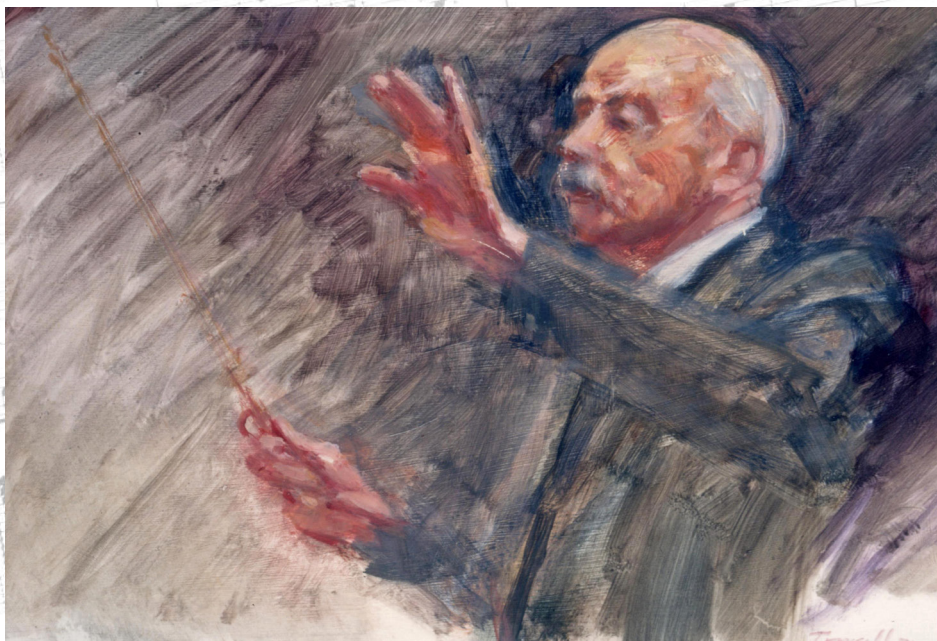


The Society

*Elegar*

JOURNAL



August 2020 Vol.22, No. 2



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## The Elgar Society Journal

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

*Front Cover: Adrian Boult by Jonathan Trowell (loaned by the Bowerman Charitable Trust).*

**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.

The Editors have had a policy of not publishing possible solutions to the 'hidden theme' in the Variations on an Original Theme ('Enigma') or the 'Dorabella cypher'.

**Presentation of written text:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[https://elgarsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Notes-for-Contributors\\_longer-version\\_February-2017.pdf](https://elgarsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Notes-for-Contributors_longer-version_February-2017.pdf)

## Editorial

The influenza pandemic, colloquially known as 'Spanish flu' lasted from spring 1918 to the summer of 1919 with a minor recurrence in the spring of 1920. Millions died throughout the world; the exact number is unknown. In Britain the death-toll was about 250,000. The Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, caught influenza but recovered. The Elgars were fortunate to escape the scourge, but perhaps this was because they spent a considerable amount of time in these years at Brinkwells, their isolated rural Sussex cottage near Fittleworth which Arnold Bax recalled as: 'Perched high and vaguely on a hill, it was approached only by a very rough and sticky cart-track'.<sup>1</sup> Yet Sussex was not immune to the pandemic for, by January 1919, 600 lives had been lost in the county and between January and March a further 157 casualties were recorded in East Sussex alone. The Elgars however, were more fortunate in their rural existence than the novelist D.H. Lawrence, who caught influenza in February 1919, while living in a cottage in the small upland village of Middleton-by-Wirksworth, Derbyshire and almost died.

The current pandemic of Covid-19 has at the time of writing caused over 40,000 deaths in the UK and over 400,000 worldwide. We will all have been affected by the 'lockdown' measures introduced by the Government and many of us will have lost loved-ones to this dreadful virus. Modern technology has perhaps eased the sense of isolation for many, but the long-term implications for our economy and our culture may well be profound. Most executant musicians are currently unemployed and there is real concern that some of our internationally-respected orchestras and other institutions may not survive. We must all hope that an effective vaccine and/or antiviral treatment will soon be found in order to bring this outbreak under control.

Although the consequences of this pandemic are unprecedented, the musical world and orchestras in particular are no strangers to financial disaster and have often had to battle for survival and to ward off impending dissolution. *The Times* of 28 February 1925 stated: 'We have seen the oldest of our concert-going institutions, the Royal Philharmonic Society, forced to restrict its activities to a wretched minimum of half a dozen concerts ... in the hope that by a rigid economy of means it might be able to produce a respectable balance-sheet ... No one knows precisely by what means the London Symphony Orchestra ... has managed to keep its head above water, but it is an open secret that its crises have been warded off from time to time by the personal sacrifice of its members'. Musicians survived the financial storms of the 1920s, and despite the intensity and longevity of the present crisis, maybe there is still room for optimism?

However in their joint letter to the *Guardian* on 10 June, Sir Simon Rattle and Sir Mark Elder stated: 'We refuse to believe that music will die, but it will not survive merely on energy and optimism. It will need support and understanding, particularly when it ventures out in public once more. The first year of performing with fewer musicians to a much smaller public will be our toughest time, and we will need a helping hand to make it through'.

They considered that there was the 'real possibility of a devastated landscape on the other

<sup>1</sup> Arnold Bax, 'Edward Elgar', introductory note in the programme for a performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* given on 15 June 1949, as part of the Elgar Festival, London.



side of this; orchestras may not survive.’ insisting that they must find a way to play together and that they ‘badly need clarity from government, a timeline, of when that might be and how it can be implemented’.

A letter in *The Times* on 15 June, signed by Elder and the heads of a host of major orchestras and opera companies, makes similar points and states ‘We may be left with no more Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Elgar ...’. A *Times* leader on the same day is highly supportive and concludes that ‘...emergency [government] aid in this case is not only justified but vital for the nation’s soul’.

Can we have, in Elgar’s words ‘a massive hope in the future’?

This year sees important anniversaries connected with two great second-generation Elgarian conductors. 70 years ago, in April 1950, having lost his role within the BBC, Sir Adrian Boult took up the position of chief conductor with the LPO, and although that lasted only until 1956, his connection with the orchestra continued throughout the remainder of his conducting career. Andrew Neill has written about Sir Adrian’s time with the LPO, which is marking this anniversary with the issue of five CDs highlighting Boult’s conductorship. He also stresses the significance and importance of Sir Adrian to this Society.

On 29 July 1970, Sir John Barbirolli died suddenly in London at the age of 70. Beloved conductor of the Hallé since 1943, his last day was spent rehearsing Britten and Beethoven with the New Philharmonia orchestra, prior to their flying to Japan the following month. Surprisingly for such a devoted and passionate Elgarian, Sir John was never invited to become a Vice-President of our Society – an omission which was subsequently partially rectified by offering this to his widow, the oboist Evelyn Rothwell, and was readily accepted. David Jones has provided an account of Sir John’s mission to further the Elgarian cause, through performance and recording. Again, this anniversary is being marked by a number of commemorative CD issues, including some performances never released before.

The conducting theme is continued in an article by Christopher Redwood who has unearthed reviews of Elgar conducting two concerts in Turin in 1911 with Toscanini’s orchestra, and he also draws on an article written by Richard Streatfeild to provide publicity for Elgar in the Netherlands and France. The indefatigable Arthur Reynolds has found a letter, never previously published, from Elgar to George Sinclair which has provided the focus for a short study on Elgar and Dan. Professor Jonathan Wainwright has written about the annotations in a copy of the vocal score of *The Dream of Gerontius* presented by Elgar to Robert J. Buckley with much interesting commentary on both these and other matters, including Buckley’s biography of the composer.

There is a review of the latest Complete Edition volume, together with a review of the Elgar Family Diaries from 1908 to 1910. A new recording of the Violin Concerto is considered alongside a reissue, and we review a new CD of the Piano Quintet, paired with Amy Beach’s Quintet from 1907: a novel and striking combination.

We hope that by the time of our next issue, musical life will have recovered to some extent and that we can resume concert going, together with other musical activities and events, thus enabling us to support all our musicians whose livelihoods have been destroyed by the pandemic. The Editorial Team sends you its good wishes for continuing good health.

Contributions for the December issue should reach the editors no later than 17 October 2020.

As we go to press we hear of the death of David Bowerman. An obituary will appear in December.

Kevin Mitchell

With the Editorial Team of David Morris, Andrew Dalton and Andrew Neill.

## Sir Adrian Boult CH. (1889 – 1983)

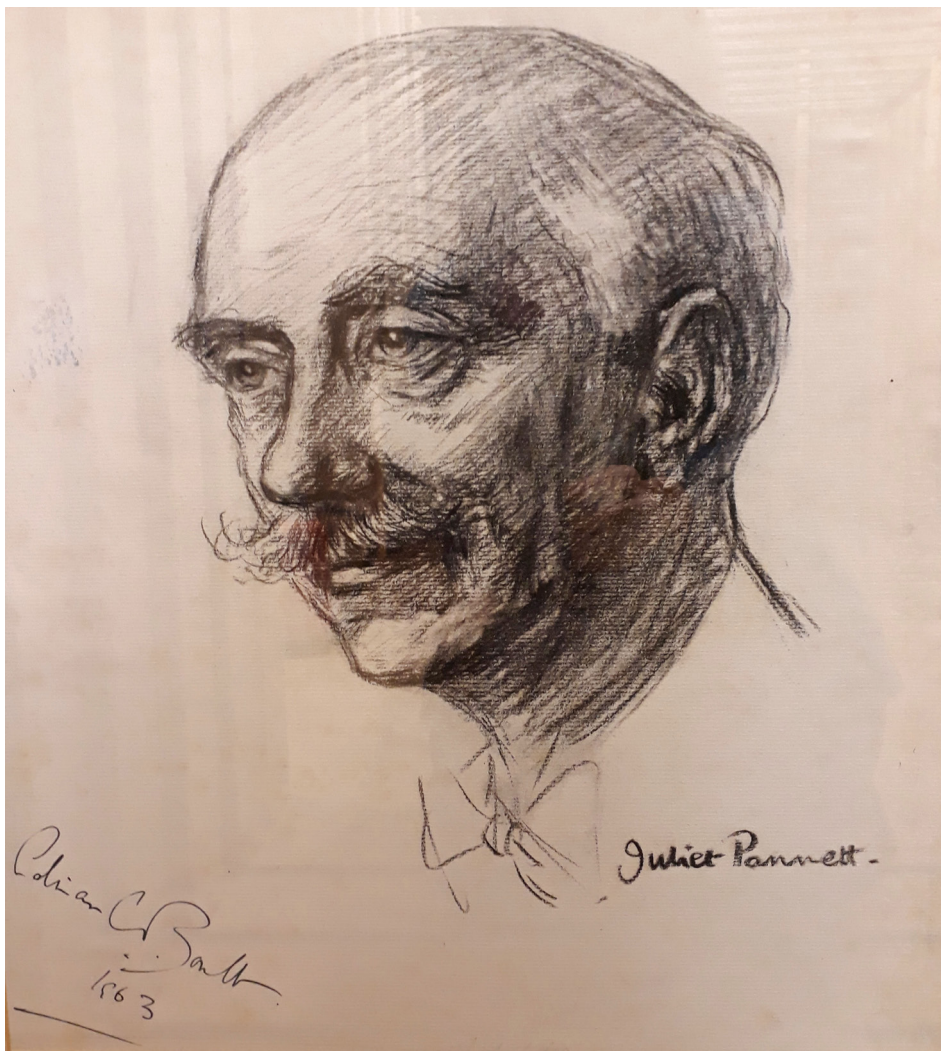
### Andrew Neill

Next year, 2021, is the 70th anniversary of this Society’s formation. No doubt planning is in progress as to how best to celebrate this important event in our country’s musical history but, first, there is another anniversary to celebrate. In the autumn of 1950 Sir Adrian Boult advocated the formation of this Society and, at his suggestion, a public meeting was held in the offices of the *Malvern Gazette* on 5 December when a provisional committee was appointed: Mr John Tompkins was invited to take the chair. The committee was charged to draft a constitution for submission, and at what was minuted as a first annual general meeting on 29 January 1951 the motion ‘to bring the Society into existence’ was proposed and passed. Sir Adrian, of course, became our first President in 1951, a position he held until his death thirty two years later.

I had the privilege of meeting him on two occasions. The first was in about 1972 when Elgar’s biographer, Jerrold Northrop Moore, arranged for a local photographer to attend at his home and show what were all the then known films of Elgar. Dr Moore then lived in Hampstead not far from where Sir Adrian and Lady Boult also lived. Sir Adrian had been of enormous help to Dr Moore in his writing of his biography of Elgar and he and Lady Boult had been invited to attend the film show. I was invited too and was able to assist the infirm Sir Adrian negotiate the steep staircase. The second meeting was in 1979 when I was elected Secretary of the Society. I was invited to visit Sir Adrian at his home where I was given coffee and had a fascinating discussion before Lady Boult made it clear that Sir Adrian needed to rest.

Sir Adrian, after he left the BBC in 1950, performed with most of the main British orchestras before his retirement in 1978 and two of his major Elgar recordings were of the *Enigma Variations* with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1970 and *The Dream of Gerontius* with the New Philharmonia Orchestra in 1975. However, it was with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO) that Sir Adrian enjoyed the closest association and, in 1950 he was appointed Principal Conductor. I was asked to write the extensive notes for a box set of five CDs shortly to be issued on the LPO’s own label and, with the orchestra’s agreement, I have edited and amended these notes for the Society’s *Journal*. By a happy coincidence, as implied above, 2020 is also the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the provisional committee which led to the formation of our Society.

The release of these five Compact Discs celebrates the long association Sir Adrian enjoyed with the LPO. The set includes two Elgar issues, the 1949 recording of the A flat Symphony and the first issue of a broadcast performance of *In the South*. These recordings also show Sir Adrian as a conductor of classics such as a Beethoven Symphony as well as embracing what was then considered contemporary music by Béla Bartók. He demonstrates his abilities as a conductor of ballet music and, of course, a supporter of music by composers of his own country. In a January 1961 concert programme the LPO offered its own tribute to Sir Adrian in celebration of his ten years of service. There could be no finer tribute to this most self-effacing of men who contributed



Adrian Boult by Julia Pannett (loaned by the Bowerman Charitable Trust)

so much to British musical life for over 60 years: 'The London Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Society take this opportunity of honouring a great man; for those of us who have had the privilege of working with Sir Adrian Boult know that he is one of the outstanding musicians of his day, selflessly devoted to the realisation of the scores he undertakes to conduct. With him duty and inclination are one. No task is too difficult, none too menial for him. In Sir Adrian we salute an ambassador, a public servant and a great artist, as well as a human being of warm sympathy and deep understanding'.

\*\*\*

In October 1919, at very short notice, the young Adrian Boult took over conducting Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Company (Ballets Russes) which was performing at the Alhambra Theatre in London. Over a few days he learnt the music of fourteen ballets including Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and *Firebird*. Sir Adrian's final public appearance was to conduct Elgar's ballet *The Sanguine Fan* at the London Coliseum on 24 June 1978, a work he had recorded with the LPO in May 1973. The great ballerina, Dame Beryl Grey, said of Sir Adrian's conducting 'that it was almost as if the composer himself was reliving the music. He knew how to lead; the worst thing to have is a conductor who follows the dancer'.<sup>1</sup>

Fifty-three years earlier, in November 1920, Sir Adrian made his first recordings with the recently re-formed British Symphony Orchestra, of which he had just been appointed Principal Conductor. The sessions included his first recording of George Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad* Rhapsody. He would go on to make recordings for nearly 60 years until his final sessions (with the LPO) in 1978 when he conducted the music of Hubert Parry and his friend Gustav Holst. As Ralph Vaughan Williams noted in a letter of 7 February 1933 after the premiere of his Piano Concerto: 'You have made impossible the composer's time-honoured excuse that the work would have sounded all right if it had been properly played – I could not have imagined a better performance'. Following a performance of his E flat Symphony on 17 March 1920 Elgar wrote to the 30-year-old conductor who had just directed the symphony in London's Queen's Hall. 'My dear Adrian: With the sounds ringing in my ears I send a word of thanks for your splendid conducting of the Sym: - I am most grateful to you for your affectionate care of it & I feel that my reputation in the future is safe in your hands. It was a wonderful series of sounds. Bless you!' All was not 'plain sailing' however. In 1924, at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival, Sir Adrian told Elgar that he would have to conduct *The Dream of Gerontius* with reduced woodwind in Birmingham that October to save on the costs of the performance. Far from being understanding Elgar was horrified and relations between the sensitive composer and young conductor were not repaired until 1931. Typically, Sir Adrian arranged and paid for the extra players himself. Nevertheless, Elgar's comments in 1920 were prescient

**A fifteen year-old music critic.  
Boult in 1904.**



<sup>1</sup> A.C.B. – A Portrait of One of the Century's Greatest Musicians Sir Adrian Boult C.H. (BBC TV film, 1989).



and, as it turned out, Elgar's music (as well as the music of many of his contemporaries) was safe in Sir Adrian's hands for over half a century, much of it performed with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

### Early Years

Adrian Cedric Boult was born on 8 April 1889 to a successful Cheshire businessman and his wife. In 1901 he was sent to Westminster School where he developed into an intelligent and perceptive observer of London's musical life. From school he attended countless concerts hearing music conducted by, among others, Artur Nikisch (1855-1922), Hans Richter (1843-1916) and Richard Strauss (1864-1949). The young Adrian made detailed notes of concerts he attended. At times, these reflect the naivety of a teenager and at others the fastidiousness he would bring to his own conducting. On 24 October 1904 he attended what was only the second London performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. It is fascinating to see how an intelligent and perceptive young man had a definite opinion even if he was to alter this later in life. After the performance he wrote: 'I was very disappointed. It is aimless wandering. The closing scene is exquisite, and the demons chorus is good, but Gerontius takes much too long dying.... Will Elgar live? His *Variations* will, I am certain. Will *Gerontius*? I am not certain by any means. I fully believe that if I knew the poem better, I should understand the music more: I should like to hear it again'. Despite becoming one of the supreme interpreters of *The Dream of Gerontius* Sir Adrian expressed a much later opinion in the notes that accompanied his recording of Elgar's *The Kingdom* in 1969: 'I think there is a great deal in *The Kingdom* that is more than a match for *Gerontius*, and I feel it is a much more balanced work and throughout maintains a stream of glorious music whereas *Gerontius* has its ups and downs'.

After his time at Oxford Sir Adrian studied in Leipzig for a year where he attended rehearsals and concerts conducted by Nikisch, whose style was to become the greatest influence. During his time in Leipzig Sir Adrian considered settling in Germany so that he could pursue his passion for conducting opera, but his family wanted him home. It remains regrettable that he was never invited to conduct opera after World War II and during the inter-war years he felt he was kept out of the Royal Opera House by Sir Thomas Beecham, who was Sir Adrian's opposite in virtually every way. It was in those early days that he became convinced as to how best to serve the music he conducted and the sound he wanted to project to an audience. In a BBC Television broadcast in 1969 he said 'I think that people like Richter and Toscanini would turn in their graves if we played with the second violins on the left behind the firsts. The seconds then have no individuality at all. It also means that the whole of the treble of the strings section goes to the left side . . . you will not have a balanced dish to offer your audience . . . the 2<sup>nd</sup> violins really don't need to do any work at all – they can shelter behind the firsts!'

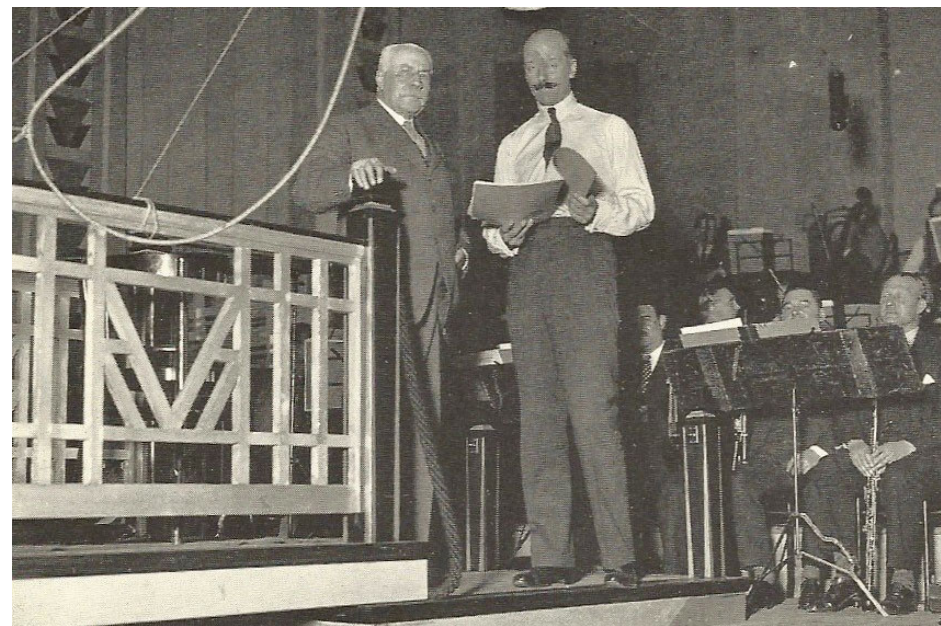
Sir Adrian's first professional engagement, on 27 February 1914, was back home in the Wirral town of West Kirby (where his family had moved). He conducted a programme that included George Butterworth's *The Banks of Green Willow*. In 1924, Sir Adrian's appointment as director of the Birmingham Festival Choral Society led to his move to the then City of Birmingham Orchestra (CBO). The local audience, although welded to traditional programming was, nevertheless, introduced to the music of Mahler and Stravinsky; Sir Adrian and his family subsidising concerts on occasions. It was these six years directing the CBO where his reputation was made. Whilst there, he was able to conduct performances of *Die Walküre* and *Otello* with the touring British National Opera Company and elsewhere *Parsifal* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*. He had also been noticed by the BBC and in 1928 was invited to join the Corporation's Music Advisory Committee.

### With the BBC

In January 1930 Percy Pitt, the BBC's Director of Music, stood down on reaching his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. The BBC, following discussions between Sir John (later Lord) Reith, the Director General, Sir Hugh Allen and Sir Henry Walford Davies asked Sir Adrian to take over as Director with the responsibility of *directing* the music of the Corporation. 'If conducting now and then could be added to direction . . . well and good'.<sup>2</sup> Sir Adrian assumed the position on 15 May and became involved in the planning for the establishment of the BBC's Symphony Orchestra, which would employ up to 110 musicians. Reith's wish that Sir Adrian should primarily be an administrator was soon compromised when it became clear that he insisted on conducting the Orchestra's first concert on 22 May 1930 in Queen's Hall. This was one of those concerts that few who attended would forget. Largely unknown in London, Sir Adrian conducted a programme that began with Wagner's Overture from *Der fliegende Holländer* and ended with the second Suite from Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloë*. In the words of *The Times*' critic 'London now possessed the material of a first-class orchestra'. The excellence of the new orchestra meant that many conductors from overseas were attracted to perform in London, notably Willem Mengelberg, Richard Strauss and Arturo Toscanini. Sir Adrian continued as Director of Music until 1942 when he was at last freed from administrative duties. He now grabbed the additional freedom to work more substantially with the orchestra, conducting many wartime broadcasts which included Beethoven's *Fidelio* and *Missa Solemnis* and rarities such as Wagner's *Das Liebesmahl der Apostel*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Adrian Boult, *My own trumpet* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1973), 94.

Adrian Boult with Elgar in Abbey Road studios, recording Elgar's transcription of Chopin's Funeral March with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, on 30 May 1932.



In his time at the BBC, Sir Adrian conducted an exceptional number of first performances in Britain such as: Alban Berg's *Three Orchestral Pieces*, Busoni's *Dr Faust*, Khachaturian's *Ode to Stalin*, Křenek's Piano Concerto, Malipiero's First and William Schuman's Third Symphonies. Many a composer from Berg, whom Sir Adrian had got to know at a meeting in Cambridge in 1931, to Béla Bartók and Elizabeth Lutyens had reason to be grateful to him for his faithfulness to their music and his determination to get to what he thought were the intentions of the composer. Sir Adrian was also one of the pioneering post-war interpreters of Mahler's music, conducting broadcast performances of many of the symphonies before he took up his position with the LPO.

### *The LPO Years*

In July 1933 Sir Adrian married Ann, who had divorced the tenor Stuart Wilson on the grounds of cruelty. This had unforeseen consequences which were to benefit the LPO. Although senior members of the BBC had given assurances to Sir Adrian that the official retirement age of 60 would not apply to him, much had changed by 1949. What is more, Sir Stuart Wilson (he was knighted in 1948) had been appointed Director of Music at the Corporation following the sudden death of Victor Hely-Hutchinson in 1947. The BBC Symphony Orchestra had lost many of its players to the newly formed Philharmonia and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras and although: 'by 1948 the Orchestra (BBC) was much improved Wilson saw replacement of Sir Adrian as the solution to the Orchestra's problems'.<sup>3</sup> After his extraordinary contribution to the BBC his departure was handled in the most insensitive and discourteous manner.

He now found himself a 'freelancer' with an uncertain future. The LPO, formed by a financial consortium led by the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham gave its first 'electrifying' concert on 7 October 1932. However, following the departure of Sir Thomas overseas in 1940 and the withdrawal of financial support which, with wartime restrictions, threw the future of the LPO into doubt, many musicians did what they could to support the orchestra. As Sir Adrian put it 'someone hit on the idea of lending them [LPO] my services as conductor'.<sup>4</sup> He was, therefore, already known to the players of the LPO by the spring of 1950 when he was approached by Thomas Russell the Orchestra's Managing Director.<sup>5</sup> 'As it turned out, I was only unemployed for two or three days'<sup>6</sup> for Russell wasted little time in asking Sir Adrian to take over the Principal Conductor's position from Eduard van Beinum. He quickly accepted Russell's invitation and threw himself into supporting the orchestra by accepting a substantial workload and by contributing to it financially. Immediately he set to work and began recording with the orchestra, undertaking an exhausting tour of Germany in early 1951, and conducting more concerts than any other conductor in Britain at the time.

In February and August 1933, the orchestra had recorded music by Elgar under the direction of the composer; the magnificent string section showing its quality in the *Serenade in E minor* with

3 Edmund Pirouet, *Heard Melodies are Sweet, A History of the London Philharmonic Orchestra* (Lewes, The Book Guild Ltd, 1998), 92.

4 Boult, 150.

5 In 1943, the film *Battle for Music* tells of the LPO's survival during the early days of WWII. Beautifully restored by the British Film Institute this is a valuable historical document showing the leader Jean Pougnet and conductors such as Warwick Braithwaite, Constant Lambert and Sir Malcolm Sargent directing the players. It also shows Boult conducting part of Elgar's *Cockaigne Overture*.

6 Boult, 147.

the playing of the great Leon Goossens drawing praise from Elgar: 'Leon G's oboe passages in *Froissart* are divine – what an artist!' By 1949 the rebuilding of the orchestra was underway and, although he could not have known it, Sir Adrian's choice of Elgar's A flat Symphony for his first LPO sessions was a sign of great confidence. When released in 1950 the recording suggested both a link to his old friend and a determination to ensure Elgar's music established itself at the heart of the orchestra's music making. Sir Adrian, always supportive of the music of his own country recorded Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad* Rhapsody, Elgar's *Enigma Variations* and Second Symphony, Holst's *The Planets* and Vaughan Williams's 'Masque for Dancing' *Job* four times each and RVW's complete symphonies twice.

During his time as Musical Director of the orchestra Sir Adrian accompanied the players on a number of gruelling overseas tours culminating in a visit to the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1956. Earlier he had advised the LPO management that he would not be going to Russia as flying caused him ear pain and his back trouble was exacerbated on long journeys. With the tour imminent, the Russian authorities suddenly told the orchestra that unless Sir Adrian conducted the tour would be cancelled. Reluctantly he agreed to go and conducted what was a successful series of concerts including in Moscow the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies of Vaughan Williams, *Meditations on a Theme of John Blow* by Bliss, the Violin Concerto of Walton (with Alfredo Campoli), Holst's *The Planets* and what was, clearly, a special performance of Schubert's 'Great' C major Symphony. The journey there and back (now by train) from Paris meant long delays at the borders of East Germany, Poland and Russia.

On his return home Sir Adrian felt the time had come to hand over to John Pritchard, making it clear that he 'was ready to work with them (LPO) as much as possible'.<sup>8</sup> During 1957 he became closely involved in the Elgar centenary celebrations as well as continuing to make recordings for EMI and Decca. It was at this time that Sir Adrian and the LPO began to record for a number of American labels, including Everest, Nixa, Reader's Digest, R.C.A., Vanguard and Westminster. On occasions, for contractual reasons, the orchestra had to be called by another name such as 'Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra'. One remarkable recording he made was for the *Classics for Pleasure* label in 1967. Called 'The LPO on Parade' it allowed Sir Adrian to enjoy his favourite *Dam Busters March* by Eric Coates as well as four Marches by John Philip Sousa. The latter's *The Stars and Stripes Forever* has rarely sounded more thrilling nor as much fun!

Sir Adrian's time with the LPO, although artistically satisfying, was not always smooth going. As well as assisting financially from time to time he was drawn into the so-called 'Russell affair'. Thomas Russell, the Managing Director of the orchestra combined this position with that of Chairman. Russell, as well as being an effective manager of the orchestra, was also a member of the Communist Party. However, this had never interfered with his management of the orchestra which he had been undertaking for ten years when the crisis relating to his position arose in 1952. Russell had accepted an invitation from the Britain-China Friendship Association to join a group of left-wing Labour MPs on a visit to Beijing at a time when British forces were fighting the Chinese army in Korea. Furthermore, he extended his absence by returning via Communist-governed Czechoslovakia and soured his relationship (and therefore that of the orchestra) with the Arts Council, an organisation critical to the finances of the LPO. This also affected the likelihood that the orchestra would be made the 'resident' at the newly built Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank. Sir Adrian who had supported Russell, now became involved by removing his support which, after a close vote of the Orchestra's Board, led to Russell's removal.

7 Letter (13 March 1933) to Fred Gaisberg of HMV.

8 Boult, 166.



### ‘Indian Summer’

Sir Adrian outlived the other four great British conductors of his time: Barbirolli (born 1899), Beecham (born 1879), Sargent (born 1895) and Wood (born 1869). He was devoted to the great Austro-German tradition but, like Barbirolli and Sargent, he was also committed to the music of his own country. He had the privilege of befriending great composers like Vaughan Williams and his espousal of Butterworth’s music helped to ensure this was not forgotten after Butterworth’s premature death. For some Sir Adrian was already old-fashioned by the time he took over the LPO. This is clear in the nevertheless sensitive recordings he made of the music of Bach and Handel in the 1950s and of the ‘unfashionable’ recordings of Bach’s *Brandenburg Concertos* (works he had conducted in his earliest concerts and which he loved) which he set down with the full orchestra in 1972. These show how a great musician will always have something to say about a work no matter how much fashions change!

Those of us who have the privilege of recalling Sir Adrian remember the tall figure, the straight back, the immaculate tails and the unfashionably long stick. Born a Victorian he lived into the digital age, made the BBC Symphony Orchestra one of the great ensembles of its day and worked to turn the LPO into a similar body over the six years he was its conductor. His recorded legacy is substantial but does not fully reflect his wide musical sympathies which extended beyond Brahms, Elgar and Dvořák to Busoni, Mahler and Strauss. Nevertheless, those last years, notably the recordings he made for EMI with Christopher Bishop, produced a legacy which are perhaps unequalled by other conductors of his age. He was a man of simple tastes, eschewing alcohol and enjoying uncomplicated ‘school’ food. His love of what he did never deserted him. Sometime after those last recording sessions, Christopher Bishop mentioned to Sir Adrian (now very infirm) the possibility of recording the symphonies of Robert Schumann one more time. His eyes lit up at the thought, but his body was no longer up to the demands of long recording sessions.

Michael Kennedy, in his biography of Sir Adrian, wrote that when he was considered for the BBC position ‘Boult at this time was not what today we should call charismatic. Whatever may have constituted the general public’s idea of a conductor, it was not Boult. He could not rival the characterful avuncular popularity of Wood; he had none of Beecham’s raffish charm and daredevilry; he lacked the brilliance and panache of Sargent; he had not the magnetic intensity of Barbirolli’.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, he was the BBC’s choice in 1929 and that of the LPO in 1950. The first post placed him in the unique position of both educating and entertaining the British public as they became used to the idea of listening to music ‘on the wireless’ and in creating one of the great orchestras of the time. In the second, he was again closely involved in creating a great orchestra and, as the musical life of Britain developed and advanced in those post-war years, playing a continued major role in the musical life of these islands. Not all the music he conducted was necessarily to his taste but, having seen him conduct often, I would suggest that, at times, Sir Adrian did achieve a level of ‘avuncular popularity, brilliance and panache’ and even ‘magnetic intensity’ but certainly never ‘raffish charm and daredevilry’! Any suggestion of the latter would have appalled him!

In considering Sir Adrian’s legacy it is obvious that he contributed greatly to the opportunities for audiences to hear and understand the orchestral music of his native country. Supported by the British Council, tours of European countries as well as those under Soviet domination would always include a number of British works. With Sir Adrian the LPO was able to celebrate a side of British culture which showed a world beyond Shakespeare and Turner. On one of his appearances on BBC Radio’s *Desert Island Discs* most of his eight recordings were of British music (although

9 Michael Kennedy, *Adrian Boult* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), 132.



Sir Adrian Boult and Ralph Vaughan Williams receiving the Harvard Glee Club medal on 31st July 1956. L to R, RVW, Professor Wallace Woodworth, ACB. (From the collection of Ursula Vaughan Williams kindly provided by Stephen Connock, MBE.)

not conducted by him) but, tellingly, his ‘one record’ was of Mozart’s Symphony in G minor, K.550 conducted by Richard Strauss, a conductor (and composer) he heard and admired.<sup>10</sup>

At his best Sir Adrian, as with any great conductor, could get to the heart of the music. For example, in the Third Symphony by Rachmaninov, he understood the originality of this work, which many of its first hearers failed to grasp. He allowed the long melodic lines to breathe whilst skilfully balancing the lively music with the darker reminders of Rachmaninov’s obsession with the *Dies irae*. In one of the lesser known symphonies of Vaughan Williams, his Eighth in D minor, Sir Adrian points up the surprising scoring with its thrilling use of percussion but, at the same time, bringing out the shadows in the symphony. Once, in the company of the conductor Vernon Handley, I can recall watching a film of Sir Adrian conducting ‘Mars’ from Holst’s *The Planets*. Handley was reduced to tears of laughter as he pointed out how Sir Adrian was ‘fudging’ the beat. As Handley explained, ‘Only a great conductor could do that!’ He was, of course an ideal accompanist, Dame

10 In c.1980 Andrew Keener recorded an interview with Sir Adrian which included a memory of a concert in the summer of 1914. ‘Strauss was a great conductor’ recalled Sir Adrian, remembering how Strauss rehearsed three of his orchestral works and ‘finished in an hour and a half. “Now let’s get down to business” Strauss said and then concentrated on the Mozart G minor Symphony during the remaining rehearsal sessions’.



Janet Baker saying that one of the happiest recordings she made was with the LPO under Sir Adrian of Brahms's *Alto Rhapsody* and Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*.

In 1968 the BBC made a television recording of *The Dream of Gerontius* with Sir Adrian conducting the LPO in Canterbury Cathedral. This was broadcast on Easter Day. Janet Baker (now at her greatest) sang the role of The Angel with the tenor Peter Pears singing the part of Gerontius and the matchless John Shirley-Quirk as the Priest and Angel of the Agony. Admittedly the sound of the TV broadcast is not the finest but, with Sir Adrian's insightful conducting and the LPO and Chorus filling the recesses of the Cathedral, this has to be one of the finest recorded performances of *Gerontius*.

### **Legacy**

It is now over 40 years since Sir Adrian last conducted the LPO but some of those who played under him remember the time vividly. Michael Boyle, who joined the orchestra in 1962 as second bassoon and is a member of our Society 'first encountered Sir Adrian when a young player just out of music college. I soon got used to his beat which, compared to some of his contemporaries as diverse as Georg Solti and Rudolph Schwarz, was relatively clear. To conserve energy in a four-in-a-bar passage he would leave out the third beat, but otherwise we did not find it a problem. A budding student conductor watching him at a rehearsal might find his approach puzzling. He would not say anything for a while, only stopping to make a point about balance affecting mock surprise that the orchestra had not noticed it themselves "Are you sure you can hear the solo oboe at letter H?". Only if the ensemble faltered momentarily, his beat would become exaggeratedly clear, his eyes would flash, and his moustache seemed to bristle. With a familiar work such as a Brahms or Elgar symphony he would leave out long passages: "this plays itself"; saving energy for the concert itself, often finishing a rehearsal early. He always showed great loyalty to the LPO where he felt comfortable. He would trust the players' professional experience'. Keith Millar who, was principal percussionist with the Orchestra, confirms this: 'He (Sir Adrian) was from the old school. Sir Adrian was the perfect gentleman. His conducting technique was wonderful, but he hardly did anything: he never moved his hands above his waist, he just did everything really with his wrist, but it was all there. He would just do as little as necessary, but he made everything work for you'.

If there was sympathy, then there were rewards. After a visit for tea with the Elgars in February 1918 Lady Elgar noted: 'He seemed really to understand'. Vaughan Williams wrote to Sir Adrian after a performance of his A London Symphony saying that was 'real conducting – you get just what you want and know what you want, and your players trust you because they know it also'. There are many conductors, as Society medal holder Adrian Brown attests, who remain grateful to Sir Adrian's generosity in teaching them for no charge as were the members of the BBC Symphony orchestra he founded, not only for his outstanding leadership but for his work in maintaining the BBC's music in wartime, at times under very difficult conditions. Later with the LPO, the orchestra he helped rescue, he improved its standards and therefore its reputation. During his time 'at the helm' and afterwards the LPO became one of the leading European ensembles. Finally, there are the recordings Sir Adrian made with the LPO. As long as recordings exist, these will be played, such as of the symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms Dvořák, Mozart and Elgar, Schubert's 'Great' C major, the music of Sibelius and Tchaikovsky and British music especially Elgar's *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, music by Holst and Parry, Vaughan Williams's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Job* and nine symphonies. Of all the music of composers with which Sir Adrian is associated perhaps that of Elgar, Holst and Vaughan Williams was the closest.

The LPO's set of recordings concludes with the concert overture *In the South* by the composer whose music he did as much as anyone to promote and for whom he would become one of his most devoted and greatest interpreters. Sir Adrian always took great interest in our Society, sending greetings to our AGMs and asking for a report afterwards. We, his audience, listeners to his recordings and members of this Society have every reason to be grateful now as we would have been 70 years ago.

### **The Discs - all with the LPO:**

1. Elgar Symphony - No 1 & Vaughan-Williams - Symphony No 6
2. Beethoven - Symphony No 3, Bruch - *Kol Nidrei*, Dohnányi - *Variations on a Nursery Theme* (a broadcast performance with pianist Patricia Bishop)
3. 'Music for the Dance' – Delibes, Holst & Stravinsky
4. Bartók - *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, Sibelius - *Lemminkäinen's Return*, Saint-Saëns & Walton
5. From Broadcasts: Arnold - Organ Concerto (with organist Hugh Mclean), Bax – *The Garden of Fand*, Butterworth - *Rhapsody A Shropshire Lad*, Stanford - *Songs of the Fleet* (with Frederick Harvey), Elgar - *In the South*.

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## Sir John Barbirolli, CH: An Elgarian Perspective

David L. Jones

Barbirolli and Elgar are inextricably linked in my mind. The first time I heard a major Elgar work performed live, it was with the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli. That performance, of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, was given in Sheffield in March 1958 - when I was an impressionable 20-year old - and I was completely blown away by it! The Hallé and Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus were joined by three distinguished soloists, Constance Shacklock (contralto), David Galliver (tenor) and Hervey Alan (bass). All were on top form. That magnificent performance opened my eyes to the power and beauty of Elgar's music and initiated my life-long enthusiasm for it. After the concert, I went round to the artists' 'green room' where Barbirolli and two of the soloists autographed my programme. It was one of half-a-dozen such occasions when I was thrilled to meet Barbirolli (if that is not too grand a word for such a 'brief encounter') and, on each occasion, he autographed my concert programme. No matter how exhausted he must have been after conducting a concert, he always found time to exchange a few words, and when he engaged you in conversation, those deep, dark, penetrating eyes fixed you with a gaze which I shall never forget. Countless members of his audiences must have similar memories.

### *Early life as a Cellist*

That is how I came to be acquainted with Elgar's music and to be fascinated by it. But far more importantly, what about Barbirolli - how did he come to it? He was born, Giovanni Batista Barbirolli, in London on 2 December 1899. The details of Barbirolli's musical family background, his early childhood violin and then cello lessons from his grandfather, followed by formal studies as a cellist at the Trinity College of Music (1910 to 1912) and the Royal Academy of Music (1912 to 1916) are all well-known and documented, as is the fact that at the age of 16, and after completing his formal studies at the RAM, he became (as a cellist) the youngest member of Henry Wood's Queen's Hall Orchestra. He gained valuable experience there as an orchestral musician by playing in numerous performances at the Promenade Concerts in the 1916 and 1917 seasons. As a talented young musician, he was able to gain freelance engagements in a variety of orchestras and ensembles. Exactly when he first became acquainted with the music of Elgar is not recorded but, in an interview at the age of 70, he commented that he had been interested in the music of Elgar almost since childhood. In 1933 he wrote: 'We had an excellent concert with my Trinity College pupils on Saturday. A young girl (17) made a splendid show with the Elgar Violin Concerto. From my boyhood I have preferred this to almost any other concerto, and time does not seem to make me change that opinion'.<sup>1</sup> He gave his first solo recital as a cellist in 1917 and, in the years that

1 Barbirolli to D.C.Parker 4 April 1933, Michael Kennedy, *Barbirolli: Conductor Laureate* (The Barbirolli

followed, he gained much valuable experience as an orchestral musician, and by playing in several string quartets. He also gave a number of solo recitals.

His first documented connection with Elgar's music was on 27 October 1919, as one of the cellists in the London Symphony Orchestra for the first performance of the Cello Concerto (with Felix Salmond as soloist) and which Elgar conducted. This experience spurred Barbirolli on to learn the work and on 27 January 1921 he was the soloist in a performance with the Bournemouth Municipal (later Symphony) Orchestra conducted by Dan Godfrey. After the premiere in 1919, Salmond gave other performances of the work (including one in Manchester with the Hallé in 1920) and Beatrice Harrison recorded the work with Elgar for HMV in November 1920, but Barbirolli was almost certainly only the third musician to take up the work as a soloist. In 1923, he anglicised his name to John Barbirolli<sup>2</sup> for a recital at the Aeolian Hall, London on 12 June, when he was the cellist in an arrangement of the Cello Concerto for cello and piano with Harold Craxton as pianist. Early in 1924, Barbirolli became the cellist in André Mangeot's Music Society Quartet and he later joined the Kutcher Quartet, which was formed and led by his former fellow student at Trinity, Samuel Kutcher. Later that year, Barbirolli formed a string orchestra of twelve players which principally performed at concerts organised by the Guild of Singers and Players. It was later enlarged to include other instruments and so extended its repertoire. In the autumn of 1925, the activities of his chamber orchestra were further extended as a result of the opening of the New Chenil Galleries in the Kings Road, Chelsea, and the orchestra was renamed The Chenil Chamber Orchestra. The New Chenil Gallery music committee included John Goss, Eugène Goossens, Philip Heseltine, John Ireland, E.J. Moeran and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Barbirolli was appointed conductor of the new orchestra and at their second concert on 16 October 1925, one of the items performed was Elgar's *Elegy* for Strings. Not all the programme details of the Chenil Galleries concerts have survived, although the dates of many of the concerts have now been documented. But, on 19 October 1926, Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* for Strings was conducted there by Barbirolli, alongside Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 6* and Mozart's *Adagio*, K.546.<sup>3</sup>

In October 1927, he recorded Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* for the National Gramophonic Society. This was the first recording of the work and it was issued on CD for the first time by The Barbirolli Society in 2019. Although labelled on the original NGS 78 rpm records as The National Gramophonic Society Chamber Orchestra, it was in fact The Chenil Chamber Orchestra. When Elgar heard the recording, he remarked that he had not realised that it was such a large work. It is interesting to note that although Elgar recorded the majority of his own major works, he never recorded this work himself.

### *Early conducting career*

On 12 December 1927, Barbirolli's first opportunity to conduct a major orchestral work by Elgar (Symphony No. 2) came at a concert given by the London Symphony Orchestra at the Queen's Hall in London. He was deputising for an indisposed Thomas Beecham, at short notice, and although he had heard Elgar conduct the symphony, Barbirolli had never studied the score. The other works in the concert were Haydn's *London Symphony* and his D Major Cello Concerto (with Casals as

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Society, 2003), 94.

2 He had previously used 'John' whilst in the army but reverted to his baptised names on leaving

3 For a full account of Barbirolli's career see Raymond Holden, *Barbirolli: A Chronicle of a Career* (The Barbirolli Society and Royal Academy of Music), 2016.



soloist). The concert was well received and favourably reviewed by the critics. Elgar received enthusiastic reports of the performance from W.H. Reed and Frank Schuster and he wrote to Barbirolli on 14 December, 'I hear splendid accounts of your conducting of the symphony concert on Monday last; for your kind care of my work I send you my sincere thanks'.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, at a Musician's Club dinner in 1929 at which Elgar spoke and Barbirolli was present, Elgar addressed him as 'a rising hope of music in England for whom I have admiration and in whose work I have confidence'.<sup>5</sup> This performance of the Second Symphony had other important ramifications. Fred Gaisberg, the influential artistic director of HMV, was present at the concert and Barbirolli was immediately offered a recording contract with them. This was to have far-reaching effects for him. By joining HMV, he was soon recording with internationally famous instrumental and vocal soloists, and larger orchestras. Their professional opinions of him and their influence in music circles undoubtedly influenced the development of his subsequent career. The first two Elgar items which Barbirolli recorded for HMV were two excerpts from *Caractacus* – 'Oh! My Warriors' and 'Leap, Leap to Light' – sung by Peter Dawson with an un-named symphony orchestra. In January 1929, Barbirolli re-recorded Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* for HMV with the John Barbirolli Chamber Orchestra<sup>6</sup> – it is still a much-revered recording. Then, in April 1929, he recorded two items from *Sea Pictures* – 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' and 'Where Corals Lie' – with Maartje Offers, contralto. Only the latter item was issued.<sup>7</sup>

In December 1925, at a Wigmore Hall concert, Barbirolli had conducted a scene from Bernard Van Dieren's comic opera *The Tailor*. Frederic Austin, artistic director of The British National Opera Company, was in the audience for that performance and he was deeply impressed by Barbirolli's conducting of it. He offered Barbirolli the chance to conduct some of The BNOC's productions. Barbirolli was both surprised and delighted by this offer and subsequently joined the company in the autumn of 1926. It was a pivotal point in his conducting career and occupied a major part of his professional activities until the end of 1932. During this six-year period he conducted complete performances of many operas with The BNOC (from 1926 – 1929), its successor, the Covent Garden Opera Company – a touring company (from 1930-1932) and, from May 1927 onwards, he conducted, on a number of occasions, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Barbirolli (who is not primarily thought of as an opera conductor) conducted a total of 386 performances of 16 different complete operas<sup>8</sup>. During this period (from 1926 to 1932) he continued to give recitals as a cellist, to conduct the John Barbirolli Chamber Orchestra, guest-conduct some other orchestras and make numerous recordings.

### In Scotland

In November 1930, Barbirolli made a short series of guest appearances in Glasgow and Edinburgh as conductor of the Scottish Orchestra (SO) (now the Royal Scottish National Orchestra). This subsequently led to six weeks of engagements to conduct them during the second half of their

4 Michael Kennedy, *Barbirolli: Conductor Laureate*, 61.

5 Ibid., 62.

6 The Chenil Chamber Orchestra had by now become the John Barbirolli Chamber Orchestra

7 For a detailed account of Barbirolli's association with Elgar see, K.D. Mitchell, 'Any Friend of Elgar's is a Friend of Mine: Barbirolli and Elgar' *The Elgar Society Journal*, volume 11 number 5 (July 2000), 250-269. Eds.

8 Some later recording sessions are also included in this total number

1932-33 season, and then to his appointment as their permanent conductor from the beginning of the 1933-34 season. The SO's main seasons of concerts were given in their home base, St. Andrew's Hall in Glasgow, and at the Usher Hall in Edinburgh, and there were occasional visits to other venues throughout Scotland. SO concerts were also regularly broadcast on the BBC's Scottish Regional Service. Barbirolli's symphonic repertoire was rapidly and extensively expanded during his time with the SO and works by Elgar appeared frequently in his programmes with them.

The works he conducted with the SO between 1933 and 1937 were: the *Cockaigne Overture*, *Elegy*, Elgar's arrangement of Handel's *Overture in D minor*, *The Variations on an Original Theme (Enigma)*, *Grania and Diarmid* Incidental Music, *The Light of Life* – Prelude, *Pomp and Circumstance* March No. 1, *Romance* for Bassoon and Orchestra, *Sea Pictures*, Symphony No. 1, Symphony No. 2, and the Violin Concerto (with soloists Albert Sammons and David McCallum). Altogether, Barbirolli conducted 45 performances of Elgar's works during his time with this orchestra. No recordings exist as the SO did not make any commercial recordings at this time. It was during his time with them that Barbirolli made a vow:

Barbirolli was already beginning to regard his Elgar performances as his special mission in life. And as he told Charles Parker [music critic for the Glasgow Evening Times], 'I still feel the mass of our public is still far from a true appreciation of his greatness'. And, walking with [his wife] Evelyn in Glasgow one night, he took her to Lister's house in Woodside and, there, vowed to do all that he could to make people, both in Great Britain and overseas, appreciate the true greatness of Elgar.<sup>9</sup>

Before taking up his permanent appointment with the orchestra, Barbirolli went to visit Elgar at Marl Bank. There, Elgar showed him his garden and the view of the Cathedral towers from his bedroom window, talked to him about music and played some of his HMV recording of *Falstaff*. That was in the autumn of 1933 and only a few months before Elgar died in February 1934.

During spring 1935, Barbirolli undertook his very first guest-conducting tour abroad - to Helsinki, Leningrad, and Hilversum. He included Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* and the *Variations* in his programmes.



**John Barbirolli with photograph of Elgar and Marco - 1930s. It is possible that Elgar gave the photograph to Barbirolli when he visited Marl Bank on 19 August 1933.**

9 Michael Kennedy, *Barbirolli: Conductor Laureate*, 105.

## New York

The next pivotal point in Barbirolli's career came with an invitation from the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York for a ten-week guest appearance following the departure of Arturo Toscanini as their conductor. In the second pair of concerts during his first week with the orchestra, Barbirolli conducted Elgar's *Variations*. This Sunday concert was broadcast on the American CBS network. Within weeks, he was offered the post of Principal Conductor - starting in October 1937.

In November 1937, he introduced Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* to his New York audiences and, thereafter, Elgar works appeared in his programmes on more than 50 occasions during the next five years. The works performed were: Cello Concerto (Piatigorsky), Cello Concerto arranged for Viola (Tertis), *Cockaigne* Overture, Elgar's arrangement of Handel's *Overture in D minor, Variations, Introduction and Allegro*, Symphony No. 2, Violin Concerto (Heifetz). Although Barbirolli made numerous studio recordings for the RCA Victor and American Columbia labels during his tenure in New York, none of Elgar's works were included. However, his Sunday afternoon concerts were regularly broadcast over the American CBS network and a single memorable performance - of Elgar's Cello Concerto (with Piatigorsky as soloist) - has survived and has been issued on CD. On holiday during summer months, and unable to leave the USA during World War Two, he made a number of guest-conducting appearances with American orchestras - including one in July 1940 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, at the gigantic Hollywood Bowl, in which he conducted Elgar's *Variations* before an estimated audience of over twenty thousand people.

## To Manchester

Homesick and worried about his family back in war-torn Britain, Barbirolli made a hazardous return journey across the Atlantic in early summer 1942 to conduct (without fees) a series of concerts in the UK. Here, his programmes with the London Symphony and London Philharmonic Orchestras included performances of the *Introduction and Allegro*, the *Variations* and *Carillon*. When, in 1943, he received an invitation from the Hallé in Manchester to become its permanent conductor, he accepted without hesitation. The story of his rebuilding of the Hallé from only 26 remaining players, the preparations and rehearsals for their first concert in just five weeks, the amazing standard of playing which he obtained from the orchestra and the punishing schedule of concerts given in wartime Britain were legendary and described as a 'A Miracle in Manchester'. In recognition of his services to music he was knighted in 1949, the Royal Philharmonic Society awarded him its Gold Medal in 1950 (presented by Vaughan Williams) and he was made a Companion of Honour in June 1969. A personal and famous sobriquet was coined by R.V.W. after the first performance of his *Sinfonia Antartica* in January 1953 when he wrote in Barbirolli's programme: 'For glorious John, the glorious conductor of a glorious orchestra'.

From the very beginning of his permanent appointment with the Hallé, Barbirolli included works by Elgar in his programmes. The *Variations* and *Introduction and Allegro* were included in the first week of concerts which the rebuilt orchestra gave in Bradford in early July 1943. But, this was not the first time that Barbirolli had conducted works by Elgar with the Hallé. In January 1934, whilst working as chief conductor of the Scottish Orchestra, Barbirolli made a guest appearance with the Hallé at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, where his programme included the *Introduction and Allegro*. A year later, Barbirolli was back in Manchester on 15 February 1934 to conduct an all-Elgar programme with the Hallé. The concert was scheduled to have been conducted by Elgar,

who by that time was gravely ill. Barbirolli conducted an unchanged programme which comprised *Cockaigne*, the Violin Concerto (with Albert Sammons as soloist), *Froissart* and the *Variations*. Elgar died eight days later, on 23 February 1934. Three years later, in February 1937, Barbirolli returned to the Hallé in Manchester to conduct Elgar's Symphony No. 2.

Up to this time, gramophone recordings of works by Elgar conducted by Barbirolli had been few and far between – just six studio recordings and the one live recording from New York in 1940. Between 1947 and 1970, there were many more studio recordings and a number of live recordings from broadcast concerts, both with the Hallé and with various other orchestras.

Between 1943 and 1970, Barbirolli conducted over 600 performances of 22 of Elgar's works, with the Hallé Orchestra, at 108 venues in Great Britain and at 24 venues abroad (Africa, Eire, Europe, Mexico, and Chile). Listed in order by their frequency of performance, the Elgar works which he performed included:

*Variations* (172), Symphony No. 2 (82), *Introduction and Allegro* (63), *The Dream of Gerontius* (37), *Serenade in E minor* (37), *Cockaigne* Overture (35), Symphony No. 1 (34), *Falstaff* (26), Cello Concerto (25), Violin Concerto (20), *Elegy for Strings* (11), *Sea Pictures* (10), *Froissart* Overture (8), Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 (5), Pomp and Circumstance March No. 4 (3), *In the South* (3), 'Land of Hope and Glory' (3), *Three Bavarian Dances - Lullaby* (1), *Dream Children - No. 1* (1), *Grania and Diarmid - Funeral March* (1), *Nursery Suite - The Serious Doll* (1), and - *The Waggon Passes* (1).

## Beyond Manchester

In the first fifteen years of his appointment with the Hallé (i.e. between 1943 and 1958), Barbirolli had spent the majority of his time conducting them, but had also from time to time undertaken a number of guest conducting engagements with other British orchestras or overseas organisations. These included the BBC Scottish and Northern, London Philharmonic and London Symphony Orchestras, in the UK - with all of which his programmes had included works by Elgar. Abroad, he had conducted the *Variations* with several orchestras in Italy in 1944; the *Introduction and Allegro* with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in Salzburg and Vienna in 1946; *Cockaigne*, in Florence in 1949; *Introduction and Allegro* and the *Variations* with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra at the Edinburgh Festival in 1949; the *Variations, Serenade in E minor* and Symphony No. 2, in Australia in 1951; *Introduction and Allegro* and *The Dream of Gerontius*, again in Australia in 1955; the *Variations*, with the Tonhalle Orchestra in Zurich in 1957; *The Dream of Gerontius*, in Dublin in 1957; the *Variations*, in Turin, and *The Dream of Gerontius*, in Rome – both in November 1957. On 29 September 1958, he conducted Part One of *The Dream of Gerontius* in the presence of Pope Pius XII at Castel Gondolfo – the Papal Summer Residence. It was only a few days before the Pope's death, and it was the last music that Pius heard. As Michael Kennedy reports in his biography, Barbirolli later stated, 'I have often wondered what the feelings of Newman and Elgar would be if they could know that the last words he [the Pope] heard had been the setting of Newman's words, "Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul"''.<sup>10</sup>

At the end of the Hallé's Centenary Season (1957-58), Barbirolli had completed fifteen years in which he had dedicated most of his time to them. He decided to reduce his commitments with the Hallé to allow himself more time to conduct with major orchestras abroad, following frequent

10 Michael Kennedy, *Barbirolli: Conductor Laureate*, 258.



requests. He wanted, among many things, to conduct again in America. So, in early 1959 he returned to New York (after an absence of fifteen years) to conduct the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in a series of concerts which included four performances, in Carnegie Hall on consecutive nights in January 1959, of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*. A recording taken from these complete performances was issued on CD in 2010 by West Hill Radio Archives. It is part of a four CD set which also includes works by several other composers performed by Barbirolli with the NYPO during this visit to the USA.

Between 1961 and 1967, Barbirolli was also the Principal Conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra (HSO). He conducted thirty performances of works by Elgar during his tenure with the HSO, including fifteen performances in Houston of the *Variations*, four of Symphony No. 1 and two of Symphony No. 2. He also took the HSO on Spring tours in four consecutive years, in which he conducted the *Variations* in concerts given in many States of the USA and in Canada.

Apart from several visits abroad with the Hallé, during which Elgar works were played, Barbirolli conducted over a hundred performances of works by Elgar as guest-conductor with over forty different orchestras - including performances in Australia, Canada, Caribbean Islands, Eire, Europe (in a total of seven countries), Israel, South America, the USA and Canada.

### Final decade

Barbirolli's final decade was thus a period of intense and varied activity – making it one of his most productive periods both at home (here in the UK) and abroad. He also returned to conducting opera.

In September 1963 on a tour in South America with the Philharmonia Orchestra, he conducted the *Variations* in Rio de Janeiro. Then, in October 1964, Symphony No. 2 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Boston; in June 1965, the Cello Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra; followed by eight performances of the *Introduction and Allegro*, with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. In August 1965, on tour in South America with the New Philharmonia Orchestra, they performed the *Introduction and Allegro* - in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Georgetown (Guyana), Port of Spain (Trinidad) and Kingston (Jamaica). On tour with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in January 1967, he conducted the Cello Concerto (with Jacqueline du Pré) in Prague and Moscow, and then, in Leningrad, *Sea Pictures* (with Heather Harper) as well as Symphony No. 2. Later in 1967, on two of his many visits to Berlin, there were performances of *Introduction and Allegro* and the *Variations*. In June 1968, he took the Hallé to South America and the Caribbean - where they performed Symphony No. 2 in Mexico City, Santiago and Kingston, Jamaica. In July 1969, Barbirolli appeared, as a guest conductor, with L'Orchestra National de l'Opera de Monte-Carlo (now the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo), where he conducted the *Variations* and some unspecified Elgar songs; and during a visit to Los Angeles, in November 1969, he performed



Barbirolli recording at EMI in 1965  
(Warner EMI archive)

*Introduction and Allegro* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. On the very last occasion on which he conducted an Elgar work abroad (on 13 May 1970), it was a work very dear to his heart - *The Dream of Gerontius* - in Dublin, with the RTE National Symphony Orchestra, Our Lady's Choral Society (one of his favourite choirs), and soloists Bernadette Greevy (mezzo-soprano), Ronald Dowd (tenor) and David Ward (bass).

During his final decade (1960-1970) and despite reducing his concert performances with the Hallé, there is documentary evidence of over 150 performances of individual Elgar items with them during this period. By this time, the majority of the Elgar works he conducted had been in his repertoire for decades, but there were two notable exceptions. In 1966, he recorded *Sospiri* with the New Philharmonia Orchestra for HMV. As Elgarians will know, this is an exquisite little adagio for string orchestra, harp and organ – surely a genre close to Barbirolli's heart - but this recording session is the only occasion on which he is known to have conducted the work.

*In the South (Allassio)* was the other exception. It was Michael Kennedy who persuaded him to study and perform this work, pointing out to him that 'of all Elgar's works this, the Anglo-Italian one, was made for an Elgarian Anglo-Italian conductor'.<sup>11</sup> After carefully studying it, he gave three vibrant performances in April and May 1970, in Manchester, Sheffield and in the Royal Festival Hall, London. On each occasion the other item in the programme was Bruckner's Eighth Symphony. I was fortunately able to be present at the Manchester concert on 30 April, and it was an unforgettable experience. Michael Kennedy wrote: 'As could easily have been predicted, he went to the heart of the music'.<sup>12</sup> The Royal Festival Hall concert (a Royal Philharmonic Society event, and Barbirolli's last appearance with the Hallé in London) was broadcast by the BBC. The concert was recorded and has been issued on CD.

His penultimate concert (24 July 1970) was an all-Elgar concert given by the Hallé at the King's Lynn Festival. Here they performed the *Introduction and Allegro*, *Sea Pictures* with Kirsten Meyer and Symphony No. 1. This was broadcast by the BBC and all three works have been issued on CD (although *Sea Pictures* has, so far, only been issued on the Intaglio label in Italy).

### Elgar recordings

Here is a list summarising all Barbirolli's known Elgar recordings which have been issued to date. Fifty-six of his recordings of works by Elgar have been issued from both studio and live recordings.

#### Between 1927 and 1940, the following items were recorded:

- (1927) *Introduction and Allegro* (National Gramophonic Society Chamber Orchestra) (NGS)
- (1928) *Caractacus* – 'Leap, Leap to Light' and 'Oh! My warriors' (Peter Dawson) (HMV)
- (1929) *Introduction and Allegro* (John Barbirolli Chamber Orchestra) (HMV)
- (1929) *Sea Pictures* – 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' and 'Where Corals Lie' (Maartje Offers) (HMV)
- (1940) Cello Concerto (Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York and Piatigorsky) (CBS Live)

#### Between 1947 and 1957, he made the following recordings with the Hallé, for HMV and Pye:

- (1947) *Elegy, Introduction and Allegro, Bavarian Dances* (Lullaby), *Variations* (1949) *Serenade*; (1950) *Cockaigne Overture, Dream Children – No. 1*
- (1953) *Introduction and Allegro*; (1954) *Cockaigne Overture, Symphony No. 2*

11 Michael Kennedy, *Barbirolli: Conductor Laureate*, 260.

12 Ibid.

(1956) (Pye) *Variations*, Symphony No. 1, *Elegy*, *Introduction and Allegro*  
(1957) (Pye) Cello Concerto (André Navarra, cello).

**The live recordings from broadcasts between 1951 and 1959 are:**

(23 March 1951) *The Dream of Gerontius* – [Part Two only] (Hallé Orchestra, F.T.H., Manchester)  
(16 November 1951) ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ (Kathleen Ferrier, Hallé Orch. and Choir, Manchester)  
(15 November 1957) *Variations* (Turin Radio Symphony Orchestra)  
(20 November 1957) *The Dream of Gerontius* (Rome Radio Symphony Orchestra)  
(30 January 1958) Symphony No. 1 (Hallé Orchestra, F.T.H., Manchester – Hallé Centenary Concert)  
(21 August 1958) *Sea Pictures* – (Hallé Orchestra, Constance Shacklock) (Royal Albert Hall, London)  
(3-25 January 1959) *Introduction and Allegro* and *The Dream of Gerontius* (New York Philharmonic)



Barbirolli and Jacqueline du Pré recording Elgar's Cello Concerto on 19 August 1965 at Kingsway Hall, London (Warner EMI archive).

**The HMV Studio Recordings between 1962 and 1966 are:**

(May & August 1962) *Variations* (Philharmonia Orchestra)  
(August 1962) *Cockaigne*, Symphony No. 1., Pomp and Circumstance Marches Nos. 1 & 4. (Philharmonia)  
(May 1962) *Serenade and Introduction and Allegro* (Sinfonia of London)  
(1964) *Falstaff*, Symphony No. 2, and *The Dream of Gerontius* (all with the Hallé Orchestra)  
(1965) Cello Concerto (du Pré) and *Sea Pictures* (Baker) both with the London Symphony Orchestra  
(1966) Pomp and Circumstance Marches Nos. 2, 3 and 5, *Froissart*, *Elegy* for Strings and *Sospiri* (New Philharmonia Orch.)

The above recordings were Barbirolli's final studio recordings of Elgar works. However, he continued to conduct Elgar, in concert, to the very end of his life and several important 'live recordings' have been issued from these final years:

**The Live Recordings from broadcasts between 1967 and 1970 are:**

(3 Jan 1967) Cello Concerto (BBCSO, Jacqueline du Pré, in Prague)  
(9 Aug 1968) Cello Concerto (Hallé Orchestra, Vladimir Orloff. BBC Prom Concert, R.A.H., London)  
(18 Dec 1969) *Introduction and Allegro* (Hallé, F.T.H., Manchester – JB's 70th Birthday Concert)  
(20 May 1970) *In the South* (Hallé, R.F.H., London)  
(24 July 1970) *Introduction and Allegro*, *Sea Pictures* (Kirsten Meyer) and Symphony No. 1  
(This was an all-Elgar programme given by the Hallé Orchestra at the King's Lynn Music Festival).<sup>13</sup>

It is not the purpose of this article to comment on the comparative merits of Barbirolli's recordings of Elgar compared with those of other conductors, but Barbirolli's musicianship and his love of Elgar shines through in the vast majority of his recordings made over a period of almost forty years. I must mention a few that I regard as very special. For obvious reasons, as mentioned at the start of this article, his sublime Hallé recording of *The Dream of Gerontius*, from December 1964, is at the top of my list. I would not wish to be without his wonderful readings of the string works which he recorded with the Sinfonia of London in 1962. I know that there has been some criticism of his 1964 Hallé recording of the Symphony No. 2, because of his slow tempos in sections of the first movement, but then just listen to the way Barbirolli brings out that line for the first violins which comes in the late climax of the second movement. 1964 must have been a vintage year, because I also rate very highly his magnificent Hallé recording of *Falstaff*. The Hallé is in top form in all three of these 1964 recordings and Elgar's writing and his masterful scoring of *Falstaff* gives various individual Hallé musicians a chance to shine in the wonderful cameos which they are given to perform in this work. It is also interesting to compare Barbirolli's nine recordings of *Introduction and Allegro*, five of the Cello Concerto, four of the *Variations* and Symphony No. 1 and three of *Cockaigne*, *Elegy*, *Sea Pictures*, and *The Dream of Gerontius* - two of which are live.



Sir John Barbirolli in the 1960s (Warner EMI archive)

13 For a detailed account of Barbirolli's recordings see David L. Jones, *Sir John Barbirolli: A Career on Record with Discography*, (The Barbirolli Society), 2011; K.D. Mitchell, 'A Discography of Barbirolli's Elgar Recordings', *The Elgar Society Journal*, Volume 12 Number 1 (March 2001), 31-49; Malcolm Walker, *Discography in Michael Kennedy, Barbirolli: Conductor Laureate* (MacGibbon & Kee, 1971), 337- 402\*\*; and John Knowles, *Elgar's Interpreters on Record: An Elgar Discography* (Thames Publishing), 1986 and <http://www.elgarsociety.org>.

\*\*NB the reissue of this book by The Barbirolli Society omits the Walker discography. Eds



### *A remarkable achievement*

In my presentation last year to the North West Branch of this Society, I talked about the vast number of works (more than 20,000 in fact) which Sir John had conducted at well over 5,000 concerts in more than 600 venues throughout the world during his long professional conducting career (1924 to 1970). The full extent of all his commercially released recordings is no less impressive. More than 900 recorded items have been issued and they are all well documented. They range from single items or excerpts to huge orchestral works, and four complete operas. At the time of his death in 1970, most of the issued material was from his commercial studio recordings. Since then, a large number of 'live' recordings from broadcasts or concerts have come to light and have been issued on CD. In June 2020, The Barbirolli Society issued a live BBC recording of Barbirolli's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Concert given on 18 December 1969 in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester - a truly memorable concert which I was fortunate enough to attend. The programme comprised Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro*, Vaughan Williams' Sixth Symphony and, after the interval, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. The full BBC broadcast also included an interview with Barbirolli and heartfelt tributes from friends and colleagues. All of this is captured magically on these two recently issued CDs.

It is now fifty years since Sir John Barbirolli died and the number of people who saw and heard him conduct live in concert is obviously diminishing with time, and so the legacy which Barbirolli has left us becomes progressively more important. Writers leave behind their books for posterity, poets give us their enduring poetry, artists paint pictures which survive for generations - but the only tangible thing which musicians (and that includes conductors) can leave behind is their recordings as a lasting testimony to their artistry. That is something which Pauline Pickering (who founded The Barbirolli Society in 1972) was always keen to point out. That Society's main aim is to keep alive the art of Sir John Barbirolli through the release of his recordings.<sup>14</sup>

Earlier in this article I mentioned that, in the early 1930s, Barbirolli made a vow to do all that he could to make people, both in Great Britain and overseas, appreciate the true greatness of Elgar. To quote a phrase that Sir John himself once uttered, I think we can say - 'Mission accomplished!'

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*David Jones is Honorary Secretary of the North West Branch of the Elgar Society. In May 1972 he joined both the Barbirolli Society and the Elgar Society. Until retirement 23 years ago, a heavy workload and frequent on-call duties as a consultant surgeon in Manchester, precluded any active role in either Society. He helped rejuvenate the Barbirolli Society in 1994 and has been an active committee member since then. The Barbirolli Society published his detailed discography in 2011. An updated version is in preparation. About 15 years ago he joined the committee of the North West Branch of the Elgar Society and in recent years he has been actively involved in all aspects of branch activities. He has helped with the maintenance of the national membership database and the development of the associated 7-Zip encryption system.*

14 Many of Sir John's studio and live recordings mentioned in this article have been issued by The Barbirolli Society and all are still available from their catalogue and various commercial and internet sources. Information is available from <http://www.barbirollisociety.co.uk/>

## Elgar - Views From and For the Continent

### Christopher Redwood

A recent research project involving examination of early newspapers and magazines, principally *The Musical Times*, uncovered two interesting reports of Elgar's 1911 invitation to Turin, where he conducted Toscanini's orchestra in two programmes consisting almost entirely of his own music. That on October 18 followed Weber's *Euryanthe* Overture and Mozart's 40<sup>th</sup> Symphony with the *Enigma* Variations, the March from *Caractacus* and the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*. (Toscanini had conducted that last work several times on the orchestra's recent tour so they knew it well.) The second concert, on October 20, opened with Mendelssohn's *Ruy Blas* Overture and continued with the *Larghetto* from Elgar's Second Symphony, the Introduction to Part One of *Gerontius* and a performance of the Violin Concerto with Michael Zacharewitsch.

The Italian press received the concerts with enthusiasm. Indeed, one of its principal papers seemed almost to have recruited a critic from its art pages, who wrote: 'Similar to a painter's palette, vibrating with luminosity, rich in the most vivid and varied colours, harmonising together in a gorgeous and sumptuous concord of tints and unexpected effects, the inspiration which we had already admired ... appeared veiled with a tinge of melancholy ...'. The commentator was perceptive, however, when he continued: 'The nobility of ideas, the mastery of form, the certainty of development, the expressiveness of the orchestral language, the clearness and directness of the composition, asserted themselves in so serenely dominating a manner as to induce us to inquire of ourselves how it was possible that a composer such as Edward Elgar could be so little known amongst us, and how, among the many illustrious conductors whom Turin welcomed ... few had thought of revealing to us some work of the English composer'.

The account continued: 'A breath of sadness invests both works, the *Larghetto* and *The Dream of Gerontius* and this sadness dilates and diffuses itself through every bar in similar language. Melancholy, shadowed with a sense of mournful, restrained resignation, which beats with no rebellious impulses, which neither shudders nor screams. Something austere, and almost aesthetic, characterises the two works in equal measure. By degrees the mist which envelops them is dispersed by the impetuous breath of a broad, serene melody, almost like a hymn which, in the name of faith, opens a door to hope'.<sup>1</sup>

Another paper wrote: 'More than the exceptional conductor, we admired in him the exceptional composer. He leaves a profound impression in our souls, both by his lofty, severe and impassioned inspirations, as well as by the elect qualities which characterise all his music - music with him so elegant, so thoughtful, and so personal an art'.

'Now that we have heard many of his compositions, we are able and feel it a duty to proclaim him a symphonist of the first class'. In conclusion the correspondent mentioned 'the warm and unanimous applause which resounded through the well-filled hall'.<sup>2</sup>

1 *La Stampa*, 21 October 1911.

2 *La Gazzetta del Popolo*, 21 October 1911. Both quoted in *The Musical Times*, 1 January 1912, p.39.

A year later there was publicity for Elgar both in the Netherlands and France through the publication in each country of a translated substantial article on his music by Richard Streatfeild.<sup>3</sup> The article, written for a continental audience in countries that were not familiar with Elgar's music, provides its European readers with a very subjective view of the two Symphonies and Violin Concerto. As well as being a writer on music Streatfeild worked with Laurence Binyon at the British Museum and readers will associate his name with the controversy over the setting of Binyon's *For the Fallen*. Indeed it appears to have been he who persuaded Alfred Littleton of Novello & Co. to publish the settings by both Elgar and Rootham. (Incidentally, he is also credited with urging Elgar to join the Hampstead Volunteer Reserve in 1915.)

The *Musical Times* printed only part of the article (the main reason why I did not include it in *An Elgar Companion*), although it still occupied almost a page-and-a-half, so attempting a summary is not easy. Streatfeild opened by laying out a thesis that probably caused surprise at the time: 'we may with reason look upon the two Symphonies and the [Violin] Concerto as one great work in three sections'. Enlarging, he observed 'Elgar has prefaced 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 ... the first movement is all strife and turmoil ... 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 passion is drawn with astonishing vigour, and the movement surges along its tumultuous course with inexhaustible spirit'. (Similarity to the Turin critic's feelings will be noted.)

'The Scherzo seems to carry us into a 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'. By contrast the writer considered the Adagio 'a movement of extraordinary beauty, in which the deepest and purest aspirations of the soul of man are clothed in sound. The atmosphere is one of tense yearning and high-wrought rapture' while finding the last movement's introduction '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 the 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'.

In his view the 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 ... The 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'. After debating whether the composer chose concerto form as most suitable for what he had to say, or whether his choice of form moulded the character of the music, the writer concluded that 'the grand sweep and noble breadth of style which characterise the symphony are exchanged for a more personal and more intimate note'. He saw the first movement as 'a picture of warring passions, of the clash of high-strung feelings – not on

<sup>3</sup> *De Nieuwe Gids* and *Le revue du temps présent*, 2 April 1912, quoted in *The Musical Times*, 1 June 1912, pp.386-7.

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 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'. Of the accompanied cadenza, which Streatfeild preferred to call a soliloquy, '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 ... Yet memories of this strange interlude of mystic contemplation still survive, and the work ends upon a strain of grave and exalted nobility'.

The second Symphony 'completes his great symphonic trilogy in the most satisfying manner. After Strife and Contemplation, comes Joy, and the Symphony in Eb is full of a rapturous exultation which we do not find in the two earlier works ... He sings of growth, not of decay. Even in the passages of deepest feeling, in which the Larghetto 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 throughout the whole work. Spring is its theme, the Spring of which artists dream and composers sing ... Yet the movement is not all joy and ravishment. 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'.

After opining that the Larghetto 'offers a broad and striking contrast to this carnival of joy' Streatfeild refutes the suggestion of 'certain not very clear-sighted critics' that it was intended as a funeral march for the late King Edward VII on the simple ground that it was conceived before the monarch's death. '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 was the only movement about which he had misgivings. '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 acid 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 dizzier 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'.

*Christopher Redwood was educated at Christ's Hospital and Trinity College of Music. After 16 years teaching he became Headmaster of an independent school in the Midlands. He retired early and was an external tutor at Bristol University, where he took his Ph.D. on the life and music of William Hurlstone, Stanford's short lived but most talented pupil. Prior to that he had edited An Elgar Companion. He now resides in his native West Country where he was for five years Chairman of the Elgar Society branch.*



## Elgar and Dan

### Arthur Reynolds

An endearing, quixotic feature of Edward Elgar's creative process was his attribution of several significant melodic figures to the behaviour of Dan, the brindle bulldog<sup>1</sup> belonging to Hereford Cathedral organist George Robertson Sinclair. Dan's aquatic antics, as depicted in the first bars of No. XI of the *Variations on an Original Theme* are well known. Entitled *G.R.S.* and marked *Allegro di molto*, we have this eyewitness account from Percy Hull, Sinclair's assistant and eventual successor:

Dan was a fine swimmer and G.R.S. used to take him to the Wye after Evensong and throw a huge chunk of wood into the water. The dog then rushed about the bank (witness bar 1) and plunged in, paddling after the stick (bars 3 and 4); this paddling passage leads to the fierce growl of joy (bar 5, double thirds) as he seized the stick, and the growls continued after he had landed.<sup>2</sup>

But Dan's first appearance in Elgar's music is not as *Variation XI*. According to Hull, 'This double-third passage (bar 5 of *G.R.S.*)...was also used in *King Olaf* between the letters O and P in the accompaniment to the words, "they found the watch-dog in the yard". By the way, the "Dan" figure is not in the vocal score but it is definitely in the full score and is played by the violas....'<sup>3</sup>

Elgar wrote 'growl' over the passage in Dora Penny's score.

Other examples of Elgar's music making from the frolics of Dan are found in Sinclair's Visitors' Book, where between 1897 and 1903, Elgar sketched seven musical quotations he entitled, *The Moods of Dan, Illustrated*. In time he worked five of these figures into the fabric of large-form compositions. No. III, *He muses (on the muzzling order)*, became the 'Prayer' motif in *Gerontius*. No. V, *Dan triumphant (after a fight)*, served as the Straussian passage that opens *In the South*. The last four bars of *Mood No. VI* turn up in the orchestral prelude of the 'For the Fallen' section of *The Spirit of England* and find places in the movement's first and final stanzas. No. VII underpins the first 18 bars of the introduction to Tableau I of *The Crown of India*.

*The Moods of Dan, Illustrated. No. II (He capers)* found its way into *Caractacus*, prompting this previously unknown communication in Elgar's hand that surfaced in a March 2020 auction sale (Fig.1).

My dear Sinclair  
I hear that my rehearsal is on Tuesday a.m. at St. James's Hall: if you are in town do come & smile thereon.

1 Dan was actually a Bullmastiff, a breed created by crossing an English Bulldog with an English Mastiff. Had he been solely a bulldog, his short legs would have rendered Dan incapable of swimming to safety when he tumbled into the river.

2 Letter quoted in Powell, *Memories of a Variation*, pp. 113-114.

3 *Ibid.*

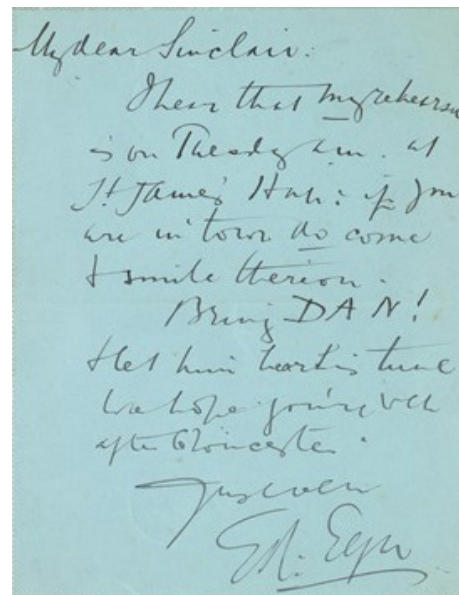


Fig.1 Elgar to Sinclair September 1898 (Arthur Reynold's Archive)

Bring DAN! & let him hear his tune.

We hope you're well after Gloucester.

Yours ever,  
Ed. Elgar

The invitation, undated but postmarked 24 September 1898, refers to the first orchestral rehearsal for the *Caractacus* premiere (Fig. 2) that took place in London's St. James's Hall on Tuesday, 27 September. Dan's tune appears twice in Scene I. The first instance comes in on page 22 of the vocal score at Cue 26, after the words, 'like a King my thundering car' (Fig.3). The second appearance is found on page 24, three bars before Cue 29, after the words, 'Like a king, a king alone' (Fig.4). When Elgar inscribed Sinclair's copy of the vocal score, he wrote, *Dan skips* at Cue 26, and, *Dan tumbles over then skips* at Cue 29. The inscription reads: 'October 31, 1898, at Hereford for the fiftieth organ recital of G.R.S., also to see the party named on pp. 22.24' (Fig.5).

Bring Dan! One can only imagine the worrying effect on the players and chorus of sharing rehearsal room space with 'the watch-dog in the yard', bred by British gamekeepers to pursue and pin down poachers. But G.R.S. and Dan were inseparable. When Sinclair succeeded Swinnerton Heap as conductor of the Birmingham Festival Choral Society in 1900, Dan accompanied his master to all the rehearsals, prompting a London music critic to declare that 'Dan fully deserves to be made a Dogtor of Music!'<sup>4</sup>

4 *Musical Times*, October 1, 1900, p.662

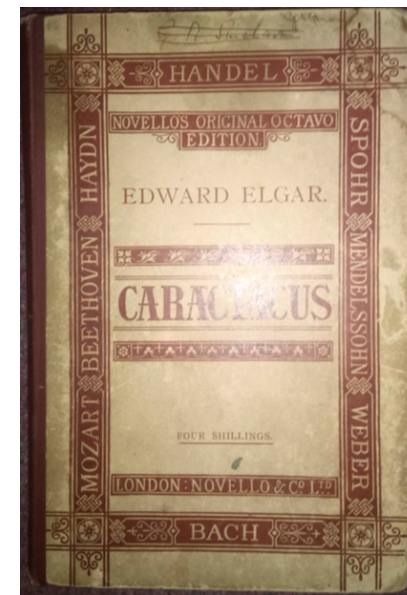


Fig.2 Cover of Sinclair's vocal score of *Caractacus* (The Elgar Foundation)

22

*cresc. f marc.*

I have driv - en, I have

driv - en O'er the ridg - es steep of war Like a King

26

my thum - d'ring ear.

*more, ff*

*They' the chosen ranks of bat tle Home has heard my whetted blades*

8283

Fig. 3 Page 22, Cue 26 of Caractacus (The Elgar Foundation)

24

*molto allargando*

Like a king—

like a king— a lone.

29

But . . . it

*Andantino*

ends, it ends . . . the in - vi - si - ble - ry . . .

8283

Fig.4 Page 24, Cue 29 of Caractacus (The Elgar Foundation)



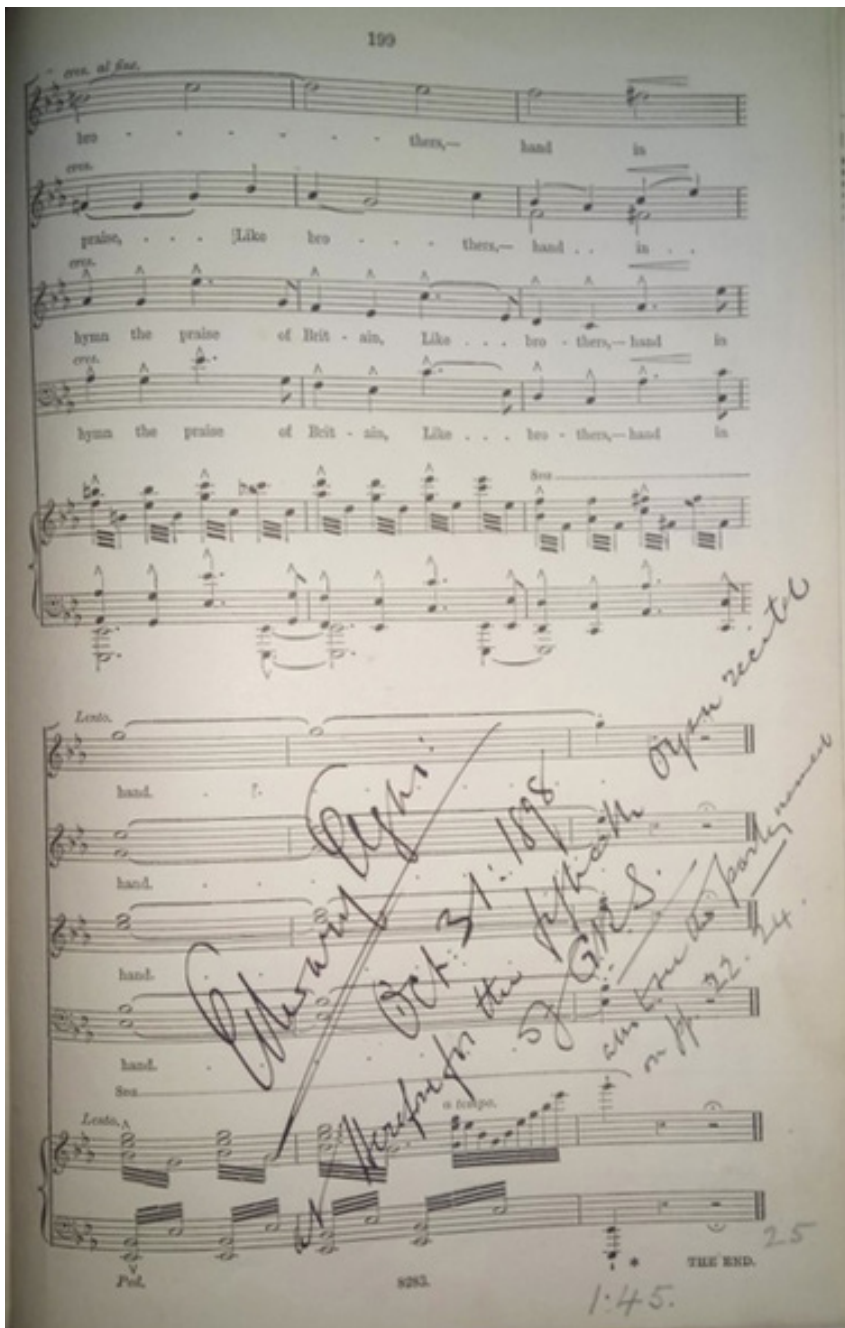


Fig. 5 Elgar's inscription to Sinclair (The Elgar Foundation)

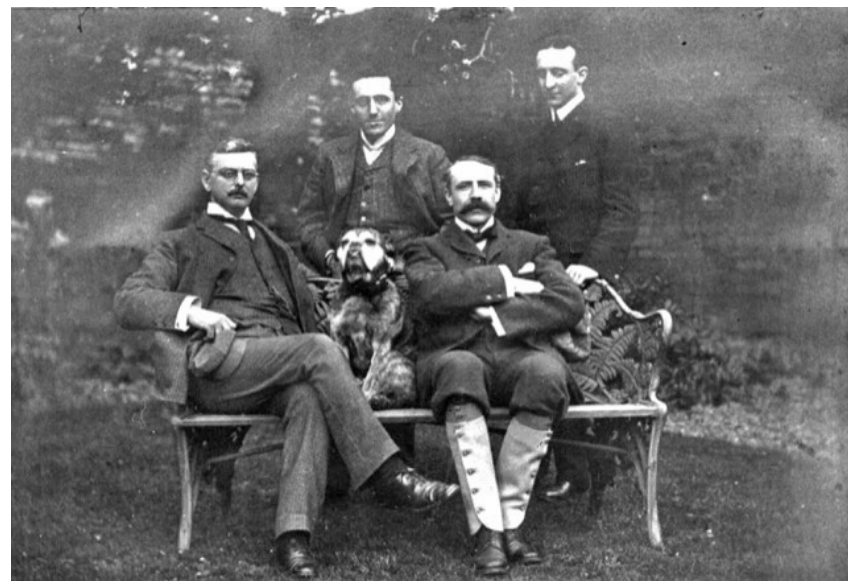


Fig.6 Gus Edwards' 1896 photograph of Sinclair, Dan, Elgar sitting, with Percy Hull and Max Mossel standing (Arthur Reynolds' Archive)

Elgar entered the last of *The Moods of Dan* in the Visitors' Book on 14 April 1903. Afterward there could be no more *Moods* because eleven weeks later Dan was no more. In a letter to Elgar dated 1 July 1903, Sinclair wrote 'Poor old Dan died an hour ago. He was my best friend'. In response to Elgar's letter of condolence, G.R.S. wrote again on 6 July 'Very many thanks for your nice letter about dear old Dan. He has a quiet little grave under the big apple tree'. Dan is buried in the garden of 20 Church Street, site of the organist's residence in those days.

A few feet from the gravesite stood the bench where in 1896, Hereford merchant and amateur photographer Gus Edwards snapped Dan sitting proudly between Sinclair and Elgar, with Percy Hull and the Dutch violinist Max Mossel standing behind them (Fig.6). Those were happy days, recalled when Elgar visited Sinclair in August 1903, at which time he notated a scale in the Visitors' Book, replacing the D with 'Alas'.

I am indebted to Kevin Allen, Chris Bennett, and Michael Trott for their *sine qua non* insights, and to the Elgar Foundation for the illustrations of the vocal score to *Caractacus*. *The Moods of Dan* were first published in an appendix in Percy Young, *Elgar O.M.* (London: Collins, 1955), 398-401.

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# “Gerontius” with M.S. notes by Elgar’: R. J. Buckley’s Vocal Score of *The Dream of Gerontius* in the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York

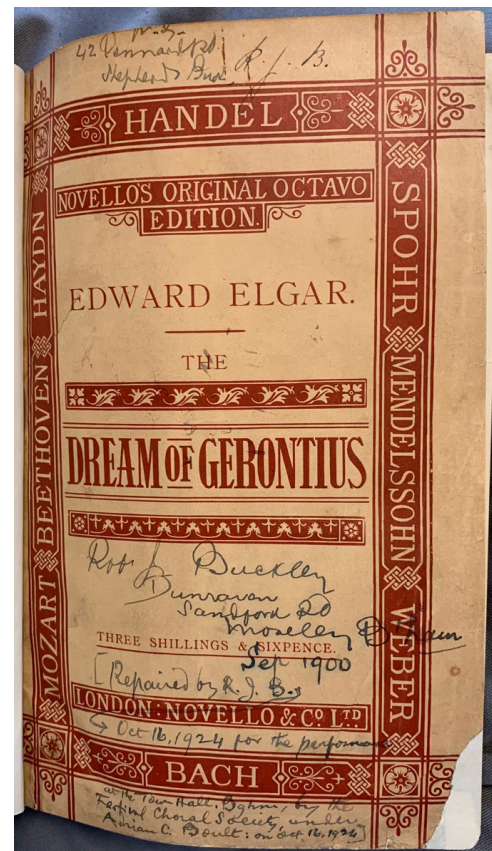
Jonathan Wainwright<sup>1</sup>

Wilfrid Mellers (1914–2008), founding Professor of the Department of Music at the University of York, bequeathed his scores and books to the Borthwick Institute for Archives at that University.<sup>2</sup> Amongst the collection there is a bound first edition vocal score of *The Dream of Gerontius* (London: Novello, 1900), containing numerous annotations in the hand of Edward Elgar, which is the subject of this article.<sup>3</sup> The vocal score’s original paper cover exists inside a more recent leather binding, and this tells us that the copy was once the property of Robert J. Buckley (Elgar’s first biographer). [Illustration 1] Furthermore, on the inside flyleaf Buckley has tipped-in a slip of paper which gives us the all-important information: “Gerontius” | with M.S. notes | by Elgar: sent | to R. J. Buckley | by the composer | on the day of | publication – | 1900–’. [Illustration 2] A stamp on the tipped-in page indicates that the vocal score once belonged to the Birmingham and Midland Institute School of Music (today the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire) and there is also the name of the bookbinder who repaired and probably bound the vocal score either for Buckley or for the School of Music library. It is likely that some of Buckley’s music, perhaps including this vocal score, was left to the School of Music after his death in 1938, but just how the copy came into Mellers’ possession is not known. Mellers was resident in Birmingham between 1948 and 1964 (connected with the University of Birmingham not the School of Music) and it may be significant that the Birmingham School of Music gained independence from the Birmingham and Midland Institute in 1963: perhaps there was a removal of stock from the School of Music library in advance of the reorganisation and Mellers got hold of the vocal score at that point?

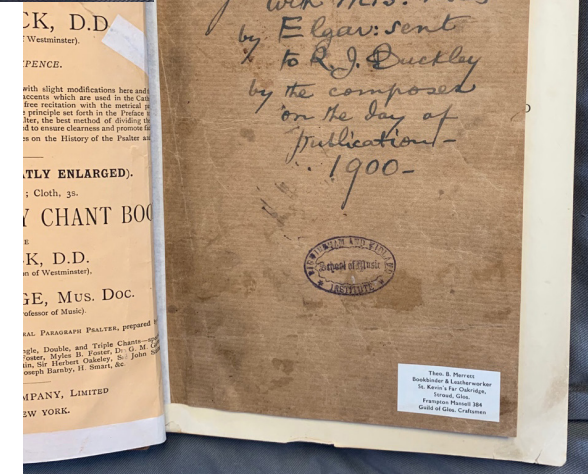
## Robert J. Buckley

Robert Buckley is known to Elgarians as the first person to write a biography of the composer.<sup>4</sup> This rather hagiographic text was first published in 1904/5, a year after Elgar was knighted,

- 1 The author would like to record his thanks to Michael Allis, Loukia Drosopoulou, David Griffiths, Charles McGuire, Bella Powell, Matthew Riley and Julian Rushton for their help in the preparation of this article. A version of the article was presented to the Yorkshire & North East Branch of The Elgar Society on 26 October 2019.
- 2 See <<https://www.york.ac.uk/library/collections/named-collections/mellers/>>.
- 3 The vocal score is currently uncatalogued but can be accessed through the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York Library. The author is grateful to the Borthwick Institute for Archives for permission to reproduce pages of the vocal score. The photography is that of the author.
- 4 Robert J. Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London & New York: John Lane – The Bodley Head, 1905; reprinted 1912 and 1925). A number of sources give 1904 as the publication date for the book due to the fact that Buckley’s introduction is dated 14 July 1904 and that the 1925 reprint gives the date of first publication as 1904; copies were certainly in circulation by October 1904.



1. Original paper cover



2. Flyleaf tipped-in



and further reprints were issued in 1912 and 1925, but Buckley's links with Elgar go back to the 1890s. In the book he writes that 'It was in the "Black Knight" period that I first visited the composer at "Forli"' (p. 29).<sup>5</sup> This is examined later in the article, but first a few other facts about Buckley are presented which were garnered from his obituary in the *Birmingham Gazette* (of 27 December 1938) and an examination of various Birmingham newspapers: He was born in Ireland on 14 July 1847, and his family moved to Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire, in his infancy. He was apparently a self-taught musician but, even so, became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, and was organist at various Birmingham-area churches throughout his life. There is at least one published anthem by him: *I will Always Give Thanks*; it is undated but, according to the title-page, was composed to celebrate the Reverend I. Casebow Barrett's 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary as vicar of St Mary's Church, Birmingham, which dates it to around 1879.<sup>6</sup> Composition was not, however, his main activity, and for forty years he was the lead music critic of the *Birmingham Gazette*, one of the city's main newspapers, and he was also a chess correspondent and contributed articles and reviews in Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield and Liverpool journals and newspapers.<sup>7</sup> In 1893, probably because of his Irish-family links, he was sent to Ireland as the *Birmingham Gazette's* Irish Correspondent and contributed a series of articles concerning Gladstone's Home Rule troubles which brought Buckley to national prominence. Buckley was also, according to his obituary, 'author of a volume of short stories, three novels, and the first ... life of Sir Edward Elgar, who was an intimate personal friend'.<sup>8</sup>

Robert Buckley's links with Elgar are now examined in order to give a context for an examination of the annotations in the vocal score. It is likely that Buckley first met Elgar in the early 1880s when the composer played the violin in William Stockley's Birmingham Concert Orchestra; Buckley reviewed *The Black Knight* favourably in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* on 6 December 1895,<sup>9</sup> and it was on 31 July 1896 that he first interviewed the composer when Elgar was living at *Forli* in Malvern.<sup>10</sup> In the 1905 biography (p. 29) Buckley mentions meeting the

composer at 'a charming cottage under the shadow of the Malvern Hills' (in that *Forli* is rather more than a 'cottage', it seems likely that Buckley had confused the house in his mind with Elgar's later summer residence *Birchwood Lodge*). This interview was the first of a number of meetings which provided the material for a series of articles which were later incorporated into his 1905 biography.<sup>11</sup> The July 1896 interview provided material for Chapter Four of Buckley's book and it reveals, among other things, that Elgar was a great book enthusiast and 'a haunter of the remoter shelves of the second-hand shops, with a leaning to the rich and rare. In the sitting room [of *Forli*] was a grand piano, in the study a smaller instrument, surrounded by books, and books, and more books...' (p. 33). Elsewhere in the book Elgar's attitude to teaching is mentioned and the composer is quoted as saying, 'teaching in general was to me like turning a grindstone with a dislocated shoulder' (p. 43) and Buckley presents Elgar as the self-made man, 'without formal instruction' (p. 6), who progressed unaided and alone, spurred on by an 'inborn inextinguishable thirst for knowledge' (p. 5). Elgar is shown as brilliant and cultured and, despite his provincial background, as a progressive intellectual with international connections. It is important to note, however, that Elgar was personally involved in the production of Buckley's book: he read the script before publication (Alice Elgar notes in her diary on 29 March 1904 that 'E went through proof sheets of Mr B.'s book on E.') and the book is therefore an 'authorised biography' with the composer, to a degree, self-crafting his own image. Indeed, in a letter of 13 December 1903 from Buckley to Elgar, the author had stated 'I want to do [the] book very accurately, & w[oul]d ask to submit it piece-meal to you. I am especially desirous o[f] putting into it all you w[oul]d like and leaving out all you w[oul]d not like'.<sup>13</sup> So it is *not* an impartial biography – indeed it is very rarely even vaguely critical of Elgar.

The book is, nevertheless, an important source of information for it is, of course, necessary for us to know how Elgar perceived himself and how he wished to present himself to others. Indeed, it is due to the book that a number of important facts and details are known. It was to Buckley that

5 Buckley's review of the Birmingham performance of *The Black Knight* was published in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 6 December 1895.

6 Copy in the Library of Birmingham (LF55.9 Music F/1/285224).

7 See Edward Winter, 'Who was R. J. Buckley' <<http://www.chesshistory.com/winter/extra/buckley.html>>, accessed 21 July 2019.

8 *Birmingham Gazette*, 27 December 1938.

9 'The "Black Knight" is no merely ingenious vamping-up of stale and worn-out platitudes. From first to last the work bears the impress of strong and original thought. There is little or none of the quality known as elegance, but in its place is a rugged power combined with a richness of imagination and a fertility of invention which remind us of Richard Wagner or Thomas Carlyle. Without being affectedly eccentric, the themes are novel and striking, their development masterly, their harmonic treatment and orchestral colouring of a great and noble type, as well as modern in the extreme sense of the term.' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 6 December 1895; cited in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 201–2.

10 31 July 1896: 'Mr. & Mrs. Buckley came to lunch. Left at 7 train. A. drove with them.' (Martin Bird (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Provincial Musician: Diaries 1857–1896*, Edward Elgar: Collected Correspondence Series V, Volume 1 (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2013), 402); also, 15 August 1896: 'Mr. Buckley came late.' (*Diaries 1857–1896*, 404) and 19 August 1896: 'Mr. & Mrs. Buckley to dinner –' (*Diaries 1857–1896*, 406). See, too, the letter of 17 July 1900 cited in Jerrold Northrop Moore (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 87 (MS in possession of J. H. Britton): Elgar, in the midst of orchestrating *Gerontius*, wrote to Buckley giving

hints of what will be in *Gerontius*: 'If you want a "drip" | You HEAR "The dream of G." is laid out for 3 solo voices[,] semichorus, chorus & in the climax of "Praise to the Holiest"–double-chorus. Mr. Edward Lloyd will create(?) the tenor part.'

11 For example, an interview of 14 August 1896 resulted in an article in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* concerning the forthcoming *Lux Christi/The Light of Life*, and quoted in the *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 15 August 1896 (with the first performance in Worcester Cathedral on 8 September 1896 reviewed by Buckley in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* on 9 September 1896); and material from an interview of 24 September 1903 was first published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (reprinted in the *Worcester Herald*) on 17 October 1903, which later appeared as 'Dr Elgar at Home' in the *Musical Opinion*, 27 November 1903. See too Buckley's entirely positive review of the first performance of *King Olaf*, at Hanley on 30 October 1896, in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 31 October 1896: 'Mr. Elgar is demonstrably the greatest English genius since Henry Purcell .... By "King Olaf" Mr. Elgar unquestionably takes rank among the greatest masters of the age.' Buckley continued to interview Elgar after the publication of his book: for example, on 1 December 1905, in the aftermath of Elgar's Birmingham Lecture and the 'storm raised by misleading quotations' as Alice Elgar noted; on 2 December 1905, in the *Birmingham Gazette and Express*, Buckley reported that Elgar was 'genial, cheery, at peace with all the world'.

12 Martin Bird (ed.), *Edward Elgar: The Path to Knighthood: Diaries 1902–1904*, Edward Elgar: Collected Correspondence Series V, Volume 3 (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2016), 273. Buckley wrote to Elgar on 6 April 1904 that he was 'really very much indebted to you for the trouble you are taking & the very kind way in wh[ic]h you have backed up what I certainly feel to be a very poor & sketchy bit of scribbling' (British Library MS Mus. 1843/3/2943 & 2944).

13 British Library MS Mus. 1843/3/2948.

Elgar admitted the importance of nature and his environment (of Worcestershire and Malvern in particular) to his music and Elgar is quoted as saying: ‘My idea is that there is music in the air, music all around us, the world is full of it and—(here he raised his hands, and made a rapid gesture of capture)—and—you—simply—simply—take as much as you require!’ (p. 32). According to Basil Maine, ‘The composer once related an incident to his biographer [i.e. Maine]... when he was nine or ten years old Edward Elgar was discovered sitting on a bank by the river with a pencil and a piece of paper whereon were ruled five parallel lines. He was trying, he said, to write down what the reeds were singing’,<sup>14</sup> and the riverbank story has become something of a trope – a recurrent metaphorical theme – in writings about Elgar. In 1921 Elgar wrote to his friend Sir Sidney Colvin: ‘I am still at heart the dreamy child who used to be found in the reeds by Severn side with a sheet of paper trying to fix the sounds and longing for something very great....’<sup>15</sup> The importance of place and nature is revisited below.

In relation to oratorio, Buckley informs us that ‘What Wagner did for opera... Elgar is doing for oratorio from the point at which it was left by Handel and Mendelssohn, and, as many believe, with equal inspiration’ (p. 88) and earlier in the book he says ‘Referring to his leaning to the *leit-motiv*, he [Elgar] said that his early studies in this direction were based on Mendelssohn, long before he had seen or heard a note of Wagner’ (p. 33). Buckley also commented on the theme of *Variations for Orchestra* Op. 36: ‘What the solution of the “Enigma” may be, nobody but the composer knows. The theme is a counterpoint on some well-known melody which is never heard...’ (pp. 54–5). That has been the cue, of course, for numerous theories, and this is not the place to even touch on them, but it is worth noting that Buckley, in his statement about the *Enigma* theme, is *not* quoting Elgar directly (as he frequently does elsewhere in the book) and it is possible that Buckley’s comments were merely the result of some discursive whimsy of the composer’s. Julian Rushton comments in his Cambridge Handbook on the ‘*Enigma*’ *Variations* as follows: ‘Since the word “enigma” was only added to the score a month or so before the first performance, “the enigma” may have been a retrospective act of interpretation by the composer himself, followed up over the years in letters, interviews, annotations ..., and musical reminiscences, notably in *The Music Makers*. On the other hand, it is occasionally proposed that the “enigma” was a joke’.<sup>16</sup>

Buckley’s book includes a substantial section on *The Dream of Gerontius*. He describes the

14 Basil Maine, *Elgar: His Life and Works* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1933), i, 7.

15 Transcribed in Jerrold Northrop Moore (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 359 (source cited: Hereford and Worcester County Record Office 705:445:3527).

16 Julian Rushton, *Elgar: ‘Enigma’ Variations*, Cambridge Music Handbooks (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 64. Edmund M. Green notes that ‘Although Buckley quotes Elgar repeatedly throughout his biography, he neither quotes Elgar as saying that the theme is a counterpoint on some well-known melody, nor does he say that Elgar told him it was. If Elgar had told Buckley, surely Buckley would have said so. The case for the theory that Elgar must have told Buckley is further weakened by the fact that there is no record of him telling anyone else. Why would he tell Buckley and then for the remainder of his life refuse to tell Mrs Powell or anyone else? Further, the argument that Elgar must have told Buckley or Buckley wouldn’t have made the statement is illogical given the statements of Mrs Powell. We know that Powell’s statement was not based on anything Elgar said to her because she said they “always spoke of the hidden matter as ‘it’, never as a tune or theme.” Therefore, by the same reasoning, it is probable that Buckley’s statement was not based on anything Elgar said to him either, and, of course, Buckley never said that Elgar told him that the *Variations* were based on a melody.’ Edmund M. Green, ‘Elgar’s “Enigma”: a Shakespearian Solution’, *Elgar Society Journal*, 13/6 (November 2004), 35–9 (at 36).

premiere ‘at the Birmingham Triennial Festival of 1900’, as ‘a memorable epoch in the annals of English music’ with only passing mention that the first performance was actually something of a disaster: this is typical of Buckley in not wanting to remind the great man of something painful. Interestingly Buckley calls *Gerontius* a ‘cantata’ not an ‘oratorio’ (presumably with the composer’s blessing) and Buckley goes on to tell us that

The music of “Gerontius” was no extemporaneous production. From the year 1889 Elgar had been studying the poem, a copy of which was given to him as a wedding present by Father Knight, of Worcester. Not an ordinary copy, but one in which Gordon’s favourite passages were indicated throughout. The cantata existed in Elgar’s mind when the commission came. For years he had been making sketches, at all times and places, just as the ideas came; selecting, rejecting, jotting down items when out walking; making memoranda on the return home, the whole gradually ripening in his mind, slowly assuming shape, condensing from the possible to the actual, like the nebulous haze of which new worlds are made. Other irons were in the fire. Elgar confesses to being engaged on twenty works at once. But “Gerontius” went on intermittently, maturing, growing as the oak grows, slowly perhaps, but naturally and enduringly. (pp. 56–7)

Buckley later tells us:

The English public did not at first find in “Gerontius” an art-work of authentic inspiration. They listened with becoming respect, but they were disappointed. Elgar spoke a language of which they knew not the idiom. They looked for the suave airs and overwhelming choruses of orthodox oratorio. Their conceptions were conventional. Consciously or unconsciously every sacred work of any pretension is compared with “Messiah” and “Elijah,” which were long regarded as the nearest approach to the unattainable ideal. The rank and file of the first hearers of “Gerontius” expected melodic parallels to “He shall feed His flock” and “O rest in the Lord,” with brave choral outbursts like the “Hallelujah Chorus” and “Thanks be to God.” And so it was, that, under the influence of conservative prepossessions, they felt at the close as though they had been sent empty away. Even the musicians were doubtful. The thing [i.e. *The Dream of Gerontius*] was so strange, so unprecedented, and, from the accustomed view-point, so revolutionary, that all except the most advanced took time to consider. The conservative mind is necessarily slow. There was a period of neglect which promised to be indefinite, and possibly to stretch out until the crack of doom. Then came the Düsseldorf performances and the outspoken verdict of the main body of German critics, whose prevailing tone was enthusiastic welcome mingled with astonishment. (pp. 59–60)

He goes on:

...the verdict of the German press aroused renewed attention, and “Gerontius”... was reconsidered ... Little by little conductors and their forces, and, in due course, their audiences, grasped the idea that the work was to be judged by its intrinsic merit, and not by comparison with standards more or less outworn[.] (pp. 62–3)

Given that this must have been written around 1903–4, this is an interesting critical insight concerning the English listening public. As an experienced newspaper music critic, he obviously knew the mindset of concert goers and their likes and dislikes, and for Buckley it was certainly their conservatism, not the poor first performance, that brought about, in his mind, the initial lukewarm response to *Gerontius*; thereafter, the English audiences had to be shown the way by the Germans. Here again Buckley seems to be toeing the party (or at least the Elgar-family) line for, as has been pointed out by Jerrold Northrop Moore and others, the reviews of the first performance

were by no means damning.<sup>17</sup> Most, even in light of the first performance's flaws, pointed out the potential of the work, some even recognising it as a masterpiece. It also has to be said that, after the Düsseldorf performance in 1901, the work very soon established itself in England as a mainstream repertoire work (a position it has maintained ever since). The work was performed twice in 1901 (in Worcester on 9 May, with Elgar conducting, which omitted the Demons' chorus) and then came the famous Düsseldorf performance on 19 December which helped established the work. In 1902 it was performed four times: in London (part one only and perhaps with piano accompaniment), a second Düsseldorf performance, then in Worcester and Sheffield (with Elgar conducting the last two). Then in 1903 it was performed no less than twenty times in Edinburgh, Gdańsk, Stirling, Manchester, Hanley, Chicago, Wolverhampton, Liverpool, New York, Birmingham, New York again, Middlesbrough, Bristol, London (Westminster Cathedral), Hereford, Darmstadt, Newcastle, Sheffield, Glasgow and Sydney.<sup>18</sup> So – with all due respect to Buckley – this is hardly 'a period of neglect which promised to be indefinite, and possibly to stretch out until the crack of doom'!

### *Buckley's Vocal Score of Elgar's The Dream of Gerontius*

Having provided some background on Robert Buckley, the article now considers Elgar's annotations in the York vocal score. It is known that Elgar completed the vocal score before he had finished his orchestration, and according to an entry in the Novello and Company Business Archive in the British Library, the company received 25 advance copies of the vocal score from the printers on 20 July 1900,<sup>19</sup> and Elgar was sent copies to his summer retreat at Birchwood (where the work was composed) on 23 July ('by Jove how well it looks!' he commented to Jaeger).<sup>20</sup> Over the next few days Elgar ensured that his soloists were sent copies for the forthcoming premiere in Birmingham Town Hall on 3 October, 1900. Buckley's annotations [Illustrations 1 and 2] indicate that Elgar sent Buckley the vocal score sometime in September 1900, meaning that Buckley had it for the first performance. Buckley's attendance at the premiere is indeed confirmed by a review in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* on 4 October 1900; the review is unsigned (as was usual) but the similarities with material which would later appear in Buckley's book and a number of phrases in the review which relate to Elgar's annotations in the vocal score, make his authorship – and the likelihood that Buckley had the York vocal score on his lap during the first performance – highly likely. It is also obvious that Buckley referred to Jaeger's analysis in relation to the names of the themes. The text of the (not entirely uncritical) review, in a section entitled 'Birmingham Festival: Second Day', is as follows with phrases relating to Elgar's annotations here presented in bold:

17 Moore, *A Creative Life*, 332–4.

18 Lewis Foreman, 'Elgar and Gerontius: the Early Performances', in Geoffrey Hodgkins (ed.), *The Best of Me: A Gerontius Centenary Companion* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 1999), 162–236 ('Table 5 – Performances of *Gerontius*: 1900–1904', at 187).

19 British Library Add. MS 69557 (Vol XLII. Stock Book S4), 491; my thanks to Loukia Drosopoulou of the British Library for her help in locating this source. See also the letter from Jaeger to Elgar dated 20 July 1900 transcribed in Jerrold Northrop Moore (ed.), *Elgar and His Publishers: Letters of a Creative Life Volume I. 1885–1903* (Oxford, 1987), 215 (source cited: Hereford and Worcester County Record Office 705:445:8471).

20 Letter to August Jaeger, 23 July 1900; British Library MS Mus. 1843/3/8434; Martin Bird (ed.), *Edward Elgar. Road to Recognition: Diaries 1897–1901*, Edward Elgar: Collected Correspondence Series V, Volume 2 (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2015), 259.

Mr. Elgar's new work has been so well advertised, and his talent as a composer so widely admitted, that contrary to the usual experience, the Town Hall was almost full for the novelty as for the standard favourites of fifty or a hundred years. The full title and description of the work is "Sacred Cantata: 'The Dream of Gerontius': Poem by Cardinal Newman. Set to Music by Edward Elgar, op. 38." "The death-bed of a dear friend," writes H. J. Jennings, "was the inspiring cause which occasioned the 'Dream of Gerontius' to be written." Gerontius, in his last hours, dreams that he is dead, that his soul is borne into the realm of the unknown, and received by the ministering agents of the Great Judge of all the Earth. "In a sublime strain of poetic power the mysteries are pictured that lie hidden across the portals of the tomb. The straining eye of a hungering fancy discloses its idea of the maybe of the soul's future."

There can be no doubt as to the intense interest of the poem, nor yet of the deep and serious earnestness with which the composer has set about the work. It was encompassed with difficulties, how great, almost appalling, only the practised musician can understand. We know two distinguished composers who for years have cast longing eyes on Cardinal Newman's poem. The subject was alluring, and in these days when every mine seems to be worked out, a new and truly sublime theme was sure to present unusual attractions. But the obstacles were too great: men were deterred from embarking on a work to whose heights they feared they might not rise. For Cardinal Newman's poem is almost abreast of the "Diesiræ" [*sic*] of Thomas of Celano, in point of sublimity, while it is written in English, which is perhaps not quite so easy to set as the Latin. However, Mr. Elgar, having gone on from strength to strength, and having attained a position in the front rank of living British composers, heroically dared to attempt the deed of high enterprise, and after months of careful preparation his creation was yesterday given to the world – with what success we will endeavour to show.

The "Dream" is, first of all, distinctly modern; further, it is constructed on representative themes: it is highly dramatic; the orchestra is handled with the utmost skill. And what an orchestra! The very enumeration of the band parts will suffice to show that only with festival resources can the work be given at all. The score shows three flutes, two oboes, cor anglais, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, and a double bassoon, three trumpets, four horns, three trombones, bass tuba, two harps, organ, three tympani, a gong, schellen, glockenspiel, drums, cymbal, and triangle. Then, of course, the real basis of the orchestra, the strings, which he sometimes divides in eighteen or even twenty parts. Mr. Elgar out-Wagners Wagner in heavy scoring, and even comes near the aspirations of Hector Berlioz. So far as mere effectiveness is concerned there would seem to be nothing left to wish for. And not only was yesterday's band complete in every part, but the artists were one and all of the choicest quality. One might almost call it a band of virtuosos, led by the choicest conductor of the world. For at the composer's wish Dr. Richter undertook to introduce the cantata to what was hoped would be a long and happy existence, if not to absolute immortality.

The first bars, in unison, are to be played "mystically:" they convey a **sense of apprehension of the unknown**: whenever they are afterwards heard we are reminded of the Judgment, of man's helplessness and ignorance, and, perhaps, of man's nothingness in face of the infinity of the universe. After the "Judgment" theme comes the "Fear" theme, and after that the "**Prayer**" theme, all of which, now heard in the instrumental prelude, are further heard, expanded, varied, and developed in the body of the vocal work. After the "**Prayer**" theme the "Sleep" motive, a solo viola and horns giving the melody; there is a sense of lullaby, of steeping the senses in forgetfulness. Yet the sleep is troubled: it is the **slumber** of a dying man. Next comes the theme to which Gerontius utters the prayer "Miserere, Judex meus," a chromatic subject quite in the latest style of Verdi. This is called the "Miserere" theme. The "**Prayer**" theme, already heard pianissimo, is now repeated with great energy. The "**Go Forth**" theme is next introduced, and after some episodic matter, the "Sleep," "Fear," and "Judgment" themes are repeated, and the Prelude ends as it began, with the accentuation of the awful ideas of Death and Judgment.



After the prelude the work is carried on by Gerontius and the Soul of Gerontius, represented yesterday by Mr. Edward Lloyd; and Angel, Miss Marie Brema; a Priest and the Angel of the Agony, Mr. Plunket Greene; and the chorus, which in turn represents demons and angelicals.

There is a four-part “Kyrie Eleison” of Assistants written in the **old church style**; it might be a bit from William Byrd’s mass to be heard on Friday morning, with its close imitation and its quasi-canonical parts. Mr. Elgar has essayed a wide range of styles, and has shown himself capable of dealing with all. Not only is he a master of modern instrumentation, but he also can deal with the most abstruse contrapuntal problems, which he usually presents in such new forms that only a close examination will show them to be counterpoint at all. Thus, in the prayer, “Holy Mary,” treated fugally, we have (on page 19) an example of **triple counterpoint** with **inversions**. This, however, is not the composer’s real form. His strength lies rather in the imaginative than in the constructive: he is a creator rather than a builder: a colourist rather than a contriver of complicated structures. He is more Beethoven and Berlioz than Bach and Handel: more of an impressionist, more emotional than other English writers. Regarded from the standpoint of English Church music, he is not English at all; nor even British, which term would admit the rich fancy of the Kelt. He is rather French in feeling: but is more brilliant and gorgeous than Gounod, who based himself on the old Italian writers. Here and there we detect various influences, but Wagner is dominant: the shrine at which Mr. Elgar worships is unmistakable. But though influenced by Wagner, his music is not Wagnerian, either thematically or in mood, and be it observed that the greatest plagiarists in music are not those who consciously or unconsciously appropriate themes, but those who appropriate mood and feeling, and speak the very language with the very manner of their masters. Mr. Elgar is Wagnerian only in method: his music is distinctive, and his own. While listening to Sir Hubert Parry’s new “Te Deum” at the Hereford Festival, an acute critic whispered, “It wants morbidity!” No one could say this of Mr. Elgar’s music.

The number of themes is so great, their mutations so many, their combinations so complex, that an analysis which would do bare justice to the composer’s labours is here impossible. Sufficient therefore to indicate the general design, and to place on record the fact that the workmanship is of the highest order. This being granted, there still remains the questions – is the work on the whole successful? Has the composer produced a cantata that will advance in estimation as the years roll on? Will it be popular, and, if not, will the enlightened few persist in admiring it? To all these questions we reply with a decided negative.

“The Dream of Gerontius” is too chromatic to take hold of the public: it has no melodies that will be sung in the home: its artistic structure is far too complex to arouse the popular interest: people do not care for leading-themes, nor their combinations, nor will they sit at concerts studying long-winded analyses. They want music that tells its own tale; they want melodies they can carry home; and though unconscious of the fact, they want clearness of outline and some sort of tangible form. As to the more cultured critics, we are reluctantly obliged to confess that while admitting great cleverness and magisterial handling of means, there is a lack of pleasing invention in the matter of themes, for which mere colouring and carefully studied effects can never atone. The brilliancy of the pictorial hues does not compensate for want of interest in the drawing. The themes are not commonplace, far from it. But neither are they interesting. Again, long, long series of tenor and mezzo-soprano solos tends to the wearisome, and the choruses do not sound so effective as they look. Here and there are real inspirations, everybody admits so much; and the fact that men disagree as to the inspired pieces is to the composer’s credit. We think highly of the semi-chorus on page 64; a small matter perhaps, but the chant and the harmonic refrain seemed very beautiful, very touching, very memorable. The first entry of the priest is another favourite passage; nothing could be finer in its way than the progression of the accompaniment. The Demon music is exceedingly dramatic and impressive – and so we might go on indefinitely. Yet with all this beauty, we believe that “The Dream of Gerontius” is destined to remain unknown to the world at large. True, it is immeasurably finer than the Perosi oratorios, which by the influence of the Roman Catholic party have become known in the country. With the same powerful influences Mr. Elgar’s work may obtain recognition. Let us hope that it will not, like the

“St. Matthew Passion,” lie forgotten and unknown for a hundred years, and until a new Mendelssohn arises to wake it to immortality.

As to its execution, there is not much to be said. The band played well; Mr. Lloyd sang with great care and fervour but with defective intonation of the day before; Mr. Plunket Greene was satisfactory, and Miss Marie Brema was unsurpassable. The chorus were not in good form: many movements were out of tune. This was decidedly unfavourable to the composer.

[There follows a section concerning the other music in the programme (Schubert’s ‘Unfinished’ Symphony and sections from Handel’s *Israel in Egypt*) and the review concludes as follows:]

The ovation accorded to Mr. Elgar should be placed on record. That he had deserved well was universally conceded.

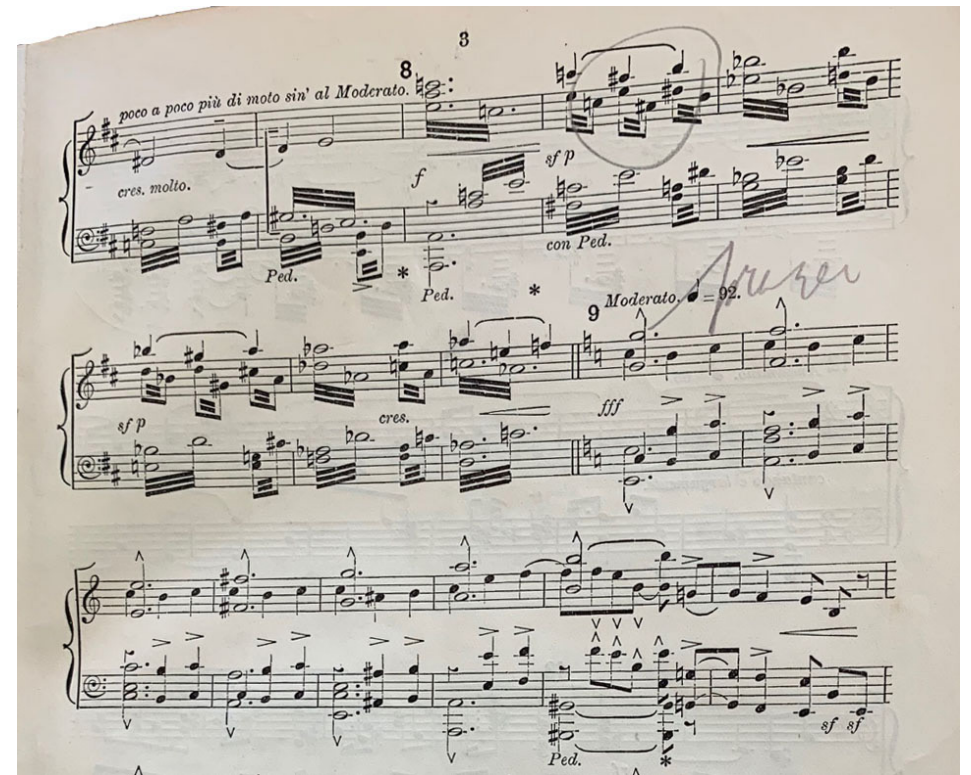
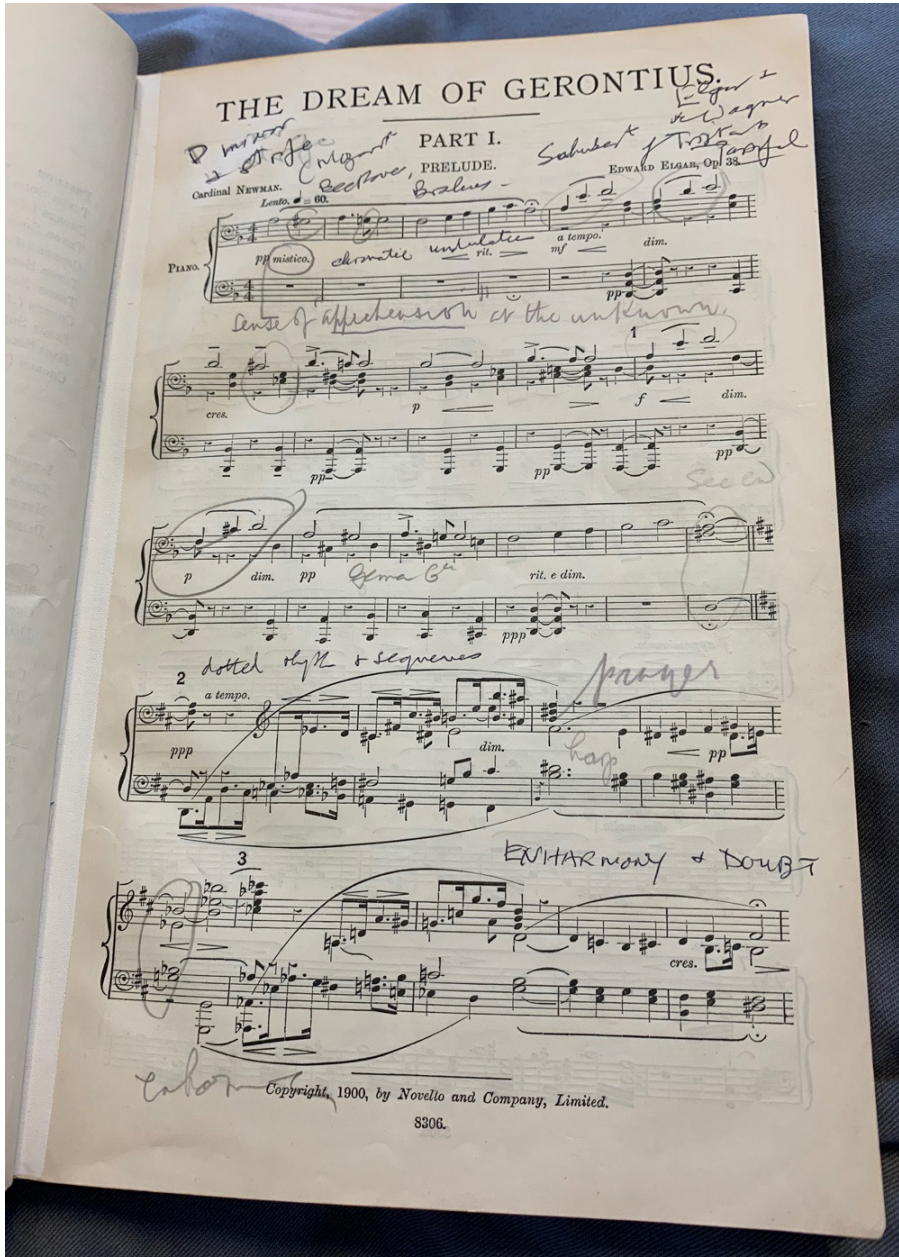
Also, an unsigned notice of 6 October 1900 in the *Worcestershire Chronicle* could possibly be by Buckley, for the author quotes Elgar as saying ‘The Poem [Newman’s *Dream of Gerontius*] has been soaking in my mind for at least eight years. All that time I have been gradually assimilating the thoughts of the author into my own musical promptings’. This is similar to the passage in Buckley’s book. In the same issue there is a favourable review of the premiere – again anonymous, but possibly by Buckley.

Elgar’s annotations in R. J. Buckley’s vocal score of *The Dream of Gerontius* in the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York are transcribed in page order in the Appendix, and below attention is drawn to some of the annotations which may be of most interest to Elgarians. Illustration 3 is the first page of the vocal score. This demonstrates one of the problems encountered when studying this vocal score, for mixed in with Elgar’s annotations are those of Wilfrid Mellers (often in biro!). It seems that Mellers used and annotated the *Gerontius* vocal score when he was writing his 1989 book on Vaughan Williams and then again in 2002 when working on his chapter ‘The Victorian Crisis of Faith’ in his *Celestial Music?* book, for his annotations correspond closely with his comments on *The Dream of Gerontius* in both these texts.<sup>21</sup> Having compared the handwriting with various Elgar letters, it is proposed that there are two Elgar annotations on this first page: ‘Sense of apprehension at the unknown’ under the first system and ‘prayer’ above the fourth system. Today listeners are familiar with the names of the themes in the prelude from August Jaeger’s *Analytical & Descriptive Notes*, written in September 1900 and intended for the first performance a month later,<sup>22</sup> but the labelling of themes by Elgar here represents an interesting parallel to Jaeger’s. (The ‘Prayer theme’, incidentally, is one of the musical fragments that appear in George Robertson Sinclair’s visitors’ book under the heading ‘The Moods of Dan’. Sinclair was organist of Hereford Cathedral from 1889 until his death in 1917 and, together with his bulldog Dan, is immortalised in the ‘*Enigma*’ Variations).<sup>23</sup>

21 See, for example, Wilfrid Mellers, *Vaughan Williams and the Vision of Albion* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1989), 9; and Wilfrid Mellers, *Celestial Music? Some Masterpieces of European Religious Music* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 174–9.

22 A. J. Jaeger, *The Dream of Gerontius: John Henry Newman & Edward Elgar. Analytical & Descriptive Notes* (London: Novello, 1901).

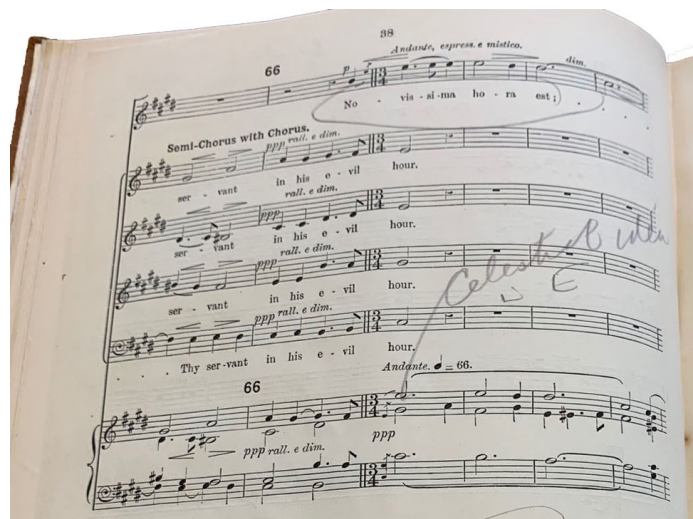
23 Michael Kennedy, *The Life of Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 71.



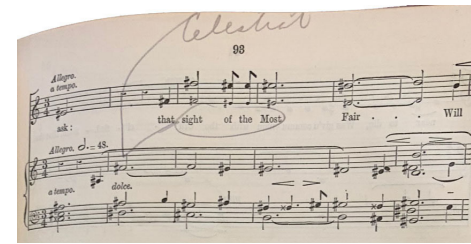


On the next page the theme Jaeger described as the ‘Sleep’ motif is labelled by Elgar as ‘Slumber | (a sick man’s)’ [Illustration 4]. It seems from a letter to Jaeger of 28 August 1900<sup>24</sup> that Elgar did not really like the label ‘Sleep’ but, at the time, could not come up with anything better – so it is significant that he suggested ‘Slumber [of] a sick man’s’ to Buckley a month later. On the following page of the score, at figure 9, Elgar labels the Prayer theme again: this is the climax of the prelude where the Prayer theme appears in augmentation [Illustration 5].

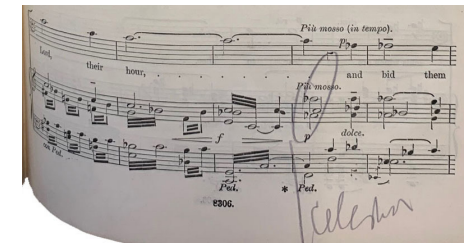
Illustrations 6–9 show four examples where Elgar highlights a ‘Celestial idea’: this theme is labelled the ‘Novissima hora’ by Jaeger. The annotation on p. 159 is significant for what it does *not* say, for this is the passage that Elgar rewrote following Jaeger’s criticism. The correspondence between the two concerning this passage is well known: having seen the original version Jaeger described the section as ‘the *weakest* page in the work! *Do re-write it!* [he asked Elgar on 16 June] Surely, you want something more dramatic *here!*? It seems mere weak whining to me & not at all impressive...’<sup>25</sup> Elgar replied: ‘You must read the poem: I cannot rewrite this: the Soul is shrivelled up & voiceless – & I only want on this page a musing murmur & I’ve got it...’<sup>26</sup> But Jaeger persisted and eventually Elgar rewrote the section with the ‘biggety-big’ theme appearing ‘for one moment’ with ‘every instrument extert[ing] its fullest force’.<sup>27</sup> This is, of course, now a wonderful climax but the revision took precious days and delayed the supply of the chorus copies still further; as is well known, it was the under-rehearsed chorus which got the blame for the poor first performance in Birmingham on 3 October 1900.



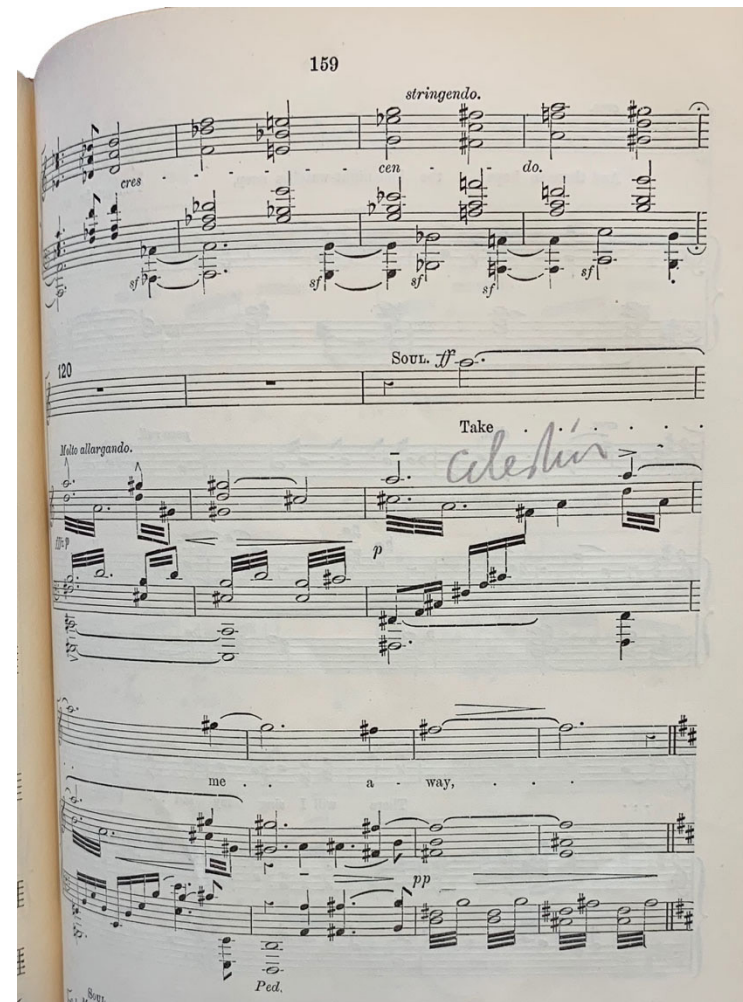
6. Page 38



7. Page 93



8. Page 153



9. Page 159

24 Letter to Jaeger, 28 August 1900, transcribed in Moore (ed.), *Elgar and His Publishers*, 227–8 (source cited: Hereford and Worcester County Record Office 705:445:8401).

25 Transcribed in Moore, *A Creative Life*, 317 (source cited: Hereford and Worcester County Record Office 705:445:8864).

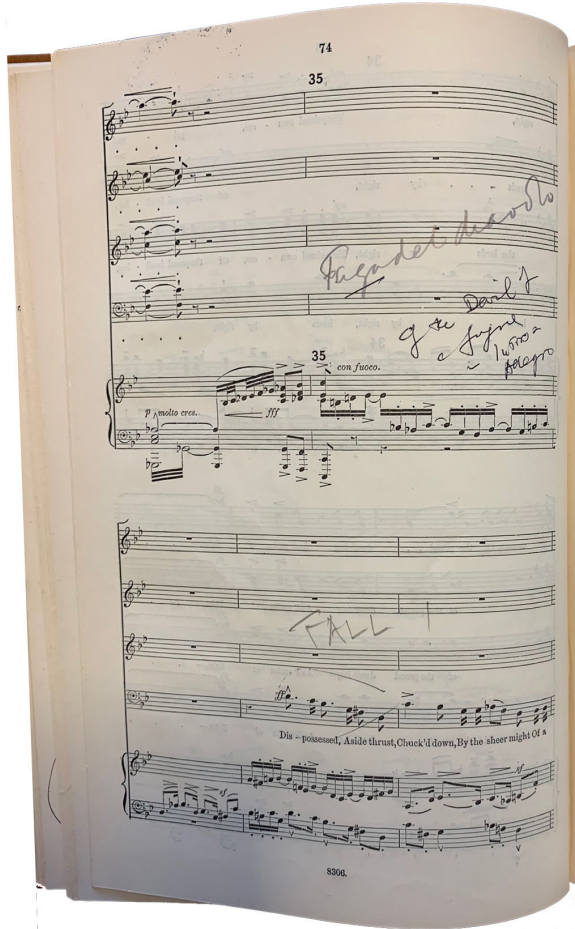
26 Transcribed in Moore, *A Creative Life*, 317 (source cited: Hereford and Worcester County Record Office 705:445:8426).

27 Elgar’s MS full score; Library of The Oratory, Edgbaston, Birmingham.



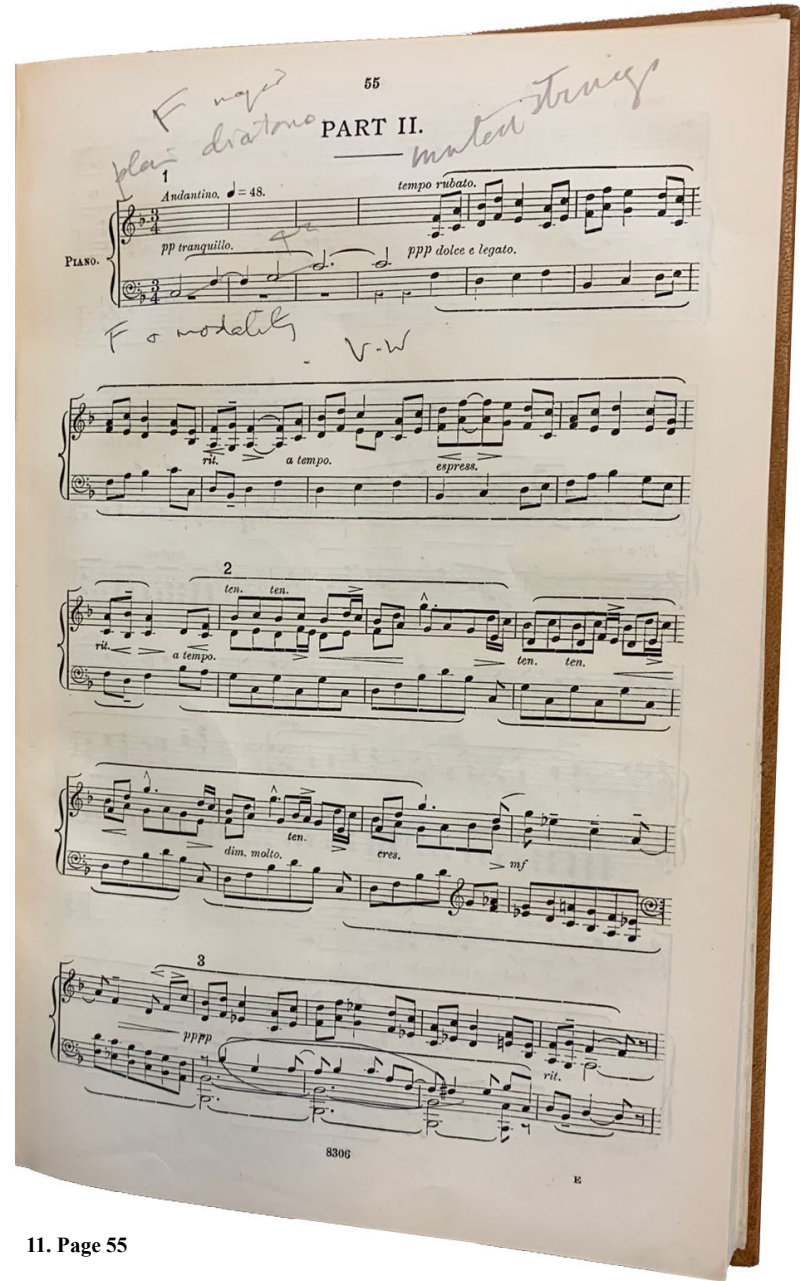
[Illustration 10] Elgar annotated the Demons' fugue on page 74 'Fuga del diavolo' and, in biro below, Mellers reminds us of the 'Devil of a fugue [in the] Intro[duction] and Allegro'. ('FALL' on the second system below may also be in Mellers' hand, but the use of capital letters makes the handwriting identification very tricky.) Julian Rushton has written about the devil's fugues of Berlioz and Elgar<sup>28</sup> and he reminds us that Elgar, in a letter to Jaeger, called the fugue in the *Introduction and Allegro* 'a devil of a fugue'<sup>29</sup> but the annotation in the vocal score here is, as far as the author is aware, the only existing reference to Elgar actually calling the *Gerontius* double-fugato 'The fugue of the devil'.

10. Page 74



28 Julian Rushton, 'A Devil of a Fugue: Berlioz, Elgar, and *Introduction and Allegro*', *Elgar Society Journal*, 11/5 (July 2000), 276–86.

29 26 January 1905; see Percy Young ed., *Letters to Nimrod from Edward Elgar* (London: Dobson, 1965), 248–9.



11. Page 55

56

4 Soul of GERONTIUS (Tenor). *Rit. trappillo. a tempo.* *ad lib.*  
I went to sleep; and now I am re

*colla parte.* *a tempo.* *colla parte.*

5 *L'istesso tempo.* *parlando.*  
A strange . . . fresh-ment . . . for I feel in  
fresh. *L'istesso tempo.* *dim.*

*pp a tempo.* *leggiere.*

*cres. animato.* *mf* *dim.*  
me An in-ex-pressive light-ness, and a sense Of free-dom, as I were at length . . .

*dim.* *mf*

*poco rit.* *dim.* *a tempo.* *12/8 Malvern Hills*  
. . . my-self, And ne'er had been be-fore.

*poco più lento.* *pp colla parte.* *ppp dolcissimo.* *fp* *Malvern Hills Tune*

8306.

The final examples are perhaps the most interesting and significant. Illustrations 11 and 12 are pages 55–6 of the vocal score at the beginning of Part II. On page 55 Elgar tells us that the pastoral theme, labelled by Jaeger as the ‘Soul’s Passage’, is to be played by ‘muted strings’, and the other annotations are in Mellers’ hand: ‘V.W.’ refers to Vaughan Williams and, indeed, in his book on the composer Mellers writes about this section of the *Dream of Gerontius* and describes it as the ‘simplest, and perhaps the most beautiful, music Elgar ever wrote. Flowing from god-like fourths, it is at first not only diatonic, but modal, limpidly scored for woodwind.’<sup>30</sup> Although it is scored for strings (initially at least), Mellers is surely correct that this is a most wonderful section. Elgar paints the stillness of the soul at rest before awakening into life after death with his use of flowing sixths in the arcadian key of F major. There is no real dissonance – indeed there is not an accidental until bar 18 – and the mood is of spiritual peace and idyllic pastoral simplicity. The pastoral mood continues as the Soul of Gerontius sings ‘I went to sleep’ (page 56, Illustration 12) and, at fig. 5, when the music moves into 12/8 time. At the bottom of the page Elgar labelled the 12/8 theme ‘Malvern Hills Tune’ (and the biro annotation above, repeating this, is in the hand of Mellers). ‘Malvern Hills’ appears again on page 58 [Illustration 13] possibly in Elgar’s hand, but it might be in Mellers’ hand: compare it with Wilfrid’s biro annotation on page 56 (see Illustration 12).

9 *Più lento.* *Malvern Hills* *rit. dim.*  
sweet, Hath some-thing too of stern-ness and of

*Più lento.*

*ppp dolciss.* *colla parte.*

These pages highlight the difficulties faced by the author when considering the annotations. Having consulted a number of Elgar-handwriting experts, there does, however, seem to be a consensus that the annotation at the bottom of page 56 [Illustration 12] is in Elgar’s handwriting and this is significant. Jaeger in his analysis draws attention to the 12/8 theme (actually there are two versions, the second being a variation of the first) but does not give them a label, and it is interesting that when Elgar read through the analysis he did not suggest the ‘Malvern Hills’ label to Jaeger. This is slightly surprising given the importance that Elgar himself gives to the Malvern Hills in other letters and writings.<sup>31</sup> *The Dream of Gerontius* was written at Birchwood Lodge, a cottage that the Elgars rented near the tiny village of Storridge on the border of Worcestershire and Herefordshire. This cottage, surrounded by woodland and with views of the Malvern Hills from the upstairs study window, was where Elgar fled for quiet and inspiration; and, in the summer of 1900 with *Gerontius*

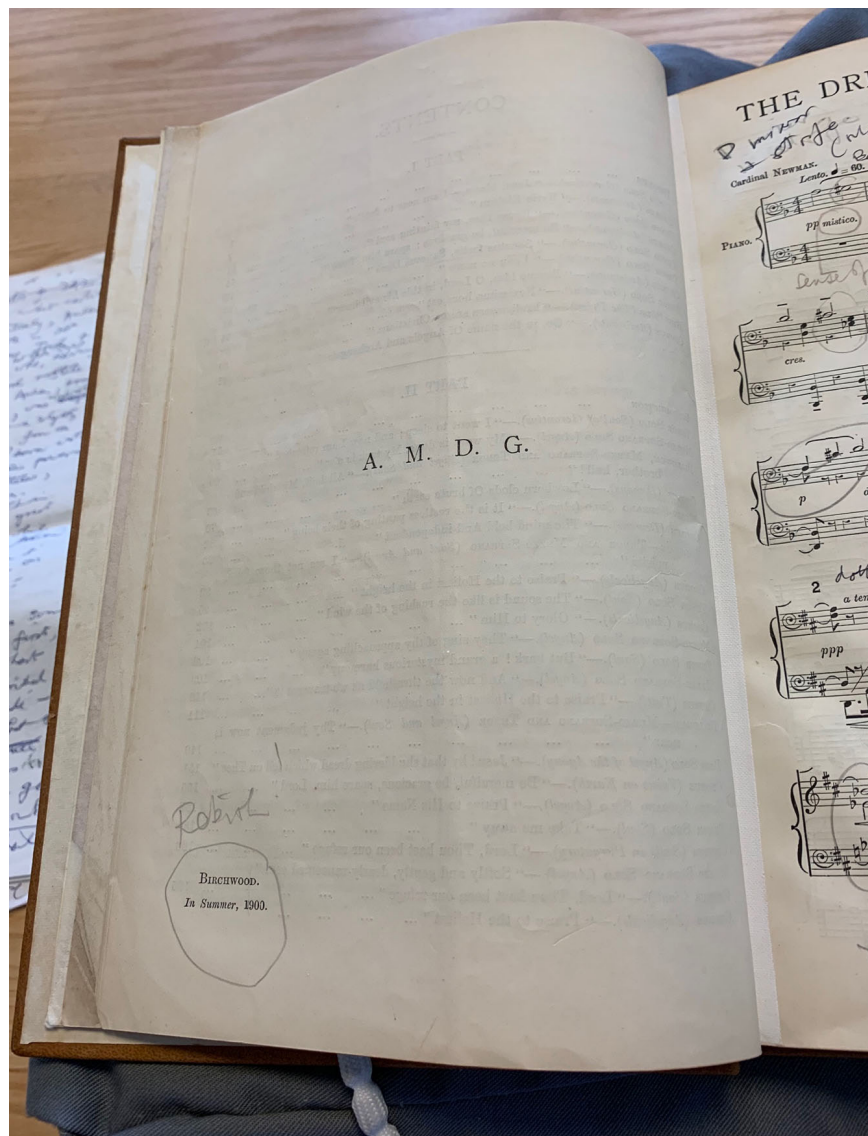
30 Mellers, *Vaughan Williams*, 9.

31 Although, as Julian Rushton pointed out to the author, this sort of topographical tag would perhaps not fit with Jaeger’s other labels in his analysis.



deadlines looming, he needed it more than ever. It is known from Elgar's correspondence and his wife's diaries that he loved the peace and tranquillity that Birchwood offered, and it would be really good to think that the annotation 'Rebirth', on the verso of the final preliminary page, is the composer's for Elgar certainly felt reborn when at Birchwood.

#### 14. Verso of final preliminary page



Dora Powell (née Penny: 'Dorabella' of the 'Enigma' Variations) visited Birchwood in July 1900 and, in 1937, wrote in her book:

I had bicycled from Wolverhampton, forty miles, and arrived, rather warm and dusty, at the cart-track leading up through the woods to the house. When I was nearly there I thought I would rest, out of sight, and yet cool. I heard the piano in the distance and, not wishing to lose more of it than I need, I soon went on.... He was playing the opening of Part II, and those who know the music will understand what it was like to hear that strangely aloof, ethereal music for the first time in such surroundings. Each time I hear it I think of that beautiful place and that glorious day with the sunshine coming through the lace-work of greenery and branches and the deep blue sky over all.<sup>32</sup>

There is absolutely no doubt that locations in the area between Worcester and Hereford, such as the Malvern Hills, were an inspiration to Elgar – he says so many times in his correspondence and diary entries – and this 'Malvern Hills' annotation in the vocal score is another specific example of a geographical location inspiring Elgar's creativity and is a further addition to the popular association of Elgar with the Malvern Hills. The 12/8 'Malvern Hills' theme is typical of many pastoral evocations (flowing triplets, major key, use of woodwind instruments in its first iteration) and, as such, Elgar is using long-established musical conventions to suggest Arcadia, a natural and idyllic vision in harmony with nature.

#### Conclusion

It should be remembered that Elgar made these annotations – probably in a terrible rush – at the very time that August Jaeger was completing his analysis in advance of the first performance. Presumably, therefore, Elgar did not want to 'rain on Jaeger's parade' by giving too much away to Buckley. This might explain why there are not more similarities between the Buckley annotations and Jaeger's analysis. Even so, it might be asked why Elgar did not use Jaeger's descriptors more in his annotations. It should also be said that Elgar was not in the slightest bit consistent in what he notes and what he does not in his annotations in Buckley's vocal score. Indeed, it might be that the musical features that Elgar does *not* mention are as interesting as the ones that he does! Why, for example, in the Buckley vocal score, does Elgar pass by (and not annotate) some of the – at least to modern commentators – most important musical moments? For example, the themes are not labelled in any consistent manner; there is no comment about the words, 'The sound is like the rushing of the wind, The summer wind among the lofty pines' – something to which Elgar would later draw attention and which has occupied many Elgar scholars since;<sup>33</sup> and the rewritten section when the Soul appears before God, mentioned above, is passed over without comment. It is, of course, quite possible that Elgar was actually not that interested in telling others how they should analyse and think about his music, and it could be that Elgar just did not have the time to

32 Mrs Richard Powell (revised and edited by Claud Powell with an addendum by Jerrold Northrop Moore), *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), 28–9. It seems that Dora Powell confused the dates of her visits to Birchwood and reports on the composition of *Gerontius* as 31 July 1899. This cannot be the case for the *Gerontius* music was not advanced enough before January 1900, and it is her visit of 19–21 July 1900, when Elgar was orchestrating Part II of *Gerontius*, that is most likely when she heard the composer playing through the Prelude to Part II and 'Praise to the Holiest'; see Moore, *A Creative Life*, 288 fn. 15.

33 See Moore, *A Creative Life*, 41; Matthew Riley, *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 92–100; etc.

systematically annotate Buckley's vocal score because he was still in the midst of orchestrating the piece (he did not finish the orchestration until 3 August).<sup>34</sup> This might explain the slightly slap-dash annotations, with the composer offering just a few comments that may have helped Buckley when he came to hear the piece and write his review. That said, it is interesting that Elgar saved the 'Malvern Hills tune' annotation for Buckley and did not pass it Jaeger's way – perhaps because the label was too 'personal' and therefore not suitable for an analytical work. It may be, however, a warning to us that Jaeger's analysis, good though it is in many ways – and even though it had Elgar's blessing – is not necessarily the full story (certainly when it comes to highlighting important themes). The discovery of R. J. Buckley's annotated vocal score is *not* one that has in any way changed Elgar scholarship: the reality is that the annotations just confirm a number of things already known. However, the vocal score does, in small ways, add to our knowledge of Elgar's relationship with an important music critic who was to become his first biographer and, along the way, does offer some supporting insights into *The Dream of Gerontius*.

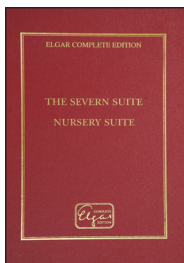
*Jonathan Wainwright* is Professor of Music at the University of York. He is a musicologist who writes primarily on early modern English and Italian music. His books include *Musical Patronage in Seventeenth-Century England (1997)* and *From Renaissance to Baroque (ed. with Peter Holman, 2005)*; and he had edited two volumes of music by Richard Dering for *Musica Britannica (2008 & 2015)*, Walter Porter's *Collected Works for A-R Editions (2017)*, and a volume of Henry Lawes' *Sacred Music is forthcoming from Early English Church Music*. *Jonathan Wainwright* has also been active as a performer: from 1996 to 2001 he was Director of the Girls' Choir at York Minster, and his recordings range from a CD of Sarum plainsong and Medieval carols through to the first commercial recording of Percy Whitlock's *Organ Symphony*, recorded in York Minster.

34 Bird (ed.), *Diaries 1897–1901*, 261.

#### Appendix: Elgar's annotations in R. J. Buckley's vocal score of *The Dream of Gerontius*

<i>Location</i>	<i>Annotation</i> <sup>35</sup>
Verso of final preliminary page	Rebirth [See Illustration 14]
Page 1, under system 1	Sense of apprehension at the unknown [See Illustration 3]
Page 1, above system 4, 3 bars after fig. 2	prayer [See Illustration 3]
Page 2, above system 1, at fig. 4	Slumber   (a sick man's) [See Illustration 4]
Page 3, above system 2, at fig. 9	Prayer [See Illustration 5]
Page 4, above system 2, at fig. 12	'go forth' See p 42
Page 7, above system 3, 6 bars after fig. 22	Christ
Page 11, across system 1	The chorus (words throughout part I are   paraphrased from the Catholic service[.] Prayers   for the benefit[?] of dying[.]   Maybe that after my years   of organist I have caught   the spirit to [illegible] reflect on the ancient   tones.
Page 19, at fig. 37	Christ
Page 19, below system 1	triple counterpoint inverted
Page 23, below system 3	Extraordinary harmony
Page 24, above system 1	The Creed testified
Page 25, above and below system 1	The man is for the moment full of   energy & youthful [illegible] fire & ecstasy
Page 32, above and below system 2	sort of sketch of the Demon scene pp. 70 etc   the awful complete picture is p 70 to [...] p 85   Ha! ha!
Page 33, system 1, at fig. 60	Ha! ha!
Page 33, below last bar	The climax of human pride
Page 34, above system 4	Celestial idea   in E [See Illustration 6]
Page 38, system 1, 1 after fig. 66	muted strings
Page 55, above system 1, 3 bars after fig. 1	Malvern   Hills Tune [See Illustration 12]
Page 56, below system 4, last 2 bars	Malvern Hills [See Illustration 13; ? possibly Mellers]
Page 58, above system 2, at fig. 9	Bass 3 oct below with melody
Page 60, above system 3, 2 bars after fig. 12	Princes (not fallen)
Page 71, below system 2, 2 bars after fig. 33	Fuga del diavolo [See Illustration 10]
Page 74, system 1, at fig. 35	It dies away impotently
Page 91, above system 1	Celestial [See Illustration 7]
Page 93, above system 1	see Intro.
Page 96, above system 1	Note how up there themes flow to [illegible]   developed until   the   climax p 147
Page 151, surrounding system 1	really in <i>Db</i> – the whole movement – but   [illegible] written 'phonetically'   on   acct   of   the   extreme   enharmonic change
Page 153, below system 4, 5 bars after fig. 112	Celestial [See Illustration 8]
Page 158, system 3, at fig. 118	The Judgment
Page 159, system 2, 3 bars after fig. 120	Celestial [See Illustration 9]
Page 165, at fig. 126	Angels farewell   lullaby to [illegible]   [illegible]   The angel floats afterwards   to heaven after leaving   his charge in Heaven
Page 168, above system 1, at fig. 132	

35 Elgar's and Mellers' annotations are often difficult to distinguish and this list should not be taken as definitive. The author would like to record his thanks to members of the Yorkshire & North East Branch of the Elgar Society for their invaluable help in deciphering some of Elgar's annotations when a version of this paper was presented on 26 October 2019.



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## MUSIC REVIEW

### Elgar: *The Severn Suite, Nursery Suite*

Elgar Complete Edition, Vol. 26, edited by David Lloyd-Jones

The 1920s drew from Elgar only one work to which he felt able to give an opus number: his transcription of J.S. Bach's Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 537 is Op.86. He was active in the 20s - more so, perhaps, than is generally realised - but notwithstanding much coaxing from Ivor Atkins, Henry Embleton and others, he produced in that decade no compositions of great consequence. But as it drew to a close, the elderly composer seems to have been reinvigorated, and in 1930 alone he wrote *The Severn Suite*, Op.87, the *Nursery Suite*, and a fifth march for *Pomp & Circumstance*. Perhaps it was something to do with the permanent return to Worcester effected in December 1929, when the purchase of Marl Bank was completed. Perhaps it was something to do with the need to re-pay Embleton's loan. That he was pleased with *The Severn Suite*, the result of Herbert Whiteley's commission for a test-piece for brass band, is suggested by the award of an opus number. Perhaps this proof that he could still write a reasonably substantial multi-movement work gave him the encouragement he needed in order to resume activity on a larger scale: it is at least possible that if illness had not supervened, he might have completed a further symphony (Op.88), an opera (Op.89) and a piano concerto (Op.90). It is just possible, too, that he might at last have settled to the task of writing Part III of *The Apostles*. However, subject to *Mina*, and to the Chopin funeral march transcription, the great sequence of Elgar's orchestral essays comes to an end with the two late suites and the C major march. The earlier suites - *The Wand of Youth*, Op.1A and Op.1B - appeared in Volume 25 of the Complete Edition; here now are *The Severn Suite*, in its orchestral version only, and the *Nursery Suite*, both of them finely presented by Elgar Works (the brass band version of the former is due to appear in Volume 40).

There is, and has been, a tendency to underestimate the late suites, because of their partial reliance on old material and their predominantly light nature. In *Portrait of Elgar*, for example, Michael Kennedy was dismissive of *The Severn Suite* (third edition, page 314) and in his 1970 BBC monograph on the orchestral music he made no mention of it at all and referred only in passing to the *Nursery Suite*. Other commentators have been similarly cool. But Elgar throughout his career had made good use of abandoned material and old sketches, and there is a certain amount here that is far from light. One thinks especially of the austere, *ricercar*-like polyphony of the 'Cathedral' movement of Op.87, which - though it may have been inspired by the experience of transcribing BWV 537 - is not exactly Bach-like, and not at all like Elgar's other examples of fugal writing (the nearest to it is the music beginning at around rehearsal cue 29 in *Gerontius*, as Ivor Atkins

observed in 1927). And that movement not only contains one of Elgar's finest sequences (bars 321-4) but has at its climax something of the restrained grandeur of *Nimrod*. In the *Nursery Suite*, too, there are suggestions of the pre-1920 Elgar. *The Wagon Passes*,<sup>1</sup> its fifth movement, has been described by Anthony Payne as 'dark and even visionary', and *Dreaming*, its seventh, calls to mind the sound-world of *Sospiri*, Op.70.

In 1991, Acuta Music published a limited-edition study score of the orchestral version of *The Severn Suite*. This was the first full score of the work to be published, and in the absence of the autograph it was based on a manuscript version made by or for Keith Prowse. In 2010, however, the autograph manuscript re-appeared and in accordance with Carice's Will was lodged with the British Library (*Lbl* MS Mus.1718), a development which enabled Acuta to issue a revised score in 2015. By contrast, the full orchestral score of the *Nursery Suite*, published by Keith Prowse, had appeared in 1931. The present volume is based largely on the two manuscript scores of *The Severn Suite*, and as regards the *Nursery Suite*, largely on the 1931 published score and the manuscript full score (*Lbl* Add.MS 58278); and notice has been taken of the recordings conducted by Elgar himself.

The new volume is dedicated to the memory of Paul Adrian Rooke, who died in 2019. Paul was not only a co-founder of Elgar Works but also its Chief Originator; he was for many years a member of the council of the Elgar Society; and he was responsible, jointly with Paul Stockbridge, for originating the text of the two suites. The cover of the volume immediately resolves, in gilt letters, a query about nomenclature. Does the title of Op.87 include the definite article? In defiance of the majority of commentators, Volume 26 gives the question an emphatic 'yes', but Elgar himself gave the same answer in 1931, when he made the version for orchestra (as can be seen from the plate on page xiii, which shows the first page of the autograph). The foreword is followed by six pages of illustrations from the source material, a meticulous description of all the sources, and a very detailed commentary. Subject to an apparent indecision over the title of *The Wagon Passes*, which as given in the commentary has 'Passes' in parentheses, the musical text itself is exemplary and more than suggests that the standard of the series has been maintained. Sadly, however, the foreword contains a number of errors. Elgar's initial tenancy of Napleton Grange, Kempsey began on or around 7 April 1923, so the Fugue in C minor that became the third movement of Op.87 could not have been written at Napleton in January 1923, as the editor claims; and the January date is repeated not only in the list of sources but also in the caption

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that in his letter to Fred Gaisberg of 9 June 1931 Elgar consistently uses *Waggon*. See Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar on Record: the Composer and the Gramophone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 138. However, the published Keith Prowse score has *Wagon*. To add to the confusion the Keith Prowse score places *Passes* in brackets, whereas Elgar does not do so in the quoted letter. Over the years the spelling and the brackets have been inconsistently employed in books, and in record and programme notes. Eds.



to the plate on page xii, which shows the first page of the manuscript (*Lbl* MS Mus.1843-1-44, formerly MS 35 at the Birthplace Museum). Anderson, Kent and Moore are unanimous in stating that the manuscript is dated 29 June 1923. Indeed, that is the date given in the foreword to Volume 36 of the Complete Edition, which deals with the works for organ. Is it possible that when making notes, the editor abbreviated 'June' to 'J' and subsequently thought that January was the month? At any rate, there follows the suggestion that the work was intended for the recital that marked the re-opening of the organ at Worcester Cathedral; but that recital took place not in 1923, as the foreword states, but on 16 April 1925, and in a major essay published in the December 2013 edition of this journal, Robert Kay argued strongly that the work was not performed at Worcester Cathedral until March 1927. Given that cathedral music schemes cannot by their very nature include everything the organists play, it is at the very least possible that the fugue was played at the Cathedral, as Wulstan Atkins claimed, on Sunday, 12 April 1925, the day on which the rebuilt organ was first used at services; but Kay's argument in favour of a 1927 first performance commands respect, and it should have been mentioned, if only in a footnote, in order to bring the volume up to date with scholarly thinking. Other errors are less serious. No one is likely to believe that Princess Margaret was born in 1921, two years or so before her parents' marriage. Similarly, it does not really matter that, strictly speaking, the Clarendon Press published Dr Moore's edition of the correspondence with Elgar's publishers; or that the proof-reader failed to spot the redundant 'publishers' in the final footnote or the odd use of upper case in the very first sentence. But in a publication intended as a monument to a great composer - and as a memorial to a scholarly Elgarian - such lapses are a disappointment. They do not diminish one's admiration for the volume as a whole, or for the great investment of time and industry it represents.

Relf Clark

## BOOK REVIEW

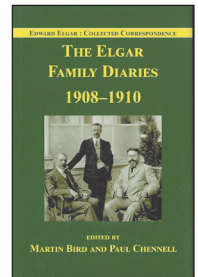
**Edward Elgar: Collected Correspondence (Series V, Volume 5)**  
The Elgar Family Diaries 1908-1910  
Edited by Martin Bird and Paul Chennell

This is of course a volume that has an added importance for, as Paul Chennell writes in his introduction, the period covered within these pages 'saw the composition and first performance of two of Elgar's finest musical achievements [the A Flat Symphony and Violin Concerto]'. I am happy to argue that 3 December 1908 is the most significant day in the history of British music since the death of Handel in 1759. This statement of course ignores events such as the first Wagner Festival in Britain, Mahler conducting *Tristan und Isolde*, early Berlioz performances and the arrival of Mendelssohn. This, however, is different. On a foggy evening in Manchester Elgar's A Flat Symphony was premiered. In its originality, its profusion of ideas, its power to move and inspire and in its brilliant orchestration nothing like it had been composed in this country which suddenly found it nurtured a symphonic composer of international reputation within its shores. So, any volume of correspondence and diaries of those closest to the composer of this astonishing work at this time is of the utmost importance.

Remarkably this is the eleventh volume to be published under the general heading of 'Collected Correspondence'. Two volumes, originally edited by Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore were reissued as 'Series 1 Volume 1' and 'Series II Volume 2' and the remainder through the enthusiasm of the late Martin Bird. So, this new volume brings us the name of Paul Chennell who has taken over the role of editor from Martin. Mr. Chennell who spent time working for the BBC is a historian and music enthusiast and, for many years, editor of *The Delius Society Journal*. All Elgarians will be grateful to him for taking on the task of completing the editing of this volume and, I would hope, future editions which will cover the Great War and then the increasingly sparse entries following the death of Lady Elgar.

The multi-faceted personality of Elgar springs from the pages of this volume: the composer, family man, traveller, self-educator, prankster and the contrarian. His energy and enquiring mind shine (he joined Carice Elgar at her French lessons in Rome) and, from there, we move inexorably to that date in December 1908. We move on too but that moment can be savoured as well as its aftermath: the joy of those whose faith had never wavered and the petty carping of Delius and Stanford - one of whom never ventured towards a symphony and the other outshone by a self-taught genius from the provinces.

The front cover of the sleeve is graced by a photograph of Elgar, Sir Granville Bantock and the elegant figure of Tertius Noble who as organist of York Minster (1898-1916) produced a choir of 400 for a performance of



Elgar Works, 2020  
Rickmansworth

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375 pages

*King Olaf* in 1910. 'Elegance' has always been the hallmark of these volumes and the standard of production is maintained with eight pages of photographs many of which were new to me. The volume begins with that wonderful Elgarian addition: *An Elgar-English Dictionary*. This is essential, for some words such as 'murk' for 'walk' or 'explore' and 'mimsy' for weather need an explanation! Having 'lived' with the Elgars now for more than fifty years I find this all rather endearing although I appreciate their intimacies can be off-putting to the newcomer. The prime-source of material for the volume remains Alice Elgar's diary with the addition of Carice's 'notebook-cum-diary' and the occasional contribution by Elgar himself.

At the end of 1907 the three Elgars travelled to Italy with May Grafton where they would spend much of 1908. Carice, then aged seventeen, was a keen observer of the culture of Rome where they stayed first. Alice spent much of January in bed which enabled Carice and her father to explore Rome, enjoying coffee together as well as the occasional bottle of wine. It is Carice who records the excursions and their many activities during January, their lives initially dominated by worries over the health of Will Grafton, May's father. Elgar was also working on his Op 53 part-songs, three of which he sent to Novello saying that No 4 ('Owls') was "'a clinker" the best I have done'. On 8 January May travelled back to Britain where she would be greeted by the first of many affectionate letters from her uncle Edward. News of Will Grafton's death arrived by telegram on 13<sup>th</sup> after Carice and Edward had attended their 'Berlitz lessons together'.

Reading, say, the year 1909 one realises how busy Elgar's life was – attending concerts all over the country (he would conduct abroad in 1910) and all the time responding to the demands for music as the composition of the Violin Concerto came to dominate his life. A visit to Cornwall in the spring of 1910 galvanised Elgar to record his enthusiastic impression of places like Dartmoor and the cleanliness of Tavistock! There were visits to the theatre and socialising with musicians such as Paderewski, Richter and Ysaÿe. The premiere of the concerto on 10 November 1910 was the musical event of the year. The generous hearted Sir Hubert Parry was not sure: '... rather falls to pieces after the beginning of the beautiful beginning of the slow movement...'. However, Sir Henry Wood took the work to his heart: '...the loveliest concerto ever written for a violin...'.

The volume is a cornucopia of wonderful things: Elgar's attempts to master the art of boomerang throwing, the visit to the Strausses in Garmisch and a trip to observe the flooded Wye, all enhanced by the vast knowledge the editors have of those individuals who swim in and out of the pages. There is barely a name without an explanation! The final entry for 1910 is: 'Decided to leave Plâs Gwyn during its course-'. However, before that, there is a delightful vignette taken from the *Liverpool Post* where the reporter attended a New Year's eve concert given by the Hallé Orchestra: 'Just before Sir Edward Elgar took up his baton at the Philharmonic Hall on Saturday afternoon, the famous Richter was observed making for a seat with the celerity of a youth and with a quite noteworthy manner suggestive of "I don't want to be seen".'

Once settled down among the audience, the famous maestro became sunk in the profound contemplation of the performance. It was quite obvious that the magnet of attraction for "the doctor" was the new Elgar concerto, for having heard that he speedily departed under cover of the thunderous applause bestowed on Elgar and Kreisler'.

That is the sort of added colour which makes these volumes so entertaining and add to the pleasure of getting closer to the Elgar family and their busy (at times hectic) lives during which two masterpieces appeared for the lasting benefit of us all.

Andrew Neill

## CD REVIEWS



Decca  
485 0949

### Elgar: Violin Concerto in B minor, Op.61 *Sospiri*, Op.70, *Salut d'amour*, Op.12, *Chanson de Nuit*, Op.15, No.1

Nicola Benedetti (violin)

London Philharmonic Orchestra, Vladimir Jurowski

Petr Limonov (piano)

A recording of the Violin Concerto was reviewed in the April edition of this publication: examination of randomly selected back numbers suggests that this latest CD adds to an already impressive total. Among the reasons for this evident enthusiasm is presumably that by recording the work a violinist passes a big professional milestone, given the technical difficulties involved and the stamina and the high level of musicianship called for. As to the difficulties, one thinks in particular of the terrifying passages beginning at cues 21 and 40 of the first movement, and the way in which elsewhere Elgar compounds them by adding ornaments (the trills in bars 101 and 103, for example, and the mordents in bar 50 of the third movement). Nor are the difficulties confined to the solo part. The score is among the composer's most elaborately 'dressed' and demands of the conductor unremitting attention to detail and an eye continually focused on the soloist's bow. Take as merely one example bars 73-8 of the first movement, which are directed to be played *più tranquillo* (73-4), *a tempo / più lento* (75), *colla parte* (76), *a tempo* (77) and *animato* (78). And articulation marks abound: rarely if ever has Elgar been more anxious to see the quavers properly nourished.

Inevitably, every such recording draws from Elgar specialists comments from a wide spectrum of opinion. Some will find too little or too much or just enough of this or that quality. The more captious (reviewers, for example) will turn to their scores and their metronomes, or to the timings of earlier recordings. Others will be incited to reminiscence or autobiography. It is hard for Elgarians not to adopt a proprietorial attitude towards a work so personal, so bound up with one of the composer's most intimate friendships, and so eloquent of the era that saw the high-water mark of his public acclaim. This is a finely wrought performance and one which suggests a good deal more than professional respect for the score: only a few matters seem to call for any kind of detailed observation, all of them relating solely to the first movement. Given the care with which Elgar indicates his intentions, it is puzzling that in the bars between cue 8 and the soloist's first appearance even Jurowski perpetuates what appears to be the almost invariable practice of holding the music back. Perhaps he is following the example of Elgar's 1932 recording, or perhaps even professionals sometimes need reminding that a slowing is not implied by *diminuendo*. Subject to the need to make the last horn note of bar 69 a clearly audible event, there should surely be no slowing of any

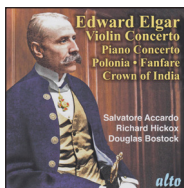
kind until that first entry, where Elgar writes *molto largamente*. Secondly, Jurowski's handling of the four bars immediately following cue 24 seems to suggest that he too is nonplussed by Elgar's mixture of dynamics here, for the passage between cues 23 and 26 is taken throughout at the initially prescribed *fortissimo*. But perhaps Elgar's own example is again being followed. On the subject of dynamics, in bar 137 and again at bar 150, Benedetti - like most other soloists - does not quite achieve a reduction to Elgar's possibly rather optimistic *pianississimo*, and the intended whispers are therefore lost; but Elgar's letter to Windflower of 18 October 1910 (see *Portrait of Elgar*, second edition, page 235) suggests that what he truly wanted here was impossible to realise on a musical instrument. All such niggles are in any event swept aside by the performance as a whole and in particular by those 'terrifying' passages referred to above, and the similar ones in the finale, in which Benedetti thrillingly negotiates the high wire of Elgar's semiquavers. The spirit of the work is movingly captured throughout, most especially in the second movement, where Geoff Brown's adjective 'ardent' (*The Times*, 15 May) hits the nail nicely.

The CD is filled out with two early works, *Salut d'amour*, Op.12 and *Chanson de Nuit*, Op.15, No. 1, and one, *Sospiri*, Op.70, from an altogether different period in Elgar's life; and Benedetti is deftly accompanied in all three by Petr Limonov. The inclusion of *Sospiri*, which Elgar dedicated to W.H. Reed, is most apt, given the very important role played by Reed in the genesis of the Violin Concerto. The version for violin and piano was published by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1914, at the same time as the more familiar version for strings, harp and organ; it necessarily lacks some of the poetry of its companion, but its inclusion is likely to fill a gap in many collections.

Finally, it is a bonus indeed that the liner notes have been written by David Owen Norris, though perhaps one could have wished for rather more words from so illustrious an Elgarian; and purchasers wondering about the location of 'the famous [is it?] leap of a twelfth on the G string' will find it at bar 39 of the slow movement (and see page 582 of Dr Moore's *Edward Elgar a creative life*, but note that Reed surely meant E flat, not E). Thankfully, we are spared a discussion about the work's epigraph, Mr Norris opining that the 'wilder reaches of speculation, though entertaining, cast little new light on the music'. Quite so.

Relf Clark





Alto ALC1423

**Elgar: Violin Concerto in B minor (op 61)**  
**Symphonic Prelude: Polonia (op 76)**  
**March/ Hail Immemorial Ind (Crown of India (op66))**  
**Civic Fanfare (1927)**  
**Piano Concerto slow movement (op 90) (ed. Percy Young)**  
Salvatore Accardo (violin): Margaret Fingerhut (piano): Mette Christina Ostergaard (Mezzo)  
London Symphony Orchestra / Richard Hickox  
Munich Symphony Orchestra / Douglas Bostock

The two CDs sent to me to review on the budget priced Alto label are compilations of previously issued recordings on a variety of labels. The recording in 1991 of the Violin Concerto appeared on the Collins Classics label, with, I seem to recall, very little fanfare. I certainly missed it then, and am pleased to catch up with it now in its newly remastered form. The Italian violinist Salvatore Accardo had a distinguished career, and was particularly noted for his interpretations of the finger-cracking works of Paganini. I wondered how he would cope with the Elgar Concerto, which not only requires similar feats of virtuosity, but has a greater emotional, passionate, indeed musical, depth to it. I need not have worried. He gives a lovely performance of this intricate work, with enough fizzing virtuosity when required, but also with a warmly lyrical tone in the more reflective moments. He is in safe hands with the conductor Richard Hickox, who shapes this complex score with full understanding. His opening tutti is quite brisk, and the playing of the London Symphony Orchestra is a delight throughout, from whispered *pianissimos* to full throated ardour. The recording is spacious yet detailed, and, praise be, the violin is set in a realistic perspective with the orchestra, instead of spotlighted to an enormous size. All in all I feel the performance offers no particularly fresh insights, but there are no quirks or gimmicks either. It is a sane, musically balanced performance that I could very happily live with.

*Polonia* seems to have come out of the shadows recently, which is good as it is a most attractive and enjoyable work. There are several recordings available, and this one is certainly a fine one. The Munich orchestra obviously revels in Elgar's virtuosic orchestration, and Bostock guides it sensibly through the myriad changes of mood with assurance, although one or two of his tempi are on the brisk side.

It is also good to welcome a couple of lesser-known movements from *The Crown of India*. The March enjoyed popularity in Elgar's lifetime but then almost disappeared until recently. It is a fine one, and well played with the necessary panache here. It was not included in Elgar's own Suite from the music, possibly because that also contained the more brazen and flamboyant *March of the Mogul Emperors*. It has something of the verve of the later *Empire March*. The aria *Hail Immemorial Ind!* is, I think, quite unique in the composer's output in its exotic, swirling orchestration and vaguely 'Eastern' melodic lines. It is partly based on Elgar's own earlier piano piece *In*

*Smyrna*. It is well sung by the young Danish mezzo-soprano Mette Christina Ostergaard, who has an attractive voice although her English diction is not that clear. Fortunately the words are included in the booklet.

The slow movement from Elgar's projected Piano Concerto exists in sketch form and was edited and orchestrated by Dr Percy Young in the 1950s. It is played with sensitive feeling by Margaret Fingerhut at a tempo that seems to me to get to the heart of the work far better than the lighter, more skittish, tempo favoured by David Owen Norris in his recording of Robert Walker's realisation of the complete work. It is a charming trifle, even if we must remember that it is not a finished Elgar movement.

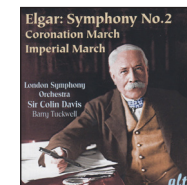
The final, and welcome, work is another trifle, the Civic Fanfare written for the 1927 Hereford Three Choirs Festival. Written for an orchestra without violins, it is always good to hear it, and it's a pity it is not used more often to precede the composer's arrangement of the National Anthem.

Even if this disc's titles make it seem a bit of a mish-mash, I welcome it, especially at Alto's budget price, as it presents a good Violin Concerto along with a range of music just off the beaten track.

Barry Collett.

**Elgar: Symphony No 2 in E flat (op 63)**  
**Coronation March (op 65)**  
**Imperial March (op 32)**

London Symphony Orchestra / Sir Colin Davis / Barry Tuckwell



Alto ALC 1407

I had no idea, or if I had, I'd forgotten, that the Australian virtuoso on the French Horn, Barry Tuckwell, also conducted. But here he is with the London Symphony Orchestra with splendid interpretations of two of Elgar's wonderful Marches. The *Coronation March*, written for George V's coronation of 1911, is surely one of Elgar's greatest orchestral works, yet not as well-known as some other works in the same form. The opening, using up previous sketches, is dark and ominous and explores the cavernous depths of the orchestra – low brass instruments and organ pedals prominent, and in three-four time. Try marching to that! It gets under way in the 'correct' march rhythm, but there is a steely glitter and an underlying anxiety to the music – it is far from a festive, triumphant pageant. Had Elgar sensed the disquiet of the times and the approaching catastrophe? Up till now my favourite recording has been on an old ASV CD, with Yondani Butt and the RPO, especially in the earth rumbling depths of the opening, but this one runs it close. Tuckwell adopts a stately tempo, and the orchestra, with prominent organ, plays splendidly. The earlier *Imperial March* also receives a first-rate performance, and it has always struck me that the rather jaunty tempo and at times underlying wistfulness is far from an 'Imperial' mood.

The Symphony was recorded in 2001 in the far from ideal acoustics of the Barbican. The difference in sound from the Marches is noticeable – there is a boxiness and lack of ‘bloom’ in the sound. One does get used to it, and it does not cloud the clarity of the texture. Harps and soft percussion, for instance, can be quite clearly heard.

The first movement is generally good, and there is an *elan* and an exuberant swing to the twelve-eight rhythms that surges the music onwards. The more sinister elements in the central section are also well played in the passages that can become becalmed if the rhythm is allowed to flag. The slow movement has some wonderful playing, particularly the brass-topped climaxes at Figs 76 and 85, but the basic pulse is very slow. I have sometimes felt that Colin Davis’s Elgar can become too inert, and lack a sense of forward momentum. Here it is redeemed by the fine orchestral playing, but I’ve noted some comparisons in a final paragraph (below).

No such problems affect the last two movements. The third movement Rondo is a *tour-de-force* of orchestral virtuosity, and the LSO is predictably excellent, although there is a quaint, and unmarked, slowing down before the final exuberant coda. The finale is also excellent, finely paced, wonderfully played, with real nobility and passion. And when the opening theme of the work returns in a golden hazy glow, Fig 168, leading to that emotional, sunset ending, all criticism is silenced. If only it hadn’t been recorded at the Barbican! No matter, I can recommend this CD as a welcome addition, especially at budget price, to anyone’s library.

I looked at some other recordings of the Symphony on my shelves to check Davis’s speed in the slow movement, to see if it was as slow as I thought. Of course, speed is not the only thing – Barbirolli could often get away with slow tempi because of the sheer love for the music communicated itself to the warmly expressive playing. For those interested in these things, here are some comparisons of timings for the second movement. The figures in brackets are for the complete symphony.

Gibson/SNO 13 (52); Barenboim/ Berlin Staatskapelle 14 (56); Slatkin/ LPO 15 (55); A Davis/BBCSO 14 (56); Oramo/ Stockholm PO 14 (55); Svetlanov/ USSR State SO 16 (51); Petrenko/RLPO 15 (59); Solti/LPO 15.30 (51); Sinopoli/ Philharmonia 18.28 (65.22); Colin Davis/LSO 16.19 (57.40)

So the Davis performance of the slow movement is longer (and slower) than most, and his complete symphony slightly longer than most too. Apart from Giuseppe Sinopoli, who clocks in at a staggering 65 plus minutes, but again he is redeemed by the passionate and committed playing of the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Barry Collett

## Elgar and Amy Beach Piano Quintets

Garrick Ohlsson (piano)

Takács Quartet

Among the last-known photographs of Edward Elgar, taken on 12 December 1933 by HMV photographer Fred Hempstead, is an image of the bed-ridden composer holding a disc from a recording of his Quintet in A minor for Strings and Piano, Op. 84. Recorded in October by the Stratton String Quartet with pianist Harriet Cohen, the disc was a test copy, rushed through processing to arrive at the South Bank Nursing Home in Worcester by December in time to celebrate Elgar’s last Christmas. Unhappily, he was no longer living when the published version, in the form of HMV’s 4-disc set, appeared in May, 1934.

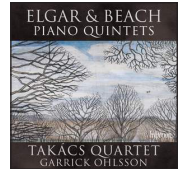
The Stratton/Cohen account was not the Quintet’s first published recording. In 1926, Compton Mackenzie’s National Gramophonic Society label published the piece performed by the Spencer Dyke Quartet, together with the Irish pianist Ethel Hobday. Mackenzie invited the composer himself to record the piano part, but Elgar declined, replying, ‘I never play the pianoforte - I scramble through things orchestrally in a way that would madden with envy all existing pianists’. Subsequent issues include recordings by the Aeolian Quartet with Leonard Cassini, the New London Quartet with Frank Wilbaut, and the Allegri Quartet with John Ogdon.

Hyperion Records contributed two very fine versions. The first, recorded by the Nash Ensemble, was released in 1993; the second, performed by the aptly-named Goldner Quartet with pianist Piers Lane became available in 2011. Now the label has outdone itself with a third offering: this one a splendid performance by the Takács Quartet joined by the outstanding American pianist Garrick Ohlsson.

What we hear are complementary musical outpourings flowing from two autodidacts, both of whom carried the scars of a held-back upbringing. Elgar’s youthful circumstances are well known. As for Amy Cheney (1867-1944), her mother made every effort to mould her child-prodigy daughter into a paragon of Bostonian respectability, first by restricting Amy’s access to the piano until she reached her teens; later by refusing on her daughter’s behalf offers of musical training, locally and in Europe; and finally by marrying Amy off at eighteen to Dr. Henry Beach, a surgeon twenty-five years her senior. As the wife of a worthy physician, Amy was forbidden to teach piano and was permitted to participate in only one or two charity recitals a year. Left to her housebound solitude, Amy sought refuge in self-teaching and composing under the grudging eye of her rectitudinous husband. One result was the Piano Quintet she completed in 1907.

Mercifully, Amy outlived both Dr. Beach and Mrs. Cheney, who died in 1910 and 1911, respectively. Thereafter, she lived the life of an acclaimed touring virtuoso in Germany until the advent of the Great War, after which she spent the remainder of her life teaching and performing in her native USA.

On this latest recording we find brilliant playing applied to the inspired



Hyperion  
CDA68295



pairing of Elgar's 'wood magic, so elusive and delicate' and Amy Beach's exquisitely nuanced Piano Quintet in F# minor, Op. 67.

Founded in Budapest, now resident in Colorado, the Takács Quartet's place among the leading string quartets of our time is evidenced by its induction into membership of the Gramophone Magazine's first Hall of Fame, the only string quartet to be so honoured. On this occasion, the partnership with Ohlsson has produced a merging of technical prowess that traces with intimate expressivity and unaffected restraint the extrovert-to-elegiac mood swings common to both masterpieces.

Nigel Simeone's admirable notes succinctly analyse the two works' musicological highlights and sum up the relevant background. The cover illustration from a painting by Paul Nash comes close to visually matching the musical moods at play. In my view, this CD, expertly produced by Andrew Keener, belongs in every serious Elgarian's library.

Arthur Reynolds



Chandos CHSA 6268  
(2)

**Sir Charles Hubert H Parry**  
**Judith, or the Regeneration of Manasseh**

Sarah Fox, soprano  
Kathryn Rudge, mezzo-soprano  
Toby Spence, tenor  
Henry Waddington, bass-baritone  
Crouch End Festival Chorus (David Temple, MBE musical director)  
William Whitehead, organ  
London Mozart Players  
Conducted by William Vann

The problem for the music of both Parry (born 1848) and Stanford (born 1852) and why it has been largely marginalized seems clearer to me now that I have listened to this and some recent recordings of Stanford's music. We have only to look at some of their contemporaries: Antonín Dvořák (born 1841) Leoš Janáček (1854), Edward Elgar (1857), Giacomo Puccini (1858), Gustav Mahler (1860), Claude Debussy (1862), Richard Strauss (1864), Jean Sibelius (1865) and Maurice Ravel (1875) for the problem to be emphasized. All these composers were geniuses and, although some of what they wrote might not be deemed 'great', their music has stood the test of time as well as countless performances. Furthermore, Parry and Stanford were composing (for part of their lives) with the towering figures of Brahms, Verdi, Tchaikovsky and Wagner dominating much of western musical activity. All these great composers had a 'sound' which can often lead a listener who turns on the radio identifying their music within a bar or even one chord. I cannot say, admittedly from my limited experience, that either Parry or Stanford have a unique sound that enables the innocent listener to identify their music with little or no delay but the problem is not unique. I am not sure that others such as Max Bruch (born 1838) had an individual sound either whilst relatively

minor composers such as Gerald Finzi clearly did.

That gadfly of a critic, G B Shaw wrote for his review of Parry's *Judith* in 1888: 'Never was there a musician easier and pleasanter to praise, painfuller and more ungracious to disparage'. Shaw's opinions of Parry as a man and his views on his choral works are easily found but those readers interested in the visual arts will be aware of Artemesia Gentileschi's astonishing painting of Judith decapitating the Assyrian general Holofernes. Letizia Treves, the curator of the current London exhibition of the artist's work said of Gentileschi: 'No other artist, male or female, paints that with such violence. It is an incredibly violent work ... but there is a truthfulness about it'. That about sums up my issue with the Parry interpretation of this vivid story. In my review of the concert that went with this recording (News 68) I referred to Caravaggio's painting of the same event (which was reproduced) and both Caravaggio and Gentileschi point up Parry's failure to colour such a vivid story. He failed to paint a musical picture that escapes from a Victorian tea party. Suggesting that Judith was a seductress, as in the nude portrayal by Franz Stuck from 1928, takes matters too far (although she was impersonating a seductress) but something closer to the grim worlds of Strauss's *Salome* or *Elektra* might have added life to Parry's monochromatic version of the tale. Of course, Parry wrote some great music: *Blest Pair of Sirens*, *I was Glad*, the *Symphonic Variations*, *Songs of Farewell* and his Piano Concerto are but obvious examples although when he emulates *Judith* in works such as *Job* and *Prometheus Unbound* alas he 'falls at the first fence'. I recall attending the BBC recording, conducted by Vernon Handley, of *Prometheus Unbound* in 1981 at the behest of the producer, Michael Pope, who was then also the Society's Chairman. I have listened to the recording of the broadcast on numerous occasions since then and remain as disappointed with the work as I was in 1981.

Nevertheless, having now listened to the recording of *Judith*, the music has grown on me and my admiration for the performance has, if anything, increased. Andrew MacGregor in BBC Radio 3's Record Review in March 2020 said about this Chandos performance that it is 'getting the recording it richly deserves' and I have read other reviews that are equally enthusiastic. In many ways they are right: it is a beautiful recording, the soloists are all excellent, the chorus is magnificent, and the small orchestra sounds like a body twice its size. Over and above all these factors looms the brilliant conducting of William Vann whose passion for the piece was stimulated by his wish to get to the origin of the hymn tune, *Repton*. All this, together with the eloquent notes of Professor Jeremy Dibble meant that I needed to think again about *Judith*. There are moments that are memorable such as the *Repton* setting: 'Long since in Egypt's plenteous land' beautifully interpreted by Kathryn Rudge. This is low for her but she accomplishes what is 'the big tune' in *Judith* with great sensitivity and control. Sarah Fox is a wonderfully clear, radiant, Judith and, despite the dull libretto, she very much makes the most of it. Then there is the tenor solo towards the end: 'God breaketh the battle' which is a fine example of a Handel parody. My comments on the

male soloists in the concert review stand. There is much I could add but that was covered by my review last August, too. I remain deeply disappointed by Parry's inability to engage with the story; he seems to be looking at it through a reversed telescope and doing everything to avoid dirtying his hands.

Notwithstanding my reservations I can recommend the recording for its sound, the excellent solo and choral singing and the committed performance overall. Sadly, for Parry, this only serves to clarify why Elgar when he emerged, trod on his and so many other reputations!

Andrew Neill



SJB 1098-99 The Barbirolli Society

**Sir John Barbirolli**  
**70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Concert**  
**Elgar : *Introduction and Allegro* for strings Op.47**  
**Vaughan Williams: *Symphony No.6 in E minor***  
**Beethoven: *Symphony No. 7 in A major Op.92***  
 Free Trade Hall, Manchester, 18 December 1969  
 Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir John Barbirolli

Barbirolli was in Houston for his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday on 2 December 1969 so the Manchester concert to mark it, with a programme chosen by him, took place after his return to the UK. This two CD set is taken from a mono BBC recording of the evening, complete with announcements - these may now seem wryly amusing with their formality and unemotional tone, which evoke another age: truly the past is another country. This is reinforced by the playing of the National Anthem at the start of the concert.

Barbirolli's first choice was Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro*, a work he had conducted for over 40 years, and indeed this was to be his 119<sup>th</sup> performance. The *Variations* clocked up 266 outings: these two works were the most frequently played of Elgar's *oeuvre* in his conducting career.

This performance has all the exuberance, poetry, lyricism and wistfulness expected from this conductor. The Hallé strings bring out the sinewy strands of this masterpiece as well as the inward quality of the quieter reflective passages, as played by the quartet embedded within the main structure. The *Allegro* at Cue 7 is beautifully paced, leading to the second subject with its *staccato* semiquavers, followed by the *nobilmente* reference to the opening bars at cue 12. The middle section, the fugue, is wonderfully controlled. Barbirolli, being a cellist, was well aware of the nuances of Elgar's string writing and fully alive to the numerous changes in *tempi*: he brings out the sonorous passages to perfection, especially at the *nobilmente* version of the opening bars at Cue 27. The peroration with the 'Welsh theme' at Cue 30 is suitably triumphant and leads the work to its masterly conclusion. This splendid rendition reminds us of Elgar's 1905 statement that: 'Nothing better for strings has ever been done'.

The second piece is the powerful Sixth Symphony of Ralph Vaughan

Williams, which Barbirolli eagerly took up after its first performance in 1948 (he was the second conductor to perform it - three months after Boult's premiere he took it to the Cheltenham Festival). He conducted it 69 times and of all RVW's symphonies only number Eight exceeded this with 79 performances. The momentum of the turbulent opening movement could not be bettered, with its themes tumbling over each other, contrasting well with the flowing romantic E major episode toward the end of the movement. The eerie *moderato* second movement with its insistent trumpet-and-drum beats at its heart is well caught, as is the 'hell's-kitchen' of the Scherzo with its jaunty saxophone playing. The Epilogue, a true *pianissimo* throughout, has the icy chill which the composer intended, hinting later that the key to its meaning was in Prospero's Farewell.

After the intensity of the Vaughan Williams, the warmth of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony concluded the evening in a celebratory manner, with a spirited, lively, life-enhancing reading, very fitting for a Barbirolli favourite which he conducted 249 times, making this the most frequently played Beethoven symphony of his career. Whilst the mono sound is less spacious than JB's studio recordings with EMI, it is perfectly acceptable, capturing the unique atmosphere of the Free Trade Hall on an evening when the Manchester audience acclaimed this much-loved man. He was to conduct the *Introduction and Allegro* only twice more, the Sixth Symphony once, and he ended his final public concert in King's Lynn on 25 July 1970 with this Beethoven symphony.

The CDs are rounded out by contemporary 70<sup>th</sup> birthday tributes from Michael Kennedy, Martin Milner the orchestra's leader, C.B. Rees, Jacqueline du Pré, Daniel Barenboim and others, and there is an interview with Sir John which is suitably reminiscent as he looks back at 70 over his life. Barbirolli enthusiasts will not hesitate to acquire these CDs – and so should Elgarians.

Kevin Mitchell



## OTHER RECENT RELEASES

To commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sir John Barbirolli's death on 29 July 1970, Warner has issued a 109 CD box set containing all of Barbirolli's recordings with HMV, EMI and Pye from 1928 to 1970, which have been remastered and digitised in high-definition from original sources. David L. Jones and Paul Brooks from the Barbirolli Society were closely involved in the production process as, surprisingly, Warner did not have access to all of JB's recordings and had to obtain some from David Jones' extensive archive of these. David also provided many of his original LP and EP covers as sleeves for the CDs. The set includes Barbirolli's Elgar recordings, starting with the *Introduction and Allegro* in 1928 and finishing with his recordings of *Froissart*, *Elegy* and *Sospiri* made on 15-16 July 1966, which will be well known to members. One bonus disc contains a recording of Part Two of *The Dream of Gerontius* recorded in Manchester Town Hall in 1951 with Parry Jones, Marjorie Thomas and Marian Nowakowski. Part One is lost. Michael Kennedy in his biography of Barbirolli singled out two performances of *The Dream* which remained in his memory from 1947 and 1950, featuring Parry Jones, and he considered the Hanley performance on 2 November 1950, as being perhaps the greatest account of the work he expected to hear. The set includes a documentary by Jon Tolansky. **Warner: 9029538603.**

**The Barbirolli Society** has also issued, apart from the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday concert, a 1954 Proms recording of Act Two of *Tristan und Isolde* but scene three is incomplete – **SJB 1101** - and a 1965 BBC2 broadcast featuring Jacqueline du Pré in Bruch's *Kol Nidrei* – **SJB 1100**.

For those who still hanker after vinyl, Warner has produced an LP of Barbirolli's 1962 recording of the *Variations* and the *Cockaigne* Overture with the Philharmonia Orchestra. The cover has an evocative still of Elgar and his bicycle on the Malvern Hills at sunset, taken from Ken Russell's *Monitor* film – **Warner 9029539003**.

Decca's *The Supreme Record Company – A Recorded Legacy* is a 55 CD box set which includes a recording made in November 1945 on 78s of the *Variations*, conducted by Sargent with the National Symphony Orchestra – **Decca 4850219**.

Decca has issued a 60 CD box of the Orchestra of St. Martin in the Fields, which includes Sir Neville Marriner's fine recordings of the *Introduction and Allegro*, *Elegy*, *Serenade* and *The Spanish Lady Suite* – **Decca 4850093**.

Also, from Decca is a 38 CD box of the complete recordings for that label of Zubin Mehta with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which he conducted from 1962 to 1978. The recordings include the *Variations* – **Decca 4850374**.

The *Variations* can also be found in *Pierre Monteux: Milestones of a Legendary Conductor* a 10 CD set from Documents. This is his renowned recording with the LSO from 1958 which was the choice of Dr Kate Kennedy in 'Record Review' on Radio 3 last January – **Documents 600543**.

Peter Wispelway includes the Elgar Cello Concerto in a four CD set of six Cello Concertos spanning 200 years on **Channel Classics CCSEL1498**.

**Chandos** has re-issued a two CD set of *The Best of Tasmin* which includes Tasmin Little's recordings of the Violin Concerto, *Chanson de Matin* and *Salut d'amour* – **CHAN201852**.

The *Introduction and Allegro* and *Chanson de Matin* can be found on *Daniel Hope: Belle Epoque* a two-disc set with the Zürcher Kammerorchester on **Deutsche Grammophon – 4837244**.

Jonathan Hope plays his own arrangement of *In the South* on the organ of St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol on **Willowhayne Records WHR0591**.

Timothy Parsons plays an arrangement for organ of the *Imperial March* on *The English Cathedral Series, Vol.20: Exeter* on **Regent Records – REGGCD523**.

Finally, *In Smyrna* and *Serenade* for piano, can be found played by Alexander Karpeyev in a piano recital on **SOMM** called *Composers at the Savile Club* – **SOMMCD0601**.

Kevin Mitchell

## 100 YEARS AGO ...

Following Lady Elgar's death in April 1920, Elgar valiantly attempted to maintain a diary, but the brief entries did not equal her detailed records and became increasingly intermittent, so from henceforth in tracing Elgar's life, correspondence will be used in addition to the sparse diary notes.

When staying with his sister Pollie in Bromsgrove he wrote to Troyte Griffith on 19 April: 'I do not know how I shd. have got through the awfully lonely time without your friendship and care. As the days go by ... the "blank" seems greater and unbearable'. Troyte, as well as securing for Elgar the next available space in St. Wulstan's churchyard, carried out the design of Alice's headstone.

On returning to Severn House on 26 April, Elgar immediately left to spend four days 'in Kent wandering', where he tried to look up 'some old Elgar things', writing to Carice from a wet Canterbury the following day, that 'I feel so old now'. On 30 April 'E. returned sad'. On different days Lady Stuart of Wortley, Billy Reed and Bantock all came to tea and gave sympathy and he and Carice visited their solicitor on 3 May who advised that Severn House had to be valued for probate. On the same day Elgar consulted Sir Maurice Anderson over rheumatism of the hip joint.

On 6 May the Bohemian Quartet rehearsed in the Severn House music room for a performance of his Quartet 'to break the awfulness of the change'. Ivor Atkins raised the slim possibility of a new Elgar work for the revived Three Choirs Festival to be held in Worcester in September, but Elgar replied on 6 May: 'It will not be possible for me to write anything new – you cannot fathom the loneliness & desolation of my life I fear ... *We* had been looking forward to the dear old festival & suddenly the whole thing is hurled away from me'. On the following day he and Carice travelled to Newcastle to fulfil an engagement to conduct *The Apostles* in the Cathedral with Henry Embleton's Choral Union on 8 May - which he noted was the 31st anniversary of his wedding - returning to London and 'The empty house' on 9 May. There followed several cinema visits, but Elgar excused himself from attending the Bohemian Quartet's concert on 12 May, sending Carice in his place. Trouble with neuritis forced him to visit Sir Maurice Anderson again on 17 May. Still affected with neuritis on 19 May, medical necessities changed to legal ones, when on 20 May he and Carice returned to Messrs. Field Roscoe & Co., solicitors in Lincoln's Inn, and 'signed all horrible documents for probate', afterwards attending a cinema in Coventry Street and then another in Frognal.

He went to Glamorgan with Carice on 25 May to conduct concerts with the LSO in Cardiff and Swansea, the main work being the Second Symphony. They were the guests of Lord Aberdare at Duffryn Castle. Returning home via Malvern on 28 May, he called on Troyte Griffith intending to travel on to The Hut on 29 May, but an attack of giddiness forced him to remain with Troyte. After making some recovery, a car was ordered to take him back to his sister in Stoke, but his illness then required a doctor, followed by an eight day stay at the Grove Hotel from 1 to 8 June. Carice wrote to Lady Stuart of Wortley on 2 June (Elgar's 63rd birthday) that she did not know of any future plans and that 'everything seems useless & hopeless'. She wrote again on 6 June to report that 'Father has been in bed all week ... He is naturally very depressed'. They returned to London by train on 8 June.

However, plans had been made for him by Lalla Vandervelde to conduct in Brussels and Prague, (where there was to be a 'Festival of Freedom' to mark Czech independence) with Carice arranging for visas on 10 June and collecting them on 12 June from the Czech Embassy, linking this with a visit to the Belgian Ambassador at the Belgian Embassy to collect the insignia of the

Ordre de la Couronne, which had been bestowed on her father by the King of the Belgians on 9 June. But following a visit by Sir Maurice Anderson on 14 June, Elgar decided against the journey to Belgium and Czechoslovakia. It was announced that he was 'suffering from a severe chill' and cancelling all engagements. On 19 June Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony Orchestra played the First Symphony at Queen's Hall: Elgar did not attend but the conductor wrote on 20 June: 'Your glorious symphony went off magnificently yesterday, and the audience was so wildly tumultuous in its acclaim that finally I had to lift your score from my desk and point to it to show to whom the real tribute was due...'

Henry Embleton, ever the benefactor, came to Severn House on 21 June for a 'long talk' and endeavoured to renew interest in writing the long awaited third part of *The Apostles*, posting a cheque for £500 a few days later, trusting that this 'loan' would persuade the reluctant composer to once again gather his ideas for the oratorio. Perhaps in a spirit of optimism, Elgar cashed the cheque.

Fortunately, he and Carice were able to escape from London to Sussex by car on 22nd June as Brinkwells was still available, yet memories of Alice made the first day 'dreadful', and the diary noted 'Very, very tenderly sad. Alas!' Carice was able to report to Lady Stuart on 25 June that 'the air & the quantity of lovely milk, butter, eggs & fruit are all doing Father good - & he seems better ... He is quite busy with his wood & little repairs...', yet Elgar could not hide the truth from the Windflower, that he was 'numb'. He confided on 18 July that he 'could have borne the many memories but they have cut down the woods so much & made a road which alters the look of the place but of course dear A. *made* it & it is so full of remembrances - too too sad for words'. Despite Embleton's entreaties he concluded: 'Music I loathe – I did get out some paper – but it's all dead'. As summer declined and the harvest commenced, he later wrote that 'the fields are as bare as my mind & soul'.

The same mood pervaded his letter to Atkins on 26 June; 'I do not get on in health as we could wish but the shock has been too great & although I struggled hard & went through some conducting in Newcastle & S. Wales the inevitable crash came – I am really all right but tire too easily & can take no interest in any thing'.

Carice took over her mother's role in organising the domestic arrangements, and bicycled to Pulborough, Petworth and Fittleworth as needed. Rural activities carried on around them, with Mr Aylwin, the local farmer cutting 'grass in the field under the studio', but it was a wet summer with the diary recording much rain, showers and thunderstorms. On a walk to Little Bignor Pond on 1 July they 'Got wet thro' walking home'.

Lalla Vandervelde, who was their sole visitor, arrived at Brinkwells on 8 July, but her stay coincided with much showery weather and on 17 July she 'fled & we cannot cope with visitors'. That day he wrote 'E. very unwell'. He and Carice left Sussex on 19 July and Elgar repaired to The Hut, with Carice going to stay with her friend Lady Petre at Ingatestone Hall, Essex but they met again at St. Pancras station on 24 July to go to stay with the Speyers at Ridgehurst, where Elgar remained until 3 August.

Kevin Mitchell



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