

The Society

Elgar



JOURNAL



August 2016 Vol.19, No. 5



The Elgar Society Journal

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August 2016 Vol. 19, No. 5

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*The Editor does not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors,
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*Front Cover: Elgar’s snapshot of Frank Schuster on board HMS Surprise, Autumn 1905
(Arthur Reynolds collection)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Editorial

This issue must start, as did the last, on a sad note with the recording of the death of my friend Ernie Blamires, who for many years contributed the 'Japes and Larks' column to the *Journal*. But he did far more than that. Aptly described by Cora Weaver as 'a whirlwind of infectious enthusiasm', Ern set out to discover the true identity of Variation XIII. Living in Sydney, with ready access to the Australian archives of Mary Lygon's brother, Earl Beauchamp, he found to his surprise that at the time Elgar composed Variation XIII, Lady Mary had absolutely no idea that she would be embarking on a sea voyage with the next Governor of New South Wales. He also identified the 'Shover', (a 1903 Darracq), and unearthed Anthony Collins' *Elegy in Memory of Edward Elgar*, which incorporates themes from the Third Symphony, and which was soon recorded by David Lloyd-Jones.

The question of the validity or desirability of arrangements of Elgar's completed works raises its head once more with the issue of a disc of the Piano Quintet played not by a quintet but a symphony orchestra, and *Sea Pictures* sung not by a contralto but by a choir. A year ago I passed a CD of David Matthews' arrangement of the String Quartet to a violinist to review, for fear that I would do it less than justice. He produced a compelling argument as to why the music loses greatly when played by multiple strings and should have been left well alone.

With many orchestrations by Elgar of the works of others, and many arrangements (for sound commercial reasons) of his own shorter instrumental works, we are not in an ideal position to argue against the practice! I myself have orchestrated the Organ Sonata for ten wind instruments and double bass which gives the original more than a run for its money. But I have never let it out in public – it was done purely for the enjoyment of a local wind dectet, rather as Stokowski's Bach arrangements provided pleasure for the Philadelphia Orchestra at rehearsal. Just because something can be done, it doesn't mean it should be done!

To turn to this issue. While you will recognise the names of Richard Smith and Richard Westwood-Brookes as frequent contributors – and their contributions are, as ever, stimulating – I was particularly delighted to receive the two essays on aspects of *Gerontius*, both of which popped unannounced into my Mailbox a couple of months ago. It remains one of the delights of editing the *Journal* that one can never be sure what (if anything!) is going to turn up, and here we have articles on *Gerontius* by an A-level student intending to study music at Manchester and the Maltese Ambassador to the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania.

Read and enjoy, while I turn my thoughts to December and the last *Journal* under my editorship.

Martin Bird

Frank Schuster – Elgar’s patron

Richard Smith

Schuster had the soul of an artist, as far as appreciation of music goes, but his limitations were expressed by his clumsy hands, which were almost grotesque, like his slightly malformed feet. Unable to create anything himself, he loved and longed to assist in the creation of music. He wanted to create artistic history; but could only do so by entertaining gifted people.¹

Leo Francis Howard ‘Frank’ Schuster was born on 24 September 1852 at 151 King’s Road, Brighton, the third child of Leopold Schuster by his second marriage. His mother was the Norfolk born Mary Howard, and she married Leopold in 1845. His two older sisters were Amy Leonora Frederica (1849-1915) and Minnie Adela (1850-1940). His father, Leopold Schuster (1791-27 February 1871) was a German-born Jew. He moved to England in 1808 and twelve years later formed the trading company Leo Schuster, Brothers & Co., cotton merchants based in Manchester, Bradford and Liverpool. His first marriage was to Emilie and the couple had two children: Samuel Leo Schuster (11 May 1830-23 December 1884) and Mariana Emily Schuster. In 1855 he moved to London, and formed Schuster Sons & Co., a merchant bank based in Cannon Street, London. He was best known as the Chairman of the London and Brighton Railway, then the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, and part of the consortia which bought The Crystal Palace during the 1850s. On his death his estate was valued at over £500,000,² making him one of the wealthiest merchants of his time.

Frank was baptised at St John’s parish church, Penge in Surrey on 19 November 1852. He was educated at Eton College, but his working life was relatively short, as Basil Maine recorded:

A short acquaintance with the interior of an office convinced him that his future did not that way lie, and he decided to tell his father frankly that he found that kind of busyness irksome. He wished, he said, to devote a strictly useful life to the service of the arts; and to this his father wisely agreed. Thenceforward he made himself acquainted with all the music that could possibly be heard, forming tastes and developing judgment.³

His father’s wealth meant that this aim was entirely possible. Apart from a dislike of the commercial world, Schuster was a homosexual, and had several physical problems as mentioned by Sassoon.

1 Siegfried Sassoon, *Diaries 1920-1922*, edited by Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 293.

2 Approximately £41 million in today’s values.

3 Basil Maine, *Elgar, His Life and Works* (London: Bell & Sons, 1933), 168.

These difficulties meant that he shunned publicity but was; nevertheless, a tireless and generous host and enjoyed ‘being in the swim’ and patronising new artists. Schuster’s home at 22 Old Queen Street, which overlooked St. James’s Park, rapidly became a meeting-place for artists, writers and musicians, who eventually included John Singer Sargent, Arnold Bennett, Walter Sickert, Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell, Siegfried Sassoon, William Walton and Bernard Shaw. He also did much to make Gabriel Fauré’s name known in England. Basil Maine described an evening of chamber music at Old Queen Street: ‘... a panelled room, bare of all furniture, containing, in fact, only two objects, a pianoforte and a bust of Richard Wagner.’⁴

The first recorded meeting between Elgar and Schuster was on 11 May 1899 in London. Shortly afterwards Schuster heard the premiere of the ‘Enigma’ Variations with which he was completely ‘bowled over’. He then travelled to Worcestershire and called upon the Elgars at Craig Lea. From those meetings grew a friendship in which Schuster’s esteem for the composer was the dominant factor. As Schuster’s admiration for every new work Elgar produced, mutual friends were shocked to find a new bust in the music-room of his Westminster house. Wagner had been deposed: Elgar reigned in his stead!⁵

During April 1901 Schuster arranged a meeting between Elgar, the actor-manager Herbert Beerbohm Tree and the dramatist Stephen Phillips regarding the possibility of his writing the incidental music for Phillips’ latest drama, *Ulysses*. Nothing came of the idea, although the play was produced at Her Majesty’s Theatre on 1 February 1902.

On 26 November 1902 Schuster wrote to Elgar that he had overheard someone asking Paderewski ‘Who is Elgar and where did he study? Was he at any conservatoire?’ On receiving a negative answer the man asked ‘but who was his master?’ ‘Paddy’ replied ‘*Le Bon Dieu*’.⁶ After staying with the Elgars for the 1903 Three Choirs Festival, Schuster wrote:

How I enjoyed those walks & talks with you Edward, and if my speech must have appeared only stupider than my silence, you must make allowances for the fact that I always so to speak paralyse in the presence of genius: in the matter of friendship we are, and I thank God for it, on terms of equality, but try as I may I can never forget that you have written a “Gerontius”, and I have only listened to it! – the gulf awes me.⁷

During the year Schuster had bought a country house at Bray near Maidenhead from Miss Van de Weyer, a lady in waiting to Queen Victoria and daughter of the Belgian Ambassador, Sylvain Van de Weyer. Known as ‘The Hut’, it was a beautiful black and white house with lawns running down to the River Thames.⁸ The original house was built in the 1820s with a new front entrance added in 1896. During the years that followed Schuster hosted a large number of famous names in the cultural world. W.H. ‘Billy’ Reed was to describe the house during 1910:

I can see it now as it looked that spring morning when I first arrived. It was a sweet riverside house, raised several feet above the level of the lawn, with wooden steps leading up to the veranda from the

4 *Ibid.*

5 Basil Maine, *op.cit.* 168.

6 EBM (Elgar Birthplace Museum) letter 6896.

7 EBM letter 6898, 12 September 1903.

8 David McBrien, ‘A Visit to the Hut’, *The Elgar Society Journal* Vol.15, No.2. This article includes a detailed description of ‘The Hut’ with colour photographs.

gravel path. It was evidently constructed in anticipation of floods, being only a stone's throw from the Thames, which, however, flowed past serenely enough between its banks whenever I happened to be there. Across the lawn, and almost screened by trees, was the studio, away from the house and approached by stones placed in the grass about a pace apart. It had rather a barn-like exterior, but, inside, it was a home for most of the curios, Chinese ornaments, rare and extraordinary objects which Frankie had collected and brought home from all parts of the world.⁹

The Elgar Festival

In October 1903 Alice suggested that there might be an Elgar Festival. Adrian Boult takes up the story.

Frank told me how it began. But I must preface his story with the fact that Lady Elgar was very tiny indeed, and had a quiet, intimate way of speaking. This caused her to come close up to anyone to whom she had anything important to say. As Frank put it, 'You know the way dear Alice used to come up to one and confide in one's tummy? Well, one day she said to my tummy: "Frank, dear, we are always going to Gloucester Festivals or Leeds Festivals and so on. Don't you think we might have an Elgar Festival some time?" My tummy reported what she had said and I went off to see Harry Higgins and that's how it all began'.¹⁰

He immediately proposed this idea to his friend Harry V. Higgins, chairman of the Covent Garden Grand Opera Syndicate, proprietors of the Royal Opera House. The result was that a three day festival of Elgar's music was scheduled to be held at the Royal Opera House between 14 and 16 March 1904.¹¹

For the festival Elgar temporarily considered writing a Symphony, but he soon abandoned this in favour of a concert overture. This emerged as *In the South*, inspired by the holiday that he and Alice were enjoying in Italy. By the time they left Alassio on 30 January 1904 he was beginning work on the orchestral score. The overture was finally completed on 21 February and dedicated 'to my friend Leo F. Schuster'. In a letter to Schuster written on 22 February 1904, Elgar claimed that he had 'put in a warm cordial of spice of love for you'.¹² The overture received its premiere on 16 March 1904 on the third night of the Elgar Festival. Elgar conducted the Hallé Orchestra.

Elgar stayed with Schuster in London throughout the festival, but he apparently stayed in bed most of the time to get avoid the reporters and photographers. Schuster reported with some amusement:

'...that one day he was shut up in a little room – a photographer on the stairs, an interviewer in the dining room, a man who wanted to make his bust in the drawing room and they would not go away – so poor E.E. to get rid of them retired out of the window!'¹³

9 W.H. Reed, *Elgar as I Knew Him* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936), 26-27.

10 Adrian Boult, *My Own Trumpet* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1973), 69-70.

11 Arthur S Reynolds, 'The Elgar Festival at Covent Garden – March 1904', *The Elgar Society Journal* Vol.13, No.4 gives a complete report on the festival.

12 Royal Academy of Music, London, MS.1, Elgar-Leo F. Schuster.

13 Michael Kennedy, *Adrian Boult* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), 24.

During the festival Schuster hosted a party at Old Queen Street; a sumptuous affair with no expense spared. Even the panels of the dining room had been decorated with emblems 'referring to various phases of Elgar's works in order to pay tribute to the composer'.¹⁴ But Elgar was not impressed as Henry Wood was to report in his autobiography.

What should have been a happy occasion was completely spoiled by Elgar's churlishness and unmannerly behaviour: far from showing pleasure at this generous tribute he appeared utterly bored by the whole proceedings. The crowning discourtesy came when Schuster, to quote Alice Elgar's diary, 'proposed E's health in the most touching way with his heart in his voice'. The guests were now thoroughly uncomfortable but, to quote Wood, 'naturally expected Elgar to make a suitable reply. Instead he went on talking to and old friend and probably had no idea his health had been drunk at all'.¹⁵

On 6 July 1904 Elgar received his knighthood with Schuster driving with him to the Palace. At the same time Schuster sent Carice 'a charming tile for yr. door with Mr. Babbit on it – so nice',¹⁶ as Alice wrote to her daughter. Eight days later Edward and Alice dined with the Prince and Princess of Wales at Marlborough House. Then Edward stayed at 'The Hut' while Alice and May Grafton were busily engaged in arranging the shelves at Plás Gwyn to where the Elgars had moved on 30 June. Shortly afterwards Schuster paid his first visit to Hereford, driving there in his Fiat car. In appreciation of their hospitality Schuster sent them a handsome sundial for the garden.



13 October 1904: 'Frank Schuster arrd. about 6 in fine Fiat Motor, with [Cecil] Barry & a Chauffeur'. Over the next three days Schuster took the Elgars all over Herefordshire. (Elgar Birthplace Museum)



24 October 1904: 'Sundial came – E. & C. & May placed it in lawn', and Alice admires it. (Elgar Birthplace Museum)

14 Henry Wood, *My Life of Music* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), 179.

15 Vincent Waite, 'Elgar, Parry and Stanford', in Christopher Redwood (Ed.), *An Elgar Companion* (Ashbourne: Sequoia Publishing, 1982), 186.

16 EBM letter 35, 6 July 1904.

By this time Elgar had become very friendly with Samuel Sanford, Professor of Music at Yale University. Early in May 1905 Sanford asked Edward and Alice to stay with him at his house in Newhaven Connecticut for just over a month. This absence from home was to cause the couple some concern about Carice should anything happen to them. On 5 May Edward wrote to Schuster:

... We go to the States on June 9 (S.S. Deutschland) to stay with Professor Sanford for a few weeks & we have been thinking over many things. One is the future of Carice, in case anything happens to blot us both out: now would you allow us to name you as one (of two) guardians? The other legal one would be my wife's cousin, [William A.] Raikes the barrister: he would of course see to all legal & money business neither of which would trouble you in any way, but we should feel that you know our feelings as to education, art & society better than anyone else & might be able to advise wisely if need [be]...¹⁷

Schuster accepted the guardianship without question, and the couple stayed with him in London just before proceeding on to Dover. Alice recorded that 'Frank saw us off – nearly tearfully'. The visit proceeded quite well, Yale presenting him with an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Music, although Edward suffered badly in the humid American summer.

Following the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester in 1905, Schuster brought an invitation from Lady Mina Beresford whose husband had recently been made Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet. The plan was to join a party aboard HMS *Surprise* for a two week cruise around the Mediterranean as guests of the Royal Navy. Elgar was undecided whether to go or not, but finally he opted to join the party on 15 September. He and Frank then left by train for the two day journey to Brindisi in southern Italy. On arrival they boarded an Italian steamer for Corfu and Patras. They then travelled on to Athens where they met Lady Maud Warrender's husband, Sir George, who was captain of the cruiser HMS *Carnarvon*. During the cruise they were able to visit Lemnos, Constantinople (now Istanbul) and Smyrna (now Izmir). The latter city prompted Elgar to write a piano piece *In Smyrna*.¹⁸

Another example of Schuster's generosity came following a letter written to him by Elgar. Edward's good friend and editor, August Jaeger, had been diagnosed with TB and had already spent the winter of 1904 in the cold mountain air of Davos in Switzerland. Elgar was concerned:

My Dear Frank,

... I passed through town yesterday & saw poor dear Jaeger. He has told no one yet but he must return to Davos at once. The doctor tells him to bring a fur coat to lie out of doors in. It does not matter how shabby it is as he doesn't want to show it off (poor dear) but only to slumber in out of doors when he is in Davos. Don't trouble at all but perhaps amongst your many motoring sort of people there might be such a thing.¹⁹

Without hesitation, Schuster immediately sent Jaeger his own fur coat – obviously of very good quality.

On 6 April 1906 Edward and Alice left for their second visit to the USA, this time to conduct

17 EBM letter 6924.

18 Andrew Neill, 'Elgar in Smyrna, 1905', *Elgar Society Journal* Vol.14, No.3 details Elgar's visit to Greece and Turkey.

19 EBM letter 7020, 29 October 1905.

at the Cincinnati May Festival. At this time he was working on the second part of his proposed trilogy, to be called *The Kingdom*. They stayed at the newly completed Country Club in Cincinnati which they had virtually to themselves. Alice described it to Carice as 'lovely, something like Mr Schuster's'.²⁰ On 1 May Alice was having coffee with Julia Worthington at the Country Club when she received a telegram from Edward's brother, Frank, telling her that their father, William Henry, had died. Schuster was quick to send his commiserations:

My heart goes out across the seas to you... I know that you are too sensible to fret & repine – that you had feared yourself for this sorrow for a long time past – that your uppermost sentiment will be gratitude for the long & fairly active life granted your father – and yet I know too that you will not be able to stifle altogether the regret of being absent when your dear one was taken ... But there is no sting in such a death, and it is perhaps as well that the long farewell was spoken when you thought it only an 'auf wiederseh'n' – for what could you have done in the way of devotion & attention at the last that you had not given freely & fully all your life through?²¹

The Kingdom was finally premiered on 3 October 1906 at the triennial Birmingham Festival to enormous acclaim. Schuster wrote: 'You have been entrusted with one of the greatest messages ever sent to mankind. Do not falter, do not fail, but God willing, go on and deliver it to the end.'²² But seven days later, Elgar replied in a fit of depression: 'I don't seem to realise that I have written anything & I am trying to forget all about it & myself.'²³ Schuster later commented on a Three Choirs Festival performance of *The Kingdom*: 'It is assuredly a work destined to a glorious immortality. I don't believe that people so close to its inception can properly appreciate its rare beauty.'²⁴ Adrian Boult remembered all his life how Schuster said that: 'beside *The Kingdom*, *Gerontius* is the work of a raw amateur'.²⁵

Boult also remembered that Schuster had an excellent sense of humour, but this once led him into trouble. Early in 1900, following a bicycle ride with the singer, Kennerley Rumford with whom he had been to school, Rumford decided to give his bicycle a name. 'I shall call it Santley (after a famous baritone) because it is a singer.' Schuster replied, 'I will call mine Clara Butt because it isn't'.²⁶ He was disappointed that the joke



15 July 1906: Elgar relaxes at The Hut. (Arthur Reynolds collection, from an original in an album belonging to Leslie Wylde)

20 EBM letter 73, 16 April 1906.

21 EBM letter 6956, 4 May 1906.

22 EBM letter 6958, 6 October 1906.

23 EBM letter 7053, 10 October 1906

24 Letter to Adrian Boult, 19 September 1907, in Kennedy, *Boult*, op.cit. 29.

25 Introductory note to EMI recording of *The Kingdom*, 1969.

26 Adrian Boult, quoted in Michael Kennedy, 'A new home rich in history', *The Spectator*, 31 January 2007

was not appreciated and understood why a few weeks later when Rumford and Butt announced their engagement!

Early in 1907 the Elgars arrived in Italy for a holiday, staying at the Hotel Quisisana in Capri. From there Edward wrote to Carice. 'It was nice to see your guardian, Leo F. Schuster Esquire: he does understand the world. Speaks French like a Frenchman, Italian very well & German ("m-m m-m") only enough to 'get on'.²⁷ During their visit Elgar and Canon Gorton visited the villa owned by Axel Munthe, a friend of Schuster's. Munthe later became best known as the author of *The Story of San Michele*.

Throughout the remaining part of the first decade of 1900, Schuster and Elgar remained close friends, with the latter often visiting Queen Street and 'The Hut'. Arthur Benson, probably best known for writing the words of 'Land of Hope and Glory' gave his opinion of Schuster following a visit: 'I like Schuster; he is so harmless, kind, innocent & refined. We had tea & a long talk mostly about Elgar. I learn that Lady E. is not well off, some £300 a year only, & and that E. has to make money.'²⁸

In June 1908, Schuster heard that Elgar was working on a Symphony. He immediately wrote to Alice: 'So glad to know you are settled down once more & Edward at work! This is splendid & is it true about the Symphony?'²⁹ In August Edward took the score of the Symphony to 'The Hut' so that he could work undisturbed. On Schuster's copy of the miniature score he later wrote: 'This was written at the Hut (Orchard Room) 1st September 1908'. In the days that followed, proofs of the Symphony continued to arrive, with the premiere taking place on 3 December with Hans Richter conducting the Hallé Orchestra at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. It was received with rapturous acclaim. Three days later a second performance was given at the Queen's Hall in London and both Frank Schuster and Gabriel Fauré were in the audience. In 1909, following the death of his friend the Duchess of Manchester, Schuster was to comment on Elgar's music:

As long as I have it I can bear my losses, although I thought when I went in to the hall today that I couldn't. I felt then as I never have, but as you, I fear, sometimes do – that life was not worth the living & I would not be sorry to lose it. Then came your Symphony – and in a moment I knew I was wrong. In it is all love – and love makes life possible. I wonder if you realize – when you feel despondent & embittered – what your music is to me – and therefore to countless others? You may not care to be of use to those who live after you – but surely it must be something to you to know you are giving happiness & hope & consolation to your fellow creatures? Bless you for it anyway!³⁰

On 30 March 1910 Elgar left London for Torquay where he met Schuster who was staying with his sister, Adela. Four days later they left in Schuster's chauffeur driven car for a tour around Cornwall, eventually deciding to see the Stuart-Wortleys at Tintagel. They encountered snowstorms crossing Bodmin Moor but arrived safely at 3.30 pm. After enjoying lunch together, Charles Stuart-Wortley returned to London the next day. Elgar and Schuster then continued further south as far as Falmouth before Edward returned to London on 11 April.

27 EBM letter 102, 13 January 1907.

28 Diary, 21 February 1908, quoted in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar – A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 527.

29 EBM letter 6959, 8 June 1908.

30 EBM letter 6899, 3 December 1909.

The Violin Concerto

At this time he was continuing to work on his Violin Concerto and, from 12 May, he spent ten days at 'The Hut' using the solitude of the studio situated a little way from the house to compose. 'Billy' Reed described the studio thus:

Whenever I play the andante, or hear it played, a mental picture of the studio flashes to my mind. It was a home for all the quaint objects and curios that Mr Schuster had collected in many parts of the world, and there was also a grand piano and a writing desk, so that Sir Edward could steal away from the house and repair to the studio at any time, where he could work to his heart's content without interruption.³¹

As composition progressed Edward returned again to 'The Hut' on 10 June, writing to Schuster:

I want to end that Concerto but do not see my way very clearly to the end – so you had best invite its stepmother to the Hut. Do.³²

Two days later 'Billy' Reed joined him to help him try out sections.

It was not very long before I received an urgent summons to go there. The slow movement and the first movement of the Concerto were almost finished; and the Coda was ready. Could I therefore come and play them with him? ... When we were tired of playing, or if Sir Edward wanted to go out in the air for a change, the fiddle was laid in its case and we went off together, strolling about the riverbank, watching the small fish in the water and enjoying the quiet beauty of the place.³³

Finally, in early August, Edward finished the Concerto with its premiere already scheduled for 10 November 1910. This took place at a Philharmonic Society concert in the Queen's Hall with Elgar conducting. Wulstan Atkins described the scene:

Then came the Violin Concerto, with Kreisler giving the first performance. The second part consisted of the Symphony in A flat. The hall was crowded, and Elgar and Kreisler were repeatedly called back. The Symphony also received tremendous applause, and the audience would not let Elgar go.

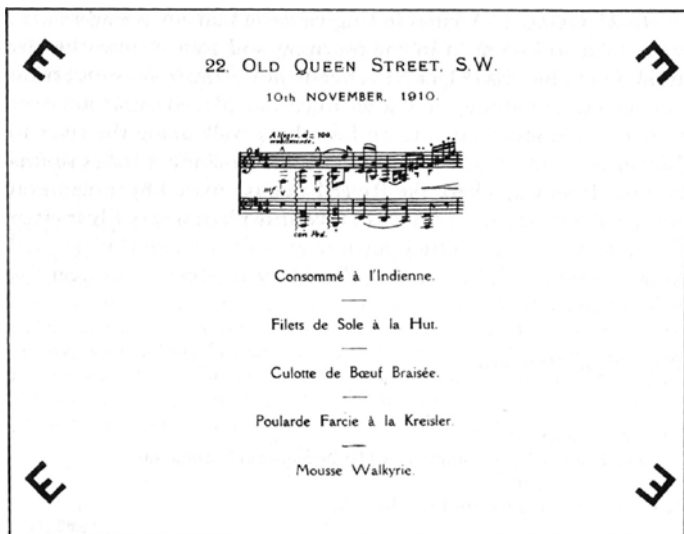
After the concert they eventually found their way to 22, Old Queen Street as Schuster's guests at an elaborate party. Schuster had really thought of everything to please Elgar. The tables were laid out in the form of a large E, named after the three movements of the concerto and decorated with white heather. After the composer's health had been drunk, and that of Kreisler, a male voice choir appeared and sang the five part-songs comprising Op 45, *Part-Songs from the Greek Anthology*, which Elgar had written in 1902. This was not only a surprise for those assembled, but clearly also for the Elgars, and my father recalled the look of surprised pleasure on Elgar's face at that moment.³⁴

31 W.H. Reed, 'The Violin Concerto', in Redwood (Ed), *op.cit.* 254-255.

32 EBM letter 7055 [Its stepmother was Alice Stuart-Wortley].

33 W.H. Reed, *op.cit.* 26-28.

34 E. Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1984), 209-212.



10 November 1910: the menu for the dinner after the première of the Violin Concerto.

In the years leading up to the First World War Elgar continued to visit 'The Hut'. During the late spring of 1913 he began work on *Falstaff*, a symphonic study to fulfil a commission from the Leeds Triennial Festival. Much of the work was composed in the Orchard Room at 'The Hut'. On 29 July he sent Alice Stuart-Wortley a sketch of the music with the inscription '(Farewell to the Hut) July 1913 – written after you left'. On 21 September 1913 Elgar met with W. H. Reed on to try out the wind parts for *Falstaff*. The work received its premiere in Leeds on 1 October 1913 with the composer conducting the London Symphony Orchestra.

In August 1914 the world was plunged into a savage war. Although Elgar immediately joined the Hampstead Special Constabulary he did not like some aspects of war as he famously wrote to Schuster:

Concerning the war I say nothing – the only thing that wrings my heart & soul is the thought of the horses – oh! my beloved animals – the men – and women can go to hell – but my horses.³⁵

In 1916, during a visit to Lady Astor's hospital at Cliveden a few miles from Bray, Schuster met a handsome New Zealand officer, Leslie 'Anzy' (after ANZAC) Wylde who had lost a leg at Gallipoli and received severe chest wounds. He awoke in hospital to find Schuster bending over him. Eventually he became Schuster's protégé, companion, and, in spite of his disability, his chauffeur. Anzy's arrival at 'The Hut' heralded a change in atmosphere there from Edwardian England to the roaring twenties. The change was not to be appreciated by Elgar.

After the war Schuster organised a private performance of Elgar's two new chamber works, the String Quartet and Piano Quintet, at Old Queen Street on 26 April 1919. The performers were the same as those who were to give the first performances on 21 May at the Wigmore Hall: Albert

35 EBM letter 6944, 25 August 1914.

Sammons and William H. Reed (violins), Raymond Jeremy (viola) and Felix Salmond ('cello). Basil Maine recorded:

[They] were the composer's first essays in the smaller medium since the immature efforts of his youth, and musicians were curious to observe with what effect he had put off the opulence of his orchestral manner and submitted to the rigours of the chamber style. The more perceptive among them were in no way disappointed. After the dark period from which they were then emerging, this new music broke upon them with the pale, quiet colours of a late winter sunrise.³⁶

The death of his wife Alice on 7 April 1920 left Edward distraught. The private funeral took place on 10 April at St. Wulstan's in Little Malvern. Alice was very fond of the Elgar Quartet and Schuster arranged with the four musicians who had premiered the work to play the slow movement at the service. Two days later Edward wrote to Frank: 'I cannot thank you [enough] for the quartet – it was exactly right & just what she wd. have loved – but once more you must please let me settle the acct when you know what it is: the boys played like angels.'³⁷ Schuster replied:

And now I want to try & tell you what a lovely impression was left on my mind by that little quiet ceremony and those beautiful surroundings last Saturday – by the peace & poetry of the whole thing ... It was all just like her, from the music to the place & even to the way the tea was served: My two great impressions this winter & indeed of my life – have been the dying of my oldest friend Howard Sturgis and the burial of your wife.³⁸

A change of atmosphere

It was perhaps the loss of Alice and the change of atmosphere at 'The Hut' that led to Edward temporarily cooling his relations with Schuster. On 2 August 1921 he wrote to 'Windflower': 'I have given Frank up! he is hopeless & so an end'.³⁹ This attitude was not helped when Schuster, who had been in Europe, rushed back to London for a Promenade concert on 1 September at which Elgar conducted *Falstaff* and the Violin Concerto. Due to a problem with his luggage, he did not arrive at the Queen's Hall until after the Concerto had begun. Siegfried Sassoon reported on the subsequent encounter:

Elgar was grumpy and unkind to Frank Schuster (who has probably done more than anyone else to create his success) when he went 'behind' to see him at Queen's Hall. I was with F.S. Elgar didn't notice me, and his behaviour made me quite bitter against him. He scarcely glanced at poor old Frankie, who had come straight from Munich to the concert, and missed his dinner, to hear Elgar conduct. Elgar dashed out of the Hall and across to the Langham Hotel, muttering 'You can come and see me at the hotel, if you like'.⁴⁰ There is no doubt that E. is a very self-centred and inconsiderate

36 Basil Maine, *op.cit.* 168 (Maine mistakenly gives this event as taking place at 'The Hut' on 3 May 1919).

37 EBM letter 6977.

38 EBM letter 494. Howard Sturgis (1855-1920) was a novelist who wrote about same-sex love and was a close friend of Schuster.

39 EBM letter 7169.

40 The explanation of Elgar's behaviour after the concert was that when conducting he perspired a lot, and always rushed away to his hotel to change his shirt, for fear of catching cold.

man (how different to Hardy!). Knowing how deeply he'd wounded old Frankie last week, I made up my mind to be grumpy with E, if I encountered him here [Hereford]. 'Selfish, conceited old brute!' I thought. But, returning from this evening's concert early, after hearing the concerto, I came into the hotel, and there was Elgar, handing a letter in at the office window. And I could think only of the magnificence of *The Apostles* this morning. Could this possibly be the man who composed that glorious work – this smartly dressed 'military'-looking grey-haired man, with the carefully-trimmed moustache and curved nose?⁴¹

Although Sassoon was critical of some aspects of Elgar's character, there was no doubt that he had a tremendous admiration for the man. 'How I envy Elgar his achievements, and his continued activity! What shall I be like when I'm his age, if I attain it?' Another accolade came after Sassoon had attended the Three Choirs Festival performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* at Hereford.

... magnificent performance. The orchestra and choruses superbly conducted by Elgar. Soloists not so good, but adequate. I am now sure that Elgar is a great composer. His sense of form is flawless; he never lets one down in his constructive power, although in detail he may occasionally be derivative or commonplace. *The Apostles* and *Gerontius* have the essential qualities of greatness – structural magnificence and imaginative vision.⁴²

Schuster was very forgiving and Edward was careful to write to him after he had decided to sell Severn House in London. After the Elgars had moved there in 1912, Schuster had been kind enough to furnish the drawing room with Empire furniture. On 6 January 1922 Elgar wrote:

Now, please do not misunderstand about the furniture; of course I know that it was a present; but – Carice did not want it & I have nowhere to put it, as you have seen; I cd. not bear to think that you might not know of the sale &, if you heard, you might think I was making a good thing out of a friend's present – that's all: the things remain stored now until better times.⁴³

Edward still did not like the atmosphere at 'The Hut'. He wrote to 'Windflower' on 7 June 1922: 'I arr[ive]d. last night from the Hut. I missed you: Claude, Glyn Philpot, R. Nicholls, S. Sassoon & myself were the party &, of course, the N. Zealander – reminds me of Macauley's N. Zealander sitting on the ruins not of London Bridge, but of the Hut, and the Host!⁴⁴ The New Zealander, Anzy Wylde, had meanwhile formed a friendship with Wendela Boreel, a young female artist and pupil of Sickert. Wendela was the daughter of a Dutch diplomat and a neighbour of Schuster's in London. She and Anzy were to play an increasingly large part in the running of 'The Hut', where they began to call Schuster 'Nunkie'. Elgar did not approve as he wrote to Lady Stuart:

This afternoon he [Schuster] was sitting in the back of a smart car ... driving with an odd looking – I hate to say it – bit of fluff!!! in flamboyant pink on the front seat, all laughing loudly; they did not see me & I was glad for I shd. have been thoroughly ashamed.⁴⁵

41 Sassoon, *op.cit.* 79-80.

42 Sassoon, *op.cit.* 81 (8 September 1921).

43 EBM letter 6945.

44 EBM letter 7157.

45 EBM letter 9708.



16 June 1912, at The Hut. Alice's diary reads: 'Lord Northampton there & Muriel [Foster] & Miss E. a great traveller in the East ... They stood out after dinner linked together & loved it all ...' (*Arthur Reynolds collection*)

Realising how unsettled Elgar was at this time, having lost his beloved Alice and with Carice getting married, Schuster offered to let Elgar stay at 'The Hut' rent free in October 1922. Elgar refused, as he told Carice, because of the 'eternal servant question'.⁴⁶ Around this time Anzy and Wendela built an annex to 'The Hut' where they could live after their marriage in 1924.

On 4 November 1924, Gabriel Fauré, who Elgar had known for 25 years and whose music Schuster had done much to promote, died in Paris. Schuster went to the funeral to where Edward wrote:

Thank you for your letter from Paris: I was very sad over Fauré's death – he was such a real gentleman – the highest type of Frenchman & I admired him greatly.⁴⁷

Elgar then tried to persuade Herbert Brewer to perform Fauré's Requiem at the Gloucester Festival, but to no avail. The work did not feature in a Three Choirs performance until 1935 in Worcester.

46 EBM letter 226.

47 EBM letter 6906.

Sometime in 1926 Schuster, having sold his house in London left 'The Hut' in the charge of the Wyldes who had married in 1924. They renamed the house 'The Long White Cloud' (the Maori name for New Zealand = *Aoteaotoa*). Schuster then moved to Hove Lawn, Cromwell Road, Hove where he lived until his death. He did, however, borrow 'The Hut' in June 1927 for a concert to celebrate Elgar's 70th birthday, at which the String Quartet and Piano Quintet were performed by Albert Sammons, 'Billy' Reed, Raymond Jeremy, Felix Salmond and William Murdoch. A large number of guests were assembled for the event as the painter Hector Bolitho remembered:

There was an herbageous border of famous people sitting behind me: Arnold Bennett, looking morose in a black hat which he forgot to remove, Sir Landon and Lady Ronald, Gustav Holst, and on one side, near to our host, Sir Edward Elgar himself.⁴⁸

But, as Elgar reported to 'Windflower': 'the Hut atmosphere has gone never to return. Dear old Frank was radiant &, as usual, a perfect host ...'.⁴⁹ Osbert Sitwell later wrote unkindly of the event in his autobiography:

The plump wraith of Sir Edward Elgar who, with his grey moustache, grey hair, grey top hat and frock-coat looked every inch a personification of Colonel Bogey... In the main the audience was drawn from the famous composer's passionately devout but to me anonymous partisans here gathered for the last time ... One could almost hear, through the music, the whirr of the wings of the Angel of Death.⁵⁰

Sitwell's words were to prove prophetic. On 21 December 1927 Lady Stuart noted in her diary⁵¹ that Schuster had suddenly been taken ill and was undergoing an operation. Three days earlier they had lunched together and gone to the *Messiah* at the Albert Hall when he had 'seemed fairly well'.⁵² Edward replied immediately from Battenhall Manor:

Thank you for your news of dear old Frank: I have wired & have reply that he is progressing: it was an awful shock as we had been exchanging notes about dates etc. Poor dear I hope he is in 'no pain'⁵³



Outside 'The Hut' in the early 1920s. Schuster with unidentified companions. (Lady Ottoline Morrell)

48 Hector Bolitho, *Older People* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935), 123.

49 EBM letter 7781

50 Osbert Sitwell, *Laughter in the Next Room* (London: Macmillan, 1949), 196-197.

51 Clare Stuart Wortley note to EBM letter 7791.

52 *Ibid.*

53 EBM letter 7720.

On 26 December he wrote again to Lady Stuart:

I had your p.c. & I have written to Hove: I do not expect a reply to my general messages: thank you many times for letting me hear; I do hope all goes well with dear old Frank.⁵⁴

Next morning a telegram arrived to tell Edward that Schuster had died. He wrote again to Windflower:

I know you will be in deep sorrow – a telegram has just come – it is too sad & I had hoped, from the last news I had received, that all was going well. Alas!⁵⁵

Schuster's funeral was held at Putney Vale on 30 December, but because of heavy snow neither Elgar nor Lady Stuart would be able to attend. Realising this, Edward wrote again to Lady Stuart:

The roads are impossible so I cannot get to the funeral. I had hoped that I might have driven from here. So I am sitting here in thought – mostly very pleasant & happy ones of dear old Frank. It is a dispensation of Whoever controls us, that in remembering childish holidays we recollect always the fine days – the bad ones do not come back so easily; in the passing of friends it is somewhat the same; the radiant happy & sunny Frank I have before me as I write & the small temporary little irritations, which worried one at the time, are gone & forgotten forever. I wrote to his sister [–] just a note = the rest of the family are unknown to me.

And you: I left you till the last because in music you found such a 'world' & in Frank such a friend of music. Your loss in this way is naturally not to be filled – how could it be? So I can only say I know & sympathise as you know.⁵⁶

Schuster had made special mention of Elgar in his will, and on 10 January 1928 Adela Schuster wrote to give the full facts:

The sum Frank left you in his will is £7,000 – (but there are death duties to come off this.)⁵⁷ and the words in which he makes the bequest are there: 'To my friend, Sir Edward Elgar O.M. who has saved my country from the reproach of having produced no composer worthy to rank with the Great masters'.⁵⁸

When Shaw heard about it he thought that 'Schuster really deserves to be buried in the Abbey, though he overlooked ME'. He resented the chancellor's death duties: 'I grudge Churchill his share. Why don't they make us duty-free instead of giving us OMs and the like long after we have conferred them on ourselves?'⁵⁹

54 EBM letter 7791.

55 EBM letter 7801

56 EBM letter 7782. Elgar's letter of sympathy to Adela Schuster was also dated 27 December (EBM letter 6847).

57 In today's values £7,000 is approximately £380,000 but 10 per cent death duties had to be paid on this, leaving Elgar with approximately £324,000.

58 EBM letter 6655.

59 EBM letter 2225 (4 April 1928).

A final tribute to Schuster came from Elgar in another letter to Windflower:

And now all is over: I feel a sad want of something in the background – it is as if a support had gone. F. was all the time there if wanted, – but I never troubled him in any way ... I should have loved to have had some memento of him – but it is perhaps better not.⁶⁰

I would like to record my thanks to Sue Fairchild, archivist at the Elgar Birthplace and Arthur Reynolds, Chairman of the North American Branch of the Elgar Society for their help in the compilation of this article.

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

60 EBM letter 7766.

Who is the real soul of the Violin Concerto?

Richard Westwood-Brookes

Elgar's application of a mysterious Spanish inscription at the head of the Violin Concerto: 'Aquí Esta Encerrada el alma de' has inspired almost as much speculation as the elusive 'Enigma'.

Romantically translated as 'Herein is enshrined the soul of', Elgar further sparked the theorising by use of five dots at the end of the quotation in place of the universally accepted three dots to indicate a missing word.

He never revealed the answer, but let it be known that the identity was 'female', and given the intensity of the work, the generally accepted version is that the quotation referred to a woman of Elgar's intimate acquaintance who obviously had a name which could be fitted somehow into five letters.

And following on to that: if the quotation does refer to a woman – what exactly was the nature of her relationship with Elgar?

Over the years the speculation as to the identity of this veiled lady has centred on two people – Alice Stuart Wortley, wife of the MP for Sheffield, and the wealthy American socialite Julia Worthington.

Plenty has been poured into both claims over the years, so I will resist reprising much of the argument here.

In recent times the pendulum of opinion has swung in favour of Alice – the 'Windflower' (though of course this sobriquet does not fit into the five dot pattern), while the claim of Julia Worthington who was originally nominated as the 'Soul' by Alice Elgar, no less, has receded.

It is natural to consider whether the identity matters at all – except for the fact that great pains seem to have been undertaken by members of the Elgar entourage to suggest that they knew the identity but it was to be kept secret, perhaps for all time, and therein lies the reason for speculation.

Rosa Burley concluded for example: '[Elgar] ... clearly did not wish the true subject's name revealed. I shall therefore follow the lead of Ernest Newman who is understood to have possessed certain confidential information which he refused to publish regarding the dedication of the Violin Concerto, and let her remain anonymous.'

Alice Elgar, as reported in Dora Powell's book 'Memories of a Variation', solemnly did reveal the identity – again in a mysterious and veiled manner: 'the door opened and the Lady [Elgar] came in. She came and stood by me, saw what I was looking at and translated the Spanish sentence. Then she went on to fill in the name – that of a personal friend – and asked me never to reveal it. I promised her that I never would. My guess was right.'

Dora nevertheless *did* reveal the name – as Mrs Worthington – in a later edition of her book, and, according to her, with the full permission of Carice Elgar.

Such attention to secrecy would seem to rule out any idea that the nature of the 'soul' was any abstract concept of five letters, such as 'music' for example, or even for that matter 'Elgar' – and

given the nature of Edwardian propriety with its ardent desperation to hush up embarrassing or even worse subjects for the protection of reputation, one is inevitably drawn to the conclusion that under all this lies the speculation – though rarely voiced – that the veiled Lady and Elgar were lovers locked in some sort of clandestine affair. Why else make her identity such a never to be revealed mystery?

Nicholas Reed, writing in *The Musical Times* in August 1984 reflected at great length on the rival claims as to the ‘soul’s’ identity.

In the article he publishes a transcript of a reminiscence by Stokowski broadcast in 1972 and referring to an incident in 1903 when he claims to have encountered Elgar and an unnamed American lady – but clearly Mrs Worthington – and states unequivocally that they were deeply in love : ‘... Elgar was ... married he was true to his wife and yet he was in love with this girl. And this was a great tragedy of Elgar’s life ...’.

Stokowski furthermore claims that Pippa Worthington was also the inspiration of the Romanza Variation – which might dismiss the whole thing as the ramblings of an aged mind. After all, if this were the case, Elgar would have had to have known Pippa prior to the composition of the Variations in 1899, and according to all the accepted wisdom this is clearly not the case. Or is it?

The fact remains that there is, and perhaps never will be, any concrete evidence one way or the other in all of this. Elgar was exceedingly careful to conceal his mysteries, and his inner circle, and particularly his wife and daughter, were equally adamant at maintaining the status quo.

So if there is to be any further ‘evidence’ as such, we must delve into that which can only best be described as ‘circumstantial’ – and here I accept that such ‘evidence’ might not be enough to convince a jury beyond reasonable doubt, nevertheless I do think it worth putting into a wider debate.

The first aspect to consider is the nature of Elgar’s relationship with Alice Stuart Wortley.

The fact remains that whatever it may or may not have been – and here one must take into account what Elgar might have *wanted* it to have been – there is not a shred of evidence that it was any more than a relationship which was accepted by all parties and above all, it conformed to the proprieties of the age in which they all lived. A friendship in which Alice Stuart Wortley provided a rock of understanding to a very tortured creative mind – as evidenced most starkly in the passage in the second movement of the Second Symphony when the ‘Windflower’ dances above the tortured funeral tones which one must associate with Elgar himself – but that was the extent of it.

No further proof is needed, I think, than the way in which the dedication of Elgar’s choral piece ‘The Angelus’ a somewhat slight *a capella* work written just before the Concerto, was handled. This was his opus 56, and he dedicated it to her. Correspondence indicates that he sent his version of the dedication to her for approval. But that letter has not survived.

Charles and Alice Stuart Wortley (from a photograph by Sydney Loeb)



What he received back was *her* version : ‘Dedicated to Mrs Charles Stuart-Wortley’, which I think encapsulates exactly how she felt about the relationship.

The daughter of the painter Millais, she grew up in the world of the Pre-Raphaelites – the world of affairs and free living. But she married an aspiring MP who by the time of her friendship with Elgar, was a member of the Government and thus a pillar of Edwardian society. It is therefore logical to assume *she* knew only too well how speculation of any impropriety in her relationship with the greatest composer of the age would not only wreck her husband’s political career but might actually bring the Government down – and given the fact that her husband *was* a leading politician there would have been a legion of people who would have relished the opportunity to do just that.

So the mere idea of anything other than a relationship which was fully acceptable by the constraints of the society in which she lived was quite out of the question. And from the somewhat austere tone of her version of the ‘Angelus’ dedication, she obviously wanted to make that quite clear to someone who might have been tempted into romantic thoughts.

After the deaths of Alice Elgar and Charles Stuart Wortley, Elgar and his Windflower were free to marry, but didn’t. And from one small incident in the 1920s she was clearly much more locked into Victorian tradition than Elgar had been – he offered to buy her a gramophone so that she could listen to the works she had supposedly inspired, but she refused to have any such new fangled technology in her house.

Furthermore, Elgar’s correspondence with his ‘Windflower’ remains largely intact – enough to make for a 350 page book.¹ True, some of the passages, and indeed perhaps complete letters were excised, either by Windflower’s daughter Clare, or by Elgar’s daughter Carice, who, after all, during the First World War worked for M.I.9., the Postal Censorship Branch of the Secret Service, and therefore knew only too well how to remove sensitive material from correspondence.

And of course such exorcism has led to speculation that the passages that were removed were of a nature which betrayed a clandestine dimension to Elgar’s relationship with his ‘Windflower’. But passages are removed from letters for far less salacious reasons, and while we shall never now know what was actually removed it is just as likely that the passages were considered inappropriate for other reasons than proof of illicit liaisons.

In fact is it not more likely, given the sensitive political position of the recipient and the dangers of prying eyes making sensational revelations? It is surely also quite questionable as to how Elgar, so eager to conceal so many aspects of his life by such elaborate means, would be so stupid as to blunder into weaving questionable prose into openly transmitted letters which might easily fall into the wrong hands – let alone be viewed by Charles Stuart Wortley.

The fact remains that we know so much today about the highly romantic nature of that relationship – the picking of ‘Windflowers’ – the mere fact that he made it so plain the position she held in his affections – and indeed the fact that he was allowed by all parties on both sides to call her his ‘Windflower’ at all? None of that was kept secret. Their relationship flourished throughout many years right up until their old age. So why make such a secret of her identity as the ‘Soul’ if indeed it was she?

Correspondence, or the lack of it, plays a key element in circumstances surrounding any claim of Julia Worthington to be the ‘Soul’. Because, despite the fact that she was hailed as a dear friend of the Elgar’s throughout many years, and despite the fact that Elgar at one point wrote that they had received letters ‘as usual’ from her, only a handful of her letters has survived.

¹ ... and, in its 2nd edition (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2015), which includes many letters from the 1920s and ’30s omitted from the 1st edition, a 500 page book.



Julia Worthington – ‘Pippa’ (Elgar Birthplace Museum)

The extremely well researched and comprehensive article by Richard Smith about her in this *Journal*² quotes most if not all of the extant correspondence and one is bound to speculate as to why there appears to have been such a wholesale disappearance.

Of course we don’t have anything of Elgar’s letters to Julia. I have spent half a lifetime trying to track them down, but to no avail.

However, I did manage to obtain the autograph manuscript of the aforementioned ‘Angelus’ – that which he dedicated to Alice Stuart Wortley – and it does have a rather interesting inscription in Elgar’s hand on it: ‘Mem: This used paper in return for fair paper: to J.W. – the spirit of Careggi, from E.E. May 1909.’

The manuscript must have belonged to Julia Worthington, and the fact that I obtained it in New York – where Julia lived out her life – suggests that it had not made the transatlantic crossing until it came into my hands.

So if you are looking for a ‘dark lady’ in Elgar’s life, Julia Worthington certainly begins to fill the bill. Elusive, foreign, known to be a close confidant though a person who constantly recedes into the mists of speculation, hardly any extant letters, and a person who is solemnly dubbed as the identity of the ‘Soul’ by Alice Elgar in an extraordinary revelation which carried no further explanation as to why – to say nothing of veiled references by Ernest Newman, considered so private that they were taken with him to the grave.

Furthermore, Elgar appears to have had extensive contact with her but without the presence of his wife – and particularly during his second tour of America in 1907 and his third and final tour in 1911, upon which he embarked alone, accompanied only his French valet Jaulnay.

Publicly he loathed America, yet after what appears to have been a dismal encounter with the country in 1905 he chose to embark on two further tours there. Why?

Richard Smith’s article exposes yet another mystery about Julia’s relationship with Elgar. At the end of the American tour, the generally accepted fact, as reviewed in his article was that Elgar returned home alone. As Richard Smith put it: ‘After a miserable time in these cities, Elgar finally returned to New York on 1 May where he said a sad farewell to Pippa two days later.’

However, I have long had in my possession a postcard written jointly by Elgar and Pippa in which Elgar writes: ‘Love to you all, Edward Elgar’ while Pippa adds: ‘Precious ones there – all Easter blessings – I sail with him on May 3. Your Pippa.’

The postcard was sent to Nicholas Kilburn and his wife at Bishop Auckland in the North East, and here perhaps is a key element in the circumstantial evidence surrounding this mystery – one which I am surprised no one appears to have commented on before.

Kilburn, who was a strong influence on Elgar and his music, to the extent that Elgar dedicated *The Music Makers* to him, was a wealthy manufacturer of pumps used in the coal mines of the North East.

One of his business associates in America was the International Pump Company, the President of which was Charles Worthington, Pippa’s husband.

Part of Registration	NAME OF PASSENGER	Class (Whether 1st, 2nd or 3rd)	Profession or Calling of Passenger	AGES OF 12 YEARS AND UPWARDS						RATONALITY (Country of which Citizen or Subject)	Routing Through Third or other Ports	Port to which Passenger has been Sent	
				Accompanied by husband or wife	Single unaccompanied male or wife	Male	Female	Male	Female				
New York	Janet Worthington	1st		30	30	86	34	2	1	1	U.S.A.	Paris	Falguere
	Edmund Wortley										Germany	Paris	Falguere
	Blanche										U.S.A.	London	Falguere
												Paris	Falguere

Elgar returned from New York on the Cunard liner *Mauretania*. Its manifest reveals that ‘Pippa’ was a fellow first-class passenger (incorrectly listed as Janet Worthington), en route to Paris. Her presence is not mentioned in Alice’s diary.

The Kilburn link is obviously important as it provides a possible explanation as to how Elgar and Pippa Worthington became acquainted. The generally accepted idea was that Pippa was a mutual friend of Professor Samuel Sanford, Professor of Applied Music at Yale University, whom Elgar had first met in 1902. That chronology suggests, that Elgar and Pippa did not meet until 1905 – and indeed it has been suggested elsewhere that they in fact met on the voyage over to America in 1905 when Elgar and his wife sailed on the *Deutschland*.

But is it not also possible that they met through their mutual friendship with Kilburn – and if Elgar’s connection with Kilburn went back to 1897, it is surely possible that their friendship, for want of a better word, began much earlier than 1905. If this is the case, and I do accept that this is mere speculation, then it would certainly provide a timeframe which would make Stokowski’s suggestion that Pippa was the source of the ‘Romanza’ variation at least a possibility.

There is no doubt that Pippa was a particular friend of Nicholas Kilburn and his wife. We have the evidence of my postcard, and elsewhere in the Elgar-Kilburn correspondence there is a letter dated 2 September 1909 when Elgar urges Kilburn to attend a party at Harley House and makes a point of saying ‘... Mrs Worthington will be there ...’ There is also a handful of letters written to the Kilburns directly by Pippa which are in the archives of Durham University, and which clearly show that they had a warm and constant friendship.

Which brings me to the actual mysterious Spanish inscription itself.

More than 40 years ago, I remember looking over the autograph manuscript full score of the concerto in the British Library. At the time I was very eager to see if there were any clues in Elgar’s hand as to the inscription – only to discover that it does not appear at all at the head of the work.

I have been puzzled ever since. Of course you could say that this was just a practical application: it was merely added at proof stage as an afterthought. This surely cannot be the case

given all the intrigue engendered by the nature of the references to it by Alice Elgar, Newman *et al*, to say nothing of the refusal by Elgar himself to reveal the identity.

So why then? Having thought about it considerably for four decades it is has always seemed to me that perhaps its presence was so important to Elgar that he ensured that it never appeared at any time when its existence might be interrogated – presumably by Lady Elgar.

This is not without precedence. I have seen a particular letter to Rosa Burley for example, which begins, in Elgar's hand 'My dear Miss Burley', but is then amended, as if prying eyes are no longer present to 'My dear Rosa' and on several occasions in the Burley correspondence one gets the impression that certain letters were written under the constraint of more public scrutiny while others were written more privately.

The only discussion which appears as a matter of record concerning this inscription is in the often quoted letter in which Elgar provides his translation – and that letter was written to Nicholas Kilburn.

At the time Kilburn had been preparing a very early performance of the Concerto at one of the three festivals he ran in the North East, and in one of his letters he made a mild enquiry as to what the inscription signified.

Elgar's reply concerned a discussion about the success of Kilburn's performance then adds the famous passage as an afterthought.

The first element of note in this is that Elgar adds only three dots to the end of both the Spanish and translated versions of the quotation, not five. He also departs a little from the more romantic suggestion of 'enshrined' to read: 'Here, or more emphatically In here is enshrined or (simply) enclosed – buried is perhaps ['more' is here deleted] too definite the soul of ...? The final 'de' leaves it indefinite as to sex or rather gender Now guess.'

Having owned that letter for 40 years, I have had the privilege of mulling over its content at length, and over the years certain factors about the wording have become patently obvious.

Firstly, it is quite clear that if Elgar had a specific identity of the 'soul' he was not prepared to reveal it even to Kilburn. It also rules out the suggestion that the 'soul' was something abstract or trivial, and indeed, in my estimation, must also rule out anybody or anything which was beyond Kilburn's ability to identify.

The invitation 'Now guess' could only sensibly be offered if the recipient of the letter had the ability to guess the answer – and the fact that three dots are used in Elgar's letter rather than five, it suggests that to Kilburn at least the identity would be self evident.

It has also become quite clear to me that Kilburn doubtless did guess and needed very little in the way of suggestion to recognise who this person was. He appears never to have asked Elgar for more clarification and the subject never passed between them again – so it seems reasonable to assume that based on this translation and with a few words of further explanation Kilburn did guess the identity.

Conversely, it is surely illogical that Elgar would induce his friend in this way to guess the identity of someone he had never met, and would therefore have no ability to identify.

In years of research into Kilburn I have never found anything which suggests that he even knew Alice Stuart Wortley, let alone would recognise her influence over Elgar and his music, but his close association with Pippa, first through his business dealings with her estranged husband and then in a more intimate personal relationship stands clear, and if this hypothesis holds any substance it is much more likely that Kilburn would have recognised Julia Worthington as the 'soul'.

Stokowski's reminiscence in 1972 painted a picture of a composer deeply in love with a

vivacious, capricious and overwhelmingly attractive American woman – yet locked into a marriage from which he could never depart. Stokowski's conclusion: 'He was married; he was true to his wife and yet he was in love with this girl. And this was a great tragedy of Elgar's life.'

Dora Powell's conclusion, on the inscription was this: 'What sadness and regrets; what high hopes and what dreams was he describing? Later, of course, I saw the dedication and guessed the rest.'

If this were indeed the case then it does tend to fit as an underlying explanation for other aspects of Elgar's music – the 'Rarely Rarely comest thou spirit of delight' of the Second Symphony, for example, the specific choice of words for 'Deep in my Soul' which he dedicated to Julia:

*'Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells
Lonely and lost to light for evermore
Save when to thine my heart responsive swells
Then trembles into silence as before'*

... or the way in which a reference to the Violin Concerto is played in *The Music Makers* to the words: '*in our dreaming and our singing a little apart*'; to say nothing of the nature of Elgar's music itself in his most creative and mature period – the 'Smiling with a Sigh' of the *Introduction and Allegro*, and the whole feeling of sadness and regret which pervades all of his output, and which, after all, makes it such great music.

Without concrete written evidence, of course, we shall never know the full explanation. I have always harboured the fond hope that perhaps, somewhere in America, lies a pile of unrecognised letters in a scribbly often undecipherable hand addressed by an 'Edward' to a 'Pippa' which, once discovered, might finally provide the explanation not only to this mystery but to the wider relationship of Elgar and his 'dark lady'. Perhaps, one day, this might become a reality.³

Richard Westwood-Brookes has been researching and collecting Elgar material all his life. As a boy of five he met Elgar's daughter, Carice, and since that time has built up one of the most significant collections of Elgar's letters and manuscripts in private hands. He is accredited as crucially assisting Anthony Payne with the reconstruction of Elgar's Third Symphony, and single-handedly organised the placing of a commemorative plaque at Wolverhampton Wanderers' Molyneux Stadium to record Elgar's love of the football club. His collection includes a considerable number of Elgar's letters, original manuscripts, Elgar's own copies of the Beethoven Violin Sonatas which he had as a boy and such items as Elgar's father's membership ticket for the Worcester Glee Club. Richard has lectured frequently – and often controversially – to Branches of the Elgar Society and is always happy to offer one of his lectures in the future.

3 It may indeed: in the past month a great-granddaughter of Julia Worthington has been in touch with the editor.

Theology applied to music: *The Dream of Gerontius* revisited

Lino Bianco

The theme of Cardinal John Henry Newman's *The Dream of Gerontius* is the Roman Catholic theology of death and the redemption of a sinner. It is a respectable piece of writing in poetical language, numerous reprinted and translated in French and German. It formed the basis of Edward Elgar's libretto and music bearing the same title as Newman's work.¹ The scope of this article is to explore the relationship of Elgar's to Newman's vision as interpreted in his libretto and choral composition. The article concludes by placing Newman's work in the context of the history of musicology.

On becoming a new man

Newman's *The Dream of Gerontius* was the subject of an essay published in the *Elgar Society Journal*.² *The Dream of Gerontius* 'was written by accident – and it was published by accident'.³ Vélez argues that Newman's (1801-1890) personal history indicates otherwise:

... it was the fruit of many years of agonizing study and prayer leading him to the Roman Catholic Church.⁴

Newman wrote it two decades prior to his conversion to Catholicism; it was first published in two parts, in May and June 1865, in the Jesuit magazine *The Month*.⁵ An overtly Catholic theological poem of eschatological significance, this work is aptly described as a Goethe's 'Spiritualised Faust'. In *The Dream of Gerontius* Newman ...

- 1 Edward Elgar, *The Dream of Gerontius: The Libretto*, accessed on 10 December 2015, <http://www.elgar.org/3gerontl.htm>.
- 2 Ian Ker, 'Newman and *The Dream of Gerontius*', *Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.17, No.2 (August 2011), 30-32.
- 3 John Henry Newman, *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, ed. Charles S. Dessain *et al.*, Vols.11-22 (London: Thames Nelson & Sons, 1961-72), Letter to Lady Charles Thynne (29 October 1865), 22:86.
- 4 Juan R. Vélez, 'Newman's Theology in the Dream of Gerontius', *New Blackfriars*, 82, No. 967 (2001), 387-398. The poem is divided into seven 'phases': (i) Gerontius, (ii) Soul of Gerontius, (iii) Soul, (iv) Soul, (v) no title, (vi) Angel, and (vii) Angel.
- 5 Stephen Banfield, 'The Dream of Gerontius at 100: Elgar's Other Opera?', *The Musical Times*, 141, no. 1873 (Winter 2000), 23-31.

... reached a refined doctrinal and spiritual understanding of the Christian belief in life after death. In effect he had overcome various problems and interpretations of Calvinist and Anglican theology, and of Roman Catholic piety.⁶

It was not offensive to the Anglicans except for some doctrinal notion of the purgatory which they found repugnant. The poem is about the journey of the soul of Gerontius, the pious dying old man, to judgment by God, a meditation of afterlife. It recalls the allegorical depiction of the journey through the metaphysical territory of the death, a recollection of the medieval epic poem *Divina Commedia* by Dante Alighieri (c.1265-1321). Vélez compared Newman's work with another eschatological poem by Ettore Vernazza (c.1470-1524) entitled the *Tratatto*, commonly referred to as *Purgation and Purgatory*, a work inspired by St Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510).⁷ Vélez notes similarities and differences between *The Dream of Gerontius* and *Purgation and Purgatory*. Both poems ...

develop a rich notion of purgatory as a spiritual purification of the soul. For them purgatory is a condition in which the soul experiences great sorrow for past sins, mixed with great joy because it is assured of its salvation.⁸

Whilst the theme in the former is individual judgment, the theme in the latter is purgatory. Vélez further argues that the reading of one poem ...

... enriches the other, and both contribute to a more complete biblical, theological and spiritual understanding of the doctrine of purgatory as a purification of the soul for the definitive union with God its maker and redeemer. Although both poems deal exclusively with personal eschatology, the authors convey the unity between Christian eschatology, creation and Christology. They recall mankind's original holiness, subsequent fall and redemption through the Incarnation and passion of Jesus Christ.⁹

A former academic at Oxford and an Anglican priest, Newman was a main exponent of the Oxford Movement.¹⁰ In 1845, he left the Church of England for that of Rome. He relinquished his teaching post at Oxford and became a priest in the Roman Catholic Church, a move which caused significant bitter and divisive controversial religious stir in the Victorian era. Newman was actively involved in founding University College Dublin, at the time known as the Catholic University of Ireland, of which he became its first Rector:

- 6 Vélez, *op. cit.*, 389
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*, 392-3.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 395.
- 10 See Brian Martin, *John Henry Newman: his life and work* (London and New York: Continuum, 1982). This text is a critical biography of the Newman from his academic career at Oxford to the highest college of the Roman Catholic Church. His writings, themes which were central to the controversies facing Christianity in the nineteenth century, are exposed in the socio-religious setting in which they were put forward. For a selection of his non-autobiographical writings (which include *The Dream of Gerontius*) and model sermons see John Henry Newman, *Selected Sermons, Prayers, Verses, and Devotions*, ed. John Thornton and Susan Varenne (New York: Vintage, 1999). This book, with an introduction by Peter Gomes, was a highly recommended text when it was issued (Christian, *op.cit.*).

Long celebrated as a spiritual writer and autobiographer, and certainly among the most famous modern converts to Catholicism, Newman is news that has stayed news.¹¹

The Master of the King's Musick

Edward Elgar (1857-1934), the leading British composer of the earlier part of the twentieth century, was moved by Newman's poem. His choral work remains his masterpiece:

... *The Dream of Gerontius*, a powerfully dramatic setting for soloists, chorus, and orchestra of a poem by Cardinal Newman that tells the story of a dying man's encounter with God.¹²

Although the website page of the University of Birmingham states proudly that ...

The Department of Music is one of the most distinguished in the UK, with a history stretching back to 1905 when Edward Elgar was appointed the University's first Professor of Music,¹³

Elgar was considered at that time as an outsider not only in music circles, mainly composed of academics, but also in social ones. Although self-taught, he was appointed to the post once the Music Department was set up;

The English musical establishment was dominated by 'gentleman composers' with university degrees who taught on the conservatory level.¹⁴

He resigned from the chair three years later. He hated teaching and, throughout his life, he was an 'outsider in English society'. In his commentary on Elgar, the music and drama critic of the *Wall Street Journal* Terry Teachout notes that ...

... he was also born Catholic at a time when Protestant bigotry, though considerably diminished, remained a significant force in English social life.¹⁵

In spite of this socio-religious context, Elgar was respected by the British Monarch. He was appointed 'Master of the King's Musick and the Musician Laureate of the British people'¹⁶ in 1924, a post he retained until his death in 1934. The respect that he enjoyed in the royal court is evident in the opinion of King George V and his advisors who were reported to have stated that 'if the post is to go to the most eminent musician it would hardly be possible to go beyond Elgar.'¹⁷

11 Graham Christian, 'Selected Sermons, Prayers, Verses and Devotions', *Library Journal*, 124, no. 12 (July 1999), 99.

12 Terry Teachout, 'Unloved Elgar', *Commentary* 118, no. 1 (Jul/Aug 2004): 42-45, 43, accessed on 8 December 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.ejournals.um.edu.mt/docview/195873435/fulltextPDF/750837E43D094956PQ/1?accountid=27934>.

13 Accessed on 15 December 2015, <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/lcahm/departments/music/index.aspx>

14 Teachout, *op. cit.*, 43.

15 *Ibid.*, 42.

16 'Master of the King's Musick', *The Times*, 5 May 1924, 16.

17 Letter from the Earl of Shaftesbury to Sir Frederick Ponsonby, 10 April 1924, in Jerrold Northrop Moore,

Birmingham: The crucible for The Dream

As a Catholic priest, Newman's base was Birmingham. Thus, it may not be incidental that in 1898, less than a decade from Newman's demise, Elgar, a Roman Catholic by birth, thought of setting *The Dream of Gerontius* when he was asked to contribute a work for the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival of 1900. He started working on the composition in autumn of 1899. Work progressed rapidly thanks to August Jaeger, the editor at the publisher *Novello*, who was instrumental in having Elgar's work completed in the way it has been published, most notable the representation of judgment.¹⁸ The contribution of Jaeger cannot be underestimated as Elgar communicated with him almost on a daily basis. The work was completed three months prior to the premiere.¹⁹ Following the custom of Johann Sebastian Bach who would have devoted his works to 'S.D.G.', Elgar devoted *The Dream of Gerontius* to 'A.M.D.G.', the motto of the Jesuits.²⁰

Andrew Farcah-Colton notes that in August 1900 Elgar added this quotation from John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* to the manuscript score:

This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved and hated, like another; my life was as the vapour and is not; but this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory.²¹

Farcah-Colton also argues that Elgar's connection with Newman was not simply theological but poetical:

What made it the right choice, ultimately, was Elgar's profound connection with Newman's poetic vision. Program annotator Michael Steinberg has described the poem as "one of the glories of English verse, its language as fragrant as the smoke rising from the thuribles in the churches that had become [Newman's] spiritual home". The composer had been familiar with the poem since at least 1887, the year he lent his copy to his then future wife, Alice, to help console her following her mother's death. In 1889, he and Alice received another copy as a wedding present.²²

ed., *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Rickmansworth, Elgar Works, 2012), 430-431.

18 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 322.

19 Farcah-Colton notes that in August 1900 Elgar added this quotation from John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* to the manuscript score: 'This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved and hated, like another; my life was as the vapour and is not; but *this* I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory' (Andrew Farcah-Colton, 'The Nearly Impossible Dream', *Opera News* 71, No. 12 (2007), 40.

20 Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 317. 'S.D.G.' is the abbreviation for 'Soli Deo Gloria', translated into English as 'Glory to God alone' whilst 'A.M.D.G.' is the abbreviation for 'Ad maiorem Dei gloriam', translated into English as 'To the greater glory of God'.

21 Farcah-Colton, 'The Nearly Impossible Dream', 40.

22 *Ibid.*

The final page of the manuscript score of *The Dream of Gerontius*, with Elgar's quotation from Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*. (Arthur Reynolds collection)

Elgar's libretto and music composition

Newman's work was too long and hence Elgar's libretto omitted sections of it whilst respecting the entire narrative. He makes use of most of Newman's poem in Part I but leaves out significant sections of the meditation, the theme of Part II. Whilst the context of Part I is terrestrial, that of Part II is celestial. Elgar's libretto, half Newman work in length, is the poetical text for musical composition; it was through Elgar that Newman's work is remembered.²³

In Part I, Gerontius is fearful yet hopeful and always confident. Praying and meditating, he is joined by a group of friends. Peaceful he passes away and valediction by the priest takes place. In Part II, Gerontius, now 'The Soul', is drawn into a place which is dimensionless and timeless. It becomes conscious that his guardian angel, joyful at the arrival of 'The Soul', is present. After a long discourse, together they pass to the judgment throne. On their way, they encountered a group of demons and choirs of angels. The Angel of the Agony begs with Christ to standby the souls of the faithful. At last, Gerontius met God and is judged. The guardian angel lands Gerontius into purgatory, with an ultimate blessing and assurance of re-awakening to glory. Part I lasts approximately 35 minutes whilst Part II is about 60 minutes in length. Each includes distinct sections. Gerontius is sung by a tenor, the Angel by a mezzo-soprano and the Priest is a baritone, while the Angel of the Agony is assigned to a bass but given that both the latter parts are short, they are usually sung by the same vocalist. Elgar, whilst in agreement with Newman's conception of the Angel as a male, assign the role to a female singer.²⁴

Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* has been described by some as an oratorio. He disapproved with such opinion although he did stop arguing this point to his publisher.²⁵ Farcah-Colton notes that, indeed, this work ...

... stands apart from the British oratorio tradition altogether, not least because it is through-composed rather than being divided into recitatives, arias and choruses. The distinction stems directly from Newman's poem, which is less a narrative than a metaphysical dialogue portraying the death of a pious Catholic "Everyman" and his soul's subsequent journey to judgment and Purgatory.²⁶

David Lemon argues that, in the closing pages:

Elgar's music is almost entirely *piano* or quieter and employs subtle turns of phrase, keeping as throughout close to the sense of the words. This music-drama approach ... actually increases the emotional level to the point at which people who love the work look forward to utter transcendence.²⁷

23 See Geoffrey Hodgkins, *The Best of Me – A Gerontius Centenary Companion* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 1999). The title of this publication is inspired from a quote from John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies: Two Lectures delivered at Manchester in 1864* (New York: J. Wiley & Son, 1866).

24 See Norma E. Hollingsworth, "I believe in angels...": the Role and Gender of the Angels in *The Dream of Gerontius*', *Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.14, No.5 (July 2006), 5-13.

25 Farcah-Colton, *op. cit.*, 40-43.

26 *Ibid*, 40-42.

27 David Lemon, 'Elgar's *Gerontius*: A dream of transcendence', *Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.12, No.5 (July 2002), 183-190.

Hell at the premiere

The premiere, held on 3 October 1900 at the Birmingham Town Hall, was a debacle. The failure can be attributed for the following four main reasons:

- i. The chorus was composed mostly of amateurs who were unable to handle Elgar's work;
- ii. The unexpected demise of the chorus master, Charles Swinnerton Heap; his substitute William Stockley was not able to comprehend Elgar's music.²⁸
- iii. Hans Richter, the conductor, did not see the full score until the day before the first rehearsal,²⁹ and
- iv. During the performance, two soloists were in poor voice.³⁰

Despite its weak show at the premiere, music critics realized that the shortcomings were not due to the quality of Elgar's work:

... though the ill-prepared premiere was a calamitous failure, *Gerontius* ... was soon recognized as a work of real substance ...³¹

The Dream of Gerontius was more admired on continental Europe than in Britain. It was translated into German and subsequently performed in Düsseldorf in December 1901 and in May 1902. Elgar's work was established in Britain following its performance in London in 1903, the year when it was conducted in the United States, namely at Chicago and New York, and in Sydney, Australia. It was performed in Vienna in 1905, premiered in Paris 1906 and in Toronto in 1911. The entry on Elgar in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, states that this music composition became popular with British choral societies ...

... although its popularity overseas did not survive 1914. Many regard it as Elgar's masterpiece. ... It is unquestionably the greatest British work in the oratorio form, although Elgar was right in believing that it could not accurately be classified as oratorio or cantata.³²

This recalls the critic of Chicago's *Daily News* who had described Elgar's work as a ...

... great choral composition, neither oratorio nor cantata.... [It] is such a departure from the timeworn form of the sacred musical drama that its presentation was in the nature of a revelation.³³

All Elgar's principal works were largely ignored until the 1950s when the Elgar Society was founded with the main objective to promote his music. *The Record Guide* of 1955 did not include *The Dream of Gerontius*.³⁴ Although extracts were recorded in 1916, the work was not recorded in its

28 Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 325.

29 *The Musical Times*, 1 November 1900, 734.

30 William Henry Reed, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1956), 60.

31 Teachout, *op. cit.*, 43.

32 Michael Kennedy, 'Elgar, Sir Edward William, baronet (1857–1934)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed on 8 December 2015, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32988>

33 Farcah-Colton, *op. cit.*, 43.

34 Andrew Farach-Colton, 'Vision of the Hereafter', *Gramophone*, 2003 (February), 36–39.

entirety until 1945 by EMI. In 1964 the same company the first stereophonic recording.³⁵

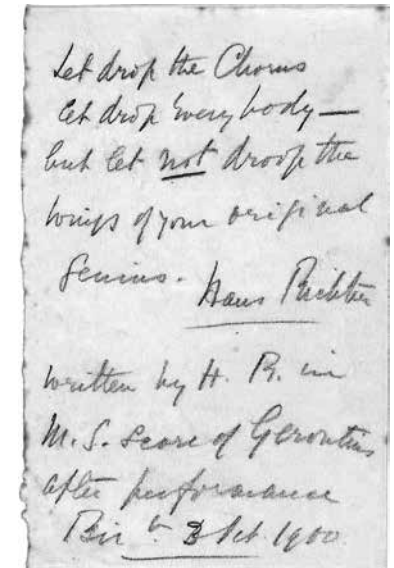
The Dream ... in the history of musicology

The Czech composer and organist Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) had considered setting *The Dream of Gerontius* fifteen years earlier. He, a Roman Catholic, did in fact discuss it with Newman before giving up on the idea:

The matter, indeed, was about fifteen years ago discussed between [Cardinal Newman] and Dr. Dvořák, who afterwards found the subject too placid and lyrical for his special style.³⁶

The link between Elgar and Dvořák goes beyond Newman's work. The Austrian-Hungarian Hans Richter (1843–1916), musically associated with Richard Wagner (1813–1883), had conducted works for both.³⁷ Richter, who was introduced to the British scene by Wagner in 1877 to conduct a series of concerts in London; became the principal conductor of the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival in 1885, a post which he retained until 1909.³⁸ He had thus conducted the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. On autographing the manuscript score, he wrote:

Let drop the Chorus, let drop everybody—but let not drop the wings of your original genius.³⁹



Elgar's note of Richter's comments in the manuscript score of *Gerontius*. (Elgar Birthplace Museum)

35 The conductors for the 1945 and the 1964 recordings were Sir Malcolm Sargent and Sir John Barbirolli respectively.

36 Quoted in Graham Melville-Mason, 'Dvořák and Elgar', *Rethinking Dvořák: Views from Five Countries*, ed. David R. Beveridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 225–233. Melville-Mason makes reference to Moore (*Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 291) who, in turn, quotes this statement and enters as source 'Newspaper cutting at the Elgar Birthplace' (*ibid.*, fn. 22).

37 John Clapham, *Antonín Dvořák, Musician and Craftsman* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966). In 1891, the University of Cambridge conferred Dvořák with an honorary degree, an honour conferred later on Elgar.

38 Christopher Fifield, *True Artist and True Friend: A Biography of Hans Richter* (Oxford University Press, 1993). Hans Richter also directed Hallé Orchestra, Manchester, from 1899 to 1911, and the London Symphony Orchestra from 1904 to 1911.

39 *The Musical Times*, 1 November 1900, 734.

Richter, who had already conducted the premiere of the 'Enigma' Variations, was a great admirer of Elgar's work. For a few English critics at the time, Elgar was ...

... more like Sergei Rachmaninoff or Richard Strauss, a genius born too late to have fit comfortably into his own time.⁴⁰

An organist and composer of note who had personal acquaintance with Elgar was Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924).⁴¹ The American-born musicologist Jerrold Northrop Moore, one of the major authorities on Elgar's life and works, notes that after attending Elgar's First Symphony in 1908, Fauré joined him for dinner.⁴² Fauré was the teacher of Prof. A. Courtonne, later the organist at Nantes Cathedral. Karm Scerri (1905-1981), whilst preparing for priesthood in France, had undertaken his musical studies under Courtonne.⁴³ Scerri was the organist at Luçon Cathedral of Notre Dame of the Assumption, France, from 1933 until 1940 and, after the Second World War, at St John's Co-Cathedral in Malta. Scerri was also a composer of sacred music who flourished in the second half of twentieth century Malta, the island which hosted Newman in 1832-3.⁴⁴

The author would like to thank Martin Bird, Editor of the Elgar Society Journal, for the illustrations and his valuable suggestions. Gratitude is also due to some members of the academic staff of the Faculty of Theology, University of Malta, for their valuable comments on this research.

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40 Teachout, *op. cit.*, 42.

41 Jessica Duchon, *Gabriel Fauré* (London: Phaidon, 2000).

42 Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, 547.

43 Ġuże Aquilina, 'Gallery of Distinguished Maltese: Mgr Carmelo Scerri (1905)', *The Times of Malta*, 27 May 1980, 5. This article is a concise review of Dun Karm's priesthood, his studies in France and ends with his contributions to music. In 1960, the French Government bestowed Dun Karm with the title of Chavalier des Palmes Academique Francais (Michael J. Schiavone, *Dictionary of Maltese Biographies* (Malta: Pubblikazzjonijiet Indipendenza, 2009), Vol.2, 1425).

44 Paul Cassar, 'Two Letters by Cardinal John Henry Newman in Malta: Their historical background', *Scientia*, 27, No.2 (1961), 64-71; Thomas Freller, *Malta and the Grand Tour* (Malta: Midseabooks, 2009), 172, 197-8.

Bach in *Gerontius*? A Discussion

Hugh Morris

My interest in the music of Edward Elgar, I confess, is fledgling. The interest really began during the build-up to probably the two musical moments of my life thus far – performances of Elgar's 1900 work *The Dream of Gerontius* in September 2015 as part of the Birmingham Symphony Hall Commemorative year, and a repeat performance two days later at the Proms in London, both with Simon Rattle and the Vienna Philharmonic.

One of the most intriguing, and later contestable parts of the week was the moment when the Choir's Chorus Master Simon Halsey drew the Youth Choir's attention to the part on page 158-159 of the Vocal Score (Novello) leading up to Fig.120. This is the climax of the orchestral writing at least, where the score is thickest and the dynamic grandest, despite the lack of voices at this part. The chorus master then proceeded to spell out the syncopated bass line that Elgar draws attention to in the two bars before Fig.120, announcing the cipher that Elgar uses – that is, of course, BACH, given that the German H equates to the note B natural.

After the rehearsal, I made a point of asking Halsey why Elgar might have used this reference. An answer came which, truth be told, I wasn't convinced by. He suggested the reasoning behind it could have been historical; traditionally, Britain had been viewed as 'Das Land Ohne Musik' by our German counterparts, and this was a reflection on German musical tradition in comparison to Elgar's relatively sparse culture. I didn't buy this at all.

Analysis of the bars in question

It is almost without question that Fig.120 features some reference to a sight of God. At this point in proceedings, Gerontius and the Angel are at the Judgement part of deciding his fate. There are various passing references to the event foreshadowed in the music too. 'I go before my judge' sung before the Voices on Earth enter with their prayers certainly suggests a Judgement from the Lord, but 'Consum'd yet quicken'd by the glance of the Lord' is probably the most explicit reference to a potential vision of God at this point, sung by the Angel in the lead-up to Fig.17, but there are other references too. The text from the 'Voices on Earth' suggest a prayer directly to the figure we are about to encounter in just a couple of bars, and a lot of the text following the emphatic 'Praise to the Holiest' is sung in direct reference to Him ('Alleluia, Praise to *His* name' being the most common refrain). Elgar's letter to Jaegar advises him to 'remember that none of the 'action' takes place in the *presence* of the Lord',¹ but if anything, this makes the split second outburst of Godliness even more emphatic.

Musically, Elgar certainly creates a sense of anticipation in the preceding bars. The motif

1 EBM letter 8401.

heard in the first bars of Part I makes a reappearance, but construed completely differently. Full woodwind and horns create a full-bodied sound, and by taking the marking down to *pp marcato*, the section shifts to a passage that sounds more like a quiet military march than a lyrical lament. This is followed by the change in instrumentation, allowing the trumpets and low brass to intercept the dark melody; all of this is in contrast to the viola, clarinet and bassoon lament that begins the piece. The heightening harmonic tension is abundantly clear; Elgar's *stretto* means the motif is shortened from 4 bars to 1, which is repeated sequentially, rising chromatically. This, combined with a long *crescendo* from a dynamic already at *fortissimo pesante*, a syncopated chromatic bass line, a score thick with brass and the gradual *stringendo* builds the tension perfectly for first the BACH cipher and second the climax at 120, which Elgar famously marks "For one moment, must every instrument exert its fullest force", which he too echoes, using all forces including four percussionists (or more) and organ to create a huge discord reminiscent of Wagner.

The argument that the cipher in question has little meaning is a poor one given the musical analysis and the context of other Elgar works. You only have to look at the Enigma Variations or his extensive and frequent musical dedications to see that Elgar's music often has an extra-musical meaning. Similarly, the musical analysis points the fact that Elgar wants us to notice this bass line. Reliving the syncopation that begins Part II, Elgar writes a dissonant, chromatic bass line, doubled in octaves across multiple parts marked fortissimo, which he surely intends to be noticed. The fact that this section relives so much of musical material heard before in a different context, and that the BACH cipher is completely different harmonically (if not rhythmically) to what we have heard before shows Elgar's intention to highlight the cipher. The BACH cipher therefore must have meaning.

J.S. Bach, perhaps?

A connection between Elgar and Johann Sebastian Bach isn't entirely inconceivable. Firstly, Gerontius's dedication, A.M.G.D (*Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, "To the greater glory of God") is in a similar vein to the S.D.G. (*Soli Deo Gloria* "Glory to God Alone").² We know Elgar sought to study in Leipzig, home of the composer, but perhaps firstly because the educational opportunity presented itself more than any other UK institution and secondly because it was the birthplace of Richard Wagner, a composer whose style is echoed to some extent in the piece, but also the former musical homes of Schumann and Mendelssohn; the idea that Elgar aspired to study in Leipzig in order to follow some kind of Bachian pilgrimage is unlikely. Elgar's transcriptions and arrangements of Bach's music, including the successful *Fantasia and Fugue in C Minor* (1921) and the *St. Matthew Passion* (1911), certainly show the influence of Bach on Elgar musically, but it is noted that Elgar didn't arrange Bach solely; he also arranged, among others, Handel, Purcell, Corelli and Wagner for forces large and small.

There are a number of key issues with the reference to J.S. Bach however, especially in the context of *Gerontius* as a work. Firstly, the poem's content suggests a reference to Bach may not have necessarily been suitable religiously. The poem is heavily Roman Catholic in origin and in content; written by Cardinal John Henry Newman in 1865, it follows a soul's journey through purgatory to face God, an idea which is heavily Catholic in derivation, and features a mixture of sacred Latin text (*Proficiscere anima, Christiana*) and explicit Catholic dedications.

Performances in Anglican cathedrals raised doctrinal difficulties, for example at the 1902

2 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 317

Three Choirs Festival. The newly-appointed Bishop of Worcester, Canon Gore, was certainly raising eyebrows with his outspoken comments in *The Times* regarding the treatment of children in Boer concentration camps,³ in his rejection of the title of 'Lord Bishop' and in his membership of The Cooperative Society.⁴ In an attempt to be seen more positively by members of the church community though his questioning of the merits of the use of Newman's text, Gore then raised the spectre of the incompatibility of Newman's text with the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and, in particular, Article 22, 'Of Purgatory'. Amendments or cuts to the text were demanded and, ultimately, agreed.

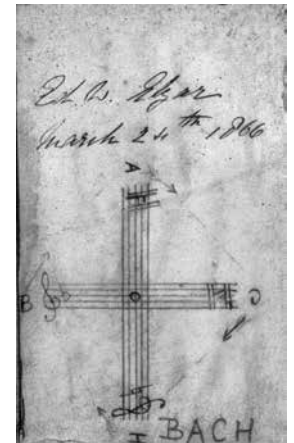
To adorn the climax of the whole piece with a cipher representing one of the most famous Protestant (Lutheran) composers of all time, on top of all of the difficulties that he had had in securing performances, may have been both unwanted and unwise.

Secondly, given this is described by many as Elgar's magnum opus, it seems a strange choice to use the orchestral climax and vision of God to honour a composer who didn't influence Elgar hugely. The BACH cipher was beginning to be used in the Bach revival by composers who were genuinely inspired by the famous Cantor from around the 1850s. Johannes Brahms, for example, used it in his *Fugue in A Minor*, but this, in contrast, was a man who was firstly classically trained from a young age and secondly exemplary in his disciplined use of counterpoint and in his dedication to Bach's music. If Bach really did have a vast enough impact on Elgar's life to make reference to him here, one wonders whether he may have exhibited his influence more, by writing, for instance, a set of Preludes and Fugues a la Dmitri Shostakovich, or even more numerous arrangements of his music.⁵

Justifiable interpretation

The issue of the BACH cipher came to the fore when I first visited the Birthplace Museum. One of the first artefacts I saw was the 'first notes of Elgar', written in a so called 'BACH cross' where, given the different clefs and key signatures, the single note which sits at the crossroads can be seen as B, A, C and H. A nod to this would offer a more logical interpretation of the reference to Bach seen in *Gerontius*, but must be justified.

In terms of the content of the piece, the interpretation flows. Where the cipher is heard, it is at the peak of God's judgement of Gerontius' soul (notice the change in the poem from 'Gerontius' to 'Soul' to mark the progression in his journey, seen in the music four bars before Fig. 14). By placing the reference to Elgar's childhood here, it is certainly feasible that he intends to show the judgement of



3 Letter from Canon Gore, 26 October 1901, published in *The Times*, 28 October 1901)

4 Alan Wilkinson, 'Gore, Charles (1853–1932)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press: 2004), online edition, Oct 2008.

5 The influence of Bach on Shostakovich (following a trip to Leipzig for the bicentenary of his death) was enough to inspire him to write 24 Preludes and Fugues in the Bachian style, and to include references within to chorales and his 2-part inventions- take the A major prelude for example enough. Dmitri Shostakovich, *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. (Nabu Press 2014, Oxford Music Online, accessed 02/05/2016)

a whole life, from early childhood to its final moments in the space of just a few bars. Perhaps it is too unrealistic to extend to linking Gerontius with Elgar himself, but the character of Gerontius (derived from the Greek meaning ‘old man’ or ‘ordinary man’) and the parallels with Elgar’s background and even obsession with death could potentially create another line of inquiry.

Another aspect that adds weight to this interpretation is the epilogue Elgar writes at the end of the manuscript. From John Rusken’s *Sesame and Lillies*, he writes

‘This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved and hated, like another: my life was as the vapour and is not; but this I saw and knew; this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory’⁶

If this is a composer reflecting on life, or at least quoting a poet reflecting on life, it makes sense for his music to mirror this, and, by covering life through references to his childhood writings such as the Bach cross, and obviously by covering death through the character of Gerontius, Elgar satisfies this reflection very well.

A BACH reference, but not a Bach reference

The point I have argued is actually remarkably simple; the BACH cipher stated by the bass parts of the orchestra just before Gerontius meets God is not a BACH reference in the sense of the composer Johann Sebastian Bach, but is instead a reference to childhood and to the ‘Bach Cross’ Elgar created when he was a child. This is certainly not the last I will write on an issue that has intrigued me greatly. What I think we can be certain of is that the idea of ‘Das Land Ohne Worte’ and an envy of German musical tradition is not what Elgar intended here.

Hugh Morris is an 18-year old music student currently living in Durham, who is hoping to read Music at the University of Manchester in September. He’s interested in musicology and composition, in particular the links between music, politics and national identity. Hugh’s interest in Elgar started during the rehearsals for ‘The Dream of Gerontius’ for the Proms. Following this, he visited the Elgar Birthplace Museum after a National Youth Brass Band concert in Cheltenham, and subsequently joined the Society. He hopes to be a part of it for some time to come.

6 Diana McVeagh (editor), ‘Elgar, Sir Edward’ in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, accessed 15/05/2016).

‘A confusion of ideas’ – Rootham, Elgar and ‘For the Fallen’

Martin Bird

It was a confusion of ideas between him and one of the lions he was hunting in Kenya that caused A. B. Spottsworth to make the obituary column. He thought the lion was dead, and the lion thought it wasn’t.¹

This, my favourite P.G. Wodehouse quote, came to mind when I was mulling over a title for this essay about the unfortunate confusion of events, expectations and circumstances that brought about the misunderstanding between Elgar and Cyril Rootham over their respective settings of Binyon’s poem ‘For the Fallen’.

Much of the background has been covered by Jerrold Northrop Moore in his *Letters of a Lifetime*,² and, more recently, by Andrew Neill in his essay ‘As if it was England singing’ in this *Journal*,³ and I shall not repeat it here: but the simple truth that Elgar had, under pressure from his friends, reneged on a promise to Rootham to withdraw his own setting by no means tells the full story of this sorry tale. To draw my conclusion at the outset, we can be very glad that Elgar did succumb to friendly pressure, for a hundred years later we have not only his exceptionally fine setting on Binyon’s words, but Rootham’s very different and, in many ways, more substantial setting which, following Richard Hickox’s pioneering recording of 1986, has started to take its place in the choral repertory.

* * * * *

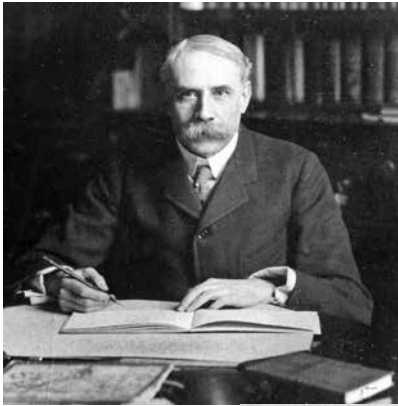
Cyril Bradley Rootham was born in Bristol in 1875, the son of Daniel Rootham, for half a century director of the Bristol Madrigal Society, the Bristol Festival Choir, and chorus-master of the Bristol Festivals. After graduating in Classics at St. John’s College, Cambridge, in 1897, he returned there in 1901 as organist and choirmaster, a position he held until his death in 1938. A prolific composer, by 1914 he had composed more than 70 works,⁴ although few had been published. His major successes had come in 1908, when his 1905 cantata *Andromeda* received its first performance at the Bristol Musical Festival (where it was followed by a performance of *King Olaf*), and in 1911 when

1 P.G. Wodehouse, *Ring for Jeeves* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1953) 10.

2 2nd edition (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2012) 324-328.

3 Vol.18, No.6, December 2014.

4 For more details see the Cyril Rootham website run by his grandson, Dan Rootham (www.rootham.org/works).



Elgar (Arthur Reynolds collection)



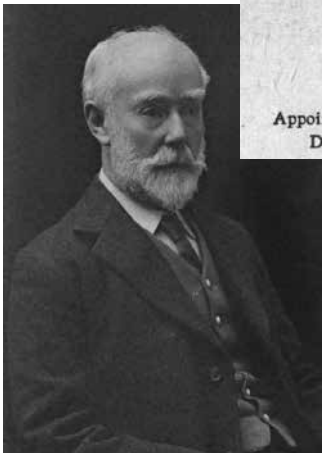
Rootham (Dan Rootham)



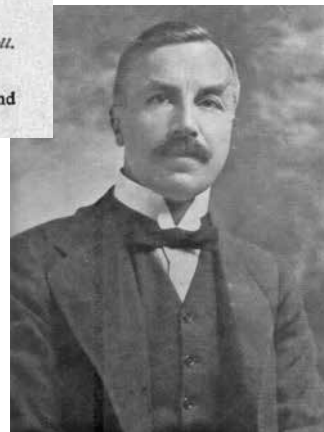
Photo. Russell.

MR. LAURENCE BINYON,
Appointed Assistant Keeper of Prints and
Drawings at the British Museum.

Binyon (Illustrated
London News)



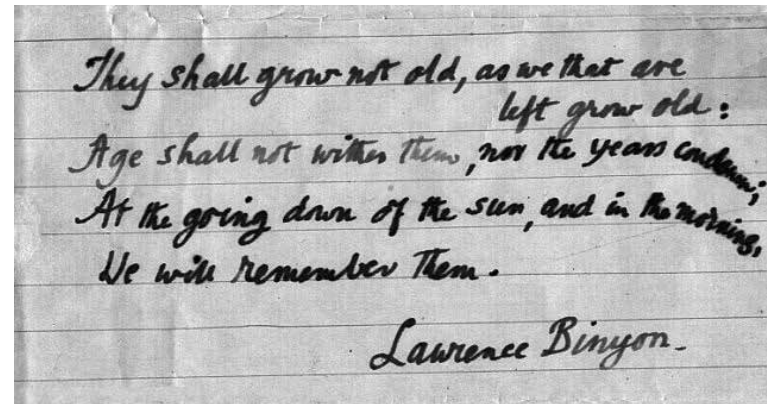
Colvin



Streatfeild

his orchestral rhapsody *A Passer-By* was premiered by Henry Wood at the Proms, provoking the comment: 'The result, musically speaking, is somewhat dull, though the piece fortunately is hardly long enough to become tedious'.⁵ The soloists at Bristol were none other than Clara Butt and her husband Robert Kennerley Rumford, and Henry Wood's wife, Olga. Clara, of course, was a local girl and had had singing lessons from Daniel Rootham.

Following the outbreak of war in August 1914 Laurence Binyon wrote a number of war poems, some of which were published in *The Times* during the autumn including, on 21 September, 'For the Fallen'. On 31 October he left for New York on the Cunard Liner *Orduna* for a lecture tour, arriving back in England on 12 December on the *Lusitania*. Rootham had written to him before his departure, asking permission to set the poem, and received Binyon's approval. Binyon's return coincided with the publication of 'For the Fallen' in an anthology of his poems entitled *The Winnowing Fan: Poems on the Great War*.⁶



The fourth verse
of 'For the Fallen'

Rootham worked quickly, and by early 1915 Novello had agreed to publish his setting. In 1908 the firm, as the principal publishers of new British choral works for musical festivals, had published the vocal score of *Andromeda*. However, the circumstances of Novello's offer to publish 'For the Fallen' were entirely different: for there was no specific performance in mind. The firm seems to have made a straightforward commercial decision to cash in as soon as they could on the growing popularity of Binyon's poem.

Now another figure comes into the picture: Sir Sidney Colvin. Until his retirement Colvin had been Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, where he had been Laurence Binyon's boss since 1897. In 1909 Binyon had been appointed Assistant Keeper, and had been Colvin's recommendation as his successor. Elgar had been friends with Colvin since they met at a dinner party in 1904, and with Binyon since they met in 1901 at Ridgehurst, the Hertfordshire home of Sir Edward Speyer.

On 9 January 1915, while Alice was 'busy doosin things ready for E.'s party',⁷ (a luncheon for senior members of the Union of Graduates in Music), Elgar met Sidney Colvin, who sowed the seed for a possible new work.

5 *The Scotsman*, 4 October 1911.

6 London: Elkin Mathews, 1914.

7 Alice Elgar diary, 9 January 1915.



The Print Room at the British Museum in 1914. Binyon sits in the foreground.

My dear Elgar

After we had parted yesterday I tired myself badly at a silly picture gallery, and between that and the remains of a long cold felt too mouldy to come out in the wet this afternoon ...

Why don't you do a wonderful Requiem for the slain – something in the Spirit of Binyon's For the Fallen, or of that splendid passage of Ruskin's which I quoted in the Times Supplement of Decr 31 – or of both together?⁸

Elgar met both Colvin and Binyon frequently during January 1915. Binyon came to Sunday lunch at Severn house on 7 February, and two days later Alice recorded that Elgar had 'composed violently'⁹ – the start of work on the three settings of Binyon's war poems that comprise *The Spirit of England*. Composition continued amidst a plethora of conducting engagements, and Novello was informed of the project.

Then, on 3 March, Binyon wrote with news.

8 Letter from Sidney Colvin, 10 January 1915, EBM letter 3453.

9 Alice Elgar diary, 9 February 1915.

Dear Sir Edward,

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

However, it is your setting that I care about, & long to hear it is completed. I feel it is going to be something glorious, & I needn't say how proud I am that you should set words of mine.¹¹

Conducting engagements up and down the country continued to occupy Elgar for much of March, and at the end of the month he went to stay with his sister Pollie at Stoke Prior, from where he wrote to Alice:

Heard from E. that he had written to give up "For the Fallen" "Wrotham's disappointed face comes between me & my work." Vesly vesly beautiful of E. – Sad loss for the world –¹²

Elgar had written to Binyon two days earlier ...

I saw Dr. Rootham, who merely wished to thank me for my 'generous attitude' etc. & said very nice things about my offer to withdraw – but his utter disappointment, not expressed but shewn unconsciously, has upset me & I must decide against completing 'For the fallen' – I have battled with the feeling for nearly a week but the sight of the other man comes sadly between me & my music.

I know you will be disappointed, but your disappointment is not so great as mine for I love your poem & love & honour you for having conceived it.¹³

... and had also written to Rootham, who replied:

Your most generous letter overwhelms me. I could not expect you, under any circumstances, to do as you proposed, and I hardly know what to say in answer, except to tell you that I very sincerely appreciate your attitude all through this business, and especially your crowning act of self-abnegation – rare enough, as you may yourself know. Whatever happens, be sure that I for one will not forget it. But of course I cannot feel comfortable: I trust that, even with your obvious wish to be as generous as possible, it will not be necessary that your setting of "For the Fallen" is to be given up. Shall we wait to see what Novello's firm says in the matter?¹⁴

Novello, in the form of Henry Clayton, was blunt, saying 'at the present time we do not regard lightly the prospect of publishing a work which, through being handicapped at its birth, is likely to prove a failure'.¹⁵ After Elgar had informed Novello of his decision, the firm wrote again to Rootham, who wrote again to Elgar.

10 Binyon's imagination had let him down, for Rootham's setting is on a similar scale to Elgar's, and certainly longer.

11 EBM letter 6351.

12 Alice Elgar diary, 26 March 1915.

13 24 March, 1915, published in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar – Letters of a Lifetime* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2012), 325.

14 EBM letter 6355, 26 March 1915.

15 EBM letter 6349, 26 March 1915.

Dear Sir Edward Elgar,

Since I wrote to you, I have received a letter from Messrs. Novello, telling me that they have heard from you, and at the same time renewing their original offer to publish my setting of "For the Fallen".

After two days' consideration, I feel that I owe it to your generosity to let them publish my work as they propose: for that, I believe, is what you wish.

In doing so, I want once again to tell you how deeply I appreciate your kindly feeling and rare sensibility. Such goodness of heart cannot but be remembered. Be sure that it will not be forgotten by

Yours gratefully and sincerely
Cyril B. Rootham¹⁶

The news of Elgar's change of heart had raised the ire of Richard Streatfeild, a colleague of Binyon at the British Museum, who came to tea at Severn House on 5 April 'so distressed that E. had given up Binyon's Poems – because he had so generously retired in favour of Wrootham – but quite angry too – (quite right).'¹⁷

Despite Novello's agreeing to publish both settings, Elgar remained adamant that the way must be left clear, saying 'There is only one publisher for choral music in England: Mr. Rootham was in touch with Novello first – my proposal made his M.S. wastepaper & I could not go on: that is exactly a bald statement of the case'.¹⁸

On 12 April Elgar went 'to tea with Colvins – Hope more influence for the great music'.¹⁹ This time it was both Sidney and Frances Colvin who tried to persuade Elgar to change his mind, but Elgar seemed adamant.

I heard with great distress last night that my wife's utmost petition to you on behalf of us all seemed to be in vain and that you persist, now that the original occasion for such a misfortune has passed away, in abandoning the scheme on which we had built such hopes. Well, it is cruelly hard on that fine poet & fine fellow, my friend Binyon, to whom the association with you would have brought just the lift in fame & status which was lacking to him and which, since the war began, he has so splendidly deserved. He could appreciate, as we all could, the generous motive which at first made you shrink from causing hurt or disappointment to an obscure brother-composer. But now that that obstacle is completely removed, and that it is certain no such consequences would ensue, how can one explain or mitigate to him the blow of your still refusing to fulfil the great hope you had raised in him? You put it on the indifference of our race & public to art: but what has the poor British public done now which it had not a month ago, when you were full of the project and raised all our hearts with the anticipation of a great & worthy expression & commemoration of the emotions of the hour, such as you alone are capable of giving them? ... Do the work you had promised & begun – do it for those who love you – do it for the thousands for whom it will express what is deepest & most sacred in their souls, do it for your country & the future & to honour and justify the gift that has been given you. I cannot bring myself to believe – nor to crush the hopes of the poet by having to tell him – that in the end you will not consent.²⁰

16 EBM letter 6354, 29 March 1915.

17 Alice Elgar diary, 5 April 1915.

18 Letter to Binyon, 31 March 1915, published in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar – Letters of a Lifetime* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2012), 326.

19 Alice Elgar diary, 12 April 1915.

20 Letter from Sidney Colvin, 13 April 1915, EBM letter 3457.

But the following day 'E. turned to his beautiful music again, loved it himself – So there is hope. A. to see Frances Colvin who was longing to hear if her & Sidney's entreaties had had any effect on E. to persuade to write for L. Binyon's Poems again',²¹ and on the 15th Elgar wrote to Sidney Colvin ...

I have been looking over my sketches again & they like me well : at this moment my view of the public is not new to me & not assumed during the last two sad weeks: it only arose now because of some of my dear friends appeal to me to work in order that the people – musical people – may have something really good (that is complimentary to me, and, inferentially to the B[ritish].P[ublic].) – something they really want:- yet, – they do not want me & never did. If I work at all it is not for them.²²

... who replied immediately.

It was a joy to get your letter and to think that at least it is possible that your inspiration may return and sweep you on to a happy achievement of what your friends (we won't dispute about the blessed B.P.) so longingly desire.

Of course we won't say anything about it unless or until you give us leave.²³

So Elgar, despite what seemed to Rootham to be cast-iron assurances that he would not publish a rival setting of 'For the Fallen', continued to work on his settings of all three poems for *The Spirit of England*. The vocal score of 'For the Fallen' was completed on 16 June.

Rootham's setting was published on 7 November 1915 and reviewed in Novello's 'house' paper, *The Musical Times*.

For the Fallen. Poem by Laurence Binyon, set to music for chorus and orchestra by Cyril Bradley Rootham.

Both in regard to words and music 'For the fallen' strikes a note too often absent from elegiac works called forth by war. There is genuine feeling, but there are pride and dignity as well. Mr. Rootham makes use of thematic material drawn from widely different sources. A quotation from the plainsong of the Mass of the dead has a prominent part in the introduction, and is referred to effectively from time to time, while at the words:

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye,

the orchestra makes use of fragments from 'The girl I left behind me', 'Men of Harlech', 'The Campbells are coming', 'The British Grenadiers', and the rattling old Irish tune 'Garyone'. In striking contrast is the studied simplicity of the passage commencing 'They mingle not with their laughing comrades again'. There are some fine climaxes, and the work throughout, with its rhythmic interest, its modern feeling, and its subtle and fitting flavour of austerity, is an impressive and worthy tribute to our gallant dead.²⁴

There was no sign of any immediate interest in performing the work: indeed, the scarcity of second-

21 Alice Elgar diary, 14 April 1915.

22 EBM letter 3473.

23 EBM letter 3458.

24 *The Musical Times*, 1 October 1915.

hand Novello scores today suggests that for the first seventy years of its life rarely was any interest shown.

All remained quiet until 11 March 1916 when *The Times* published a short review entitled 'The Spiritual in Music. New Choral Works'.

Among the many publications of national and patriotic songs now sold, in every kind of choral arrangement, which, made with varying degrees of artistic skill, have been pouring from the press during the last 18 months, one is glad to discover a few choral works of a loftier type and a deeper purpose.

We would mention also one work for the concert-room which has both dignity and character. It is a setting for chorus and orchestra of Mr. Laurence Binyon's poem, "For the Fallen" by Dr. Cyril Rootham. We understand that Sir Edward Elgar has chose the same words for a forthcoming work, but that should not blind us to the merits of this one, published last year by Novello. It is not enervating, but vigorous and bracing music.

Rootham wrote immediately ...

Dear Sir Edward,

I see in the 'Times' of this morning an announcement of my setting of "For the Fallen" coupled with an announcement in the same paragraph of a forthcoming setting of the same words by yourself.

In view of your generous letter to me of last year, in which you wrote "I have decided to withdraw, or rather not to proceed with my setting of "For the Fallen"" – a decision which I felt it my duty to make as public as possible among my musical friends and others as a recognition of your chivalrous behaviour to a younger musician – I thought it best now to call our attention to the paragraph in the 'Times' of this morning, as I felt that a mistake or misunderstanding of this kind would be as repugnant to you as it is to me.²⁵

... and Elgar replied on the 14th.

Dear Dr Rootham

I had not seen the paragraph in *The Times* to which you call my attention; I suppose it is based on a somewhat premature announcement in the *Daily Telegraph* of the performances of my settings of Binyon's Poems in May at Queen's Hall.

In February last year it was brought to my notice that Messrs. Novello could not see their way to undertake the publication of your composition as they thought it undesirable to issue two choral settings of the same poem simultaneously. I withdrew my work to leave the field open to you; in consequence of this action I understand that your work was published some months ago. When the matter first arose I gathered that the publication (only) was what you wished and there can be no reason now why my work should not appear in due course.²⁶

Not for the only time in his life Elgar was being somewhat economical with the truth, although, as we have seen, Rootham's setting had had the field to itself for six months without attracting any interest – even from Rootham himself. He was, after all, conductor of the Cambridge University Musical Society which, even in wartime conditions, contrived to give at least one concert each year

25 EBM letter 6353.

26 EBM letter 6356.

with substantial choral and orchestral forces. In December 1917 they included Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia* in their programme, and in December 1918 a selection of Parry motets in a programme that also featured Stanford's First Piano Concerto and Rootham's overture to his own opera *The Two Sisters*.

Rootham replied next day.

Thank you for your letter, which greatly surprises me. I cannot understand from what source you "gathered that publication (only) was what I wished". I never had any communication with you on the matter except to say to you, in the Queen's Hall, that I hated discussions on the subject of "For the Fallen" – I even offered to withdraw my own setting, rather than to have unpleasantness with you –, and then later wrote to thank you for your generous action. But what did that action, as exemplified in the words of your letter, mean? Your written words were:- "I have decided to withdraw or rather not to proceed with my setting of "For the Fallen" – I cannot allow myself to interfere with your work." Others as well as myself surely were justified in inferring from these words not only that our kindly action would enable me to get my work published by Novello (the latter had already agreed to publish it, subject only to satisfactory arrangements being made with regard to the words, before your name appeared in the matter at all), but also that you would not, as you have proceeded to do, finish and then publish your own setting of these words – an 'occasional' poem if ever there was one – a few months after my setting appeared. You must have realised then, as now, that the weight of your name as a composer against mine would spoil my chances, not in the matter of publication only. So that your generous action (which I made as public as I could) is completely negated by what you have since done. I fail to reconcile your first letter to me with the action which (without giving me a hint of what you have done) you have since taken.²⁷

Unsurprisingly, this was not the end of the story, for on 27 March 'Mr. Streatfeild came. So kind & like a champion wanting to write to that wretched Wrootham – so indignant for E'.²⁸ Streatfeild wrote next day.

Dear Sir,

I fully understand that I am taking what you may well consider an unwarrantable liberty in venturing to interfere in a private matter, but I cannot refrain from doing so ... I should explain that I am a friend of both Elgar and Binyon, and was consulted by both of them on this matter, and that I also took a small share in the negotiations with Messrs. Novello ... We decided that I should have an interview with Mr. Augustus Littleton & should endeavour to persuade him to publish both works. This I did with no very great difficulty, though I need not trouble you with the arguments that I employed. He agreed to publish both works, & of course Elgar resumed work upon his setting of Binyon's poem. That was the main thing that we, his friends, were aiming at, and having secured the publication of your work, we felt that Elgar's hands were once more free ... Besides, Binyon tells me that he made it perfectly plain to you, that you were not to have the exclusive right of setting his poem, & you must have known perfectly well that there was a strong probability of the poem being subsequently set by some other composer.

What urged Elgar to his generous act of self-abnegation was the fear, that, if he allowed Messrs Novello to publish his work, yours would be rejected. When that fear was dispelled, by Messrs Novellos' acceptance of both works for publication, there was no possible reason why he should not finish his setting of Binyon's poems. It is painful to me to think that you seem not only to contemplate with serenity the thought of Elgar's destroying his work, in order to enhance the success of yours, but

27 EBM letter 6352.

28 Alice Elgar diary.

even to desire such a consummation. I can only hope that what I have written will have the effect of removing the misconception of Elgar's action which you at present entertain.²⁹

On 30 March 'Mr. Streatfeild came such a kind dear Champion for E. about wretched Wrootham', and that, as far as Elgar was concerned, was the end of the whole sorry business.

* * * * *

At the beginning of May he and Alice travelled to Yorkshire for the first performances of 'For the Fallen' and its one completed companion 'To Women'. They were to be given by the Leeds Choral Union, with *Gerontius*, in Leeds and Bradford, in final preparation for the forthcoming week of charity performances at Queen's Hall organised by Clara Butt with the help of Henry Embleton, a wealthy mining engineer and secretary of the Choral Union. The performance in Leeds was on the 3rd.

Long rehearsal in aftn. E. seemed better & it was all wonderful to hear. Hotel very uncomfortable, such difficulty in getting anything, very trying for E. The Concert was magnificent. Enormous audience & orch. very good & Chorus perfect. E. conducted superbly – Dear Mr. Embleton very pleased, had to leave for Newcastle after concert – A. made him laugh heartily when he sd. he had hundreds of men to pay, she sd. she shd. be so frightened that the money wd. never last out!³⁰

The orchestra was the Hallé. The soloist in 'For the Fallen' was Agnes Nicholls, and in 'To Women' John Booth. The soloists in *Gerontius* were Clara Butt, Gervase Elwes, and Herbert Brown. Reviews confined themselves in the main to *Gerontius*, the *Yorkshire Observer* being typical:

Quite a brilliant start was given to Mme Clara Butt's remarkable venture last night, when the Leeds Town Hall held a crowded audience gathered to listen to 'The Dream of Gerontius' under the composer's direction, the performance of that now famous work being preceded by the production of two new choral pieces from his pen, illustrating phases of the nation's present ordeal. The orchestra was as well filled as the body of the hall – tenanted by the ranks of the Leeds Choral Union and the Halle Orchestra, neither of which seemed to have suffered material diminution through Derby drafts or others, while the picturesque costumes of some nurses at the top lent a touch of colour and a hint of significance to a concert closely associated with the war.³¹

The performance next day was in Bradford, where the Elgars stayed with Harry Behrens and his sister Wilhelmina. Harry's brother, Gustav, was Chairman of the Hallé Orchestra.

At the Behrens - Motored there after lunch from Leeds – Very kind, entirely obsessed by Bradford – even said have you good Drs. in London! this was Miss Behrens – Very fine performance in evening, immense audience –³²

The critic from the *Yorkshire Observer* was there again, and observed that 'Sir Edward Elgar

29 EBM letter 3731.

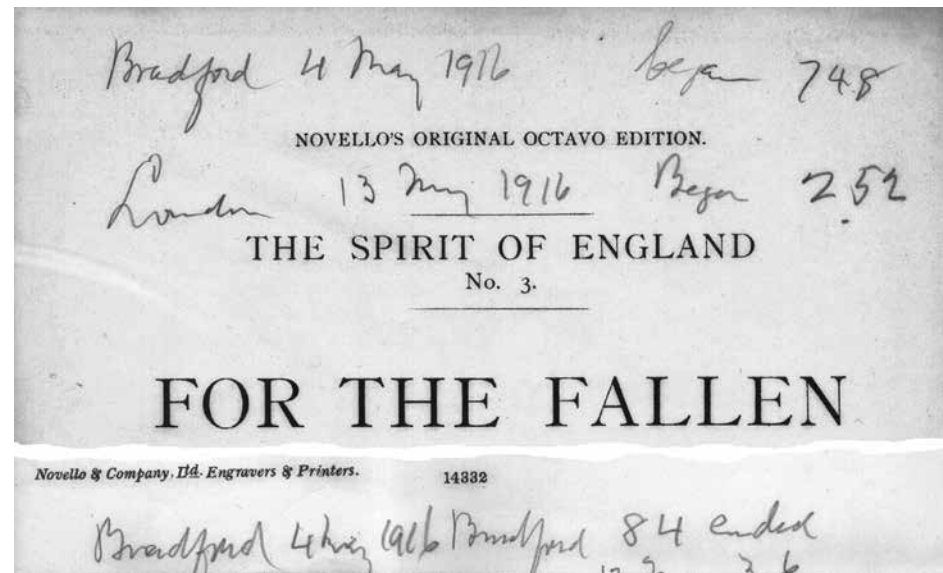
30 Alice Elgar diary.

31 *Yorkshire Observer*, 4 May 1916.

32 Alice Elgar diary, 4 May 1916.

seemed to choose a rather slower tempo in the elegy "For the Fallen" than he adopted on the previous evening, and the effect was not quite so good. Still it made a fine tribute of art to valour. Miss Agnes Nicholls gave a thrilling lead'.³³

A note on my proof copy of the vocal score records that the performance commenced at 7.48 and finished at 8.4 – a duration of 15-16 minutes, compared to the 13-15 minutes taken in current recordings.



Pages from a proof copy of 'For the Fallen', showing the timings of the performances of 4 May and 13 May. (Martin Bird collection)

Next day 'E. & A. left Bradford & arrived safely home – E. not the worse for journey. So nice to be in London again after Bradfd's very local atmosphere'.³⁴

Following the success of the Yorkshire performances, and particularly after the following week of performances at Queen's Hall, 'For the Fallen' quickly entered the repertory, both during the war as a mark of honour and respect, and after the war, when it became a regular feature of Remembrance Day.

Rootham's setting of 'For the Fallen' had to wait until 1919 for a performance. The première took place at the Guildhall, Cambridge, on 14 March with the composer conducting the Cambridge University Musical Society at a special Memorial Concert. The programme commenced with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony which, said *The Times*, 'opened the concert impressively'.³⁵ 'For the Fallen' came next, followed by *A Shropshire Lad*, played in memory of its composer, George Butterworth, who had been killed at the Somme on 5 August 1916. The concert 'ended triumphantly

33 *Yorkshire Observer*, 5 May 1916

34 Alice Elgar diary.

35 *The Times*, 17 March 1919.

A page from the autograph score of Rootham's setting (St. John's College Library, F4/1)

with Parry's "Blest Pair of Sirens", and it is perhaps the strongest testimony to the value of the new work that it could be placed beside the masterpiece of the greatest master of the choral ode since Purcell.³⁶

The *Cambridge Daily News*, reviewing the concert, said of Rootham's work:

It is, as its name implies, a work written in memory of those who laid down their lives during the great war, and is planned for chorus and full orchestra. It opened with a solemn introduction in which the persistent notes of the drums created an impressive atmosphere, which was retained throughout the length of the work. The voices entered at the close of this first section with a noble and expressive theme well befitting the words:

"With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children.
England mourns for dead across the sea."

Here one must pause to say how much Dr. Rootham is to be congratulated on the splendid understanding that exists between the conductor and his very able forces. The singing of the chorus was marked by their purity of tone, and above all by the ability to cope with the intricate rhythms revealed later in the music. Their flexible singing was indeed noteworthy, and in the more complicated parts of the work, wherein were found instances of vocal part-writing of a not altogether grateful nature, this easy mastery of rhythm stood the chorus in good stead. The composer was warmly recalled at the close of the work by an enthusiastic audience.³⁷

And that seems to have been its only performance until Richard Hickox took it up in 1986. Novello never printed the full score and orchestral material, which resides still in the Library of St. John's College. My own vocal score came from America, where it had been given to the Library Association of Portland OR. by the conductor James Sample. Another was found by a member of The Chiswick Choir for its conductor, Alistair Jones, who writes:

Now here was a work I knew I had to perform and set about researching the performing materials. I made a fruitless call to Novello and was told that they had never heard of Rootham!³⁸ ... this Novello copy is itself of interest. It was clearly used by a member of the Cambridge University Music Society chorus at the premier. It has the date and performance information inscribed in a neat hand at the top of the first page; 'First performed 14th March, 1919, in Guildhall, Cambridge, by CUMS' – and signed 'H. Shaw'. Contained in the score is the original concert programme, also inscribed by 'H. Shaw, 14.3.19'. This, too, is a fascinating document. Inside the front cover is a Memorial to those members of CUMS who fell in the Great War and they are listed by college. F.K. Bliss (Arthur Bliss's brother) is amongst those from King's College. The orchestral players are listed at the back of the programme and it is interesting to note that E.J. Dent³⁹ is there under Kettle Drums!⁴⁰

36 *The Times*, 17 March 1919.

37 *Cambridge Daily News*, 15 March 1919

38 Now why, in view of their abandonment of The Complete Edition, does that not surprise me?

39 The same Edward Joseph Dent who in 1931 was to write 'For English ears Elgar's music is too emotional and not quite free from vulgarity': quoted in Basil Maine, *Elgar, His Life and Works* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1938), 'Works', 277-278.

40 'Resurrecting Rootham and Parry', www.ism.org/features/resurrecting_rootham_and_parry, accessed June 2016.

I am delighted to hear that Cathedral Music has published a new edition of the vocal score⁴¹, and that orchestral material and a conducting score can be hired from them. The Hickox recording is still available, although only as a download, and can be highly recommended.

At the risk of another ‘confusion of ideas’, may I say that ‘This, if anything of his, is worth your hearing’.

41 CM1086, for a mere £4.25 when last I looked.

CD REVIEWS

Symphony No 1 in A Flat

Staatskapelle Berlin, conducted by Daniel Barenboim



Decca
4789353

Memories of Daniel Barenboim conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra in the early 1970's came back to me as I considered what I might say when I presented him with the Society's medal last year. Now in his eighth decade he has returned to a composer whose music means much to him. This was clear in his speech following the award of the medal and obvious to those who saw him conduct this symphony in Berlin's Philharmonie in March.

Part one of the concert was extraordinary, although part two was even more so. Jonas Kaufmann (no less) sang Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* where his voice blended immaculately with Mahler's wonderful orchestration. A sublime encore followed – *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*, the orchestra caressing Kaufmann's voice in a sublime soft world of sound: an exceptional experience, the cor anglais seemingly 'lost to the world'! This no 'second orchestra' – it is a member of that elite body of orchestras which warrant little or no criticism.

The orchestra has toured Europe with Barenboim's performance of this Symphony and their experience in the work was transparent. This performance struck me as a less indulgent reading than Barenboim's recording of the E Flat and, as such, was really beyond criticism. Perhaps the beginning of the *motto* theme could have been a little sprightlier but that is about it. The second movement, *Allegro molto* that followed really moved forward with urgency thus making the contrast with the glory that was and is the *Adagio* as moving as any I have had the privilege to experience. Alas, many Berliners seemed to have contracted coughs that evening but, miraculously, they allowed the slow movement to end and, as if on tip-toe, that glorious clarinet phrase signalled that we could breathe again. The build to the end was natural, thrilling and overwhelming.

As the cheers continued, with one flick of his wrist Barenboim turned the whole orchestra to acknowledge the applause from behind. A simple gesture: but one that was wonderfully effective. Nineteen other members of the Society were also there to hear the performance and there was little doubt that we had witnessed one of the great performances of this glorious work. It was not just the quality of the playing or Barenboim's devotion and conception it was those extra factors that raise a good performance to the great were there in abundance. The Orchestra was not stale but they knew the work inside out and, with their conductor, paced and coloured the music afresh and with great insight. It was touching and scintillating. It was moving and thrilling but, above all, it was great music performed with sympathy, understanding and love.

So, the question is: how did the live performance with its subtle errors and inconsistencies transmute into the rigorous world of the recording studio? Listening to this disc will answer the question.

Not every listener liked the recording of the E Flat Symphony. Indeed, one distinguished critic went as far as to admit that he 'hated it'. Listening to Barenboim's performance in London last spring dispelled any doubts I might have fostered for the integrity of his performance and commitment to the music and composer was almost tangible. Because it was such a personal statement it is difficult to say whether or not the recording should be a 'first choice' and, for me I would prefer to rely on Barbirolli, Boult, Elder, Davis and Handley and, of course, Elgar. Things are different with this CD but some of the issues that related to the previous recording apply here. However, I believe it should be in the library of every Elgarian and taken down to show what a group of non-British musicians can make of this greatest of English symphonies. The glory of that performance in Berlin comes through in the recording and the richness of the sound of the orchestra captured under the leadership of Andrew Keener, the producer.

To begin at the beginning: I waited a couple of months before listening to the disc again; allowing the memories of the performance in Berlin to become distant. This was a good thing to do but, again I had the feeling that the beginning was just a little too slow but such was the quality of the playing that I soon settled into the music as it moved forward. The quality (and of the recording) is demonstrated in many instances that bring out details I had not fully appreciated before. Listen, for example, to the use of the brass (one bar before fig.3) in bringing in the great opening tune as it is reprised. Then there is the beginning of the 'allegro' (three bars after fig.5) – this is 'piano' not 'forte' as is the case in so many performances after the diminuendo of the great tune as it comes to an end. Barenboim gets this just right. There are so many examples of things like this in the movement but just listen to the development and the ending: that pizzicato which ends the movement on the strings is judged perfectly adding a little tension as we anticipate it.

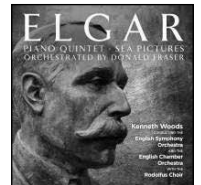
As the *Allegro molto* began I was struck how the recording emphasized the bass figure repeated from the start. This is played by the violas, 'cellos and double basses as the first violins take the scampering theme away to be augmented a few bars later by the seconds. So here was another example of a how a subtle emphasis can alter a long-held perception. The second subject, players exhorted by Elgar to be played 'like something down by the river' was very convincing – not the slow moving Spree but the Teme in flood. Time stands still as Barenboim holds us in the palm of his hand as the gentlest of 'attaccas' transports into the world of the 'adagio'. This is one of the great movements, its suppressed emotionalism paradoxically adding to the emotion. Listen to the timpani as it leads one into the 'cantabile' theme at fig.96: there is a sense of release as the theme is released on its reflective journey. So we reach fig. 104: 'we are brought near to heaven' was Jaeger's comment and we are indeed near heaven at this most glorious ending of any Elgar movement, the clarinet as in the Philharmonic, gently lowering the curtain.

This performance is much slower than Elgar's recording. However, it never seems slow – and Barenboim's conception is such that the faster passages can sound thrilling and, when necessary, menacing. Thus 'like greyhounds in the slips' the 'allegro' at 5 after fig.11 in the fourth movement dashes away, released from the tension of the mysterious beginning. The details become irrelevant as the movement is controlled by an iron hand (seemingly so relaxed) and its ebbs and flows are allowed their head: no more so in the last few bars as the great tune emerges (just) and is released in a great celebration of sound.

I am glad I sat on this CD for a few weeks. I was certain I did not like it as much as the performance in Berlin. Perhaps, if Decca had waited a few more months, there would have been differences but I doubt there would have been many. Buy this CD and celebrate a great musician and his orchestra in a performance of a great work that says so much to us on many levels.

Andrew Neill

Piano Quintet, *Sea Pictures*, orchestrated/arranged by Donald Fraser.
English Symphony Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, Rodolfus Choir,
conducted by Kenneth Woods.



I was graciously acknowledged by Anthony Payne as having 'crucially' assisted in the Third Symphony reconstruction, so I'm hardly averse to people 'tinkering' with Elgar's music, but this travesty is like a graffiti artist daubing garishly over The Haywain and calling it 'artistic improvement'

Elgar's deeply disturbing and at times sinister masterpiece, should, like its genius creator be treated with great care.

This version replaces delicate, vulnerable textures, revealing the inner schism of a creative mind at the very end of its inspiration with all its regrets, anger and frustrations, with pedestrian heavy orchestration and crashing percussion that make the first movement sound like the opening of a spy movie and the *Adagio* the accompaniment to a Mel Gibson love scene.

What on earth was wrong with the music in the first place, that needed this enhancement? Elgar regarded the Quintet as the pinnacle of his achievement, a sentiment with which I heartily agree – I dread to think what he'd make of this.

Buy this at your peril – it really is that dreadful.

And if you do, wonder at the 'Choral Version' of the *Sea Pictures* which accompanies the Quintet and ask yourself 'Why?'

What next, I wonder – The 'Rap' version of *Gerontius* – or perhaps *Falstaff* scored for Hawaiian band? Can't wait!

Richard Westwood-Brookes

Avie
AV2362



Hyperion
CDA68140

Elgar: *To her beneath whose steadfast star*
Pearsall: *Sing we and chaunt it, Light of my soul, Summer is y'coming in, Great God of Love, Lay a garland*
Leslie: *My love is fair, Thine eyes so bright*
Stainer: *Disappointment, Like as a ship, The castle by the sea, Flora's Queen*
Goodhart: *Lady on the silver throne*
Parry: *Who can dwell with greatness, La belle dame sans merci*
Stanford: *God and the universe, On time*
 The Choir of Royal Holloway, conducted by Rupert Gough

'What's Martin up to now?', I hear you ask. 'Why is he bothering to review a disc called "English Romantic Madrigals" that's only got one piece of Elgar on it?' When I tell you that for a quarter of a century I conducted a choir called the Pearsall Singers I suspect the penny may drop.

Robert Lucas de Pearsall (of Willsbridge), as his publisher, Novello, liked to style him, is one of the great unsung heroes of British music of the nineteenth century. An amateur composer (but one of genius) born in 1795 – two years before Schubert – within a decade of Schubert's death he was producing choral music of ravishing beauty and extraordinary tonal complexity of the like and quality that was being written fifty or a hundred years later by Elgar and Britten. The five 'romantic madrigals' of Pearsall on this disc set both a standard and a starting point for the development of that second 'golden age' of British unaccompanied choral music that existed for the second half of the nineteenth and the whole of the twentieth century.

To be sure, he composed plenty of 'fa, la, la' madrigals; but Holst and Vaughan Williams could 'fa, la, la' with the best of them without being dismissed as insignificant. And to pursue my comparison with Elgar and Britten for a moment: *There is sweet music* (1907) is rightly held up as a mighty example of Elgar's technical and aural prowess: a piece simultaneously in two keys a semitone apart that contrives to sound both inevitably right and sensuous to the ear. *A Boy was Born* (1932 – when Britten was still at the Royal College of Music) similarly gives us that perfect balance between beautiful, sense-tickling, sound and effortless technical complexity.

But if, in the 1930s, you had said to someone, 'I've had a great idea: I'm going to write a piece of music with every note of the scale sounding simultaneously', and then proceeded to demonstrate the effect by leaning with both arms on the piano keyboard, you could have expected the response 'you're mad!', or maybe 'We don't want any of that John Cage stuff here!' And yet this is precisely what Pearsall was doing in the 1830s. He had a real genius for sound, and the technique to pull off astounding effects. *Great God of Love* is a part-song for eight voices. At its climax Pearsall piles on the

suspensions¹ so that every note of the D major scale is being sung at the same time (see Fig.1): yet such is his skill that the result is a perfectly balanced wash of sound.



Fig.1

So I commend this disc to anyone fancying an introduction to the wide range of British part-songs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Elgar's contribution is little known – written for the anthology organised by Sir Walter Parratt in honour of the 80th birthday of Queen Victoria – and deserves to be rather better known, as does Goodhart's *Lady on the silver throne* from the same collection. Henry Leslie, known, if at all, for his work as a choral conductor, contributes a couple of attractive pieces, and the disc is completed by an interesting selection of lesser-known pieces from the pens of Parry, Stainer and Stanford.

As to the performances, they are quite superb. I must admit to knowing little about The Choir of Royal Holloway – a mix-voice collegiate choir that loses nothing by comparison with the better known choirs of Cambridge – and in Rupert Gough they have a conductor with a real feel for music of this type. I defy anyone to listen to the closing phrase of *Lay a Garland* without feeling slightly weak at the knees. Inevitably the members of a college choir will change year by year, and maybe the current crop of basses show their youth a little in a slight lack of power in their lower notes, but this matters little,

¹ 'Suspension, in music, a means of creating tension by prolonging a consonant note while the underlying harmony changes, normally on a strong beat. The resulting dissonance persists until the suspended note resolves by stepwise motion into a new consonant harmony.' (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

given the overall excellence of the choir's singing. Perhaps the best accolade I can give is to say that, having obtained a review copy from Hyperion from Pearsallian rather than Elgarian motives, my immediate reaction on hearing the disc was to buy two further Royal Holloway/Hyperion discs – 'Hymns to Saint Cecilia' (which includes *There is sweet music*) and a selection of *Cantiones sacrae* by Peter Philips.

Martin Bird

My own favourite remains Rae Jenkins's vinyl 78 (much reissued) of 'Sea Songs', briskly played by the New Concert Orchestra and much heard (years ago) on B.B.C. Children's Television in the black-and-white years (to introduce the saga of the egregious Billy Bunter!).

Michael Plant



Albion Records

ALBCD027

Vaughan Williams: *Songs of Travel* – 'The Vagabond', 'The Roadside Fire', 'Bright is the Ring of Words', *Silent Noon*, *Linden Lea*, English Folk Song Suite, *Sea Songs*, *Sine Nomine*, *Wassail Song*
Holst: 'Lovely Kind, and Kindly Loving', 'This have I done for my true love', 'Turn Back O Man', First Suite for Military Band, *A Moorside Suite*, *Marching Song*, *Wassail Song*

Edgar Coyle, Peter Dawson, Robert Irwin, Stuart Robertson, accompanied by Gerald Moore

Band of H.M. Life Guards, conducted by Lieutenant H. Eldridge

Band of H.M. Grenadier Guards, conducted by Lieutenant George Miller

Black Dyke Mills Band, conducted by Arthur Pearce

Hastings Municipal Orchestra, conducted by Julius Harrison

New Concert Orchestra, conducted by Rae Jenkins

BBC Chorus, conducted by Leslie Woodgate

Choir of the Temple Church, conducted by George Thalben-Ball

Choir of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, conducted by Rev. E. H. Fellowes

Colne Orpheus Glee Union, conducted by Luther Greenwood

It has been a pleasure in recent years to see The Ralph Vaughan Williams Society honouring the music of R.V.W. with new recordings, his voice on record, and now something on historical lines. No Elgar, but a treasury from David Michell's collection of pre-war recordings which preserve for our pleasure and instruction a carefully chosen selection of singers and orchestral items from the past. 'Heirs and Rebels' is the apt title of this compilation, well transferred from good copies of the original 78s which David hunted down over many years of collecting. We even get a picture of David himself, now one of our senior members and no longer able to travel the country (by train) as he used to do, seeking prize items from the 78 r.p.m. catalogues from before the war and earlier.

The value of the archives of sound has been and still is debated, but when we listen to singers and ensembles of years ago, a little indulgence may be expected for we are, after all, hearing in many cases the sounds the composers themselves expected to hear, practised and played (for the most part) by the performers in their presence. The music on this new CD takes us back to a time when styles and fashions were a little different, but there is much to learn and enjoy from the British singers and players we hear.

LETTERS

Membership Numbers

From David Morris

I read my friend and successor Stuart Freed's letter in the April *Journal* with interest. I am absolutely confident that the Society's official database, which I maintained until 2008, was accurate and the higher figures mentioned by Stuart were indeed achieved. As Stuart suggests, many of these additional people were probably recruited at the time of the Society's 50th anniversary in 2001 and the 150th anniversary of Elgar's birth in 2007. Obviously I cannot speak for the accuracy of the data after my involvement ceased but I would not want it thought that the official database was at that time anything other than accurate or the higher membership figures were not attained. Let us hope that we can increase our membership again and we all need to help with this – it is generally accepted that the best way of recruiting new members is for existing members to tell their friends about the Society!

100 YEARS AGO ...

On 2 May, despite Elgar being 'far from well', he and Alice travelled to Leeds for the first performance next day of 'To Women' and 'For the Fallen' in a programme in which *Gerontius*, with Clara Butt and Gervase Elwes, was the main item. They returned to Severn House on the 5th, and on the 8th Elgar commenced a week of performances at Queen's Hall of those three works, organised by Clara Butt. 'Performance wonderful. E. conducting most masterly new works made profound impression, A. Nichols' 'We will remember them' never to be forgotten', wrote Alice. The King came to the third performance, but 'seemed very fidgety & un-King like in demeanour – They had to catch a train at 4.45'.

The following week Elgar, 'tired & very anxious to get away ... at last chose Eastbourne', where they stayed until the 23rd. He was planning to go on to his sister, Pollie, at Stoke Prior, but did not feel well enough to make the journey until 2 June. Alice went with him as far as Worcester, before going on to stay with Mary de Navarro at Broadway. She and Alice 'enjoyed walking to the top of the hill, resting on a stile up there, where we gazed over "the coloured counties", while Elgar managed to 'rest & play with the dog & cut down thistles'. On the 15th they met up again in Worcester before returning home: 'A. very busy catching up things &c &c'. The final weekend of June was spent with the Speyers at Ridgehurst: 'Lovely .. Sunny & warm – Wood & fields very nice'.

A fortnight later they joined Frank Schuster for the weekend at the Hut, where they 'Learnt a nice wild Croquet game'. Within days Elgar was 'out a good deal & wishing for Country', and he set off again for Stoke Prior on 15 July. With a week Alice was 'missing him drefffully', to which comment Elgar added a decisive 'No'!

On 1 August Alice met him at Bridgnorth – 'He had a garland of clematis & threw it over A.'s head' – en route to their summer holiday in the Lake District. They stayed at the Ullswater Hotel, Patterdale. On the 11th they were joined for a week by Speyer's daughter, Lalla Vandervelde. On the 19th they 'Decided to stay till Monday', but Elgar was 'feeling throat. A. very anxious for him to be home to see Dr. feeling sure his throat needed treatment'. They returned to Severn House on the 21st, and the following day 'Sir Maurice came to see E. & gave him tonic &c – promised improvement'. Four days later he saw Elgar again and 'Found throat wanted doctoring – Ordered painting &c'. On the 29th Elgar went ' (with A.) to Sir Maurice. Found throat better but need electric cautery. E. bore it so splendidly. Sir M. thought him better. D.G – A. mis to see it done'.

ISSN 0143-1269

*Printed by
John Price Printers
Brook Street, Bilston
West Midlands, WV14 0NW*