almost *in tempo*. Kanneh-Mason and Rattle pitch it just about right and there's no sense of a jarring halt to the flow of the music. Finally, the opening returns and there is a mad dash to the end of the work bringing it to a triumphant end.

The concerto takes up less than half of the available playing time of this disc. Inevitably, the problem arises of how to fill the rest of the time. In this case we are presented with a varied programme of pieces, some in their original form, others in arrangements. I leave it to the conscience of listeners to make a judgement as to the justification of the inclusion of 'Nimrod' arranged for five cellos or the *Bassoon Romance* for solo cello, string quartet and double bass. However, I must admit to a particular liking for Simon Parkin's arrangement of Frank Bridge's *Spring Song*.

This new recording of Elgar's Cello Concerto enters a more than somewhat crowded field. In many ways it is futile to review it: with this cast it will no doubt sell in great numbers. After all Sheku Kanneh-Mason is as near as classical music has to a rock star and we should be happy that many will be introduced to Elgar's amazing concerto through this recording. Would it be my first choice? Probably not; but by the same token, I am happy to own it and embrace it as a welcome addition to the Elgar discography.

Stuart Freed

**John Barbirolli: Elgar, Moeran, Delius, Vaughan Williams
Elgar: Sea Pictures***

Broadcast from Royal Albert Hall, London, 21 October 1958
Constance Shacklock (contralto)

Moeran: Serenade

Town Hall, Cheltenham, 16 July 1952

Delius: A Song of Summer

Broadcast from the Royal Albert Hall, London, 26 May 1945

**Vaughan Williams: Fantasia on a theme by Tallis Fantasia
Grieghallen, Bergen, 5 June 1963**

Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli

The recordings on this CD, of four British composers, are all previously unpublished recordings. Barbirolli promoted the works of many British composers throughout his career. He performed their works extensively throughout the UK and, whenever he travelled abroad, he invariably included such works in the innumerable concerts which he conducted across five continents. Although works by Elgar, Delius and Vaughan Williams predominated, he conducted the works of more than 70 British composers during his career (28 of whom were represented in performances outside the UK.) Moeran's *Serenade* in G is one example. It was written in 1948 just two years before the composer's death, and Barbirolli conducted 10 performances of it during the early 1950s - six with the Hallé in the UK and four in Australia (Sydney and Adelaide) in 1955. In this rare live performance broadcast from the Cheltenham Festival in 1952, Barbirolli restores the *Intermezzo* which was inexplicably excluded from the published score. This is an interesting work and Barbirolli's sympathetic performance is very appealing. The two familiar Delius and Vaughan Williams items are beautifully performed also.

In Glasgow in the 1930s, Barbirolli once declared that he regarded promoting the works of Elgar as his 'special mission' and he certainly kept that promise. In the 45 years between 1925 and 1970, he conducted some 900 performances of the works of Elgar, both in the UK and throughout the world.

He conducted the complete orchestral song cycle, *Sea Pictures*, on twelve occasions and recorded two excerpts for HMV in 1929 with the Dutch contralto Maartje Offers as soloist. His magnificent 1965 recording with Janet Baker and the LSO has become one of EMI's 'Great Recordings of the Century'. Constance Shacklock sang *Sea Pictures* in concert with the Hallé and Barbirolli on two occasions. This recording is from a BBC broadcast from the Royal Albert Hall, London, in 1958. I think it's a glorious performance. The soloist is balanced well forward and with the added advantage of her clear diction and strong voice, every word is clearly audible. That is not to say that she does not display delicacy and restraint where required. *Sea Pictures*



SJB 1094

is a demanding work for the soloist with its span of two octaves and many difficult passages. Shacklock rises to the demands admirably and Barbirolli's sensitive orchestral accompaniment is exceptionally supportive. This is obviously 1950s broadcast sound and there is some background noise from the taped recording, but Ian Jones has done a good job in helping to minimise this in his digital remastering. I feel I can recommend it highly, though I have to admit to some bias! The very first time I heard a major Elgar work performed live in concert (in March 1958) it was a magnificent performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* in Sheffield's City Hall with Barbirolli and the Hallé. Constance Shacklock sang the part of the Angel and I was completely bowled over by the whole experience. It was that which stimulated my lifelong love of Elgar's music.

David L Jones



SJB 1096

John Barbirolli – The First Orchestral Recordings

The Edison Bell Recordings – 1928

Wagner: The Flying Dutchman – Overture, Wagner: The Mastersingers – Prelude to Act III, Humperdinck: Hansel and Gretel – Overture, Puccini: Madam Butterfly – Love Duet (finale), Mascagni: Cavalleria Rusticana – Santuzza's Aria

Lilian Stiles Alan (soprano) Dan Jones (tenor) Symphony Orchestra

The Spanish HMV Recordings – 1928

Casals: Sardana, Mozart (arr. Barbirolli): The Magic Flute – Possenti numi
London School of Cellos

The NGS Recordings – 1927

Elgar: Introduction and Allegro for Strings

Warlock: Serenade for Delius's 60th Birthday

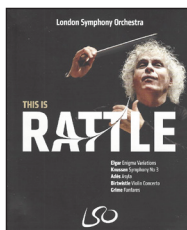
Delius: Summer Night on the River, Debussy: Danse Sacré and Danse xrofane (Ethel Bartlett, piano), Marcello (arr. Barbirolli): Allegretto

Chenil Galleries Chamber Orchestra (*National Gramophonic Society Chamber Orchestra*)

This CD, issued by the Barbirolli Society during 2019, contains the first releases on CD of these early orchestral recordings made by Barbirolli at the outset of his extensive recording career as conductor. The Edison Bell recordings are all of operatic excerpts – an indication that, at the time, Barbirolli was conducting the British National Opera Company, at venues throughout the UK, in performances of opera which were always sung in English (as they are here.) The two Spanish HMV recordings with the London School of Cellos are great rarities. The NGS recording of Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* will be of particular interest to Elgarians. Barbirolli formed his own string

orchestra (of twelve players) in late 1924. Subsequently, the string section was enlarged, and other instruments were then added to enable the formation of a chamber orchestra with an expanded repertoire. When the Chenil Gallery concerts were inaugurated in Chelsea in 1925, Barbirolli's orchestra became the Chenil Chamber Orchestra and the standard of playing received high praise from music critics. In 1925, they played Elgar's *Elegy for Strings* and, in October 1926, Barbirolli conducted Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* with them for the first time. It was the first of more than 120 performances of this work which he conducted during his lifetime with orchestras throughout the world. When, in 1927, Barbirolli recorded the work for the National Gramophonic Society with his own Chenil Chamber Orchestra (it was the first recording of the work by anyone) it was described on the label as the 'NGS Chamber Orchestra'. The quartet players in this recording are from the International String Quartet. Barbirolli had been the cellist in this ensemble in earlier years and had made a number of acoustic recordings with them for the NGS. Although there are inevitable shortcomings in these early 78 rpm discs, Ian Jones' digital remastering allows us to hear the true quality of this premier recording of the work. When Elgar heard the recording, he was obviously impressed by it and he commented to Barbirolli, 'I didn't realise it was such a big work'. Elgar never recorded this work himself. In January 1929, Barbirolli, who had by that time become an HMV recording artist, re-recorded the *Introduction and Allegro* with his own orchestra which was now labelled as the 'John Barbirolli Chamber Orchestra'. He went on to make four more studio recordings of the work (three with the Hallé and one with Sinfonia of London) and there are also two recordings of live performances - with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (January 1959) and a final recording with the Hallé (in a concert of Elgar works) which was broadcast by the BBC from the Kings Lynn Festival on 24 July 1970 – just five days before he died.

David L. Jones



BD & DVD;
LSO3066

DVD REVIEW

‘This is Rattle’

Helen Grime – *Fanfares*
Thomas Adès – *Asyla*
Harrison Birtwistle – *Violin Concerto*
Oliver Knussen – *Symphony No 3*
Edward Elgar – *Enigma Variations, Op 36*

Christian Tetzlaff, violin
London Symphony Orchestra
Sir Simon Rattle

That the London Symphony Orchestra is one of Europe’s finest orchestras is unlikely to be disputed by most readers, but the Orchestra’s brilliance remains tempered by the cramped acoustic of the Barbican Concert Hall and we rarely have the opportunity to hear it shine in the best of acoustics. To have a film of what was a striking concert on 14 September 2017 to celebrate the start of Sir Simon Rattle’s tenure at the helm of the Orchestra is welcome, even if it does nothing to alleviate the problems of the cramped stage on which the performance took place. This event was clearly an occasion and, interestingly, contained the sort of programming that might have appealed to Vladimir Jurowski at the helm of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Across and down the Thames the LSO welcomed its new glamorous principal conductor fresh from his time in Berlin. The LSO has always gone in for more glamour than the LPO (formed by Beecham in 1932), notably when Sir Adrian Boult was conducting concerts in the Royal Festival Hall and André Previn the LSO there too, and ‘This is Rattle’ attempts a sort of re-hash of these times.

This is a beautifully film made by ARTE France. However, the layout of the Barbican restricted the placement of the cameras and by the end of watching this concert I was longing for another visual angle or two. However, the wood of the cramped stage of the Barbican Hall shines in the lights and the orchestra tackled a challenging programme without flagging. It is a tribute to Rattle’s pull that he filled the hall with an audience who cheered him to ‘the rafters’ before the Grime *Fanfares* began. I appreciate most readers of this review will be largely interested in the performance of the *Enigma Variations* but this all British programme requires a more substantial response. I have no idea whether Sir Simon programmed the Elgar during his time in Berlin. If he did not then he should have done so but, otherwise, there a sense that the piece was tacked on to make the evening more appealing to an audience that might have been challenged by what was otherwise on offer and it is the *Enigma* theme which is played as the DVD awaits one’s instructions: no ‘frightening the horses’! Incidentally there is no attempt to introduce an organ and, unfortunately, the violins are lumped together in one block. This is particularly regrettable in the Elgar. Nevertheless, there is some magical

solo playing, notably from the cellist Rebecca Gilliver and Andrew Marriner the orchestra’s great clarinetist. Alas, Marriner’s subsequent retirement shows how invaluable he was, as a recent performance of Rachmaninov’s Second Symphony showed.

Helen Grime, born in 1981, is one of the younger composers whose music is likely to be in our concert halls for years to come. *Fanfares*, part of a larger commission, did not make much of an impression on me. It was finely scored but had no character I could discern. It is also an example of how so many young composers are wary (unable?) of tackling larger scale pieces; not something with which one can accuse the other composers programmed.

Thomas Adès is one of those composers who can stretch the comprehension of an audience but remain in touch with the listener. This was obvious in a recent performance of his Violin Concerto in the Festival Hall and his *Asyla* from 1997 is no exception. Brilliant, luminous scoring (piano, cowbells, bass oboe) is at the heart of a work of symphonic scale representing ‘places of safety’: *Asyla* – asylums. The sound varies from the energetic beat of a night club to a mere wisp. Here the engineers managed something of a miracle as we hear it all; or rather I believe this to be the case!

Harrison Birtwistle remains a remarkable, if elusive figure for me. To be honest I do not think I understand his music which says as much about me as anything else. Over the years I have tried to understand how he constructs his compositions and I enjoyed the Royal Opera production of his *Gawain* many years ago, even if the music was largely beyond me! It was brilliantly sung by Sir John Tomlinson and others and the music seemed to work as a support for the stage action. Since then I have heard live performances of works such as his Piano Concerto (LPO) in 2015 and his large-scale *Deep Time* at the Proms in 2017. My inability to understand those pieces and his Violin Concerto means that I should really leave others to comment on what seemed to be a magnificent performance by Tetzlaff, Rattle and the LSO.

The Knussen Symphony, a mere fifteen minutes long, is in two movements composed some time apart. This performance, given a short time before the early death of this much-loved composer, was another challenge to the orchestra which raised the bar again in this subtle work which, as Paul Griffiths says in his excellent notes, is a ‘symphony of water, wild melodies, outdoor sounds, a cortège’.

So, to Sir Edward – his familiar, welcoming *Variations* which remain fresh, brilliant, amusing, profound and startling. Rattle clearly loves the music and this is a very attractive ‘down the middle’ performance which will satisfy most listeners. Hearing again Sir Adrian Boult’s recording with the same orchestra (his last of the work) shows how his experience with phrasing plus divided strings bring out more colour and nuance than here but, for Rattle fans, this DVD will more than suffice should they wish to own a film of this special evening.

Andrew Neill

RECORDING NOTES – 1918 TO 1920

Whilst Elgar made no recordings for The Gramophone Company during 1918, he did suggest that *The Dream of Gerontius* be recorded complete, and though this was not practicable at that time, given war-time conditions, consideration was given to recording the principal numbers. With the return of peace plans were made in 1919 for Elgar to resume his recording work. Musical education meant much to him and to create listeners he recommended that this should be 'best accomplished by means of the Gramophone. I should like to see one of these instruments, with a fine equipment of His Masters's Voice instrumental and vocal records, placed in every school.'

Plans were made to record *Polonia*, some movements from *The Wand of Youth* music and to commence recording the *Variations*, but Elgar still hankered after recording *Gerontius* and Landon Ronald suggested that John Coates, Muriel Foster and Herbert Brown be the soloists, but again the project was not pursued.

Elgar, with Alice's help, began arranging the music for the gramophone sessions and whilst *Polonia* required considerable cuts, the rest of the music needed little alteration. On 22 May Elgar and Alice travelled to Hayes to meet Landon Ronald's New Symphony Orchestra. Alice recorded: 'Car came & we started just at, or just after, 9.15. Much surprised at driving thro' Upper Hampstead & Golders Green making for Harrow. *Lovely* drive, lanes & elm fringed roads, chestnut trees in blossom &c. but E. very apprehensive of distance. Arrived however on the stroke of 10. Very heavy day: everyone *so* nice & interested & music lovely to hear. *Lovely* drive back, same way.' That day, despite some unsatisfactory takes, *Polonia*, movements from *The Wand of Youth* Suites, *Chanson de Nuit* and 'Nimrod' and 'Dorabella' were recorded, although the last two were unsatisfactory.

That summer Elgar completed his Cello Concerto and following the premiere with Felix Salmond on 27 October, a recording session was in view with Suggia as soloist, as Salmond was not a Gramophone artist, but her terms were excessive, so Beatrice Harrison was chosen as she was known to Landon Ronald. She agreed to learn the Concerto and went to Severn House to play it with Elgar at the piano on 11 December. Alice, who had not been well, recorded: 'A. in drawing room – rather a poor thing still. Nice to hear the Cello Concerto – Miss Harrison came to play through Cello Concerto with E. for Gramophone...' She returned on 19 December and with the recording session fixed for 22 December, Elgar was worried that the parts had not arrived by 20 December, as he had to make cuts. They arrived by post later that day and he and Alice worked on them, as the first and last movements had to be considerably cut. The second movement needed a small cut, but the Adagio was left intact.

On 22 December Alice noted: 'E. left before 9 for Hayes, the only time A. did not go with him. Conducted Cello Concerto into gramophone – Beatrice Harrison cellist. E. home about 3 – quite a nice day – Mr. Gaisberg drove back in car with him.'

On 19 January 1920 Elgar went to The Gramophone Company's Regent Street offices to hear the discs. The Adagio was unsatisfactory, so another session was planned for February. Harrison returned to Severn House on 28 January to prepare the Adagio, but the session was postponed until 24 February, when it was proposed that 'Nimrod' and 'Dorabella' be recorded after the unsatisfactory recordings made the previous May, together with two movements from the *Wand of Youth* and *The Sanguine Fan* ballet, which also required considerable cutting. However the Cello Concerto Adagio could not be recorded as Alice's diary explained: 'Cold & vy foggy. Early lunch. A. & E. in car to Hayes (petrol-smelly car). Made records ... 'Cello Concerto parts did not arrive owing to change of date. Motored home. A. better.'

This was the last time Alice attended a recording session and Fred Gaisberg noted 'how especially tender and solicitous Sir Edward was for his wife, and he seemed so very happy to have her with him.' Alice's condition worsened and she died at Severn House on 7 April. Elgar was devastated. Gaisberg wrote a tribute about Alice: 'Lady Elgar was a constant visitor to the Hayes recording rooms. Except on a few occasions during the latter half of 1919, when she was in poor health, Lady Elgar accompanied her distinguished husband upon every visit. During the performance, Lady Elgar occupied a seat in the recording laboratory and followed the expert's work with great interest, frequently asking questions and listening to the tests.'

Acknowledgement is made to Jerrold Northrop Moore's Elgar On Record (Oxford University Press, 1974) in compiling these notes.

Kevin Mitchell



Elgar at Hayes 24 February 1920 with (left to right) Mrs. C. Carey, H.R.H. Princess Alice (Countess of Athlone), the Crown Prince of Roumania and the Earl of Athlone. Alice Elgar described the Crown Prince as 'Sad looking little thing'. (Arthur Reynolds' Archive).

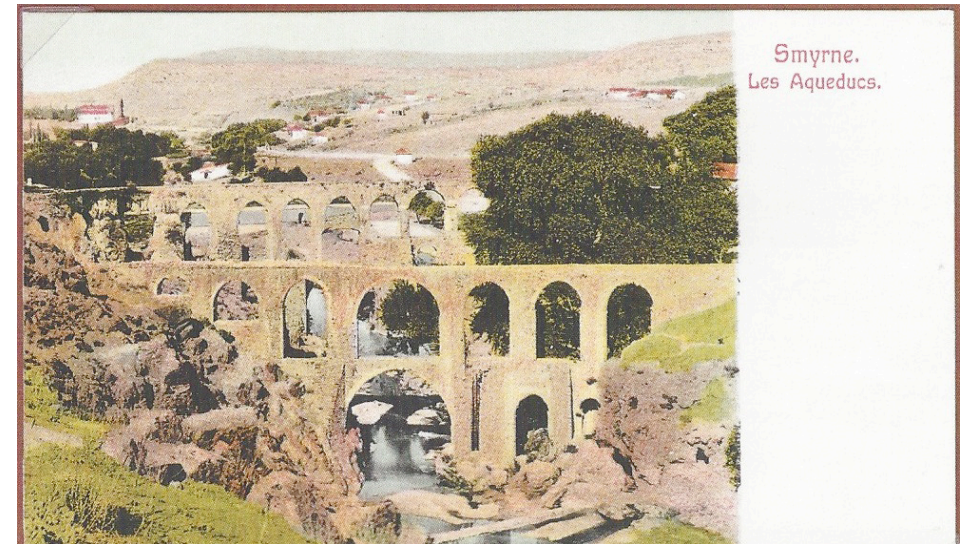
LETTERS

Dear Sir

The late Martin Bird's piece about Lady Maud Warrender (*A Mediterranean Interlude*) reproduces excerpts from Elgar's diary; notably his entry for 30 September 1905 which covers his first day in Smyrna on Turkey's Asian coast. He mentions the drive 'right up to the fortifications – tomb of S. Polycarp' and then the drive 'round the camel bridge' and the 'wonderful gorges with remains of ancient aqueducts'.

A Turkish friend of mine, who recalled my own researches into Elgar's visit to Turkey (*Journal* Vol. 14 Nos 3 & 4), recently gave me a book entitled *From Smyrna to Izmir: Everyday Life*. This reproduces photographs and postcards from the time of Elgar's visit. The tomb of St Polycarp (70-155 AD), an early Bishop of Smyrna and Roman martyr is to the left of the larger cypress tree in the photograph. The Caravan Bridge was the main point of entry for the camel caravans bringing bales of goods into the city and two of the three aqueducts which then brought water into the city were constructed by the Romans in the 2nd and 4th centuries BC and the third in the 17th century.

Yours faithfully
Andrew Neill



100 YEARS AGO

Alice Elgar's diary for 1 January 1920 recorded 'Very quiet day – Thankful to be still togethser. The year opens with many heavy clouds - Continued finance anxiety to E.& A. –'. However, the January issue of a new periodical, *Music and Letters*, contained a laudatory article on Elgar by Shaw, who stated that 'Elgar is carrying on Beethoven's business' which drew warm praise from Alice. On 6 January Elgar travelled to Ayot St Lawrence for lunch with the Shaws and the following day saw *Arms and the Man*. Elgar started writing his preface to *Musical Notation* by H.E. Button, a Novello editor, on 8 January and Alice loyally commented that she found it 'Very interesting full of *most* varied knowledge a most unusual Preface – will it not be more read than the book?' When taking the Preface to Novello's on 12 January he found time to buy black puddings in Fleet Street! Alice managed a very short walk, the first time she had been outside Severn House since 2 November. On the following day Elgar worked on the commission he had received to write music for the dedication of the Cenotaph in Whitehall, being a revision of 'For the Fallen' which was to become *With Proud Thanksgiving* and produced, Alice noted, 'glorious sounds'. There were trips to the cinema and, on 19 January, Elgar went to Regent Street to hear his recording of the Cello Concerto. Elgar developed throat problems which required it to be treated with carbolic paint by Sir Maurice Anderson which caused acute pain, and he was called in again on 30 January 'as A. had cough'. W.H. Reed noticed that Alice 'would creep up close to the fire and look so fragile ...' and Rosa Burley found Alice 'shrunken and terribly depressed'. Elgar was awarded a Diploma from the Accademia in Florence and on 3 February heard 'of his election to the Literary Socy – very pleasing-' which had been instigated by Sidney Colvin. The diaries contain many references to Alice's bad cough, but entertaining continued at Severn House, with friends being invited to afternoon tea or dinner, including Adrian Boult on 11 February to 'go through 2nd Symphony. Very pleasant'. There were more visits to cinemas in London and Farnham where on 19 February he saw George Alexander in a film made before he died: Elgar found it 'wonderful to see a dead man acting'. That day he began preparing the music for a recording session fixed for 24 February, when he and Alice travelled to Hayes to record an abridged version of *The Sanguine Fan*, 'Nimrod' and 'Dorabella': this was to be Alice's last recording session: 'Lovely to hear orchestra again'.

On 29 February a large number of friends gathered at Severn House to hear Jelly D'Aranyi and Ethel Hobday play Brahms' D minor Violin and Piano Sonata followed by the Elgar Sonata: 'E.&A. must enjoyed aftn, Everyone in such sympathy-' and on the following day the 'Art and Film Company' came to film Elgar and four days later he and Alice went to 'Cinema in Denman St. to see film of ME'. Alice Stuart Wortley accompanied them to *Pygmalion* which Alice found 'very very interesting & amusing' but a Queen's Hall concert conducted by Albert Coates, which included the *Introduction and Allegro*, was 'absolutely ruined shameful' causing Elgar to come 'away without a word to that wretched Coates'. On 6 March he found time to comment on some piano pieces that the twenty-three-year old Robert Elkin had sent.

There were further cinema visits and Elgar was filmed again on 12 March. Alice's health continued to decline, and she was unable to attend Boult's rehearsal of the Second Symphony, but after a lunch with John Ireland on 16 March the Elgars went to the concert. Alice joyfully recorded 'Wonderful performance of the Symphony. From the beginning it seemed to absolutely penetrate the audience's mind & heart. After 1st movement great applause and *shouts*, rarely heard till end & great applause all through. Adrian was wonderful – At end frantic enthusiasm & they dragged out E. who looked very overcome, hand in *hand* with Adrian at least 3 times – E. was so happy

& pleased'. She immediately followed this with a fulsome letter of thanks and Elgar also wrote to congratulate Boult correctly predicting 'that my reputation in the future is safe in your hands'.

The following day Alice had an appointment with Sir Maurice Anderson in Harley Street 'who gave her new meddies & relieved her mind of some anxiety - He sent A. back in his car-' On the following day Elgar received notice, signed by Widor, that he had been made a member of the Institut de France. For Alice this was 'a great honour – He succeeds Sgambati – How beautiful to have this & the Symphony success. So thankful-'. After more than 30 years her diaries thus came to a close and Elgar wrote against the entry: 'Her last words (written) My darling kept this book by her bedside, but wrote no more'. However, on 20 March she was able to travel to Woking with Elgar and Carice for a rehearsal and concert although it was a 'rather shaky car for A' and whilst she did not accompany her husband to Leeds for a performance of *Gerontius*, and *The Apostles* she and Carice did attend a concert on 23 March of the three chamber works, arranged by Reed and Sammons and Elgar recorded: 'My darling's last concert all my music. thoughts of the 30 (weary fighting) years of her help & devotion'. On returning from Leeds he 'found A. very unwell in bed' and on 26 March confessed to Alice Stuart Wortley: 'Carice & I are in much trouble of mind about poor dear Alice who seems really very ill & weak & does not improve'. She could retain nothing, and Elgar's diary records her decline – 'A. awake during most of the night' – along with regular attendances by Dr Rose. He and Carice tried to distract themselves with visits to the cinema but on 1st April he wrote: 'A. no better very low & tired...restless night'. Sleeping draughts brought no relief. By 6 April she was 'in great distress - cd. not understand her words - very, very painful Dr. Rose called early - nurse arrived midday - Dr. Lakin (specialist) with Dr. Rose - Bad report - Night nurse came - a long dreary restless night'. The end came on 7 April: 'My darling sinking - Father Valentine gave extreme unction. Sir Maurice called at 12.30 - Sinking all day & died in my arms at 6.10pm'. Fox Strangways arrived at Severn House to prepare her obituary which appeared in *The Times*. The funeral took place at St Wulstan's, Little Malvern on 10 April. Afterwards Elgar wrote stoically to Frank Schuster: 'The place she chose long years ago is too sweet-the blossoms are white all round it & the illimitable plain, with all the little hills & churches in the distance which were hers from childhood, looks just the same-inscrutable & unchanging. If it had to be-it could not be better'.

From Malvern he went to stay with his sister Pollie at Stoke Prior and finally returned to an empty Severn House on 26 April.

Kevin Mitchell

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