

The *Elegar* Society
JOURNAL



August 2018 Vol. 21, No. 2



President
Julian Lloyd Webber FRCM

Vice-Presidents

Diana McVeagh
Dame Janet Baker, CH, DBE
Leonard Slatkin
Sir Andrew Davis, CBE
Donald Hunt, OBE
Christopher Robinson, CVO, CBE
Andrew Neill
Sir Mark Elder, CBE
Martyn Brabbins
Tasmin Little, OBE

Chairman
Steven Halls

Vice-Chairman
Stuart Freed

Treasurer
Helen Whittaker

Secretary
George Smart

The Elgar Society Journal

18 Holtsmere Close, Watford, Herts., WD25 9NG
Email: journal@elgar.org

August 2018 Vol. 21, No. 2

Cross against Corselet: Elgar, Longfellow, and the <i>Saga of King Olaf</i> <i>John T. Hamilton</i>	3
Elgar's <i>King Olaf</i> – an illustrated history <i>John Norris, Arthur Reynolds</i>	15
To the edge of the Great Unknown: 1,000 Miles up the Amazon <i>Martin Bird</i>	27
Book reviews <i>Barry Collett</i>	41
CD reviews <i>Barry Collett, Andrew Neill, Michael Schwalb</i>	43
DVD reviews <i>Ian Lace</i>	54
Letters <i>Jerrold Northrop Moore, Andrew Neill, Arthur Reynolds</i>	56
Elgar viewed from afar <i>Alan Tongue, Martin Bird</i>	58
100 Years Ago <i>Martin Bird</i>	69

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

*Front Cover: Front Cover: Edward William Elgar (1857-1934; Arthur Reynolds' Archive) and
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882; Charles Kaufmann's Archive).*

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

Copyright: it is the contributor's responsibility to be reasonably sure that copyright permissions, if required, are obtained.

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

Presentation of written text:

Subheadings: longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Full version of the 'Notes for Contributors' please see http://elgar.org/elgarsoc/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Notes-for-Contributors_longer-version_February-2017.pdf on <http://elgar.org/elgarsoc/archive/>

Cross against Corselet Elgar, Longfellow, and the *Saga of King Olaf*

John T. Hamilton

Biographers and music historians generally agree that the premiere performance of Edward Elgar's *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*, which took place on 30 October 1896 in the Victoria Hall, Hanley during the North Staffordshire Music Festival, marked a decisive turning point in the composer's career—a veritable milestone that practically overnight transformed Worcestershire's humble violin teacher and school orchestra arranger into a musical celebrity. As Lady Elgar later commented, North Staffordshire always held a special place in the composer's heart, 'since it was here that Sir Edward, through the birth of *King Olaf*, first had that attention drawn to him which we all know has never since relaxed'.¹ Despite the fact that this major choral piece has since fallen into neglect, overshadowed by Elgar's subsequent masterpieces, in its day *King Olaf* was broadly esteemed as heralding the arrival of a truly original and truly English artistic genius. Certainly, in Elgar's own view, the cantata should not be consigned to a mere initial stage that was eventually surpassed, but rather as a sound representative of his mature style, fully formed and masterfully articulated. At the very height of his career, in 1924, the composer confided to his friend Troyte Griffith, 'If I had to set *King Olaf* again I should do it just in the same way'.²

According to Elgar's closest friends and associates, this cantata possessed a deeply personal significance for the composer. The libretto is based on a long narrative poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the American poet whom Elgar's mother, Ann Greening, counted as her favourite author. In a highly concrete sense, for Elgar, Longfellow would always remain his mother's Longfellow—a collection of poetic works enveloped by maternal care and affectionate nostalgia. To be sure, Ann Greening's admiration was hardly unique. In the mid-nineteenth century, few writers could rival Longfellow's reputation as the greatest living poet, one who captured the imagination of generations. His Romantic lyrical style, exemplified in works like *Evangeline* and *Paul Revere's Ride*, fully resonated with the times, formulating and transmitting what most took to be the core truth of American character. In 1877, Longfellow's seventieth birthday readily rose to the level of a national holiday in the United States, with civic parades, celebratory speeches, and public readings before fervently venerating crowds. This fond estimation was matched by sincere adulation in England: *The Courtship of Miles Standish* was an instant bestseller in London and schoolchildren across the land committed hundreds of verses to memory. Upon his death, Longfellow became the first and only non-British writer to be honoured with a commemorative bust placed beside Chaucer's in the sacred precincts of the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. All the same, within

1 Cited in Reginald Nettel, *Music in the Five Towns, 1840–1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), 95.

2 *Letters of Edward Elgar*, Percy Young, ed. (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), 287–88.

decades after his death in 1882, Longfellow's popularity steadily declined, gradually judged to be second-rate and therefore rudely passed over throughout the twentieth century in favour of more radical, more innovative poetic voices. From the 1920s onward, poets like Walt Whitman and Robert Frost were in, while Longfellow was categorically out. These predilections appear to have persisted. When today's music critics attempt to account for *King Olaf's* poor reception history, they are all too quick to blame Longfellow's purported shortcomings, as if the weak poet of yesteryear had somehow weakened what was otherwise a healthy compositional debut.³

Certainly, Elgar himself never wavered in his adoration, having set Longfellow's texts to music on multiple occasions throughout his career. He treasured his mother's copy of Longfellow's *Hyperion*, a prose romance about the adventures and emotional development of a young German student, which had a profoundly formative influence on Elgar's childhood imagination. This personally sacred volume always stayed close at hand, at least until 7 December 1931, when the seventy-four-year-old composer presented it as a gift to Vera Hockman, the thirty-five-year-old woman who inspired Elgar's final burst of creativity. In his letter to Miss Hockman, Elgar mediated his love through Longfellow's work, just as he had relied upon the poet for some of his grandest musical conceptions: 'I am going to give you a little book—Longfellow's *Hyperion*—which for many years belonged to my mother; since then it has gone with me everywhere. I want you to have it because you are my mother, my child, my lover and my friend'.⁴

This fourfold identification of the young muse—as *mother, child, lover and friend*—is not only touchingly expressive, but also reflects a persistent pattern in Elgar's thinking, a pattern that reaches back to one of the earliest and most intriguing documents we have of the composer's youth. On a sheet dated 24 March 1866, eight-year old Elgar inscribed two intersecting staves and, by employing different clefs and key signatures, allowed the single note at the centre to be interpreted simultaneously, in German notation, as B–A–C–H (Fig. 1).

Employing the name BACH as a musical hypogram courses through compositional history, beginning with J. S. Bach himself, for example as a motif in the fourth variation of his *Canonic Variations* on 'Vom Himmel hoch da komm' ich her' (1747) and as the third fugal subject in the unfinished *Contrapunctus XV* of *The Art of the Fugue* (publ. 1751). In the Nineteenth Century the most well-known, explicit examples include Robert Schumann's *Six Fugues on the Name Bach* (op. 60, 1848) and Franz Liszt's *Fantasy and Fugue on the Theme B-A-C-H* for organ (S. 529/ii, 1856). In contrast to these famous applications, young Elgar's cruciform design, however he first happened upon it, allows two distinct, alternative interpretations of the central note: on the one hand, the single note—this single moment—can be read sequentially as a *temporal series* of moments; while on the other hand, the sequential musical phrase (b^b–a–c–b^a) can be seen as collapsing into a one *timeless point*. The playful experiment of a precocious child therefore yields a wondrous outcome, revealing how linear time—the sequential unfolding of four distinct notes—may be irradiated by the power of an eternal, atemporal point. Indeed, with remarkable acuity, the young Elgar, perhaps unwittingly, employed the cross to demonstrate how Johann Sebastian Bach, who lived and worked during a particular historical period, can also be understood as a timeless master who transcends any determinate time; just as, over 65 years later, the composer would

3 On the curious neglect of Elgar's *King Olaf* in the Twentieth Century, see Michael Pope, 'King Olaf and the English choral tradition', *Elgar Studies*, Raymond Monk, ed. (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 46–80; and Robin Holloway, 'The early choral works', in *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 63–80.

4 *Letters*, Young, ed., 334.

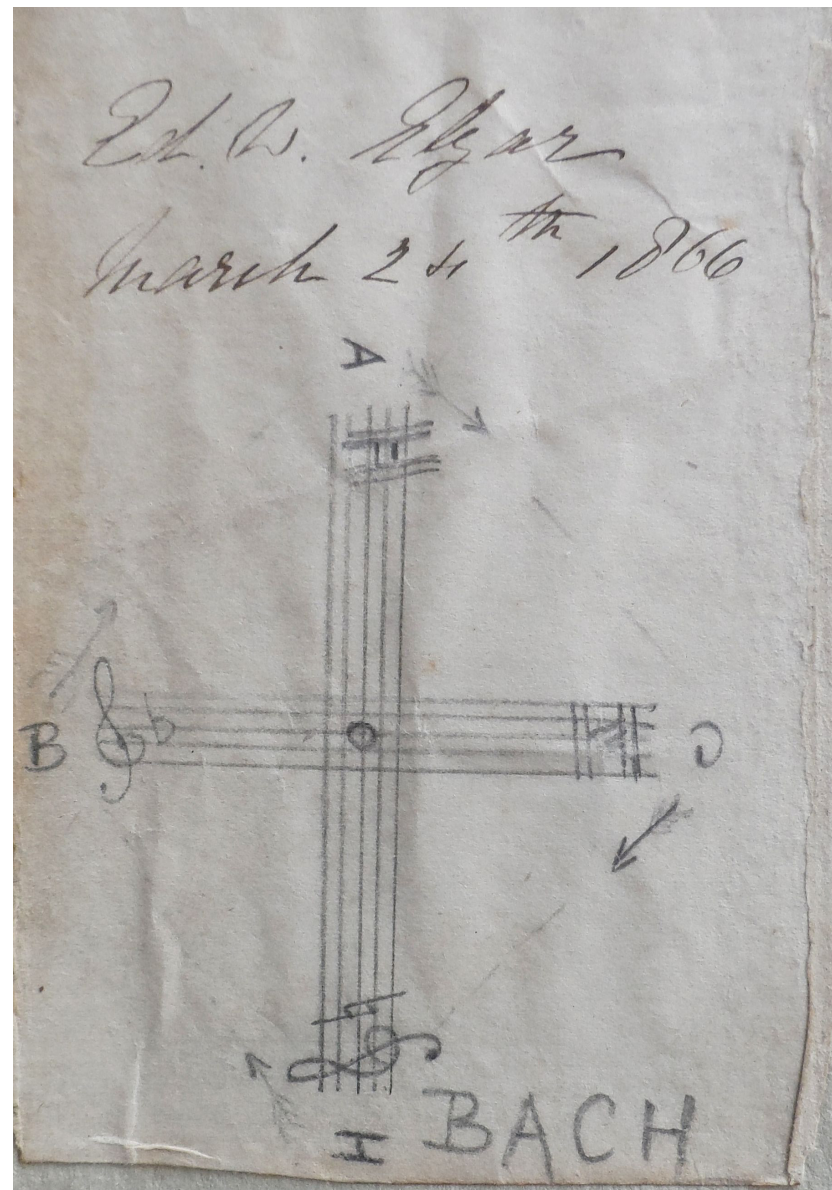


Fig. 1. Edward Elgar, pen drawing, dated 24 March 1866. (Elgar Birthplace Museum, Lower Broadheath)

regard Vera Hockman as the transcendent coalescence of roles that are otherwise perceived in temporal sequence: *mother, child, lover* and *friend*.

For this reason, the cross constitutes the chief symbol of the Christian faith. Regarded as a sign that connects the vertical and horizontal axes of the cosmos, the cross represents the conjunction of human mortality and divine eternity, and therefore serves as a salient symbol of Christ himself, who is both man and God. The richly complex symbolism of the Christian cross would not have been lost on Elgar, who was raised in his mother's Roman Catholicism. The cross's vast network of meaning proceeds from its foundational gambit: the cross is simultaneously a sign of death and a sign of everlasting life. Across European history a host of ideas have drawn their power from this simple yet far-reaching conception. In political theory, for example, the Christological concurrence of mortal humanity and immortal divinity underwrites the transfer of monarchic sovereignty: 'The King is dead, long live the King!' And in the realm of culture, since the Italian Renaissance, the master artist is characterized as an *alter Deus*, 'another God'—a man who certainly lives during a particular historical time yet one who, through his work, will ultimately transcend his deathbound condition. In a related way, specifically regarding music, Christ's sinewy flesh affixed to the cross had functioned, at least since the fifteenth century, as a vivid, albeit somewhat lurid archetype for stringed instruments, with catgut stretched over a wooden frame, modulating mournful tones of death into a glorious hymn of salvation.⁵ Christ's last words on the cross—'It is finished', *Consummatum est*, *Es ist vollbracht*—represent a fermata that is also an overture. Eternal life begins after life is complete. Eternity exceeds completion. It is, so to speak, *more complete*.

*

Elgar's *King Olaf* clearly expands upon his prior engagement with Longfellow's work, an engagement that exhibits a great degree of continuity—namely, a sustained interest on the interrelationship between life and death, specifically on the promise of everlasting life from time-bound mortality. In 1892, Elgar set Longfellow's short poem, 'Stars of the Summer Night' for his *Spanish Serenade* (op. 23), a part-song initially accompanied by two violins and piano. The poem's four stanzas focus on the figure of a lady asleep, while her lover looks on, presumably waiting for the woman in deathlike repose to rise. Within three years, in 1895, the composer turned to Longfellow's translation of Ludwig Uhland's *The Black Knight* (op. 25). Again, this medieval-style ballad, which Longfellow had inserted into his *Hyperion* romance, rests on the death of the old kingdom and the birth of the new. Analogously, for his next large-scale choral piece, Elgar selected Longfellow's *Saga of King Olaf*, which tells the tale of how the Norse king converted his realm from its ancient heathenism to Christianity and its offer of everlasting life.

Longfellow began work on this long narrative poem soon after he returned from an extended journey in Western Europe and Scandinavia—a trip, during which his young wife tragically passed away.⁶ Tellingly, the poem's birth proceeded from a painful death. The Christian message would remain in the foreground and thereby motivate and unify the various episodes of Olaf's mission. It bears noting that, upon assuming his post as professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures

5 See Bruce W. Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 196–216.

6 For useful biographical information, see George L. White, Jr., 'Longfellow's interest in Scandinavia during the years 1835–1847', *Scandinavian Studies* 17:2 (1942), 70–82.

at Harvard University, Longfellow initially intended the Nordic saga as a 'Prologue' to the second part of his epic *Christus*, which relates the full story of Christianity's conquest over North European paganism. However, over the years, as Longfellow continued to amplify the tale, he ultimately decided to include it in a new collection, which he would publish as *Tales of a Wayside Inn* in 1863.

The frame story that organizes this collection centres on a man identified as the 'Musician', modelled on Longfellow's close friend, the Norwegian violin virtuoso Ole Bull who, in 1852, purchased a large tract of land in Pennsylvania for a colony he would name New Norway. Drawing on a well-known literary device refined by Boccaccio and Chaucer,⁷ Longfellow has his Musician welcome a group of travellers who seek shelter in a cosy inn, where they take turns telling stories to pass the time. The wayside inn is the Red Horse Tavern, located in Sudbury, Massachusetts, about twenty miles west of Cambridge, on the old Post Road, which connected Boston and New York City. In Longfellow's setting, as the book's frontispiece illustrates (Fig. 2), the governing conceit is the vital warmth of music and storytelling, which attracts the guests and preserves them from the deathly chill of late autumn.

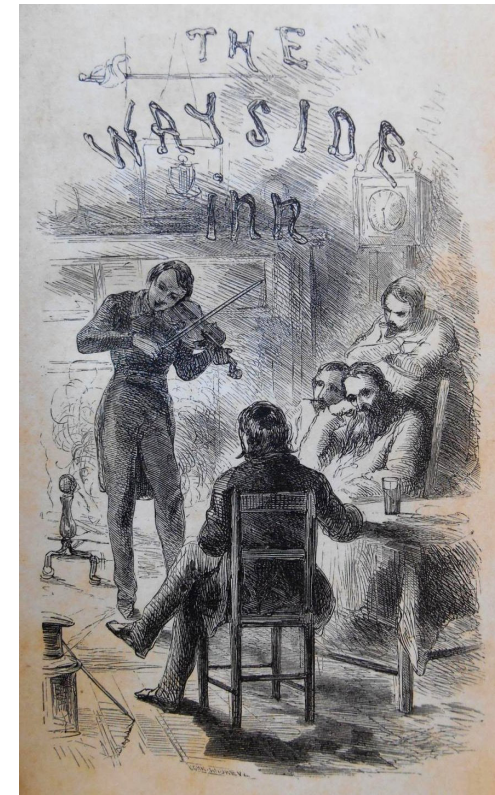


Fig. 2. Henry W. Longfellow, Frontispiece, *Tales of a Wayside Inn* (1863)

7 See William Calin, 'What Tales of a Wayside Inn tells us about Longfellow and about Chaucer', *Studies in Medievalism* 12 (2002), 197–213.

In the work's *Prelude*, we are introduced to the Musician who, 'illuminated by that fire of wood', kindles the imagination of his audience:

Voices of eld, like trumpets blowing
Old ballads, and wild melodies
Through mist and darkness pouring forth,
Like Elivagar's river flowing
Out of the glaciers of the North.⁸

In Norse mythology, Elivagar or 'ice-waves' names the primordial waters that broke free of the lifeless frost and thus became the source of all earthly life. Creation is the temporal, lateral unfolding of melodies and stories, which flow like the streams of Elivagar. Had Elgar, himself a violinist, recognized his own name in this Nordic designation? We know that Elgar often reflected on the etymologies of his surname: Ælfgar, the 'elf-spear' or 'fairy-spear'; and we recall how he fondly named his daughter *Carice* as a contraction of his wife's name, Caroline Alice. Here, in Longfellow's prologue, the icy waves could provide Elgar with a fanciful evocation—**El-iva-gar**—a magical signature of the composer from whom all melodies pour forth.

When it comes time for Longfellow's violinist to offer a story, he selects the 'Saga of King Olaf', which is by far the longest and most elaborate tale in the collection. Longfellow's principal source for the legend is Snorri Sturulson's thirteenth-century chronicle, the *Heimskringla*, which appeared in a complete English translation by Samuel Laing in 1844. For his poetic adaptation, Longfellow reduced the saga's original 123 chapters into 22 sections, which would be further pared down to nine scenes in Elgar's cantata. For this major revision, Elgar enlisted the assistance of his Malvern neighbor, Harry Arbuthnot Acworth, who had recently returned from civil service in Bombay and considered himself to be a man of some poetic sensibility. By the time he began working on the *King Olaf* text, Acworth had edited the *Ballads of Marathas*, published in 1894, and would subsequently prepare the libretto for Elgar's *Caractacus* (op. 35) of 1898.

Longfellow's and, by extension, Elgar's conception of King Olaf's mission was shaped in large measure by Samuel Laing's comprehensive introduction to his multi-volume translation of Sturulson—a 'Preliminary Dissertation' that weighed in at over two hundred-fifty pages.⁹ This lengthy exposition is noteworthy, not only because it exhibited the ideological beliefs that guided Laing's ambitious translation, but also because it decisively formulated a view of Scandinavian culture that would engender broad interest and fascination among English readers on both sides of the Atlantic. In brief, according to Laing, medieval Nordic values should serve as the exemplum for core English ideals.¹⁰ Quite similar to Richard Wagner's position, Laing argues that the old, heathen Norsemen should remind nineteenth-century nations of their noble vitality, which has been otherwise weakened by a serf-mentality most discernible today in a society of anaemic civil servants. Drawing on typical arguments involving geological and climate conditions, Laing points to the massive granite bedrock of Norway, which prevented systematic agriculture and thus avoided the pitfalls of feudalism. 'The individual settler held his land, as his descendants in Norway still

express it, by the same right as the king held his crown—by udal right, or odel—that is, noble right; subject to no feudal burden, servitude, escheat, or forfeiture to a superior from any feudal casualty'.¹¹ Accordingly, the Nordic peoples cultivated the arts of open disputation and participatory democracy in public assemblies or Things—political-legislative structures that discouraged bureaucratic tyranny. Moreover, the paucity of large agricultural estates encouraged the Vikings to fight vigorously for land and natural resources, nourishing an animated entrepreneurial spirit. Throughout his exposition, Laing refers to the weakness of the Anglo-Saxon serfs, a weakness exacerbated by a Christian faith founded on humility and self-surrender. In Laing's opinion, only a monkish culture would vilify the Vikings as barbarians; from the viewpoint of heathen culture, they were clearly valiant, technologically innovative, and unabashedly passionate.

This characterization resonated deeply with nineteenth-century readers. Laing's provocation to turn away from European Christianity and embrace Nordic heathenism aimed to direct the English to gaze westward toward America, where ancient Viking vitality purportedly flourished. 'Our civil, religious, and political rights—the principles, spirit, and forms of legislation through which they work in our social union, are the legitimate offspring of the Things of the Northmen, not of the Wittenagemot of the Anglo-Saxons—of the independent Norse viking, not of the abject Saxon monk'.¹² Americans were especially eager to capitalize on this opportunity for self-distinction. Among the many hymns to Nordic accomplishments, we find remarkably extravagant publications, culminating in rather bizarre 'scholarly' works like Albert Welles 1879 *Pedigree and History of the Washington Family*, which scientifically proved that the First President of the United States was in fact a direct descendent of the Norse god, Odin.¹³

All the same, many writers equally sought to reconcile the vital power of heathenism with the Christian message of love and universal brotherhood. In this regard, no figure would have been more attractive than Olaf Tryggvason, the Norwegian king who converted his people to the Christian faith. The adventures of King Olaf certainly found a receptive audience in Victorian Britain. In addition to being a hero who succeeded by overcoming a nearly ceaseless series of obstacles and treacherous betrayals, Olaf's biography concretely links him to English civilization. After his father was assassinated, the young man grew up in exile, protected by his caring mother, Astrid. Before returning to stake his rightful claim to Norway's crown—the boy traced his lineage back to Harald Haarfager, the first King of Norway—Olaf spent most of his time in England, where he eventually converted to Christianity. According to the *Heimskringla*, he was raised in the Orkneys, baptized in the Scilly Isles, and confirmed in Andover. In 991, Olaf led a Viking expedition into the estuary of the Blackwater in Essex, where he encountered the Anglo-Saxon defence commanded by Byrhtnoth. The ensuing *Battle of Maldon* is immortalized in the great Old English poem, where we learn—doubtless to Elgar's great delight—that Byrhtnoth's father-in-law was named Ælfgar: a presumed descendent of the composer, who once met King Olaf face to face.

Upon striking a perpetual peace treaty with the Anglo-Saxon King Æthelred the Unready, Olaf steered his ships back to the Norwegian shores, resolved to avenge his father's death, reclaim the throne, and convert the people to the new Christian faith. All three initiatives—revenge, ascension, and conversion—required savage force, which supplies the primary motif of Longfellow's account

8 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Tales of a Wayside Inn* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864), 15.

9 Samuel Laing, "Preliminary Dissertation," in *The Heimskringla; or The Sagas of the Norse Kings* (2nd ed.), 4 vols., Samuel Laing, trans. (London: John C. Nimmo, 1889), vol. 1, 1–261.

10 See Andrew Wawn, 'King Ólaf Tryggvason, Sir Edward Elgar, and the Musician's Tale', *Leeds Studies in English* 29 (1998), 381–400.

11 Laing, 'Preliminary Dissertation', 59.

12 Laing, 'Preliminary Dissertation', 133.

13 Stephen Mitchell offers an excellent overview of the American reception of Viking lore in 'Nation Building.U.S. Perspectives', in *The Handbook of Pre-Modern Nordic Memory Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Jürg Glauser, Pernille Hermann, and Stephen A. Mitchell, ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018).

and therefore Elgar's cantata. To begin, Olaf arrives to accept the challenge of Thor, the God of Thunder, who has asserted his supremacy and mocked the power of Christ. Thor speaks with unshakeable divine confidence:

Force rules the world still,
Has ruled it, shall rule it;
Meekness is weakness,
Strength triumphant.
Over the whole earth
Still is it Thor's-Day!

Thou art a God too,
O Galilean!
And thus single-handed
Unto the combat,
Gauntlet or Gospel,
Here I defy thee!¹⁴

Thor characterizes Christianity as a peaceful and therefore cowardly cult, averse to violence—one that bears the 'Gospel' of love as opposed to the 'Gauntlet' of military aggression. Yet Olaf's evangelical mission cannot and does not renounce brute strength. On the contrary, he responds by shattering Thor's statue with his mighty sword. The fierce, heathen general Ironbeard, who rushes to protect the image, is mortally wounded. In Elgar's setting, Acworth emphasizes the religious implications: when the people see that Olaf is not struck down by Thor's lightning bolt for his blasphemy, they are compelled to accept Christ, whose Cross appears in the sky 'oe'r the blood-stained Horg-stone'.¹⁵

The vision of the cross therefore inspires peace. Olaf sheathes his sword and proposes marriage to Gudrun, the daughter of Ironbeard, in an explicit gesture of reconciliation. However, on the night of the couple's marital consummation, Gudrun enters the bedchamber with a dagger, intending to avenge her father's murder. Olaf successfully spoils her wicked plan, sends the woman off into exile, and holds a grand feast for his devoted subjects. It is here, amid the celebration, that the old Norse god, Odin, appears as a ghostly guest, telling wondrous stories of legendary warriors, before disappearing without a trace. Olaf interprets this passing apparition as proof of Christianity's definitive victory over pagan beliefs. The old gods are dead. The peaceful strength of the Gospel has triumphed; the combatant Gauntlet may be put aside.

Still, Olaf understands the importance of forging alliances for the continued success of his mission. He therefore proposes a new marriage to Sigrid, Queen of Svithiod, on the condition that she would convert to the Christian faith. As Olaf should have known, conversion requires force, be it the power of rhetorical persuasion or the brute coercion of physical violence. When Sigrid refuses to accept Christ as her saviour, Olaf strikes her cheek with his armoured glove or gauntlet, seriously wounding the heathen queen, who now vows revenge. Although Thor portrayed the clash of civilizations as a battle between 'Gauntlet and Gospel', Olaf persistently forces the Gospel upon his opponents by means of the gauntlet. This fundamental tension, which Elgar will highlight by

way of clear thematic-motivic composition, reflects two opposing relationships to the past; for Olaf's return to Norway is driven by two distinct intentions: vengeance for his father's death, which spells an adherence to the heathen past; and conversion to the new Christian faith, which denotes a decisive break from that past. Olaf must negotiate between the power of the Gauntlet and the promise of the Gospel, remaining in, while transcending time.

The saga of King Olaf nears its conclusion as Olaf enters a marital pact with Thyri, the sister of Svend, King of the Danes. Unlike Queen Sigrid, who meanwhile married this Danish king, Thyri is willing to adopt the Christian faith, provided Olaf recover the lands that had been taken from her. As we have come to expect, Olaf leaves his Gospel to the wayside and takes up the Gauntlet to meet the Danish fleet. During the fierce combat, Olaf perishes in the flood, holding his shield above his head as he plunges beneath the waves. Acworth renders the king's demise with especial vividness:

Yet still, like sunbeam through a cloud,
Glimmers the helm of Olaf proud,
Faint and more faint to see:
Around it close the dark'ning spears,
It sinks, it sparkles, disappears,
King Olaf, woe to thee!

.....
Above him rolls the sudden surge,
That stormy heart has rest.

This ending, however, is but a beginning. As Elgar's musical setting underscores, according to the profound logic of the cross, the stillness of death is simultaneously the sign of eternal life. Again, if the Crucifixion marks a completion—*consummatum est*—then the ensuing salvation signals an achievement that is more complete. Thus, in the *Epilogue* to the saga, the voice of Saint John addresses Olaf's mother, Astrid, who now resides in the convent of Drontheim. The heavenly speech proclaims Olaf's death as a glorious victory over Thor's heathen savagery:

Cross against corslet,
Love against hatred,
Peace-cry for war-cry!
Patience is powerful;
He that o'ercometh
Hath power o'er the nations!

For a musician attuned to the enigmatic variations of tonal symbolism, the g articulated by the initial pairing 'Gauntlet or Gospel' may be heard as a dominant that finds its final resolution in the c of 'Cross against corslet'. With great compositional concision, for his setting of *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*, Elgar consistently alternates episodes in G minor and C major, particularly in the latter half; yet by framing the entire choral piece in G minor, the C-major episodes come across more as a subdominant softening—a gentle mollescence—rather than any straightforward, tonic resolution.

The cantata's Introduction in G minor opens with a brief orchestral prelude, descending majestically from a high g to d across four bars, countered by gently arching, interlocking figures: rising sixths on the violas and falling fourths on the violins and cellos. The theme will recur throughout the entire piece as the primary 'Saga'-motif. When the chorus enters, Elgar

14 Longfellow, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, 73.

15 Edward Elgar, *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* (Op. 30), text by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Harry Arbuthnot Acworth (London: Novello, 1896). All subsequent citations from the cantata are from this edition.

ingeniously—and beautifully—evokes the cross, not by means of tonality but rather by means of melodic form. As the tenor and soprano rise and fall along a vertical axis, starting from and returning to the tonic, the bass and alto sing in a straight, lateral monotone on g (Fig. 3).



There is a wondrous book of Leg-ends in the old----- Norse tongue.

Fig. 3. Elgar, 'Introduction', *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*

Although music is a temporal art, Elgar is able to create a cross-like figure by having the vertical line intersect with the horizontal. The piece about to unfold effectively takes place beneath this sign of the cross (Fig. 4):

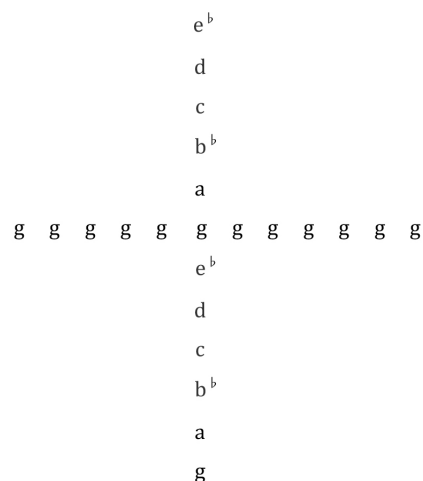
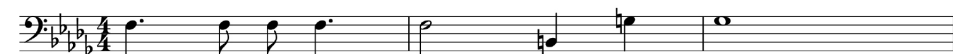


Fig. 4. Cruciform design of introductory motif

Across Elgar's composition, the formal distinction between the vertical and horizontal axes correlates to thematic differences. As the cantata develops, it is primarily the ascending-descending lines that articulate most of the plot elements, with falling figures assigned to the heathen gods and rising figures assigned to Olaf's mission. Elgar, however, punctuates these numerous rises and falls by means of a 'Cross-motif', which is essentially lateral, holding on to a single note. This tenaciously horizontal line then fulfills the cruciform figure by dropping down a diminished fourth and leaping up a major sixth in a dramatically revised key, for example in the bass recitative, number 4, which makes a transition from B^b minor to C major by way of C minor (Fig. 5).



Tell how O- laf bore ----- the cross

Fig. 5. Bass recitative, No. 4 ('Cross-motif')

A close listening to the entire cantata would bear out this general tension between dramatic action set with vertical figures and a contemplative mode produced by an expressive monotone along the horizontal axis.¹⁶ Here, it would be useful to consider the piece's *Epilogue*, which elaborates the cross-motif by retaining monotone phrases that shift in compact groups, moving from B^b minor back to the principal key of G minor (Fig. 6):



Cross a-against cors-let Love a-against hatr-ed Peace-cry for war-cry!

Fig. 6. 'Epilogue'

The word *corslet* is nearly an anagram of the word *cross*: the paired terms suffer but a slight modification or revised interpretation, which invites the listener to reflect on the work's primary tension between time and timelessness, between a vengeful adherence to the past and a liberating aspiration towards the new, between what is mortal and what is deathless.

It is precisely by operating on all these levels—the verbal, the tonal, and the formal—that Elgar's cantata achieves its stunning dramatic unity. It therefore comes as no surprise that the monotonic phrases, which define the cross-like form by laterally intersecting with the vertical aspects of the themes, are explicitly identified in the work's final lines: 'a low *monotonous*, funeral wail', incanted over a reprise of the opening Saga-motif in G minor:

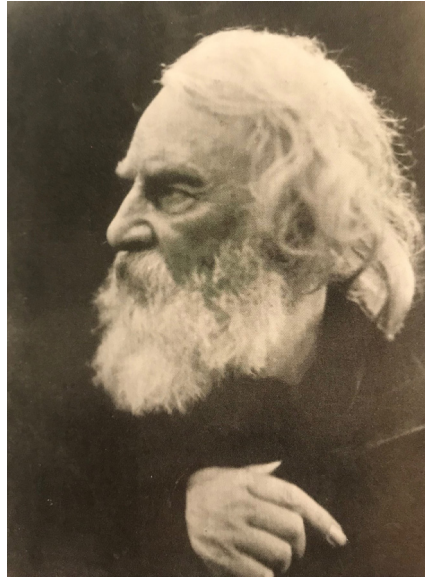
A strain of music ends the tale
A low monotonous, funeral wail,
That with its cadence wild and sweet
Makes the saga more complete.

More complete—Longfellow's concluding verse, coupled with Elgar's powerfully gentle setting, sounds out a completion that transcends completion, an overdetermined determination, a life without end. Just as the temporal unfolding of Olaf's adventures can coalesce into single epiphany, just as the career of Bach can fuse into a single note, just as the roles of mother, child, lover, and friend can be united in the presence of one individual, so Elgar invites us to hear what is here no longer.

16 For a complete thematic analysis, see Florian Csizmadia, *Leitmotivik und verwandte Techniken in den Chorwerken von Edward Elgar: Analysen und Kontexte* (Berlin: Köster, 2017), 220–242.



Max Mossel's 1896 portrait photo of Edward Elgar (Arthur Reynolds' Archive)



Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1868, five years after *King Olaf* was published; a picture of the British photographer Julia Margaret Cameron who became known for her portraits of celebrities of the time. (Arthur Reynolds' Archive)

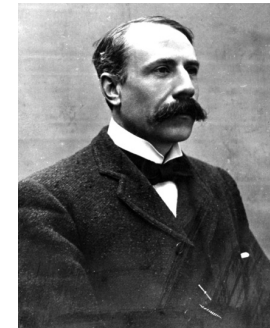
John Hamilton studied Comparative Literature, German, and Classics in New York, Paris, and Heidelberg. He has held previous teaching positions in Comparative Literature and German at New York University, with visiting professorships in Classics at the University of California-Santa Cruz and at Bristol University's Institute of Greece, Rome, and the Classical Tradition. Since 1995, he has been actively involved with the Leibniz-Kreis, a working group originally based in Heidelberg devoted to the 'Nachleben der Antike'. In 2005-2006 he was resident fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and in 2011 visiting scholar at Berlin's Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung. He is actively involved with the American Academy in Berlin and the Center for Advanced Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. Teaching and Research topics include 18th- and 19th-century Literature, Classical Philology and Reception History, Music and Literature, Literary Theory and Political Metaphorology. He is the author of *Soliciting Darkness: Pindar, Obscurity and the Classical Tradition* (2004), *Music, Madness, and the Unworking of Language* (2008), *Security: Politics, Humanity, and the Philology of Care* (2013), and *Philology of the Flesh* (forthcoming 2018), in addition to numerous articles.

Elgar's *King Olaf* – An Illustrated History

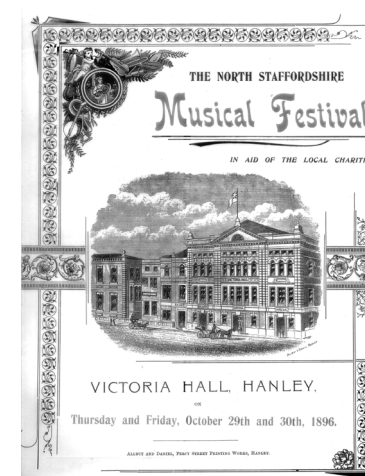
John Norris, Arthur Reynolds

Arthur S. Reynolds is the Chairman North America Branch of the Elgar Society.

John Norris has been the Complete Edition's General Manager since 2003 and a member of the Elgar Society for thirty years.

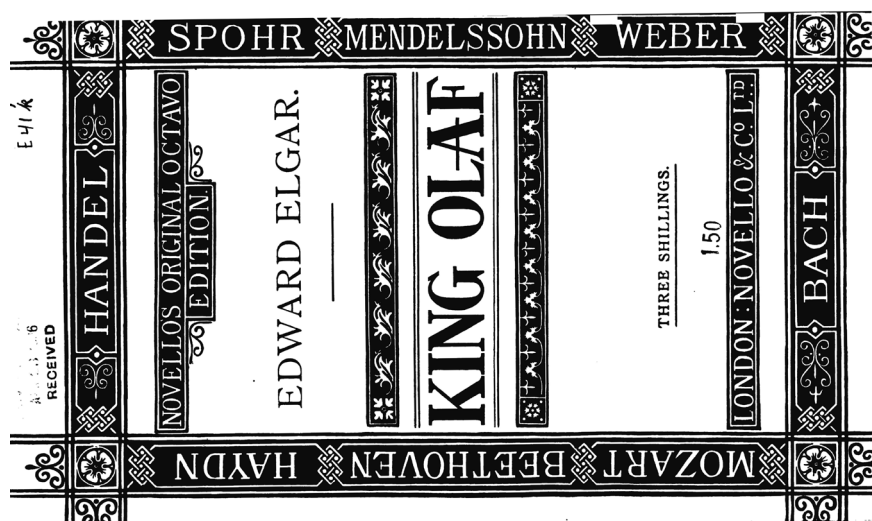


Max Mossel's 1896 portrait photo of the composer (Arthur Reynolds' Archive)



The original programme of Elgar's opus 30: the cantata *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* from 1898 (Martin Bird's collection)





NOVELLO'S ORIGINAL OCTAVO EDITION.

COMPOSED FOR THE NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE MUSICAL FESTIVAL, OCTOBER, 1894.

SCENES FROM THE SAGA OF KING OLAF

BY
H. W. LONGFELLOW
AND
H. A. ACWORTH, C.I.E.

SET TO MUSIC

FOR SOPRANO, TENOR, AND BASS SOLI, CHORUS, AND ORCHESTRA

BY
EDWARD ELGAR.
(Op. 30.)

PRICE THREE SHILLINGS.
Tonic Sol-fa Edition (University), 1s. 6d.
Vocal Parts, 1s. 6d. each.

LONDON: NOVELLO AND COMPANY, LIMITED
AND
NOVELLO, EWER AND CO., NEW YORK.

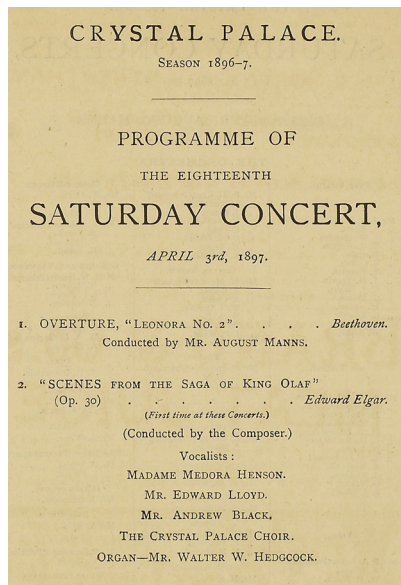
Copyright, 1896, by Novello, Ewer and Co.

The right of Public Representation and Performance is reserved.
The purchase of Scores and Parts carries with it the right of Public Performance. If it is desired to use
third or borrowed copies of Scores or Parts, the permission of the Publishers must be first obtained.

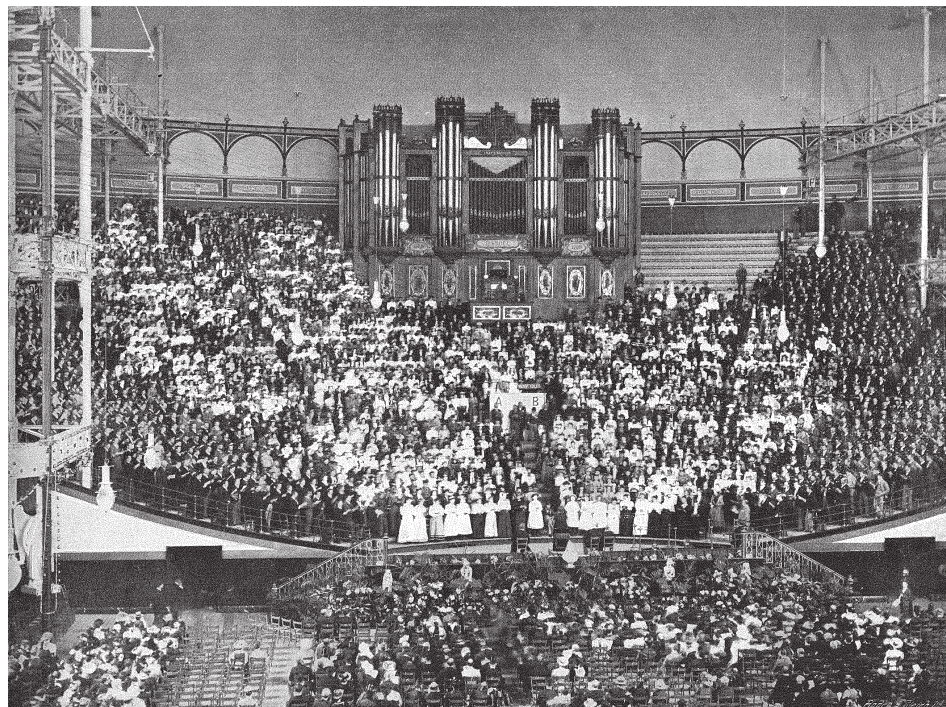
Vocal score of *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*, Elgar's opus 30, edited by Novello in 1896. The work was premiered at the North Staffordshire Music Festival in the Victoria Hall in Hanley on 30th October 1896.



Anonymous snapshot of Elgar standing in the library at Craeg Lea in 1900. Behind him we see the mug made at Hanley Potteries to commemorate the first performance of *King Olaf*. If this photograph were taken a year later, a *Dream of Gerontius* mug would be there as well. An 1893 journal states: 'Hanley, the most populous town in North Staffordshire, is generally described as the capital of the Potteries, a title to which it has certainly the greatest pretensions; [...] it has during the present century made such strides in the art, as to overtake and pass all competitors.' Elgar toured the Minton pottery works on 28th October 1898. He was presented with the KO mug either then or soon after. In 1903 Charles Noke made another mug to celebrate both the 1896 Hanley *King Olaf* and the 1903 Hanley *Gerontius*. (Arthur Reynolds' Archive; larger image of the mug: Birthplace collection)



Programme for Crystal Palace performance of *King Olaf*, 3 April 1897, conducted by Elgar. (*Birthplace archive*)



A performance at the Crystal Palace. (*Editor's Archive*)



Image of Thor pasted into Alice's copy of *King Olaf*. (*Birthplace archive*)



Menu of the 'Great Public Meeting' of the 'Musical Defence League', a group that lobbied for copyright laws: In a frame at the left hand side, a lovely drawing of a lady, in pink with a fan, written above is 'Manon, opera by Massenet'. The menu is handwritten neatly in ink. In a frame at the right hand side, is coloured drawing of *King Olaf*, written down one side of the frame is 'King Olaf, cantata by E. Elgar'. On the reverse are autographs written in pencil. (Birthplace archive)

Instruction to members of the Sunderland Philharmonic Society regarding their forthcoming performance of *King Olaf* in January 1915. (Birthplace archive)

Sunderland Philharmonic Society.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHORUS.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
 Your Committee and I have during recent weeks been seriously considering what is best to be done under the present perplexing national circumstances, with regard to the remainder of this season of the Philharmonic Society. The result being that we have decided to propose the putting in practice "King Olaf," the Cantata which, in the year 1897, placed Sir Edward Elgar in the fore front of our nation's music.

It was in the following year, 1898, that you and I performed this interesting work, and all who took part in it are aware that it is full of charm alike for singer and listener.

You have just done a worthy service to the national cause by your recent presentation of that fine old classic "The Messiah," and now, in pursuance of the wise policy which keeps in mind the composers of our own day as well as those of past times, we propose to turn to this worthy example of modern British music, believing that, in its way, it will prove as pleasant and as musically profitable as did Handel's oratorio.

It is proposed to hold say six or eight weekly practices now, these to commence on **Wednesday, February 3rd**, in accordance with the particulars, notice of which your Convener, Mr. Binns, will send along with this letter.

Under ordinary conditions the public performance of this work would take place in about two months. But the stress and uncertainty which at present exist has forced on our attention the inadvisability of any further appeal for pecuniary help to the public of Sunderland, who have already contributed so cheerfully and well.

We therefore propose to postpone the performance until the first concert of next season; the further preparation of the work being resumed as usual in September next.

I desire then to appeal to you the Chorus, who did such admirable work in "The Messiah," to show by your attendance at the coming practices, your undoubted patriotic feeling for British art and a determination loyally to sustain the honour of the Society, which for more than fifty years has striven to worthily uphold the cause of good music in Sunderland.

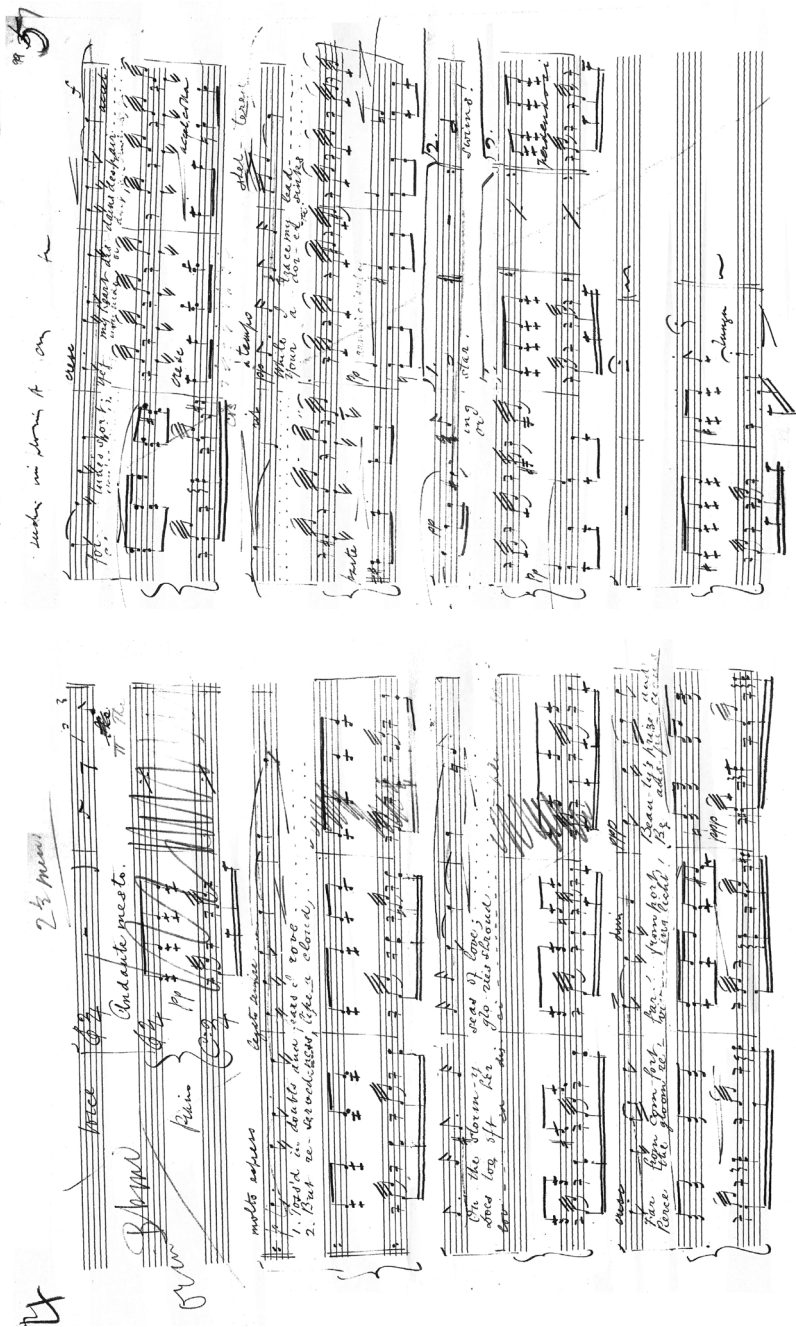
Yours faithfully,
NICHOLAS KILBURN.

January, 1915.

Handwritten musical score for a song titled "The Song of the Sea". The score is written on ten staves, with lyrics in German. The lyrics are: "Der Herr hat die Welt erschaffen, der Herr hat die Welt erschaffen, der Herr hat die Welt erschaffen, der Herr hat die Welt erschaffen, der Herr hat die Welt erschaffen, der Herr hat die Welt erschaffen, der Herr hat die Welt erschaffen, der Herr hat die Welt erschaffen, der Herr hat die Welt erschaffen, der Herr hat die Welt erschaffen." The score includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The music is written in a style typical of 19th-century German hymns.

[illegible]

Handwritten musical score for "The Song of the Lark" by Gustav Mahler. The score is written on ten staves, with the first staff being the title page. The notation includes various musical symbols, clefs, and dynamic markings. The score is heavily crossed out with diagonal lines, indicating it is a draft or a rejected version. The handwriting is in ink on aged paper.



‘Muleteer’s Serenade’ found its way into the Epilogue, only to be removed again by Novello. Its intended position in the Epilogue can be determined from Elgar’s quotation of the melody of the first line of the song beneath the words of the Bass recitative (‘Now louder, now nearer, Now lost in the distance’) in the accompaniment to bb.20-27, obviously placed to herald the appearance of the song. (*British Library*)

To the edge of the Great Unknown: 1,000 Miles up the Amazon¹

Martin Bird

In the closing months of 1938 Carice, now living opposite the Birthplace at Woodend, spent much of her time ‘airing & sorting papers etc after lunch’, ‘Busy a.m. trying to get Birthplace papers ready’ & ‘rushing all day with papers cases etc’.² By the spring of 1939 her organisation had progressed: ‘Went to Birthplace in pm. started list for catalogue’, ‘Birthplace catalogue all p.m.’, ‘Did catalogue of Birthroom after lunch’.³ As part of this sorting she gathered together all she could find about her father’s cruise up the Amazon on RMS *Hildebrand* – letters, brochures, a diary, even a laundry bill – and placed them in a foolscap envelope labelled ‘Amazon trip’, where they remained for many years, eventually – and somewhat incongruously – being absorbed into the letter collection. In 2005 Richard Smith covered the cruise in some detail in *Elgar in America*;⁴ fourteen years earlier John Knighton had written about the *Hildebrand* – on which his father had served during the Great War – in the *Journal*.⁵ This article adds a little more detail to what has already been said.

* * * * *

Writing in 1955, the author, and founder of *Gramophone* magazine, Compton Mackenzie recalled:

It may have been one day in the autumn of 1923 that Sir Edward Elgar spoke to me suddenly, in the billiard-room of the old Savile Club at 107 Piccadilly which was a beautiful bow-fronted house looking over Green Park. Looking more like a retired Colonel than ever he said:

“I suppose you people in this magazine of yours have discovered that nothing I have written has the slightest value. However, you can say what you like about my music, for I am no longer interested in music.”

He then told me that he was thinking of taking a steamer up the Amazon as far as Manaus, but that he should not go unless he could have a cabin entirely to himself.⁶

1 Booth Line Steamship Co. brochure, EB letter 2363.

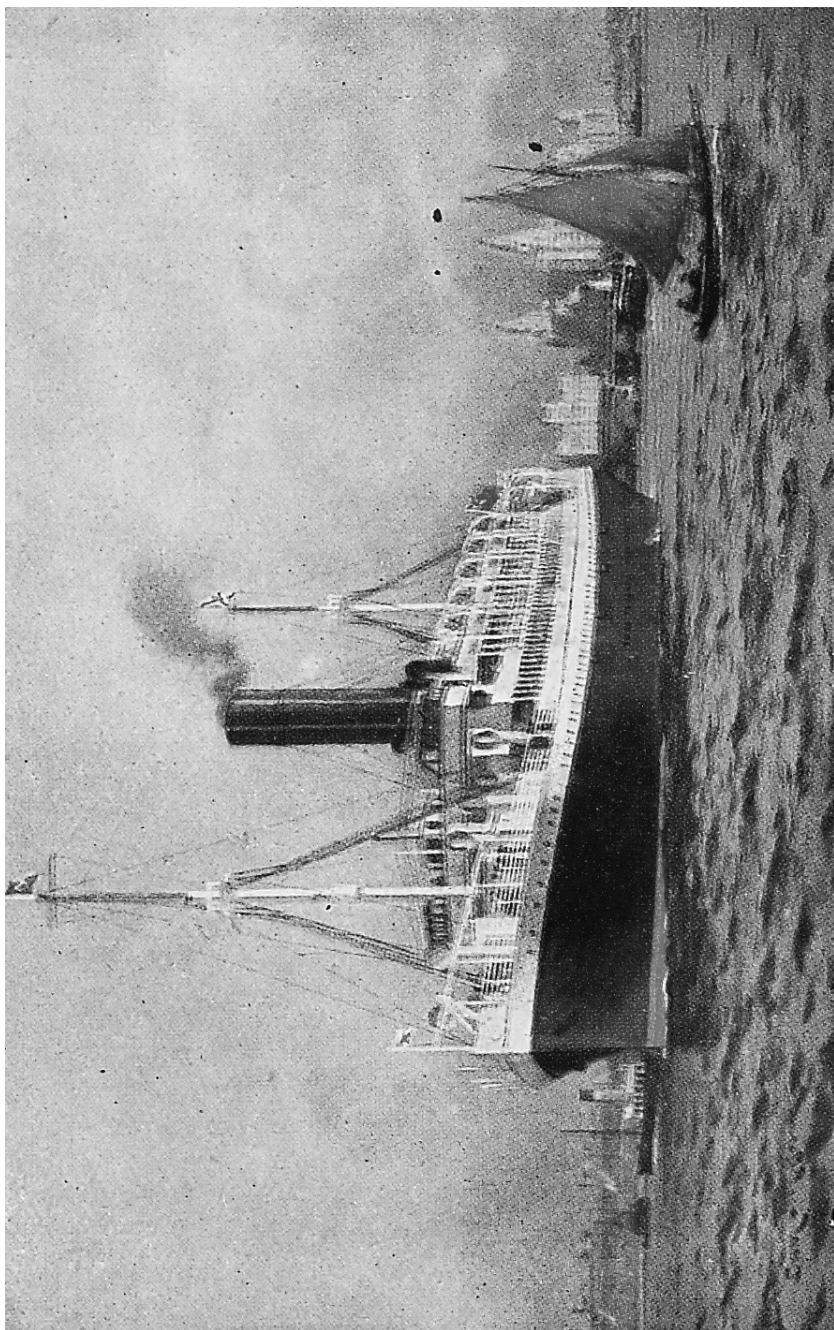
2 Carice Blake diary, 4 October and 2 and 3 November 1938.

3 Carice Blake diary, 27 April and 1 and 5 May 1939.

4 Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2005.

5 *Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.7, No.3, September 1991.

6 Compton Mackenzie, *My Record of Music* (London: Hutchinson, 1955), p.83.



RMS Hildebrand (Birthplace collection)

Elgar's short lease on Napleton Grange, near Worcester, had come to an end, and he had returned to 37, St. James's Place on 27 September: 'just sitting room, bedroom, bathroom etc. What they call a service flat'.⁷ Billy Reed takes up the story:

Becoming restless again towards the end of 1923, he suddenly announced his intention of taking a voyage to the South Seas, an announcement that was no surprise to the author, who remembered very well how obsessed he was a few months before he left Severn House with a film shown at the local cinema. He went several times to see this picture, inducing the author to go with him on one occasion. The film was taken in the South Seas and depicted divers groping about in the green depths, being attacked by an octopus, or shark, or some other sea monster, and fighting it off in a most thrilling manner with knives, all this in the cool depths of the sea with bubbles streaming upwards from their helmets. Elgar was enthralled with this⁸ ... It was evident that the impressions had lain dormant for these intervening years, but the urge suddenly returned and off he went to South America, and although not actually proceeding to the South Seas he made a trip a thousand miles up the River Amazon on 15th November ...⁹

On the 13th Carice had gone 'Up to London at 9.46. Spent day with Father helping pack & shop. Lunch at Charing X. & went to Blackwall Tunnel & on to Greenwich – & back by bus. Tunnel very thrilling. Nice day – Caught 6.50 back. Father coldy but better & all right to go on Thurs.'¹⁰

Whereas on previous holidays – for example the Bavarian trips of the 1890s and the Mediterranean cruise of 1905 – Elgar had kept a separate notebook in which he recorded his experiences, in 1923 he merely made notes in his appointments diary.¹¹ His entry for 15 November is brief and to the point.

Sail
Euston 10-20 Special train, Sailed 4 o'clock

The *Hildebrand*, at 7,000 tons, was the largest liner in the Booth Line fleet. Elgar had booked a First Class 'cabin de luxe No. 2', at a cost of £100. The company's brochure described the cruise – which formed part of its regular passenger service to Brazil – in glowing terms.

A cruise of 11,800 miles in an ocean liner is not a new innovation, but when 2,000 of these miles are accomplished in a luxuriously-fitted 7,000 ton vessel on the great Amazon – the river of mystery – and the heart of the South American Continent is penetrated through the Equatorial forests of Brazil, without a change of cabin from the time of leaving Liverpool to the day of the return to the Mersey,

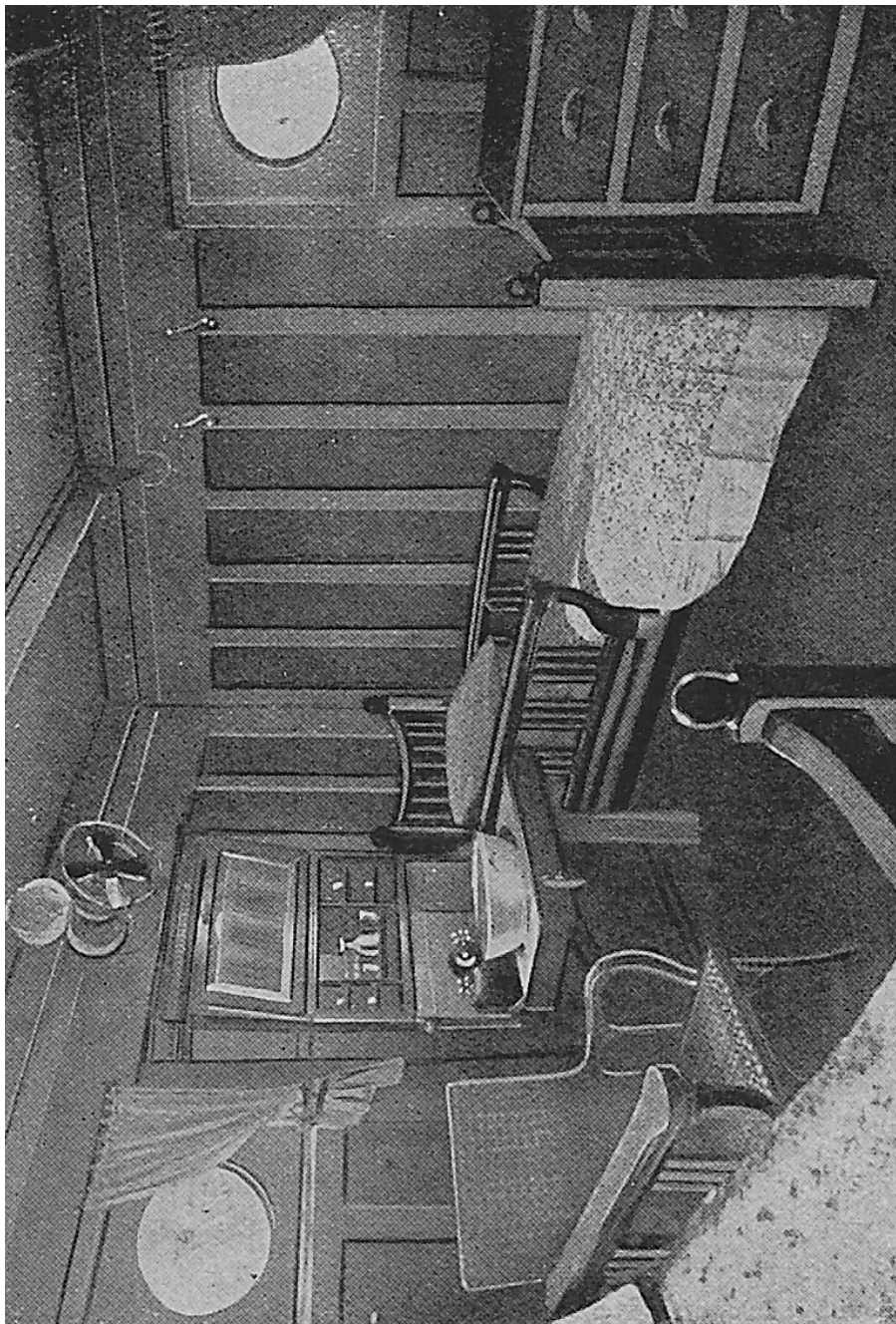
7 letter to Madge Grafton, 20 October 1921, EB letter 10040.

8 Elgar went to the cinema frequently during the first half of 1920. I have been unable to identify the film from Reed's description, although a number of possible documentaries were released at this time. I cannot imagine that the two feature films released in 1920 and set in the South Seas would have 'enthralled' Elgar: Houdini in *Terror Island*, 'Underwater escapes in the South Seas'; or 'The maddening Doralina' in *The Woman Untamed*, 'Six Reels of the Most Wonderful Picture ever presented ... the thrilling experiences of a ship captain's daughter amongst a motley crew and her subsequent adventures on the wild shores of a half naked and savage people'.

9 W.H. Reed, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1938) p.134.

10 Carice Blake diary.

11 EB letter 2351. Only the pages from 25 October to the end of the year have been preserved.



Hildebrand de luxe cabin (Birthplace collection)

when it becomes not only unique as a cruise, but also an historic achievement in maritime transport and luxurious travel.

Days are spent in quaint cities reminiscent of old Brazil. Curious natives in the palm-thatch dwellings of their jungle homes are passed at many points. Hours speed swiftly by in gliding on tropical rivers through forests of vivid colouring and alive with bright-plumed birds and gorgeous butterflies. Vistas of twilit equatorial forest, open campos, little-known mountains, and palm-fringed beaches of golden sand, are obtained before the *Ultima Thule* of civilisation is reached at the fabled El Dorado of the conquistadors, the quaint, isolated, hospitable little jungle-town of Manaos.¹²

The passenger list¹³ reads like the characters in an Agatha Christie novel, and includes: David Colville-Stewart, an unpublished author who acquired his hyphen when he took up tomato growing in Malvern; Lieutenant-Colonel Neil Fraser-Tytler and his wife Christian, daughter of the 9th Laird of Houstoun; Captain Bowes Butler-Stoney of the Coldstream Guards and his sister Ellen; John Vesey Vesey-Fitzgerald, KC; Charles Frederick Coryndon Luxmoore, JP; Rev. Arthur Miles-Moss, the noted lepidopterist and vicar of Pará, the largest Anglican parish in the world, who was returning home; and Thomas Barter Gilley, recently released from prison for company tax evasion over a period of ten years, and now working as a meat importer. One almost expects to turn the page and find the name of Hercule Poirot.

The cruise

For the first 48 hours the weather was rough, and Elgar did not venture up on deck. He noted in his diary that he had been told that it was the 'worst passage for 10 years'. Then it calmed, and on Sunday morning Elgar wrote to Carice:

Dgck.¹⁴

Quite fine now & warm: dreadful weather from Liverpool till last night the officers allow it was very bad so you can guess what it was.

I may have a chance to send this at Oporto so am writing now just to say all well.

Love EE¹⁵

Elgar's diary entry for the 18th was to prove the longest of the entire trip!

Leixoes
crowds – 250 III Class
much wine taken aboard
dined (dressed)
some ladies together
reserved

¹² Booth Line brochure, EB letter 2363.

¹³ EB letter 2350.

¹⁴ D[arlin]g c[huc]k.

¹⁵ EB letter 2348, 18 November 1923.

9m/130—(485) 2750710 & E 387
25m/9/23—(485) 145270 & E 1340 W. & Sons Ltd 120

Name of Ship **HILDEBRAND.**
Steamship Line **BOOTH LINE, LIVERPOOL.**

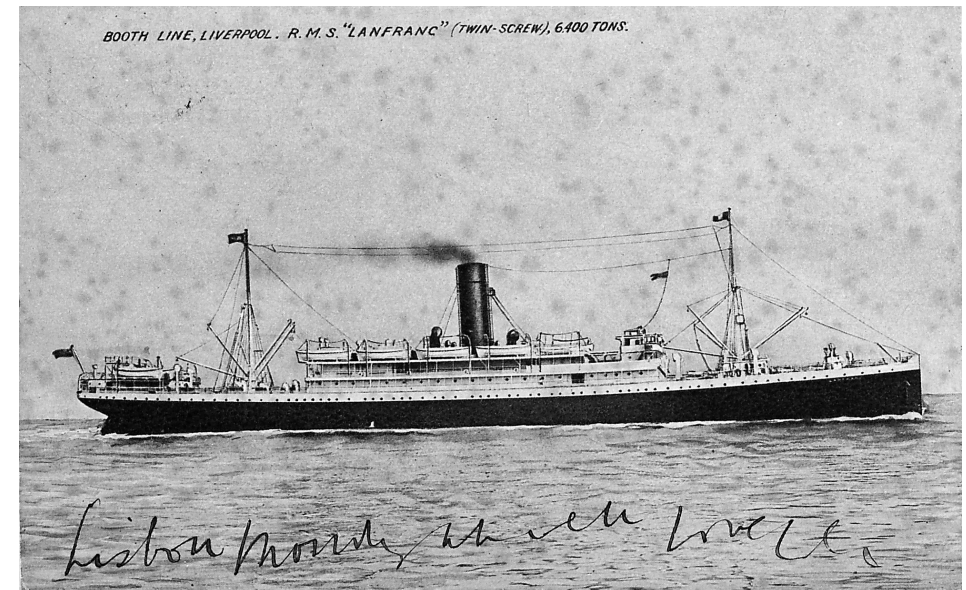
Date of Departure **15 NOV 1923** **192**
Where Bound **MANAOS**

NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF BRITISH PASSENGERS EMBARKED AT THE PORT OF LIVERPOOL

(1) Contract Ticket No.	(2) NAMES OF PASSENGERS	(3) Last address in the United Kingdom	(4) CLASS (Whether 1st, 2nd, or 3rd)	(5) Port at which Passengers have contracted to land	(6) Profession, Occupation, or Calling of Passengers	(7) AGES OF PASSENGERS						(8) Country of last Permanent Residence ^a	(9) Country of Intended Future Permanent Residence ^c
						Adults of 12 years and upwards		Children between Infants 1 & 12		Not admitted by this line or any of its subsidiaries			
						Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
	Conville Stuart, D.	8 Langdown Crescent Malvern	1st	Manaos Cruise	Author	41	62					England	England
	Cross, Miss K.M.	31 New House Cobham, Surrey	"	"	none	65						"	"
	Elgar, Sir G.	37 St. James Place SW.	"	"	Medician	55						Scotland	Scotland
	Elbridge, Mr. H.	2 Alverton Road Harrowgate	"	"	none	34						England	England
	Fraser - Sydenham, Mrs	Alasovic Castle Inverness	"	"	landowner	25						"	"
	Gilley, Mr. J.B.	146 Burnt Ash Rd. S.E. 12.	"	"	none	62						"	"
	Glyde, J.R.	Whorlton House Whorlton	"	"	"	66						"	"

Out-going passenger list (The National Archives, Kew)

The *Hildebrand* arrived in Lisbon on the 19th, and Elgar sent a postcard to Carice.



Postcard to Carice, 19 November (EB letter 2360)

Next day he wrote again:

Dgck,

We are nearing Madeira & that will be the last mailing place before Pará

I sent a word from Leixoes (Oporto) & Lisbon –

All well – weather bad – the worst passage ‘in’ ten years – but it is warm & out of doors weather – with occasional sun – a good deal of motion.

There are some nice people here & all very pleasant including the capt’n.¹⁶

It was so rough at Holyhead that we cd. not drop the Liverpool pilot – so we have him here now – he will return from Madeira.

There are a lot of Portuguese weevils aboard but we do not see much of them.

I am quite well & eat (& drink) too much but the sea air my child!

I did not go ashore at Lisbon as it was wet & raining heavily at times – quite like a London Nov. day!

Kay vooley voo?

Love
zu affecte
EE¹⁷

¹⁶ John Maddrell, from the Isle of Man, who had obtained his Master’s Certificate in Liverpool in 1894.

¹⁷ EB letter 2347.

The ship spent two days in Madeira, before setting sail for Pará,¹⁸ where they arrived on the 30th. En route there has been 'Swimming bath, dances, games'.¹⁹

On 1 December Elgar noted in his diary that he had gone 'ashore stayed Good²⁰ Burrell²¹'.

Good and Elgar were to keep in touch, and in the spring of 1924 Good wrote from Pará with news of both himself and Burrell.

Dear Sir Edward Elgar,

I am writing in the first place to acknowledge your letter. We were pleased to hear from you, and I can assure you that not only are you not forgotten, but on the contrary we are hoping you will put into execution your threat to make another visit to the Amazon. The same welcome will be awaiting you. I hope you have quite recovered from the trouble to your eye.

Burrell left here for England by the last steamer. He gravitates rather naturally to Italy each holiday, but will need to be in England a little time. My usual plan is to leave here in August each year, returning in time for Christmas, but this year am afraid shall be a month or two later in getting away. I would like to see the Empire Exhibition, but this does not seem possible at the moment.

Please accept my best thanks for the Sherry, as well as for the kind thought which prompted you to send it. It is a delightful wine, and is being much enjoyed.

Yours sincerely,
Charles Good²²

The Hildebrand 'left Para 3 o'clock²³ next day, and proceeded to Manaus, which it reached on the 6th at '8 am Very hot ashore – tea [served in] circular bin'.²⁴ Musically it is famous for its opera house, the *Teatro Amazonas*, completed in 1896 in the Italian Renaissance style. Billy Reed again:

On his return he was full of his experiences, but he seemed to be less impressed with the Amazon than with the fact that in South America in quite small towns the most important building was always the opera house. He contrasted this state of affairs with the want of vision shown in this respect in his own country.

There was one very fine opera house which excited him when, ever he spoke of it, and his frequent conversations and allusions in this direction seemed to point to the fact that he was considering the writing of an opera. Nothing was actually said about this, however, at the time.²⁵

18 Pará now known as Belém, lies about 100 km up river. Founded in 1616, it was the first European colony on the Amazon.

19 Elgar diary, 23 November 1923.

20 Charles Benjamin Good (1877-1963), the Booth Line's representative for the Amazon Basin, was based in Pereira, Brazil. He had been in England on holiday, and had returned on the *Hildebrand*. The son of a butcher from Tower Hamlets, he was to become a director of Booth Line, living in the Wirral.

21 Denys Nelthorpe Burrell (1896-1965), another Booth Line employee, later became Secretary of the Brazilian Chamber of Commerce.

22 EB letter 2358, 13 April 1924.

23 Elgar diary, 2 December 1923.

24 Elgar diary, 6 December 1923.

25 W.H. Reed, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1938), pp.134-135.

Elgar spent five nights in Manaus; his diary notes can only give a hint of his experiences: 'picnic! ... very wet ... Crocodile ... Cold ... Cloudy ... Festa ... rain ... procession'.

The *Hildebrand* sailed for England on the 11th: Booth Line's language was rather less prosaic than Elgar's!

The leave-takings from this hospitable town are mingled with regret. The band plays on the quayside, bouquets are handed to the lady passengers and crowds cheer, but there is a feeling of sadness as the end of the outward cruise is reached, at a distance of over 5,000 miles from Liverpool, the "Hildebrand" turns her bows downstream.²⁶

As on the outward voyage, two nights were spent in Pará, and Elgar again saw Charles Good. Crossing the South Atlantic on the 17th, Elgar noted 'Swimming bath rigged up', only to add two days later 'Swimming bath burst'. There had been added excitement on the 18th: 'Baby born Christened Hildebrand'.

Responsabilisa-se por qualquer falta de ROUPA que se dê

Lavanderia Paraense a Vapor

DESINFECTA RIGOROSAMENTE
TODA A ROUPA SEM O EMPREGO
DE MATERIAS QUE A DANIFIQUEM.

PROMPTIDÃO E ESmero
NOS TRABALHOS

TELEPHONE, 574 Travessa de S. Matheus, 100-bis

Para, de Republt de 1923

© Smr. E. Elgar - Caixa 2 - Deve

a Antonio M. da Silva

N. B. — A roupa que não for retirada dentro de noventa dias, será vendida para pagamento do trabalho.

7 Coll. 17	2800	
4 Camisas	6000	
1 Tufano	1000	
2 Calcinhas	2000	
2 Camisas Malha	2000	
1 Collete coracao	1000	
1 Cam. meias la	1000	16.000

Elgar's bill from the
Para Steam Laundry
(Birthplace collection)

26 Booth Line brochure, EB letter 2363.

Christmas dinner

On Christmas Day a special dinner was given, accompanied by music: the *Blue Danube* waltz, Mendelssohn's *Spring Song*, a selection from *Patience*, and a selection of Herman Finck's 'Melodious Melodies'. There were eleven courses on the menu, of which turkey and Christmas pudding were the seventh and eighth, the diners having first whetted their appetites with, among other things, turtle soup, turbot, sweetbreads, and braised ham with champagne. Elgar dined at the Captain's table, where his fellow guests were the Fraser-Tytlers, the Butler-Stoneys, and Thomas Gilley.

Oh, to have been a fly on the wall (or in the soup?). Gilley, as has already been mentioned, had served a prison term in 1919: he and his fellow directors had avoided tax by under-declaring the profits of their oil company every year from 1909 to 1918. His marriage had not survived, and on release from prison he moved to New Zealand where he worked in the meat importation trade. Now in his early fifties, he had retired.

Lt.-Col. Neil Fraser-Tytler was born in London, the son of Lt.-Col. Edward Fraser-Tytler. Educated at Eton, he then 'spent two years in France and Germany studying languages and artillery'²⁷ before becoming a member of the London Stock Exchange in 1912. During the Great War he commanded a howitzer battery, and was awarded the DSO in 1916 at the Somme. After the war he was on the staff of the Supreme War Council at Versailles, where he met his wife, Christian Helen Shairp, who was working for the Foreign Office at the Peace Conference. Following her husband's death in 1937 she joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service, formed after the Munich crisis of 1938, where she soon became responsible for recruitment, being appointed CBE in 1941. In 1943 she was appointed Deputy Director, ATS, at Anti-Aircraft Command, with a rank equivalent to Brigadier. She died in 1995.

Bowes Butler-Stoney (1879-1971) and his sister Ellen (1891-1963) were children of Walter Charles Butler-Stoney, JP, Deputy Lieutenant and High Sheriff for County Tipperary, whose family seat was Portland Park, Tipperary. Their elder brother Charles was a manager in the Liverpool office of Booth Line. Bowes was a Captain in the Coldstream Guards, and had been awarded the Croix de Guerre. He, too, was at the Versailles Peace Conference. Neither he nor Ellen ever married: they shared a house in County Clare.

Homecoming

The remaining entry in Elgar's diary, for the 30th, says simply 'arr. Liverpool'. From there he went to stay with his sister Pollie for a few days, arriving back at St. James's Place on 3 January. He wrote to 'Windflower' next day:

I arrd. in town last night – I went to Perryfield & found them very delighted at your most kind thought.

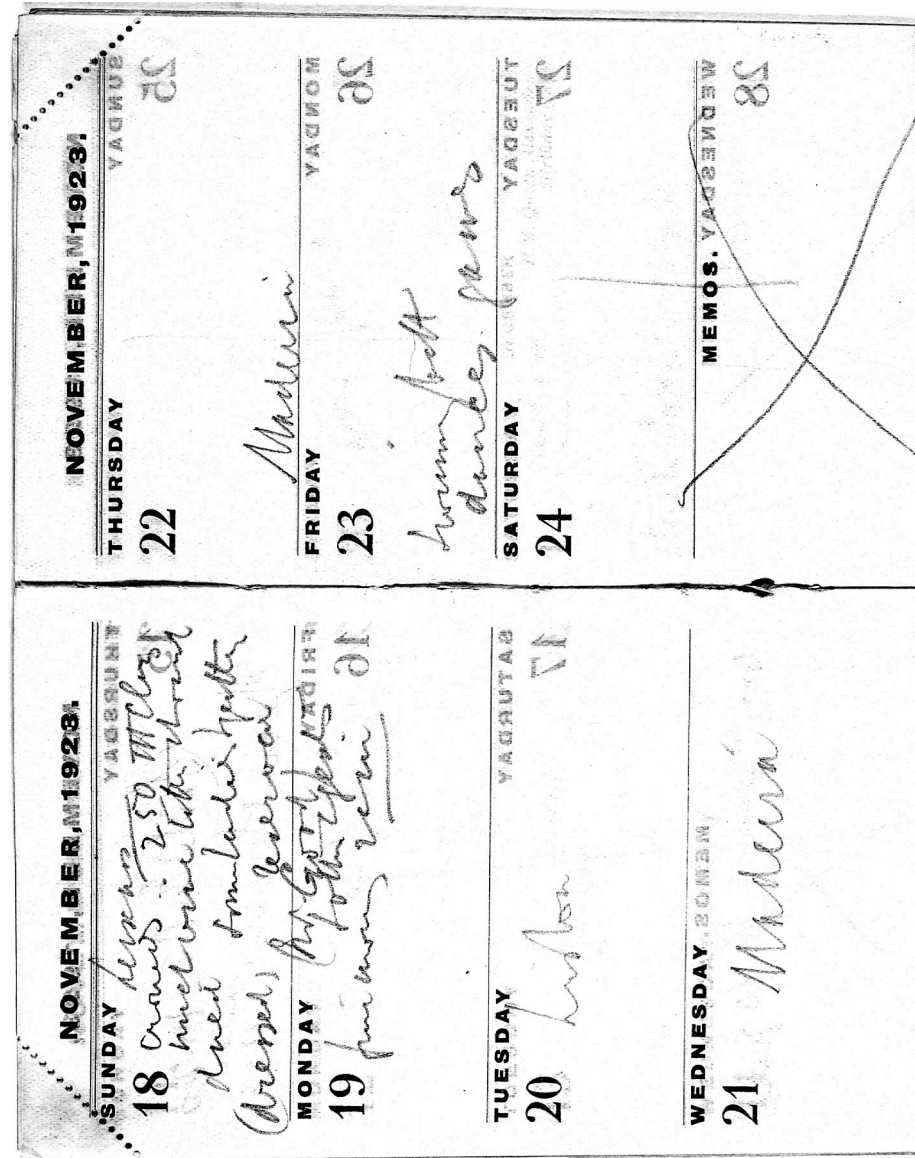
I must go back to the tropics as soon as I can clear up things.

I have no news & have not seen a newspaper since early in November & I do not know who is alive – or anything!²⁸

27 *The Times*, 26 November 1937.

28 EB letter 7182.

A page from Elgar's 1923 diary (EB letter 2351)



Elgar's return had been reported in the *Yorkshire Post*.

YORKSHIREMAN'S TRIP UP THE AMAZON

Mr. T. R. Glyn, of Whorlton, Barnard Castle, has just returned to England after an eventful cruise of 1,000 miles up the great Amazon River to Manaus, amid the equatorial jungle forests of Brazil, on the R.M.S. Hildebrand (Booth Line). The trip occupied 56 days, the distance traversed on water being nearly 12,000 miles. Amongst the English passengers on board the vessel, between forty and fifty in number, were Sir Edward Elgar, O.M., and two or three Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society.²⁹

In Worcester, a sub-editor was quick to put two and two together and make five.

Sir Edward Elgar has returned from America. He accompanied Mr. T. R. Glyn, of Whorlton, Barnard Castle, on a cruise of 1,000 miles up the great Amazon River to Manaus, amid the equatorial forests of Brazil. The trip occupied six weeks, the distance traversed on water being nearly 12,000 miles.³⁰

Elgar, mystified as to why his name should be linked with that of Thomas Richard Glyn, a retired solicitor, wrote at once to the editor of *Berrow's*, Harry Davey, and received the following reply:

Sir,

I much regret the error to which you call my attention. It seems that the sub-editor was misled by a paragraph which appeared in the "Yorkshire Post" which recorded the return of Mr Glyn "after an eventful cruise" etc., and added that among the English passengers on board the vessel were Sir Edward Elgar, O.M. and two or three Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society. He assumed that the gentleman first mentioned was a leader of the expedition. I will correct the mistake.³¹

Elgar appeared in no great hurry to see Carice, writing on the 7th:

DgCk. All well. I am getting things straight & if it shd. get really warmer, wd. plan to come down for a night or so, but it's really too cold & I don't want to run any risks about change from the tropics etc. I have no news & my journey is not worth a history – some odd things I saw but you have read all about snakes, monkeys & parrots ...³²

It was to be another six weeks before they met.

Cold day. Went to London by 10.17, up by soon after 12. Father met me but missed me & was at Flat when I got there. Lunch at Pall Mall & long talk – heard all about Amazon – seemed to have loved it & looked well. Heard sketch of new March for Wembley Exhibition – caught 4.53 – long wait at Pulboro', bus was a cab, home 7.30³³

Aftermath

In November, on the anniversary of the cruise, Elgar wrote to Captain Maddrell, who replied from the *Hildebrand*.


²⁹ *Yorkshire Post*, 3 January 1924.

³⁰ *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 5 January 1923.

³¹ EB letter 6348, 7 January 1924.

³² EB letter 254.

³³ Carice diary, 20 February 1924.

THE BOOTH STEAMSHIP COMPANY LIMITED						
						
ROYAL MAIL STEAMERS TO NORTH BRAZIL.						
PASSENGER SAILINGS FOR AUGUST TO NOVEMBER, 1923.						
The Steamers will keep as closely as possible to the dates of sailing given, but the Company will not be responsible for any delay caused to passengers. All sailings are subject to alteration or suspension without notice.						
Outward Sailings						
STEAMER	Passengers embark from Princes Landing Stage, LIVERPOOL	LEIXOES (Oporto) Sail.	LISBON Sail.	MADEIRA Arr.	PARÁ Arr.	MANAÓS Arr.
STEPHEN	Tuesday, 14th Aug. 3-0 p.m.	18th Aug.	19th Aug.	21st Aug.	1st Sept.	8th Sept.
HILDEBRAND	Tuesday, 18th Sept. 3-0 p.m.	21st Sept.	22nd Sept.	24th Sept.	3rd Oct.	9th Oct.
AIDAN	Tuesday, 16th Oct. 3-30 p.m.	20th Oct.	21st Oct.	23rd Oct.	1st Nov.	7th Nov.
 HILDEBRAND	Thursday, 15th Nov. 3-0 p.m.	18th Nov.	19th Nov.	21st Nov.	30th Nov.	6th Dec.
London Passengers will be advised of the hour of the connecting train from London when their tickets are issued.						

Booth Line sailing schedule (*Birthplace collection*)

Leixois 21st Nov 1924

Dear Sir Edward,

Very many thanks for your kind wishes for a pleasant voyage, it was very good of you for remembering me.

Our Mr. Good came home with us last voyage and is now in England, he was seeing us off on Tuesday last.

I hope you are keeping A. I. and will be making another trip with us shortly.

Yours Sincerely
J. Maddrell³⁴

In 1928 Henry Wood was considering going on the same cruise, and wrote to Elgar to ask about it. He replied:

³⁴ EB letter 2359, 21 November 1924.

My dear Henry:

I am sorry your letter has been so long unanswered, I have been away.

I made the cruise in 1924 [*sic*]; I chose it because the accommodation is reserved throughout & there is no worry about booking a return passage. I found the whole thing well done; the Booths do everything well; I liked the Hildebrand as I do not care for the gigantic liners; being a good sailor the smaller ships suit me best. The Hildebrand is 7000 tons. There are insects to any extent; some one has said 'there are 20,000 varieties some of which sting & some of which bite & many do both'. I took reasonable care & was not stung or bitten once!³⁵

I wanted a quiet restful time & had it. You probably have plans of the ship; I had a cabin de luxe No. 2. If you should think further of the cruise I shall be delighted to tell you anything more. I have a map or two & such things which I would gladly send you.

Best regards to Lady Wood & to you

Yours sincerely
[Edward Elgar]³⁶

... and in 1932 Elgar heard from David Colville-Stewart, whose attempts at growing tomatoes had proved no more successful than his writings.

Dear Sir Edward,

You will remember your trip up the Amazon some years ago and that you were successful in winning the Sweep on the Day's run, by selecting the number of the page of the book you were reading. I happened to be the fellow-voyager who sold you that ticket!

Now, Sir, I have had very trying times since then, and am now connected with life assurance.

At your present age, and in all the circumstances of the Share markets when investments are yielding small returns and their Capital Value is being reduced by conversions, etc, it has occurred to me that it would be a very sound transaction for you to purchase an

annuity.

This would yield you at 75½ (exactly to-day)

£162-6/2

for each £1000 of purchase money and could be depended upon to never vary or be irregular in payments, or cause any other worrying annoyance; but on the contrary, you would know for certain that your income would be regularly paid to your Bankers, either yearly, half-yearly or quarterly, at your choice, for the whole of your life.

Whenever you might be travelling, your mind would be free from financial anxiety – your income would be definite and secure.

Please let me know when it would best suit you for me to call.

Yours faithfully,

D. Colvillet.³⁷

Martin Bird is the editor of Elgar's collected correspondence, Edward's and Alice's diaries and 'An Elgarian Who's Who'. He also edited the Elgar Society Journal from 2010 until 2016.

35 not true: Elgar's diary entry for 16 December 1923, the day the *Hildebrand* sailed from Pará, reads '(Stings)'

36 draft, 8 February 1928, EB Letter Book 227.

37 EB letter 4546, 2 December 1932.

BOOK REVIEWS

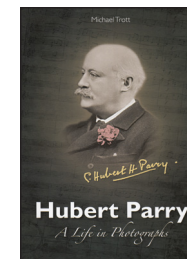
Michael Trott: *Hubert Parry – A Life in Photographs*

Brewin Books, 2018

1918 marks the hundredth anniversary of Parry's death, and so this handsome and well-produced volume of photographs is a fitting memorial. I hope the centenary of Debussy's death doesn't totally overshadow Parry, which seems to be the case in the musical press at the moment. Michael Trott is a well-known and distinguished member of the Elgar Society, and his Elgarian research and writings, and also the fact that he lives in Gloucestershire, make him a fitting person to present this book. He acknowledges his debt to Jerrold Northrop Moore's earlier *Elgar: A Life in Photographs* (OUP – long out of print) and his volume bears certain similarities to that earlier photographic record of a great composer. Beautifully produced photographs throughout Parry's life are complemented by brief comments putting them into perspective, each double page being a different 'chapter' about his life, relationships, professional duties and so on. This was not the volume for a detailed analysis of the music, but the major works are included as the life progresses.

Parry was a generous colleague and helped Elgar in that composer's early career. He was not without criticism though – he thought *The Music Makers* of 1912 'poor stuff' – but Elgar in return regarded Parry with the greatest respect and admiration, and never forgot the kindnesses that Parry had shown him. Reading this book reminded me again of the gulf that separated the two men, despite their warm personal relationship. Parry was born into wealth and grew up on a country estate in Gloucestershire with servants, and all the advantages that Elgar never had. Seemingly effortless progress following his father's footsteps through Eton and Oxford, and then study abroad in Germany. Then came academic posts at the Royal College of Music, Oxford University and finally Directorship at the Royal College of Music. A real 'establishment' figure, again contrasting with Elgar's struggles for recognition and belief that the 'Establishment' was something that he would never be a part of, despite his knighthood, OM, and numerous other honours and decorations. Parry moved easily through this *milieu*, Elgar, the son of a tradesman, didn't. Photographs of the two have some striking similarities – both nattily dressed with full Edwardian moustache, and yet Parry looks at ease, benevolent, patrician, compared to Elgar's wary, reserved and guarded expressions.

And yet, Parry's dignified gentlemanly appearance, a prosperous country squire to his fingertips, hid some remarkable surprises. Throughout his life he was a keen sportsman and athlete, excelling at football, skating, swimming, the Eton Wall game, riding – all done with much gusto and indeed recklessness. Later in life he was a keen sailor, owning his own yacht and



88 pp

ISBN 9781858585758

never happier than when buffeted by terrifying seas. He was a radical thinker, an early supporter of the Suffragette movement, and his Liberal thinking certainly set him apart from the conventional academic of the day. His home life with his wife and two children was happy, and he was highly regarded as a teacher, lecturer and a good and kind colleague to those working with him at the College as well as people in humbler stations of life.

But the reason we remember Parry is not because he was a kind-hearted man and teacher. It is because he was a composer, and it is suggested his very strict and moral outlook on life, making it difficult for him to enjoy sensuous pleasures, have actually stood in the way of his reaching the highest ranks of composers. He spent much time on his 'Ethical Cantatas' designed to improve man's desire for a religious and humble life, and are rarely performed now, as are his large-scale oratorios and much of his orchestral music. His orchestration certainly lacked Elgar's flair (compare their orchestrations of Parry's *Jerusalem*), and maybe Elgar's lack of musical academic training, and his nervy, more spontaneous personality, was a better grounding for a great composer than Parry's moral, inhibited persona. But Parry certainly touched greatness more than once. *Blest Pair of Sirens*, *I was Glad*, some of the songs and unaccompanied part-songs, and even some of the early chamber music, stand out as excellent works, with a dignity and sincerity that will surely secure their survival. I strongly recommend this attractive and informative book, the photographs therein capturing beautifully the atmosphere of that heady time in British music.

Barry Collett

CD REVIEWS

Edward Elgar, Violin Concerto in B minor, Op 61 Max Bruch, Violin Concerto No 1 in G minor, Op 26

Rachel Barton Pine, Violin
BBC Symphony Orchestra
Andrew Litton



Avie

AV2375

This is the second recording of Elgar's concerto made for the Avie label: the other being a fascinating performance by the French violinist Philippe Griffin under the reliable and sensitive direction of the much-missed Vernon Handley (Avie 2091). So here we have another non-British violinist taking up this particular cudgel (or rather a 17th century Amati), the American Rachel Barton Pine. She was unknown to me until I heard this recording. Born in Chicago in 1974 she showed an early promise winning competitions such as the J S Bach International Violin Competition. In 1995 she suffered an appalling accident when she was dragged beneath a train. Her Violin became entangled in the remotely controlled doors and she chose to hang on to her instrument – at the cost of her leg!

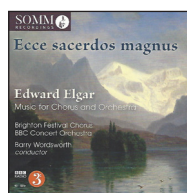
She dedicates the recording 'to the memory of a musical hero and generous friend, Sir Neville Marriner' with whom she was to make this recording but he died shortly before the sessions. Barton Pine, in her excellent notes for the booklet, makes the point that W H Reed was Sir Neville's teacher and that she was 'especially excited by the forthcoming recording session': a sort of laying on of hands for the future. Happily that great Elgarian and Society medallist Andrew Litton stepped in at short notice and provides an experienced and committed support for the soloist in this beautiful recording. In the accompanying booklet there is a joyful photograph of Barton Pine, Litton and producer Andrew Keener listening to a play back – testament to the satisfactory nature of the sessions.

To the Bruch first. This is an excellent coupling with the Elgar; the evergreen Bruch attracting, I hope, new listeners to the Elgar. Somehow, this is a work that continues to give me pleasure no matter how many times I hear it but its popularity can mean that there are more than enough routine recordings around. This is not one of those with a clear understanding between Barton Pine, Litton and excellent BBC Symphony Orchestra. Both soloist and conductor are attentive to the varying dynamics as can be heard, say, before and after Cue F in the adagio and at Cue K in the finale. The balance between soloist and the orchestra is a lesson on how recordings like this should be managed (it was made in the BBC's Maida Vale No 1 studio). In other words I loved it! Readers of this review will, I appreciate, be more interested in the Elgar recording which has all the benefits of the above which means I can concentrate on the performance.

This is, of course, one of the most demanding of concertos even in a recording where breaks can be taken during the course of the various sessions. To me Barton Pine more than rises to the challenges. She is technically brilliant and seems ‘in tune’ with Elgar’s world; understanding how to balance Elgar’s melodies with the virtuoso requirements of this big work. I have no hesitation in recommending this disc but it may help to pick out a few reasons why listeners should have it in their collection. The long opening tutti demonstrates Litton’s understanding of Elgar’s dynamics and the ebb and flow of his unique world so that when the balance is critical say at four bars after Cue 2 we can hear everything and when the violin enters on the end of a horn phrase it all sounds wonderfully natural as if all involved had been playing together for years. Then comes the second subject, the playing of which almost breaks the heart. In the *andante* the pace is just right (never veering in the direction of an *adagio*). Again the violin emerges from the ensemble, Elgar’s scoring always suggesting a just visible veil between the listener and the performers and that is what we get here.

Barton Pine is more than up to the demands of the accompanied cadenza (beautifully balanced) and what she calls the ‘whirlingly fast music’ that opens the *allegro molto*. This is a long movement (20 minutes here) but it does not drag and the move from the cadenza allows one to anticipate the ending without it becoming rushed. When the breaks go on at Cue 115 this is not a drag but a wonderful way of moving to the glorious end: ‘the noble and dramatic music that could only have been written by Elgar’ as Barton Pine says. Vernon Handley felt this was the greatest of all Violin Concertos and in performances like this we can hear exactly what he meant.

Andrew Neill



SOMM
CD 267

Elgar: Ecce sacerdos magnus (1888)
Te Deum and Benedictus (op 34) (1897)
O harken Thou (op 64) (1911)
Psalm 48: Great is the Lord (op 67) (1912)
Psalm 29: Give unto the Lord (op 74) (1914)
Spanish Serenade (op 23) (1892)
Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands (op27) (1895)

Brighton Festival Chorus
 BBC Concert Orchestra
 Barry Wordsworth

Well, here is a real treat! Seven works, hardly known in their orchestral dress and one world premiere, performed with a passion and commitment that is truly uplifting. *Ecce sacerdos magnus* is Elgar’s last work for St George’s Catholic Church in Worcester, and was written to celebrate the visit of the Bishop of Birmingham. It has had a few recordings, all with organ, but this is its first recording with the composer’s orchestration, and what a difference it makes. Suddenly, what was a pleasant enough church anthem is transformed

into a mini- masterpiece, the stately rhythmic tread, sudden blossomings of sonority and the depth of orchestral sound point very obviously to what was to come.

The splendid *Te Deum and Benedictus* was written for Hereford Cathedral in 1897. G R Sinclair, the organist there who had commissioned it, proclaimed ‘it is very, very modern, but I think it will do’. With hindsight this seems rather an odd judgement. ‘Very modern’ it is not, but it bursts into life with a vigour and exuberance that must have startled the sedate Hereford audience. The *Te Deum* ends with music of quiet contemplation which is carried on in the *Benedictus*, although the music of the *Te Deum* returns to end the work with jubilation. Throughout the Brighton Festival Chorus is excellent, with impeccably clear diction and complete assurance, whether in the contemplative sections or the richly scored dramatic ones. And although in no way overlooking the fine singing of the sopranos and altos, it is a real pleasure to hear such full-hearted singing from tenors and basses as here. As so often in Elgar’s choral works the ear is constantly caught and arrested by the orchestral detail. Was anybody writing music of such rich detail at that time in this country, or, I ’m tempted to add, anywhere else? The trombone section has a field day in this work, and there is some lovely solo oboe playing.

O Harken Thou, along with the *Coronation March (op 65)* was composed for King George V’s coronation in 1911. Heaven knows what the notoriously cloth-eared King made of it, if indeed he ever heard it. The intensely dark colouring of the March and the mystical, richly chromatic depth of the Anthem, seem curiously out of keeping with Coronation festivities. Never rising above *mf*, and often *ppp*, it receives a beautifully still, rapt performance here.

It is perhaps surprising that the Catholic Elgar’s big religious works were written for the Anglican Church. The two Psalm Settings, numbers 29 and 48, show Elgar at the height of his powers. Again they have been recorded several times with organ, but only twice with orchestra. Although Winchester Cathedral Choir with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra recorded them on the old Argo label, the obvious point of comparison (and with the *Te Deum and Benedictus*) is with versions by the late Richard Hickox and the London Symphony Chorus. Fine though they are, they were recorded almost thirty years ago, and it is Elgar Society sponsorship that is responsible for these modern recordings. The ample acoustic of Watford Colosseum is shown at its best in these festive works, and Neil Varley and his BBC recording team are to be congratulated in the cleanness and richness of the sound. Both chorus and orchestra are vividly recorded with no loss of clarity in Elgar’s often complex writing. Again the men are splendid in the opening expansively rolling phrases of *Psalm 48*. The middle section ‘for lo, the kings assembled themselves’ is nervy and anxious, but in the short baritone solo the singer is, inexplicably, uncredited in the booklet and on the CD case. In fact it is the Dutch baritone Henk Neven, who went on to record some of Elgar’s orchestral songs, to be released by SOMM in the summer. I would have thought the Chorus Master

also warranted a mention. The ending of this Psalm is Elgar at his grandest and most *nobilmente*, and this same mood opens *Psalm 29*. Here the orchestra comes into its own at the most descriptive passages – ‘the God of Glory thundereth’ certainly does here, as does the dramatic passage describing ‘the voice of God breaketh the Cedars’ but it all dies down to a peaceful and reflective ending, ‘the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace’.

The CD is completed by two non-religious works dating from the 1890s. In fact the four pre-Enigma (1899) works on this disc convince me yet again that Elgar’s genius was flaring well before the Enigma Variations arrived on the scene. The gentle *Spanish Serenade (Stars of the summer night)* does not sound particularly Spanish, apart from the tinklings of a tambourine, but did Elgar ever write a more beautifully melting phrase as ‘She sleeps, my lady sleeps!’? Incidentally, has anyone ever written a thesis on the strange Spanish influences in his music that cropped up throughout his life, especially as it was a country he never visited? Might it account for the recent revival of interest in his music in that country?

The CD ends with one of Elgar’s happiest and most buoyant works, *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*, a momento of his and his wife’s happy holidays in Bavaria in the 1890s. Alice’s words and Elgar’s music echo the vigorous dance rhythms of the region as well as capturing the atmosphere of high mountain pastures. Barry Wordsworth, no stranger to Elgar’s music, captures an ideal tempo for the first movement, a buoyant swing instead of the usual scramble. The tempo marking is *Allegretto*, which allows the words to come through clearly (although all texts are included in the booklet). The second movement’s description of False Love brings the only darker moments of the work, but it is a wistful remembrance rather than a deep passion. It is nicely contrasted with the well-known *Lullaby*, with gently floating violins over the beautifully sung alto line. ‘On the Alm’ brings out the best in the men’s chorus again, with distant horn echoing across the valleys, and in the Finale Wordsworth sets a cracking pace for this tale of a shooting match which the Elgars witnessed. I had generally thought this the weakest of the six movements, but the exuberance and joyfulness of the performance has made me change my mind. The big tune, rolled out in grandeur at the end, completely convinced me! Throughout this work there is an open-air freshness, gaiety and charm that is unique in Elgar’s larger works. Some of it was recaptured three years later in the more pastoral sections of *Caractacus*, but that mood largely disappeared as his fame grew and demands on his time took him away from the countryside he loved.

A surprising bonus track on the CD includes the opening of a 1949 issue of the *Benedictus* from Haydn’s *Harmoniemesse*, the main theme of which is echoed in Elgar’s *Ecce sacerdos magnus*. It may have been performed on the same occasion, but certainly Elgar knew it. This old Munich recording takes it at a speed which points very closely the Elgar connection. The tempo marking is an unlikely *Allegro molto*, which the great Haydn scholar H C Robbins Landon points out could be a misreading of *Allegro moderato*, which in Haydn’s day would not have been the breathless scramble that is usual today.

To sum up, a CD full of music that is too little known, but showing the composer at his best, with superb and committed choral singing from the Brighton Festival Chorus, an excellent and full-bodied contribution from the BBC Concert Orchestra, and directed by Barry Wordsworth with complete assurance and attention to Elgarian detail. Recommended with the greatest enthusiasm – a CD which ought to be on every Elgar lovers’ shelves.

Barry Collett

Short Orchestral Works

Air de Ballet

Sevillaña (Scène Espagnole), Op 7

Salut d’amour, Op 12

Three Bavarian Dances, Op 27

The Dance

Lullaby

The Marksman

Minuet, Op 21

Chanson de Nuit, Op 15 No 1

Chanson de Matin, Op 15 No 2

Sérénade Lyrique – Mélodie

Three Characteristic Pieces, Op 10

Mazurka

Serenade Mauresque

Introduction to Gavotte

Gavotte

May Song

Canto Popolare

Pleading, Op 48*

Carissima

Rosemary

Mina

Falstaff, Op 68 – two interludes*

‘Jack Falstaff, page to the Duke of Norfolk’

‘Gloucestershire: Shallow’s Orchard’

*Charles Mutter, Violin

BBC Concert Orchestra

David Lloyd-Jones



Dutton

CDLX 7354

This is simple: ‘Buy this recording’. Recently a couple of Society members asked me why is every review by me published in the journal usually enthusiastic or at least favourable. My response was that I do not believe it is up to me to pull apart a recording by a professional musician or musicians when I am, at best, an informed amateur. Therefore, I decline the opportunity to vilify even those whose attempts to make a worthy recording end in failure

and will hand the CD to someone else. On the other hand, for example, although the Donald Fraser orchestrations of Elgar's music is not for me I would not have written off a recording which was otherwise a credit to all involved [Avie AV2362]. So, this is another favourable review! In fact 'favourable' is unfair – this is a wonderful recording that should be owned by all lovers of Elgar's music and devotees of light music of which Elgar was the supreme master. This disc, sponsored by the Society, is money well spent and us members should be thrilled by the end result.

The booklet alone is worth the money: David Lloyd-Jones's beautifully written, clear notes guide the listener through the music, its background and what he had to do as editor. More about this can be read in the Complete Edition of the Short Orchestral Works of which Lloyd-Jones was the editor; but what comes with the disc is more than sufficient for the average listener.

The disc begins with the *Air de Ballet* from 1881. What a surprise awaits the listener as the 23 year old self-taught composer creates his first orchestral work. This is not juvenilia, it is sophisticated music making from a composer whose putative skill is caught here as it was in the recording of the Powick music a few years ago under the direction of Barry Collett [SOMMCD252]. On this disc we can hear how he developed over 52 years, his influences and the stirrings of that individual voice that became so distinctive although I doubt the word 'Elgar' would come to mind when listening to the *Air de Ballet*. Its secret lies in its affinity with the Powick Asylum music and the scoring, including 'piano obbligato' and euphonium. This, as Lloyd-Jones points out, 'gives us the clue'. It is charming: Pieced together by Lloyd-Jones and performed with grace and vigour on this CD.

There are other wonderful surprises too. I was particularly taken by the deeply moving and romantic 'reworking' of the *Canto Popolare* from *In the South*. As Lloyd-Jones tells us the key has been transposed upwards from C to F thus allowing the violins to project the melody. It is the scoring that is wonderful the woodwind and horns turning the serene tune (originally never louder than *piano*) into something rather magnificent. It is now a sophisticated piece that has qualities that were never even implied in the original! Then there is the astonishing *Introduction to Gavotte*. Somehow, this somewhat overblown piece (reminding me of Amilcare Ponchielli's *Dance of the hours*) segues into the Gavotte and we are away. Lloyd-Jones explains all in his notes. We also have another version of *Pleading* this time with a violin solo. Listen, too, to the beautifully articulated performances of the *Bavarian Highland Dances*. The joy the Elgar's enjoyed during their numerous visits to the region is obvious from these happy tracks. From the innocence of 1881 the disc (more or less) ends with *Mina*. Elgar's last composition, dedicated to the great Fred Gaisberg, is subtle and sophisticated employing the celeste for the only time in his life. He never completed the orchestration which was quickly finished by James Ainslie Murray so that a recording could be rushed to Elgar's bedside on 13 February 1934. This is the first time, since then, that the Murray completion has been recorded. All other versions have been that scored by Haydn Wood.

Those with SACD players will be able to listen to the two *Falstaff Interludes* as arranged by Elgar for small orchestra although why these could not be included for all listeners I do not understand. Including these tracks the total time of the CD is 47 seconds over 80 minutes. I recently reviewed an 83 minute CD and my player is not for SACD discs! The recording is transparent allowing Elgar's instrumentation to come through clearly. If I have a criticism it is that the string tone is slightly metallic, but that may be my old hearing! The quality of the playing is excellent and the affection the members of the BBC Concert Orchestra feel for this music is palpable: you feel all realised they were involved in something rather special. It is to David Lloyd-Jones though that we should be most grateful. His dedicated and, at times, challenged editing of the music and his perceptive conducting (always allowing the music to speak for itself) places us all in his debt.

Andrew Neill

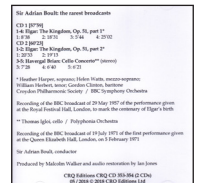
Elgar: The Kingdom

Heather Harper (sop); Helen Watts (mezzo-sop);
William Herbert (tenor); Gordon Clinton (baritone)
Croydon Philharmonic Society
BBC Symphony Orchestra
Sir Adrian Boult

Havergal Brian: Cello Concerto

Thomas Igloi
Polyphonia Orchestra
Sir Adrian Boult

Sir Adrian Boult considered *The Kingdom* a greater work than *The Dream of Gerontius*, a viewpoint with which I'm inclined to agree. He recorded it for EMI in 1968, and although I have four other recordings of the work on my shelves it is still my favourite version. In 1957, the centenary of Elgar's birth, the BBC broadcast all three of the major oratorios, and this new CD issue is taken from the broadcast of May 1957, of the live performance at the Royal Festival Hall. My first worry, given this provenance, was for the quality of the recorded sound. But I must confess to being pleasantly surprised. Of course there is not the spacious acoustic, depth or bloom of sound, that one would expect from a modern digital recording. But the sound is full and rich, and if there is not so much space around the sound picture, it is by no means as restricted as I had imagined it would be. Boult launches the Prelude on its majestic way, and one can hear quite clearly details of orchestration that can be hidden – flecks of cor anglais tone, or the harps, for example. Boult also allows himself more rhythmic ebb and flow, possible in a live performance more than a recording session.



CRQ Editions

CRQ CD353-354
(2 CDs)

The first entry of the chorus shows the Croydon choir to be in excellent form, firm and resonant, completely assured with clear diction. The men's chorus 'Thou, Lord, which knowest' is quite beautifully sung, with its background of hazy string tone, and all rise to an impassioned chorus 'O ye Priests' which closes Part One.

All four soloists were stalwarts of the oratorio circuit at this time. The two ladies, Heather Harper and Helen Watts are excellent throughout, and the short second scene 'At the Beautiful Gate' shows them to good advantage, their voices blending naturally in this wonderful scene. Scene three 'Pentecost' is the heart of the work. Again the chorus is excellent, and moving, in the Mystic Chorus 'The Spirit of the Lord' and rises to the grandeur of 'He who walketh upon the wings of the wind' – surely one of the great Elgarian moments. Peter's monologue 'Ye Men of Judea' is a test for any singer. Gordon Clinton has a big voice and uses it musically, but I do prefer John Shirley-Quirk in Boulton's later recording. Clinton occasionally is rhythmically unsteady and snatches at phrases, and a noticeable beat in his voice is apparent at times. But the scene ends with splendid assurance in the great final chorus.

I knew nothing of the tenor, William Herbert, but he is rather splendid throughout, with a ringing tone and accuracy that was a pleasure to hear. The tenor and bass duet in Part Four beginning 'Unto you that fear His name' is sung with operatic fervour. I once read that this was the most conventional and uninspired part of the work. One wonders what an odd judgement this is, when it is performed like this. Heather Harper rises to the occasion in Mary's great soliloquy 'The Sun Goeth Down', another great highpoint in Elgar's vocal works.

I would not swap my EMI recording of Boulton's *The Kingdom* for this, but it is a valuable adjunct to that recording. There is a palpable sense of the excitement and frisson of a live performance (only an occasional cough points to this) and although Boulton's perception of the work remains similar, he is certainly freer and more expansive at times here. When one considers that in 1957 *The Kingdom* was very rarely performed and that it must have been an unfamiliar score to most people involved (except Boulton) it is amazing that the performance is so assured and, indeed, inspired. The Croydon Chorus sings wonderfully – listen to the hushed sounds of The Lord's Prayer in Part Five – the BBC Symphony Orchestra revels in Elgar's brilliant scoring, and the soloists are a fine team. I was very pleased to hear this historic performance.

Havergal Brian's Cello Concerto seems an odd bedfellow to couple with the Elgar. In his early days, Brian's critical writings reveal real enthusiasm for Elgar's music, although I can hear little influence of it in Brian's own music – or any other composer's, come to that. This recording is from a live broadcast in 1971 of Brian's Cello Concerto, played by the short lived Hungarian cellist Thomas Igloi (he died at 29) with Boulton and the Polyphonia Orchestra (who were they?).

This was the premiere of the Cello Concerto. Brian was 95, and was to die the following year. I often have a job to get on with this composer's gritty and uncompromising style, but I was quite surprised by the perky and

playful humour of the first movement, with its attractive woodwind writing. Thereafter I was lost. I have no idea what the second and third movements are about, no doubt my fault rather than the composer's. The finale, starting with some rather heavy-footed high spirits, winds down to a solemn and quiet ending. But this double CD set is certainly worth investigation. Incidentally, the packaging is rather basic. There is no booklet, texts, or information, only the performers and venues listed on the front cover.

Barry Collett

Cello Concerto op.85; Sospiri op.70; Piano Quintet op.84

Marie-Elisabeth Hecker, cello
Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, Edo de Waart
Carolyn Widmann and David McCarroll, violin; Pauline Sachse, viola;
Martin Helmchen, piano



At first glance, the coupling of a symphonic work and a piece of chamber music seems surprising, though both are neighbours by genesis and opus number. This combination is the conceptual idea of the young German cellist Marie-Elisabeth Hecker, thus revealing a hidden principle of Elgar's musical poetic art. *Sospiri* (in Sir Edward's version with solo cello) peps up the CD to 70 minutes.

Hecker's chamber music partners group around her husband, pianist Martin Helmchen; her orchestral partner is the more than reliable Antwerp Symphony Orchestra under the authoritative baton of Edo de Waart. Marie-Elisabeth Hecker, in her early thirties, shows herself as backbone and central figure of this recording. In her booklet interview, the sympathetic musician talks about her first experiences with Elgar's music: his swansong for cello had been the first major concerto she studied as a teenager, and a recording of the quintet was the permanent background music while doing her homework!

Prematurely, I confess that listening to this recording is pure pleasure. Marie-Elisabeth Hecker's playing is as smouldering as her reading is accurate, delivering a fascinating, sensitive and – *sit veniat verbo* – feminine approach. The accordic portal of the 'nobilmente'-motto has an intensive impact, the sarabande-like *moderato* in 9/8 is marvellously sung out and every quaver subtly vibrated – a virtue of sensibility, as other cellists, alas, often don't vibrate the quavers following the crotchet, thus dropping out of the melodic line. Hecker observes each of Elgar's expression marks (such as accents and *tenuti*) most fastidiously in order to structure the widespread melodic line like an expressive monologue. William H. Reed testified the huge significance of this nearly endless melody for the composer's self-conception: visiting Elgar on his deathbed, the composer was humming this melody with the remark: 'If ever you're walking on the Malvern Hills and hear that, don't be frightened – it's only me.'

Alpha 283

ALPHA-CLASSICS.COM

In the scurrying *Allegro molto* of the second movement, Hecker's performance bewitches by the effortless precision of the elves' spells; enchanting is the dual change of *largamente* and *a tempo* (rehearsal figure 22 / [track] <2> at 2'15"; fig. 27 / <2> at 3'15"). About the range of freedom and the degree of permissiveness, Elgar himself gave a compelling example in his own recording with Beatrice Harrison.

The *Adagio* is convincing by Hecker's inward singing, and again, her playing is fascinating in every chased detail. Take for example fig. 36 / <3> at 1': she changes the intensity of vibrato and the colour of sound on the second quaver under the ligature (i.e. the first beat in each new bar) and attributes thereby another shade to every slurred note according to the harmonic progression in the underlying orchestra part – a moment of heavenly intensity!

Summing all this up, the soloist embodies Elgar's musical conception in every respect, not only concerning virtuosity and sensibility, but also in profoundness of perception. Anyway, it appears to me as if female interpreters were the most captivating interpreters of Sir Edward's intentions: I do not only think of Beatrice Harrison, but of the two most intensive recordings by Sol Gabetta and – of course! – the interpretation of the unforgettable Jacqueline Du Pré. The cover photo of Marie-Elisabeth Hecker seems to be a tribute to this unsurpassable role model: an image of musical exuberance with blowing blonde hair.

The accompanying Antwerp Symphony Orchestra fulfils their task far more than decently; conductor Edo de Waart steers with restrained and leaves the soloist all necessary latitude, but makes the orchestra show a great game in their virtuoso passages with dazzling woodwinds, compact brass and sensitively singing strings.

One of my favourite spots in this recording is in the last movement: the humorous, nearly grotesque caricature of its beginning: at fig. 59 / <4> at 4'50" the soloist plays in unison with the colleagues of the low register, nine bars later (fig. 60) joined in *fortissimo* by a trombone *glissando* and a buzzing second bassoon! With a twinkle in his eye, Elgar turns out to be a funny man and joker, a more hidden layer of his complex emotional structure, so often posing in his 'nobilmente' manner or captured in melancholic mood.

The recording of the piano quintet shows the same degree of intensity and musical accuracy. To the same extent I am delighted by the delicacy of the slightest seismographic vibrations in dynamics and agogics. Set mostly in a chorus, the strings form an impeccable quartet, and pianist Martin Helmchen's flexibility has to be admired by virtue of his constant change of attitude: he is the foundation in rhythm and harmony, acts as accompanist and has to switch blazingly fast into a soloist's role.

Right from the beginning, the listener is woven into the dreamy character when the musical germ cell, a piano melody spread over two octaves, is virtually hiding under the predominant rhythmic impulse in the strings. Even after subsequent listening, I am still going into raptures about the details of this reading: the soaring arabesque in the cello (fig. 1 / <6> at 0'40") or the hovering dream sequence at fig. 9 (<4> at 4'56", parallel fig. 23 / <4>

at 10'53"). Nevertheless, the ensemble can also show sonorous power, for example in a passage alluding to Brahms' intricate setting (fig. 2 / <6> at 1'17").

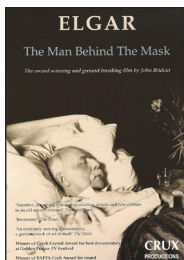
Next comes the *Adagio*, an elegiac smile through the tears, beautifully introduced by the viola and leadong to a big dramatic outburst from where the movement falls back into peaceful resignation. The final *Andante/Allegro* is based on motifs of the preceding movements, which appear in a surprising new context or shape. Examples are the waltz allusions (fig. 58 / <8> at 5'40") transformed from a theme of the first movement (fig. 6 / <6> at 3'09") by the wonderful violinists Carolin Widmann und David MacCarroll in the bliss of Viennese thirds.

The coupling of cello concerto and piano quintet, both works from 1918/19, reveals a subliminal principle of Elgar's later period, namely the cyclic modelling of a composition consisting of a few interlinking themes deriving from each other, or the gearing of some key motifs. This technique underlines Elgar's associative creativity, an operation that leads to the specific density and emotional coherence of his writing. In the closed form of the quintet as a work of chamber music, Elgar is able to act out this playing with motifs to a much higher degree than in the necessarily more massive statics of a symphonic concerto.

At this point Elgar shares again – now in a structural dimension – a common ground with his paragon Johannes Brahms, described by Arnold Schoenberg as 'developing variation': in the final *Allegro* of the quintet, Elgar resumes smallest melodic or rhythmic particles, makes them turn and rotate and examines the potential of their variability, thus creating a sense of déjà vu. Elgar proves to be the English representative of a poetic principle that roots in German Romanticism, conceptually adapted by poetically skilled composers like Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms. Out of the haze of pre-consciousness appear themes and motifs, that circle around and materialise in the quintet's first two movements before they lose their shape and evaporate in the finale. In spite of all artificial skill, this cyclic operation appears as a vegetative process, containing an organic growth and decay. This is sensitively empathized by the musicians of this recording and transformed in genuine rendition to Elgar's character and individuality.

At the watershed of modernism, Edward Elgar is undoubtedly based in the 19th century; he never attempted to be an avant-garde visionary. On the other hand, Elgar is not backward looking, but aesthetically and stylistically at the height of his time. In 1902, no less a colleague than Richard Strauss had congenially labelled Elgar 'the first English progressivist', an accolade of professional and international approval (and thus anticipating the knighthood Elgar would be awarded two years later by his King Edward VII). The present recording proves the quality and stylistic height of Elgar's music in a most compelling and beguiling way.

Michael Schwalb



CRUX Productions
CRUXGZ002DVD

DVD REVIEWS

ELGAR – The Man Behind The Mask

John Bridcut's film on the composer's life and music

Produced 2009-10. First Broadcast on BBC TV in November 2010

Colour, English Language DVD in NTSC format playable in all regions

[90mins approx.]

From my childhood I have always been an Elgar devotee. As a young man I was scorned for it. 'Why? His music is passé,' they said. I went to a performance of Elgar's *The Kingdom* at London's Royal Albert Hall in 1957, the year of the centenary of the composer's birth. I can honestly say that there seemed to be more performers than people in the audience.

I recall all this because things were about to change due mainly to Ken Russell's celebrated TV film portrait of Elgar. Another side of Elgar and his music was revealed other than the jingoistic – the recessionary aspects as well as the processional. From then on the composer began to take his rightful place as a major voice in Late Romantic music of the 19th/20th century, increasingly so until his true worth began to be recognised across the globe.

Bridcut expands Russell's original film significantly in appreciation of the man and the music. His title *The Man Behind the Mask* is apt because of Elgar's preoccupation to present an image of himself as a confident, successful aristocratic-like figure, a leading light of the realm, belying his more humble beginnings as the Catholic son of a tradesman in provincial Worcester. His marriage to Alice only served to reinforce this attitude. The reality of the bi-polar man given to depression, thoughts of suicide, extremes of mood, and prickliness of character is well presented with revealing comments by his biographers, particularly Michael Kennedy. How interesting were contributors' comments when asked 'Would you have liked to have met him?'

Much revelatory material about his relationship with women particularly his 'Windflower' Alice Stuart-Wortley and his late flowering affair with Vera Hockman is presented although I would have liked some new light shed on the early relationship he had with Helen Weaver the local Worcester girl whose family packed her off to New Zealand to escape him. Just as interesting, but so very sad, is the discovery about how much Elgar's dalliances hurt his wife.

The musical excerpts are well-chosen and very varied, illustrating Elgar's wide ranging facility and again they are revelatory particularly when presented and illustrated by David Owen Norris at the piano. The choice to include Judas's Aria from *The Apostles* was inspired. How original; one wonders how an early 20th century audience would have appreciated such daring?

Of course, one may not agree with the choice of excerpts in every case. For example, I was very appreciative of the inclusion of *The Music Makers*

but I would have gone for the dramatic and emotional heart (for me anyway) of the work when the mezzo-soprano sings 'But on one man's soul it hath broken, A light that doth not depart; And his look, or a word he hath spoken, wrought flame in another man's heart'.

Clearly a 90 minute documentary cannot hope to cover all the ground. But if Bridcut ever wants to revise and expand this marvellous film maybe he might include music from *The Kingdom* and *The Spirit of England* for instance, the latter regarded by Jerrold Northrop Moore as Elgar's 'sleeper'. The choice of contributors is well considered; each one makes a valuable contribution. Heartily recommended to all Elgarians. This is a profound examination of the man and his music; one that viewers can return to again and again and still discover fascinating detail.

Contributors include: Sir Colin Davis, Sir Mark Elder, Michael Kennedy, Jerrold Northrop Moore, Anthony Payne, Vladimir Ashkenazy, David Owen Norris and Natalia Luis-Bassa.

Live performances of excerpts from works: *The Sanguine Fan*, *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*, *The Dream of Gerontius*, *Enigma Variations*, *Dream Children*, *Caractacus*, *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 3*; *Deep in My Soul*, *Ave Maria*, *The Apostles*, *Is she not passing fair?*, *Improvisation 4*, *Falstaff*; Symphony No. 1, *Enina*, Violin Concerto, Symphony No. 2, *The Music Makers*, *Sospiri*, *Owls*, Symphony No. 3, *Mina*, *Love's Tempest*.

Musicians taking part include: the BBC Symphony Orchestra (conductor: Edward Gardner) with James Creswell (bass), Janice Watson (soprano), Michael Laird (shofar) and Crouch End festival Chorus; Scola Cantorum of Oxford (conductor: James Burton), Mark Wilde (tenor). And David Owen Norris (piano) who also comments on Elgar's compositions illustrating his points at the piano.

Ian Lace

*Elgar and Jelly d'Aranyi**From Jerrold Northrop Moore*

Christopher Gordon's article based on Elgar and Jelly d'Aranyi uses both inordinate length and indeterminate focus to raise a notion that its subject makes a matter of extensive importance in the composer's life. Mr Gordon seeks to prop up this notion by quoting David Cannadine's strictures on *Edward Elgar: a Creative Life* for not including enough sex. Perhaps my book is light on the sexual side through its pages on the early years, where in the nature of things less evidence survives. But the Cannadine strictures quoted by Mr Gordon show clearly enough that neither of these gentlemen has read my book as far as its account of the Violin Concerto.

Behind this observation stands a principle whose defence is the object of this letter. The only reason to remember and write about such a man as Elgar is the unique expression in his works – not the sexuality he shared with every man and woman not so remembered.

Throughout my working life as a biographer, I have maintained the primacy of creative interest. As an instance of the advantages it can bring, may I recall a little history of which late-comers to Elgar studies will have no knowledge? In my researches for the *Creative Life* after Carice died in 1970, I asked her closest friend and residuary legatee Sybil Russell Wohlfeld whether she would allow me to make a complete transcript of Lady Elgar's diaries. They then reposed (as Sybil herself told me) in a small blue suitcase resting on top of the wardrobe in her guest bedroom, where I slept during visits to her and her husband Henry.

She took some time to consider my request. In the end she agreed to allow the transcript, because she recognised the focus of my interest in the creative side of Elgar's life. Sybil herself was a great destroyer of Elgariana as they moved from house to house (to pursue her schemes for redecoration). Had I shown the bias shared by the two writers whose strictures you have published, it is a fair speculation that she would have refused my request, and that the diaries would not then have survived.

What in fact happened was as follows. Once I had made the transcript, and told her of its immense value to the writing of my book, she asked my advice about where to deposit the diaries themselves. She and I then drove to Worcester with the suitcase. I carried it into the County Record Office, then in St Helen's Church, and left her to make arrangements with the redoubtable and much-loved archivist of that day, Margaret Henderson.

From Andrew Neill, London, and Arthur Reynolds, New Jersey

We write to express surprise at part of Christopher Gordon's long article about Jelly d'Aranyi which you published in the April edition of the Society's Journal. In our view it was marred by his quoting of Sir David Cannadine's vicious and misguided review of Jerrold Northrop Moore's magisterial 1984 biography of *Elgar, A Creative Life*. Through his three works of biography, four volumes of judiciously edited letters and his research into Elgar as a recording artist no person has contributed more to our understanding of Elgar and his music than Dr Moore. It is extraordinary that Dr Moore's scrupulous adherence to scholastic practice should, by implication, be criticised by Cannadine and Gordon. Although much of Mr. Gordon's article is based on Joseph McLeod's 1969 biography of the d'Aranyi sisters the part that affects Elgar is thoroughly researched, and there is additional material. To suggest that there's not enough sex in Dr Moore's book and that in this respect Michael de la Noy does a much better job is laughable as is the suggestion that Elgar engaged in a platonic flirtation with Rosa Burley; her book shows how one-sided was their relationship which led to her disappointment so clearly expressed in the last pages of her manuscript eventually published with the involvement of Frank C. Carruthers.

As for the prospect that Elgar breached the #metoo movement via an act of sexual misconduct with Jelly d'Aranyi this cannot be taken seriously on the evidence. We do not know and never will know what caused d'Aranyi to flee from Severn House "cursing old men." What else could Dr Moore have written? He applied the facts and we should not have expected anything more. We know Jelly d'Aranyi was a flirt and that Elgar was a lonely widower; we also know that they had multiple lunches together both before and after the "cursing [of] old men". We have no evidence to show that anything happened between them apart from the Severn House incident; whatever that was.

As page 1 indicates, the views expressed in the Elgar Society Journal can raise not only interested comment but even controversy. However, with these letters the editor declares the Jelly d'Aranyi debate closed. The essay and the letters are sufficient to inspire a discussion that can be continued individually among scholars and admirers of Elgar's work.

DE NIEUWE GIDS

[MEDE NIEUWE SERIE VAN DE
TWINTIGSTE EEUW EN HET TWEE-
MAANDELIJKSCH TIJDSCHRIFT]
MAANDSCHRIFT VOOR LETTEREN, KUNST,
WETENSCHAP EN WIJSBEGEERTE ∴ ∴ ∴

ONDER REDACTIE VAN: Dr. A. ALETRINO, Dr. H. J. BOEKEN,
LODEWIJK VAN DEYSSEL, Mr. FRANS ERENS, WILLEM KLOOS,
JAC. VAN LOOY, FRANS NETSCHER ∴ ∴ ∴ ∴ ∴ ∴

MEDEWERKERS: ADEL ANCKERSMITH, P. VAN ASSCHE, Dr. F. BASTIAANSE, JOH. H. BEEN, Dr. J. D. BIERENS DE HAAN, Dr. P. BIERENS DE HAAN, H. DE BOER, Dr. J. DE BOER, Dr. P. C. BOUTENS, G. BUSKEN HUET, M. H. VAN CAMPEN, RICHARD DE CNEUDT, Mr. FRANS COENEN Jr., Dr. ALPH. DIEPENBROCK, MARCELLUS EMANTS, Prof. Dr. D. VAN EMBDEN, P. N. VAN EYCK, R. VAN GENDEREN STORT, Mevr. J. GOEKOOP—DE JONGH, F. VAN DER GOES, Mr. G. J. GRASHUIS, HERMAN HEIJERMANS, Dr. HOOGVLIET, J. HORA ADEMA, G. VAN HULZEN, Dr. D. G. JELGERSMA, Prof. Dr. G. JELGERSMA, Dr. J. DE JONG, JAN KALFF, Dr. R. A. KOLLEWIJN, J. KOOPMANS, PROSPER VAN LANGENDONCK, Dr. J. H. LEOPOLD, Mr. H. P. MARCHANT, G. H. MARIUS, H. H. J. MAAS, P. VAN DER MEER, MARIE METZ—KONING, Dr. P. H. VAN MOERKERKEN Jr., L. MORTELMANS, Mr. S. MULLER Izn., FRANS MIJNSSSEN, Chr. NUYS, EDMOND VAN OFFEL, KAREL VAN DEN OEVER, AUGUSTA PEAX, ARY PRINS, Dr. K. H. DE RAAF, E. VAN RAVESTEIN, J. REDDINGIUS, Dr. H. RETHY, GIZA RITSCHL, P. H. RITTER Jr., HERMAN ROBBERS, WILLEM ROYAARDS, ARTHUR VAN SCHENDEL, Dr. J. B. SCHEPERS, JULES SCHÜRMANN, Dr. M. H. J. SCHOENMAEKERS, A. SIMONS—MEES, L. SIMONS, J. STEYNEN, STIJN STREUVELS, JEANNE REYNEKE VAN STUWE, HERMAN TEIRLINCK, Kapt. L. W. J. R. THOMSON, Dr. A. W. TIMMERMAN, Prof. Dr. A. VERMEYLEN, ESTER VAS NUNES, CORN. VETH, Dr. JAN VETH, FRANS VINK, Dr. W. VOGELANG, Prof. Dr. W. VOLGRAFF, Dr. WYNAENDTS FRANCKEN, Mevr. WYNAENDTS FRANCKEN, KAREL VAN DE WOESTIJNE, e. a.

UITGEGEVEN TE 's-GRAVENHAGE DOOR DE
N.V. ELECTR. DRUKKERIJ „LUCTOR ET EMERGO” - MCMXXII

ELGAR VIEWED FROM AFAR

In 1912 the Dutch journal *De Nieuwe Gids* published a long essay on Elgar by the English contributor Richard Streatfeild. The version that appeared in the June 1912 *Musical Times* was a partial reprint from the original article he wrote for the Netherlands.

Alan Tongue and Martin Bird

De Nieuwe Gids. Jaargang 27(1912)

[p. 652]

An English musician: Edward Elgar by R.A. Streatfeild.

Wij hadden het genoegen van den heer R.A. Streatfeild onderstaand artikel voor *De Nieuwe Gids* te ontvangen. Ter introductie voor onze lezers, die den heer Streatfeild niet mochten kennen, diene, dat de heer R.A. Streatfeild, B.A. sinds het jaar 1898 muziek-criticus is van de *Daily Graphic*, en volgens den Hr. de Villiers, (onder-directeur van het Britsch Museum), ‘een autoriteit van beteekenis’. De werken over muziek die hij het licht deed zien, zijn: *Masters of Italian Music; The Opera*; 3e druk in 1907, *Modern Music and Musicians*; en *Händel*. Bezorgd voor de pers werden door hem: George Darley’s *Nepenthe*, Christopher Smart’s *Song to David*, Darley’s *Selected poems*, T.J. Hogg’s *Shelley at Oxford*; en de nagelaten werken van Samuel Butler, den schrijver van ‘Erewhon’; ook vertaalde hij Ibsen’s Lyrische gedichten in het Engelsch.

Redactie N.G.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century we English had almost resigned ourselves to the belief that we were, as our German friends had so often assured us, an ‘unmusical nation’. We could look back, it is true, to a glorious past. We could remind ourselves that in the days of Queen Elizabeth, to go no farther back into antiquity, our composers for the virginals were admittedly the first in Europe, and that our madrigalists were worthy of being compared to the great composers of France, Flanders and Italy. We could point also to the great figure of Purcell, whose genius is admitted by critics of all countries to have been of the first rank. But as regards modern times we

[p. 653]

felt that it was vain to claim equality with the nations of the continent. We had, it is true, composers whom we ourselves honoured, whose music we loved and admired: Parry, whose great choral works are animated by the mighty breath of Haendel and Mendelssohn: Stanford, who gave us symphonies, quartets and cantatas uniting the gentle melancholy of his native Ireland to the form bequeathed by Schumann and Brahms: Sullivan, whose operettas had been the delight of London for more than twenty years. But it was no longer possible to conceal from ourselves the fact that our music had not a cosmopolitan character. We might amuse ourselves as we chose among our insular fogs, but we could not pretend to form a part of the great international confraternity of art.

But the proverb says that it is always darkest before the dawn, and it was at the moment when the hopes of even the most patriotic music-lover in England had sunk almost to zero that a new voice arose, which, if I am not mistaken, is destined to carry the fame of England far afield and to give a new impression of English music to foreign ears.

It would be difficult for me to recall precisely the moment at which I first met the name of Edward Elgar, but I remember very clearly the occasion when I heard his music for the first time. It was at one of those 'Three Choirs' Festivals', which in an epoch of change have retained so much of their intimate and peculiarly English character. The Festival of the Three Choirs is a very ancient institution, dating from the early years of the eighteenth century, when, it is hardly necessary to say, provincial people had far fewer opportunities than they now enjoy of hearing good music, particularly in the West of England, where the three ancient cities of Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester stand like sentinels on the borders of Wales. It was in the year 1724 that the first festival of the Three Choirs took place. The choirs of the three cathedrals joined forces to give a series of sacred concerts in the cathedral of Gloucester. Since then the festivals have taken place every year in turn in one of the three cathedrals. Once in three years the sleepy old cities wake to sudden life. The hotels are full, the dwellers in the city entertain their friends, and from the surrounding districts the

[p. 654]

magnates of the county assemble. The venerable weather-beaten streets - usually so quiet - are full of life and activity. But within the cathedral precincts the busy movement is hushed to silence. There, where the grey towers of the old cathedral rise from the trimly kept greensward, all is peace and tranquillity. The secular elms breathe forth their sacred secrets and the holy stillness is only broken by the cries of the jackdaws which wheel their flight around the pinnacles of the cathedral. Within the church the peace is still more profound. A dim light suffuses the mighty nave, where the great pillars spring aloft like the trees in some vast primeval forest, soaring up into twilight shadows far above. Below the audience sits in awed silence, while the strains of the organ float through the mighty arches and the voices of children in the distant recesses of the cathedral sound like a choir of unseen angels.

It was in such surroundings as these that I first heard the music of Edward Elgar, and certainly no environment more completely in harmony with the mystic and devotional character of his short oratorio 'The Light of Life' could be imagined. I heard this work for the first time at its production at the Worcester Festival of 1896, and I knew that a new voice had arisen in England. The work as a whole charmed me by its intimate feeling, and by its freedom from the conventionality of English sacred music. In particular the orchestral 'Meditation', with which it opened, seemed to me to be different from anything that any English composer had previously written - different in its handling of the orchestra and different in its expression of emotion. After the production of 'The Light of Life' Elgar became, if not precisely famous, at any rate a man with whom it was necessary to reckon. People asked who this new composer was and whence he had learnt the secrets of composition, and the history of his early years soon became public property.

Elgar owes nothing to schools and academies and very little to teachers. Born in 1857 of a father who was organist at the Catholic Church of St. George in the city of Worcester and a good violinist, besides keeping a music-shop, the child passed his earliest years in the bosom of the beautiful hills of Malvern which lift their graceful outline above the valley of the Severn.

[p. 655]

In the environs of Worcester the landscape has not the savage aspect of the neighbouring country of Wales, with its wild heaths and craggy mountains. The Malvern hills, though the loftiest in the South of England, have nothing terrifying for a childish soul. Nature there shows herself amiable and smiling, and the mild breezes of the Severn valley have a caressing touch such as one finds in

few other districts of England. In the midst of scenes for which his pensive and introspective nature must have felt a lively if unconscious sympathy the child grew to boyhood. From his father he learnt the violin and the organ, and circumstances gave him practical acquaintance with many other instruments and diverse forms of music. We hear of his playing the bassoon in a quintet of wind instruments and of composing many pieces for that combination, of his leading the orchestra of a private society of amateurs at Worcester, and of his playing the violin in the orchestra at the annual festivals of the Three Choirs. But of regular musical education he had little. He never crossed the threshold of an academy; he never attended the lectures of a professor; he never wrote an exercise in counterpoint in his life. His father, who realised the talent of his son, wished to send him to Leipzig, but *res angusta domi* forbade the development of this scheme. When he was twenty years old, wishing to make a career as a violinist, he visited London and took a series of lessons from Pollitzer. But this plan also came to nothing, and he returned to the sacred shades of Worcester and to the calm solitudes of the Malvern Hills, to pursue his quiet life of student. There, with the scores of the great masters open before him, his talent slowly unfolded itself. In 1885 he succeeded his father as organist of St. George's Church, Worcester, where he composed a great deal of music for the service of the Catholic church. In 1899, after his marriage, he once more turned his footsteps to London, hoping to win a wider fame in the metropolis than a provincial city could give him. But the citadel was not yet to be stormed. In vain he laid siege to publishers and managers. Disappointment and disillusion met him at every turn, and after two years of unavailing effort he returned once more to Worcester.

In 1896, as we have seen, fortune smiled upon him, and the

[p. 656]

production of his oratorio 'The Light of Life' marked him out as a composer from whom great things might be expected. A few months later his growing reputation was strengthened by the production at Hanley, an important town not far from Birmingham, of a large choral cantata 'King Olaf', a work of remarkable freshness of inspiration and rhythmic force; and soon he was commissioned to write a choral work for the Leeds Festival of 1898. 'Caractacus', the work in question, won a success, but it was a success of technique rather than of inspiration. The composer, conscious that the eye of England was upon him, had taken enormous pains with his work, and this *limae labor* was apparent on almost every page of the score. It was admitted at the time that no English composer had ever assimilated the methods of Wagner more completely than Elgar, yet, when one had duly admired the manner in which the intricate web of 'guiding motives' was handled, it was after all the simpler scenes that made the deepest impression upon the memory. A love duet full of lyric feeling, a march with a vigorous swing, if with a slight touch of vulgarity, and above all a lament chanted by a vanquished king over his fallen warriors - these were the passages in which the real Elgar peeped out most unmistakably from behind the folds of his Wagnerian mantle.

Hitherto Elgar had been known to the English public mainly as a writer of choral cantatas. He had, it is true, already composed various orchestral pieces, overtures and serenades, which had been performed here and there in the provinces, but these had passed almost unperceived. He was now to reveal himself as a master of the orchestra and to lay the foundations of that fame which will, if I am not mistaken, immortalize his name, when his choral works have passed into oblivion.

Elgar's 'Enigma Variations' had the good fortune to be introduced to the world under the aegis of the celebrated conductor, Hans Richter, who performed them for the first time in the now demolished St. James's Hall, London, in June, 1899. As to the enigma, which gives the variations their name, it lies in the fact that the melody on which the variations are founded is itself, according

to the composer, nothing but a counterpoint or accompaniment to another melody, said to be a well-known

[p. 657]

one, the identity of which he does not choose to reveal. The fact that Elgar has kept his little secret for twelve years proves incontestably that it has little importance for the comprehension of his work. What is far more important is the manner in which he has treated the actual theme of the variations. When one thinks of all the soporific banalities, in the guise of variations, which have been served out to us during recent years, one ought to be grateful to Elgar for having breathed a new life into the musical formula, which is perhaps of all that exist the most old-fashioned and academic. To make 'programme music' out of a set of variations is indeed something unexpected. It is true that Strauss had already written his 'Don Quixote', which is incontestably a symphonic poem in the form of variations, and it is said that Brahms had in his mind a programme for his variations on Haydn's 'Chorale S. Antonii', which according to some critics are intended as a musical picture of the temptation of S. Anthony. But Elgar's variations have little in common with these two works. His work is a musical tribute to a group of his friends, whose respective characters he has traced in each successive variation, viewing, as it were, the theme of the variations through the temperament of each friend in turn. The work is therefore in a sense a 'tableau de genre', corresponding to the famous 'Hommage à Delacroix' for example, where a group of pupils and friends is assembled around the figure of an adored master. And with what a master's hand Elgar has drawn the portraits of his *dramatis personae*! They are only sketches, it is true, but dashed off with wonderful certainty of touch. One by one the figures rise before us, this one pensive and melancholy, that one proud and noble; another is lively and passionate, and yet another amorous and sentimental. Elgar has labelled each variation with initials or a nickname, some of which have been identified. One can distinguish here the gracious silhouette of his wife, there one finds a noble tribute, under the sobriquet 'Nimrod', to a friend, since dead, the young Alfred Jaeger, an enthusiastic musician and one of the first writers to announce to an incredulous world the dawning genius of Elgar. But whether one can trace the identity of each individual or not, one is never in doubt as to the truth of the

[p. 658]

likeness. The whole work is a gallery of life-like portraits, enriched with every secret of modern harmony and orchestrated with dazzling brilliancy. The success of the variations was very great. The work was performed at countless concerts throughout the United Kingdom, and Elgar took his place definitely in the front rank of English musicians.

The variations were followed by several other instrumental works, showing an equal mastery of the modern orchestra, if a somewhat less striking individuality of character. The 'Cockaigne' overture is a clever attempt to set the life of London to music. The 'brouhaha' of the streets is well suggested, but the deeper note of London life escaped the composer, and the work, though accomplished in the writing, is a little insignificant and even a little vulgar in general effect. Another overture, 'In the South', translates into music the composer's impressions of Italy. At this point in his career Elgar appears to have undergone the influence of Richard Strauss, of which the traces are perceptible both in the phraseology and in the employment of orchestral devices in this overture. More original, though less showy and effective, is the 'Introduction and Allegro' for stringed instruments, in which Elgar made ingenious use of the concerto form of the eighteenth century, while infusing into it the ideas and emotions of the twentieth.

But in England it is not by instrumental works that the heart of the multitude is reached. The cult of the orchestra is a plant of recent growth. It is only during the last thirty years that English society has learnt from Richter, Manns, Hallé and other conductors how to understand symphonic music. And it is only the *élite musicale* that sits at the feet of these masters. For the mass of Englishmen the summit of musical art is still, as it was in the days of Haendel and Mendelssohn, the oratorio - at least it was so ten years ago, for since the beginning of the twentieth century we have seen great changes effected in the musical taste of England. This fortress of conservatism was taken by Elgar with his 'Dream of Gerontius'. Produced at the Birmingham Festival of 1900 and badly executed, 'The Dream of Gerontius' was somewhat coldly received, but with every repetition the success of the work was strengthened, and it must be confessed that

[p. 659]

the triumphant career of the work in Germany and above all the words which the celebrated Richard Strauss addressed to the composer after a performance of the oratorio at Düsseldorf reacted very favourably upon English opinion. At present the success of 'The Dream of Gerontius' in England cannot any more be disputed. It is performed everywhere, not merely at the great festivals but in every town where there is a choir and an orchestra capable of struggling with the truly formidable difficulties of the score.

The success achieved by 'The Dream of Gerontius' in Protestant England has always been a matter of some surprise to me, for the work is Catholic to the core. It is true that thirty years ago a success no less complete was won by another Catholic oratorio 'The Redemption' of Gounod, but the subject of the latter was one that appealed equally to Christians of all sects and churches, and there was nothing in the treatment to shock Protestant susceptibilities.

'The Dream of Gerontius', on the other hand, is not merely Catholic but distinctly anti-Protestant in feeling, and the fact that its subject has not militated against its success in England is a proof that Protestant prejudices are less violent in the United Kingdom than they used to be. The poem of Cardinal Newman, which Elgar set to music, is remarkable, whether one regards it as a work of imagination or as a poetical statement of Catholic dogma, designed to instruct the faithful as to what the Church inculcates with regard to the life after death. It deals with the death of a believer, the passage of his soul to the Judgment-seat of God and its subsequent immersion in the healing waters of purgatory. The poem is written with a carefully studied precision of language, which is rare in English poetry, particularly in connection with a subject that is usually shrouded in mystery, and the literary ability of the author cannot be questioned even by those to whom his views are least sympathetic. It is plain that the poem appealed profoundly to Elgar's temperament. To him the composition of 'The Dream of Gerontius' was an act of faith. His fervid conviction makes itself felt in every bar of the music. Every resource of his art is consecrated to the task of heightening the poignancy of the poem. The frenzied terror

[p. 660]

of the dying man is finely contrasted with the solemn tones of the priest chanting at his bedside. Another striking contrast is found in the passage where the tranquil dialogue between the soul of Gerontius and its Guardian Angel is interrupted, in their flight to the Judgment-seat, by a wild chorus of furious demons. To this succeeds the chorus of angels around the throne of God, which only falls short of sublimity by reason of its over-elaboration of detail, and the work ends in exquisite serenity with the song of the Guardian Angel as it dips the ransomed soul into the lake of Purgatory.

'The Dream of Gerontius' brought a breath of new life into the somewhat jaded atmosphere of English oratorio. Its vivid picturesqueness, its dramatic power and its brilliant and sonorous orchestration struck like a trumpet call upon ears trained to the placid harmonies of the school of Mendelssohn, which had ruled the world of English sacred music almost unchallenged until the advent of Elgar.

To 'The Dream of Gerontius' succeeded two more oratorios, 'The Apostles' (1903) and 'The Kingdom' (1906), works of a more familiar type, neither of which has won in England anything like the degree of success which has been accorded to Elgar's earlier oratorio. In the first of these two works the story of the calling of the Apostles and of their share in Christ's ministry and passion is told, mainly in the words of the Gospels; in the second the foundation of the Christian Church is recounted according to the Acts of the Apostles. The general plan of 'The Apostles' and 'The Kingdom' follows that of Gounod's 'Redemption' pretty closely. The composer has striven to thrust into prominence the dramatic and picturesque incidents of the narrative, and many of the scenes are treated with a masterly hand. But in both works there is a lack of unity and cohesion. Each of them is less an artistic whole than a string of disconnected scenes, and even Elgar's clever use of an elaborate system of guiding themes does not suffice to give continuity to the fabric of the two oratorios. It must be admitted that in 'The Apostles' and 'The Kingdom' there is a great deal of fine music, particularly in the interpretation of individual emotion - as in the scenes allotted to Mary Magdalene and to Judas Iscariot in 'The Apostles', and

[p. 661]

in the meditation of the Virgin Mary in 'The Kingdom', which are at the same time highly original and profoundly felt - but the grand epical breadth of style which should animate works of so ambitious a plan is absent from both oratorios.

After writing 'The Kingdom' Elgar left the field of oratorio and returned once more to that of the orchestra in which his most brilliant triumphs had already been won.

His later years have been mainly devoted to the composition of three important works - two symphonies and a violin concerto, in which in my opinion he has reached far greater heights than he had previously attained. These three works are closely connected in feeling as in form. They are the product of one mood, or rather of one series of moods. Elgar turned from oratorio to symphony, from the objective to the subjective, impelled by a craving for self-expression. In his two symphonies and violin concerto he has written the story of his own soul, the story of his own struggles, beliefs and aspirations, and one cannot but feel that this craving for self-expression came at just the right moment. How many composers have striven to express themselves in music before experience had taught them how to use their material. Others have waited too long, until manner has degenerated into mannerism and character has been stifled by convention. To Elgar, however, the desire came at the moment when the power to express it was ripe. In the three works with which his career so far has reached its climax manner and matter are so closely allied and interact upon each other so harmoniously that his music may be taken as a perfect exemplification of Buffon's famous saying, '*Le style est l'homme même*'.

Elgar's first symphony in A flat was performed for the first time in December 1908, his violin concerto in D in November 1910, and his second symphony in E flat in May 1911. During the period of the production of these works he composed nothing else of importance, and we may therefore with reason look upon the two symphonies and the concerto as one great work in three sections, a symphonic trilogy - an artistic Trinity, three in one, and one in three. I ought to say that Elgar himself has given no hint of the existence of any connection between these three works. They

have been performed and published independently of each other,

[p. 662]

and it is perhaps somewhat fantastic on my part to imagine that they are united by a psychological bond. Yet, having heard all three of them repeatedly and having studied them with love, reverence and enthusiasm, I have persuaded myself that the connection exists, whether the composer is conscious of it himself or not. Summing up the general tendency of the trilogy I should describe the three sections of which it consists as illustrating Strife - Contemplation - Joy, the whole composing a vast picture of the development of an artist's soul such as perhaps no other composer of our time has hitherto attempted.

It now remains for me to deal with each work in more detail. Elgar has prefixed no definite programme to his first symphony, but his admission that it represents 'a composer's outlook upon life' gives a broad hint that there is more than a touch of autobiography in it. The struggle of a soul towards the light, the warfare of the material and the ideal - this is what the symphony paints in the richest and most glowing colours that the modern orchestra can supply, employed with a science such as only a composer profoundly versed in the history of musical development can command. The first movement is all strife and turmoil. It opens, somewhat in the manner of Schubert's great symphony in C, with the call of the ideal, a melody of arresting breadth and nobility, which pervades the whole work from beginning to end. With this summons to a higher life are contrasted the wiles of the world, the flesh and the devil. Bewildering siren-calls seem to summon the hero to destruction. Pleasure spreads her net around his feet, the call of the ideal sounds brokenly and fitfully and through the maze of changing harmonies winds ever the dark and sinister theme of sin. The conflict of passions is drawn with astonishing vigour, and the movement surges along its tumultuous course with inexhaustible spirit.

The scherzo seems to carry us unto the world of sheer hard work. The music tingles with life and energy. We seem to be plunged into the midst of the human struggle for existence, and a curiously abrupt and square-cut melody shows us the hero bracing himself for his life's task. By a happily conceived transition the scherzo melts, as it were, into the adagio, a movement of extraordinary beauty, in which the deepest and purest aspirations

[p. 663]

of the soul of man are clothed in sound. The atmosphere is one of tense yearning and high-wrought rapture. The principal theme soars upward, at first struggling with difficulty like a climber among steep rocks, afterwards mounting aloft as if upon the wings of faith. Throughout the movement the composer's mood is one of peculiar exaltation. He seems to be moving in a world of spiritual ecstasy, through an air growing ever more and more rarified, till at the close the atmosphere becomes so fully charged with mysticism that the hearer seems, like St. Paul in his strange vision, to be 'caught up into Paradise and to hear unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.'

The last movement is in some respects the most remarkable of all, and undoubtedly it is at a first acquaintance the most immediately effective. The introduction is curiously eerie in feeling and colour. The hero seems to be sunk in the lethargy of despair. Memories of his old life, of his early struggles and ambitions flit idly across his mind, but they cannot rouse him to action. At last with a supreme effort he shakes off his torpor, and throws himself once more into the fray. From this point onwards all is feverish energy and exaltation. We are hurried from climax to climax. The

horizon seems to widen, the air to grow purer. The magnificent theme of the ideal, transfigured and glorified, seems, like a vast tree, to spread its branches over all, and the work ends in a blaze of triumph and splendour.

Elgar's violin concerto belongs to the same world of thought and feeling as his first symphony, but a different atmosphere envelops it. It is throughout less strenuous and more contemplative in tone. As befits a work in which a soloist rules supreme we are here concerned not with those generalized emotions, in the expression of which one man stands as the type of his race, but with individual struggles and aspirations. To what extent cause and effect interact upon each other in these matters it is hard to say. Did Elgar choose the concerto form because he felt it to be the most suitable for what he had to say, or did his choice of the form mould the character of his music? This is a problem, which perhaps the composer himself could scarcely solve. At any rate, in treatment, if not in character, the later work forms a striking and beautiful contrast to the earlier. The

[p. 664]

grand sweep and noble breadth of style which characterize the symphony are exchanged for a more personal and more intimate note. The hearer seems to be taken into the confidence of the composer and to be listening to a recital of his private joys and sorrows, of his most secret emotions and aspirations. The first movement of the concerto resembles *mutatis mutandis* the corresponding movement of the symphony. It is a picture of warring passions, of the clash of high-strung feelings - not on the tremendous scale of the symphony, it is true, - but, though less wide in scope, no less deeply felt and no less sincere. On this tempest of emotion the opening notes of the andante fall like a dewy veil. Peace seems to descend from heaven and to enfold all things in her calm embrace. We seem to be transported to some region of clear air and cloudless radiance. The forms of the blessed seem to move through asphodel meadows under a serener sky than earth has ever known. The deep and tranquil beauty of this movement lies beyond the power of words to express. The music has the serene loveliness of some exquisite fresco by Puvion de Chavannes, some vision of the Elysian Fields, from which all earthly strife and rancour are for ever banished. From the dream-world of the andante we return once more to the bustle of real life in the finale, a movement of abounding energy, which hurries along its vigorous course in the most brilliant style. Yet even here the contemplative note, to which I have already referred as characteristic of the concerto, makes itself felt. The movement is at the zenith of its buoyant career when the solo violin glides almost imperceptibly into a long and elaborate accompanied cadenza - no! that is too conventional a word; I would rather call it a soliloquy - in which, leaving earthly things far beneath, it seems to soar into wondrous regions of spiritual ecstasy. It is as though a man in the midst of his worldly avocations were suddenly rapt away in a trance. The veil of mortal sense is rent asunder and he stands face to face with the vast mystery of eternity. But the vision fades gradually away, and we are once more on the solid earth. Yet memories of this strange interlude of mystic contemplation still survive, and the work ends upon a strain of grave and exalted nobility.

Elgar's second symphony completes his great symphonic trilogy

[p. 665]

in the most satisfying manner. After strife and contemplation comes joy, and the symphony in E flat is full of a rapturous exultation which we do not find in the two earlier works. At the head of his score the composer has written the opening lines of a famous poem by Shelley:

Rarely, rarely comest thou
Spirit of Delight.

But this motto is only to be taken in the most general sense. The symphony is in no way a musical transcription of the poem. Let no one take Shelley's poem in hand and try to trace it stanza by stanza in the four movements of Elgar's symphony. It is the Spirit of Delight itself that has inspired the composer, and we must look in his music not for the despondent poet, but for the vision of beauty that he regrets. This vision pervades the symphony from beginning to end. It is always the beauty of things on which the musician's eye rests, not upon their ugliness. He sings of growth, not of decay. Even in the passages of deeper feeling, in which the *largo* is rich, the composer derives strength not weakness from suffering and by the magic of his art draws beauty from the sorest trial. The opening *allegro* strikes the note which prevails through the whole work. Spring is its theme, the Spring of which artists dream and musicians sing. Like a fountain suddenly unsealed the music leaps up to heaven, and surges along in buoyant waves. The swing and rush of it are irresistible. All that Spring ever meant to a poet is here translated into sound - the rising sap, the bursting bud, the opening flower and wild bird-raptures in the clear heaven of March. Yet the movement is not all joy and rapture. Midway in its course a shadow seems to fall over the scene, and we see the vernal vision, as it were, in a glass darkly, but soon the sky clears, the sun shines forth again, and the movement ends radiantly upon a note of pure ecstasy.

The *largo* offers a broad and striking contrast to this carnival of joy. The fact that the symphony is dedicated to the memory of King Edward VII caused certain not very clear-sighted critics to suggest that this movement was intended by the composer as a funeral march in honour of the dead King. This is not so,

[p. 666]

since the symphony was planned early in 1910, before the death of King Edward, nor does the *largo* touch a funereal note. In character it is strong, sober and serene. It looks out upon the world with a calm and steadfast gaze, and though it has moments of almost agonized emotion, moments in which one feels that the musician has not won his way to fortitude and tranquillity without inward struggles that are beyond the knowledge of ordinary men, it never suggests the anguish of bereavement.

The rondo, which takes the place of the usual scherzo, is in some sort a problem. Judged as absolute music it is effective enough, though it has not Elgar's accustomed distinction of style, but it is difficult to understand its connection with the remainder of the work, and throughout its course one has the uneasy sense of a secret lurking somewhere within it, that baffles the inquiring mind. No shadow of doubt, however, hangs over the superb finale, in which we return once more to the glittering realm of the Spirit of Delight. We bask in the same glory that illuminated the initial *allegro* - the same, yet not the same, for the keen, almost acrid freshness of Spring has yielded to a richer mellower feeling. Resplendent Summer seems to breathe in the glowing music, and the very heartbeat of the world throbs in the wonderful rhythm, upon which the whole movement is built. So the music rolls upon its way, piling climax upon climax, scaling dizzy and still dizzy heights, until after soaring to one final summit, it sinks back, as it were, into an ocean of tranquillity, and the work ends in a peace all the more divine for the tumult and excitement that came before.

I have written of Elgar with an enthusiasm which may appear excessive to those who know little or nothing of his music, and who find it hard to believe that any music worth listening to can come out of England. Time alone can prove whether my estimate of the genius of Elgar is correct,

but meanwhile I will venture to conclude with the words that Richard Strauss addressed to him at the supper given in his honour after the performance of 'The Dream of Gerontius' at the Lower Rhenish Festival in Düsseldorf in May 1902:

'I deplore that England has not yet taken her proper place among musical nations because ever since the period of her

[p. 667]

musical greatness in the Middle Ages she has lacked progressive men ("Fortschritts-manner"). But the creation of a work like "The Dream of Gerontius" shows that the gap has been filled, and that a day of musical reciprocity between England and the rest of Europe is dawning. I call on all present to drink success to the British musical renaissance and in particular to Edward Elgar, a musician of the highest attainments, whom I am proud to welcome as a fellow-worker in the sacred cause of art'.

100 YEARS AGO ...

On 2 May the family decamped to Brinkwells for the summer: 'left comfortably at 1.36. Alice drove from Fittleworth sta. to Cottage. Carice & I walked. Lovely but quite cold. Navy boots [from *The Fringes of the Fleet*] great joy for wet woods'. Elgar was immediately in his element, and the following day 'Killed snake 2ft 2 ... Got Beer & Cider from Swan'. An added was despatched on the 6th: 'an ugly brute – planted Mustard & Cress on Sacking'.

And so it continued, as he explained to Windflower on the 12th: 'I rise about seven work till 8.15 – then dress. Breakfast-pipe (I smoke again all day!) work till 12-30 lunch (pipe) – rest an hour – work till tea (pipe) – then work till 7.30 – change dinner at 8. bed at 10 – every day practically goes thus – of course instead of work, which means carpentering of the roughest kind, sawing wood, repairing furniture etc etc and weeding, we go lovely walks – the loveliest walks really'.

Friends visited: Lalla Vandervelde (Edward Speyer's daughter, to whom Elgar seemed to have taken a particular shine at this time) came for the Whitsun weekend, and Windflower arrived on 24 May: 'delighted with everythg. enjoying herself like a baby child'. She stayed until the 28th.

On 'E.'s dearest birfday – No letters & no pesents had come for him except some asparagus from Rosa [Burley] – A vesy sweet day togesser – only praying for good [war] news'. Carice was expected at the weekend. Elgar wrote to her, saying: 'The country awaits your coming and so do I, -- also a cask of cider which arrd yestere'en and the tapping thereof will be a sollum serremony between you and me! P'raps!'

Sidney and Frances Colvin had taken a cottage at Tillington, four miles from Brinkwells, and a number of reciprocated visits were made during the month. Elgar had received a fishing permit, and his diary is littered with notes such as 'TROUT 2'.

Lalla Vandervelde stayed again, and within three hours of her leaving Muriel Foster arrived: 'Enchanted with the place'.

At the beginning of July Elgar wrote to Frank Schuster, saying: 'I am better but not fit for the world & don't seem to want it – I get a few fish & read & smoke (praise be!) but there are about six people I want to see & you are one – number one I mean the rest follow'. On the 8th 'Lalla arrived about 1 – in Government car': her husband, Emil, was a Minister of the Belgian Government. She stayed until the 13th.

Five days later 'Starlight [Algernon Blackwood] telegraphed coming by 10.00 train ... Exactly the Brinkwells Guest – He did wonderful feats with leaping pole, jumping up to top of gate head of lane & standing on the top of it'.

Windflower came again on 3 August. 'She had (wisely) arrd. by early train & rested at the Swan (lunch).' She stayed until the 6th.

On the 15th 'E. heard that Piano was "on rail"': this was the Steinway upright by Samuel Sanford. It was placed in the Garden Room. With its arrival his thoughts turned to composition, and on the 20th he started a 'Sonata for Piano and Violin'. Four days later 'Ham came & M.S paper from Novello', and on the 29th 'Mr. Reed arrived – tried over Sonata'. Next day the pair 'fiddled, fished & fooled'.

Martin Bird

ISSN 0143-1269

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