

The Society

*Elgar*



*pp*  
**JOURNAL**



19  
*p espress.*  
*div.*  
*p espress.*  
December 2016 Vol.19, No. 6



*President*  
Julian Lloyd Webber FRCM

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

*Chairman*  
Steven Halls

*Vice-Chairman*  
Stuart Freed

*Treasurer*  
Helen Whittaker

*Secretary*  
George Smart

# The Elgar Society Journal

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

December 2016 Vol. 19, No. 6

Editorial	3
A Much Maligned Cellist: The true story of Felix Salmond and the Elgar Cello Concerto <i>Tully Potter</i>	4
An enduring friendship: Elgar and Joan Elwes <i>Martin Bird</i>	19
Who was Sally Holmes? <i>Martin Bird</i>	40
Music reviews <i>Martin Bird</i>	45
Book reviews <i>Martin Bird</i>	50
CD reviews <i>Martin Bird, Barry Collett, Andrew Neill, Richard Wiley</i>	53
Letters <i>Barry Collett, Christopher Morley, Roger Neighbour, Ben Palmer, Tully Potter, Richard Westwood-Brookes, Geoff Woodcock</i>	67
Recording Notes <i>Michael Plant</i>	72
100 Years Ago	73

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

*Front Cover: Elgar and Joan Elwes, Worcester, June 1931 (Arthur Reynolds collection)*

**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. A longer version is available in case you are prepared to do the formatting, but for the present the editor is content to do this.

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

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

**Presentation of written text:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Editorial

Well, I made it to my last issue, and so, I'm glad to say, did most of you. Despite the ruffling of a few feathers along the way (not least in the August issue) I hope that you have found the essays and other contributions that have appeared in the *Journal* over the past six years varied, informative and entertaining.

My thanks are, of course, due to the many people who have contributed to the *Journal* over that period: without you it would have been a very slim publication indeed. And I must not forget to thank Sir Edward for being such an endlessly fascinating and thought-provoking person: I'm not sure he would have entirely welcomed the attention we all give to him – I spent many a day in the Birthplace archive with his bronze statue gazing somewhat disapprovingly at me – but somehow his natural genius makes such attention unavoidable.

Looking at the contents page some, including me, may think I have been rather self-indulgent in this issue. I wanted to finish my stint with something substantial, and the discovery a couple of years ago of Elgar's letters to the young soprano Joan Elwes provided the basis for the first of my essays. The second explores the identity of the slightly mysterious 'S.H' – Sally Holmes, who wrote the words of *It isn't me*, one of the two songs that Elgar composed with Joan Elwes in mind.

Then Lani Spahr produced another of his masterful sets of restorations of Elgar-conducted recordings, which I couldn't resist keeping for myself to review, and which rather demanded to be reviewed at some length. To cap it all I decided that I was as good a person as any to review the latest volume from the Elgar Complete Edition and, having set out to spend a couple of hours producing a respectably brief review, found myself devoting nearly a week to it, ending up with a combination of review and 'Tales from the Complete Edition'.

So I am more than grateful to Tully Potter with his thought-provoking essay on Felix Salmond and the Cello Concerto, and to regular reviewers Barry Collett, Andrew Neill and Richard Wiley for providing some welcome variety.

And that's it: I've enjoyed myself – there's ten or fifteen years work still to do on the Collected Correspondence, so I won't be mouldering on the sofa, and I'll once more be waiting for the *Journal* to drop through the letter-box with a sense of anticipation. My very best wishes to Meinhard Saremba for the future, and I'll certainly be submitting essays for his consideration over the coming years.

Martin Bird

## A Much Maligned Cellist: The true story of Felix Salmond and the Elgar Cello Concerto

### Tully Potter

Sometimes a myth becomes so firmly entrenched in the public consciousness that the true facts are completely obscured. So it has been with that archetypal English cellist Felix Salmond, whose career is always woefully misrepresented. In his adopted country, the United States, he is remembered for teaching at Juilliard and Curtis and nurturing most of the prominent 1930s and post-war American cellists. In Britain he is indelibly linked with the première of Elgar's E minor Concerto, an event now encrusted with myths.

Felix Adrian Norman Salmond was born in London on 19 November 1888, to musical parents: his father Norman was a professional bass-baritone who sang Richard Coeur-de-Lion in the original cast of Sullivan's *Ivanhoe* and had a busy career in light opera, also singing at many of the major festivals; and his mother Adelaide, who always appeared as Mme Norman Salmond, was a remarkable pianist. Born in New York in 1855, she was the daughter of the Italian opera conductor Mariano Manzocchi, who taught Adelina Patti. Coming to London aged 15, she so impressed Sir Julius Bendict that he gave her a letter of introduction to Franz Liszt in Weimar; but her mother sent her to Brussels, where she studied with Auguste Dupont, and to Frankfurt where her teacher was James Kwast. She knew all the great pianists and had lessons for a time from Clara Schumann. After her husband's death, she concentrated on her son's career. As a boy Felix played piano and violin, and took up the cello only at 12, taught by W.E. Whitehouse. At the Royal Academy of Music in 1903 he was highly commended but missed a scholarship. In 1904 he won the All-England Open Scholarship and in 1905 entered the Royal College of Music, where Whitehouse was a professor, remaining until 1909. From 1907 he took lessons in Brussels with Edouard Jacobs during the holidays. At the RCM his chamber music tutor was Frank Bridge, who became a close friend.

On 8 December 1908 Felix appeared at the Bechstein (now Wigmore) Hall, taking part in Brahms's G minor Piano Quartet with his mother, Maurice Sons and Frank Bridge, and premiering Bridge's Fantasy Trio. *The Times* commented that 'though nominally making his début to a London audience, he was clearly not unknown to the majority of the audience, who greeted his appearance with tumultuous applause; this must have been disconcerting, but for all that Mr Salmond played a Boccherini Sonata with great finish'.<sup>1</sup> On 28 October 1909 he made his London recital début at the same hall, playing Beethoven's A major Sonata, Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations*, Popper's *Tarantella*, Fauré's *Élégie* and Bridge's *Serenade* with his mother, who contributed some solos. *The Times* noted 'the beauty of his tone and the smoothness of his phrasing'.<sup>2</sup> It was the first of

1 *The Times*, 10 December 1908.

2 *The Times*, 29 October 1909.

a number of appearances by the Salmond Duo: Sir Henry Wood thought them 'an excellent and artistic combination'.<sup>3</sup> On 11 June Felix took part in the première of Bridge's Sextet, with Ernest Tomlinson and the English String Quartet, including the composer. In 1912, while playing in the orchestra at Daly's Theatre, Leicester Square, where English versions of Viennese operettas were produced, he met and married his first wife Lillian – his mother was far from happy at acquiring a chorus girl as a daughter-in-law and the resulting friction did not help the marriage to flourish. In 1912-14 he was a regular at the legendary late-night chamber music sessions hosted by Paul and Muriel Draper at 19 Edith Grove, Chelsea, recalled in the autobiographies of Artur Rubinstein, Eugène Goossens III and Lionel Tertis, and in Muriel Draper's own charming memoir.<sup>4</sup> On 12 February 1914 Salmond played Saint-Saëns's A minor Concerto at Queen's Hall and on 23 September, by which time Britain was at war, he made his Proms début with Eugen d'Albert's Concerto: the conductor, as for all his Proms, was Sir Henry Wood. He rapidly began to shine in such concertos as the Haydn D major and Dvořák, collaborating with many celebrated musicians. Unfit for active service in the Great War, he worked as a clerk in the Grenadier Guards' headquarters, with the rank of private, and joined in the regiment's public concerts with Guards musicians such as Albert Sammons and the Australian pianist William Murdoch. On 13 July 1917 he and Murdoch introduced Bridge's D minor Sonata at the Wigmore Hall. Among other commitments he had a regular trio with Rhoda Backhouse and Harold Samuel.

### *Elgar's chamber music*

On 26 April 1919, at Frank Schuster's Westminster home, Salmond took part in private performances of Elgar's new Quartet and Quintet, with Albert Sammons, W.H. Reed, Raymond Jeremy and William Murdoch. The generous Schuster footed the bill for this all-star ensemble and invited members of the musical press to hear the two works. Rosa Burley recalled that there were other trial performances in the big music room at Severn House: 'On 7 March, when I heard them, the party included Bernard Shaw, for whom in later years Edward had conceived a great admiration'.<sup>5</sup> On 21 May 1919 the same players were involved in the first public performances, at the Wigmore Hall, when the Violin Sonata, which had already been premiered, was heard as well. (These were just two of the occasions when the eminent quintet performed the Elgar chamber works: W.W. Cobbett recalled 'a wonderful performance' at the Salmond home.<sup>6</sup>)

Salmond was the natural choice for expert adviser on the Cello Concerto in E minor which Elgar now began writing. Soon Salmond was being consulted on various matters concerning the composition: on 5 June, and again five days later, he was at Severn House to try out what Elgar had written. It is possible that Elgar had not firmly settled the order of the two inner movements, as Lady Elgar wrote in her diary on 22 June that he was 'finally revising the beautiful 3<sup>rd</sup> movement of Cello Concerto, "Diddle, diddle diddle"'. Elgar, an excellent violinist, hardly needed advice from Salmond on string technique, but he may have wanted assurance that what he had written was playable. One can imagine the Scherzo came up in the discussions – generations

3 Henry J. Wood, *My Life of Music* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1938), 381-382.

4 Muriel Draper, *Music at Midnight* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1929).

5 Rosa Burley and Frank C. Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: The Record of a Friendship* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, London), 201. Shaw and his wife had already heard the Quartet and Quintet at their first try-out by Elgar and W.H. Reed's own quartet, at Severn House on 7 January.

6 'Sir Edward Elgar: Chamber Compositions', letter published in *The Times*, 2 March 1934

of cellists have struggled with the saltato bowing<sup>7</sup> in it, and some famous names have fallen short. Salmond had a very serviceable technique, and with his huge hands could make enormous stretches, but he must have been tested. To his credit, he evidently did not persuade Elgar to compromise on the virtuoso demands of the Concerto. On 31 July he arrived at the composer's Sussex retreat Brinkwells for a short stay, so that he and Elgar could work intensively on it. After tea they went through the Concerto, and after dinner they returned to it. From Lady Elgar's diary we learn that following breakfast the next day, a further run-through took place, and that 'Mr Felix' was 'such a delightful visitor'. Elgar took Salmond fishing, with no success; after dinner more work was done on the Concerto; and Elgar then offered Salmond the première. The cellist was so thrilled that he hardly slept that night. More work was accomplished on the following morning, and Salmond left after lunch. Back home at 7 Northwick Terrace, N.W.8, he wrote to Lady Elgar:



**Elgar and Salmond**  
(*Elgar Birthplace Museum*)

I must write a short note to tell you what a real pleasure it has been to me to have stayed with you & Sir Edward, & I want also to thank you for your more than kind hospitality. The three days were altogether memorable in many ways, & my stay with you both will always remain one of my most delightful recollections. Will you tell Sir Edward that I played the Concerto through this morning by heart!!

What a thrilling & proud evening its production will be for me!!

It is not possible for me to express how very deeply I appreciate the great honour Sir Edward paid me by entrusting the débüt of his beautiful work to a comparatively unknown artist. May I prove myself entirely worthy of his great faith in my powers!

It is a chance that but rarely falls to a young artist, and I intend to try my hardest to take the golden opportunity with both hands!

If hard work can make it a success, Sir Edward can rely on my industry – Once again, warmest thanks for your many kindnesses.

Greetings to you all –  
Believe me, very sincerely yours  
Felix Salmond

P.S. My calligraphy this morning is appalling, & practising is the reason! Cello playing & writing do not mix!<sup>18</sup>

By 8 August the manuscript score was ready and Lady Elgar took the new Op.85 in person to Fittleworth post office to send it to Novellos with the final proofs of the Quintet. On 18 September

7 A bowstroke played rapidly in the middle of the bow, one bowstroke per note, so that the bow bounces very slightly off the string of its own accord (*Grove Music Online*, accessed October 2016)

8 EBM letter 3790, 3 August 1919.

Salmond played the Lalo Concerto at the Proms and on 2 October the Saint-Saëns A minor, incidentally refreshing his memory of the acoustic of Queen's Hall, where the Elgar Concerto was to be premiered on 27 October. Most of the programme – Borodin's Second Symphony, Wagner's *Forest Murmurs* and Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy* – would be directed by the orchestra's new conductor, Albert Coates, and following the Borodin the Cello Concerto would be conducted by the composer. Sir Edward was accompanied by Alice and their daughter Carice for the first rehearsal at Mortimer Hall and in her diary Lady Elgar (writing of herself as 'A.') gave a vivid description of the humiliation meted out to Britain's greatest living composer by the arrogant Coates:

*October 26.* ... horrid place – the new work, Cello Concerto, never seen by Orchestra – Rehearsal supposed to be at 11.30. After 12.30 – A. absolutely furious – E. extraordinarily calm – Poor Felix Salmond in a state of suspense and nerves – Wretched hurried rehearsal – An insult to E. from that brutal, selfish, ill-mannered bounder A. Coates.

*October 27.* E. and A. and C. to Queen's Hall for rehearsal at 12.30 or rather before – absolutely inadequate at that – That brute, Coates went on rehearsing 'Waldweben'. Sec. [of the LSO] remonstrated, no use. At last just before one, he stopped & the men like Angels stayed till 1.30 [half an hour into overtime]. A. wanted E. to withdraw, but he did not for Felix S.'s sake – Indifferent performance of course in consequence. E. had a tremendous reception & ovation.

Elgar was beginning to go out of fashion and the hall was not full, but in the audience were a fair number of critics and some of the staff of the Gramophone Company, who issued Elgar's recordings on the 'His Master's Voice' label. As Lady Elgar indicated, those present were all, or almost all, keen Elgarians and appreciated the beauties of the Concerto, even though it was not the sort of upbeat effusion that many English people might have wanted, less than a year after the trauma of the Great War.

### *The fiasco that never was*

Just how much of a disaster was the première? Let us review some of the salient points, starting with the soloist. All those who knew him were agreed that Felix Salmond had a phenomenal memory, so there is every probability that he knew the cello part intimately by the time he arrived at Queen's Hall. As the son of a singer, he had early imbibed the virtues of a singing line and good breath control. As a virtuoso he was no Feuermann or Piatigorsky but the few discs which document him in fast-moving music show that he could move around the cello very niftily, and he had a fine trill. On his records we hear a lovely, supple legato and a well developed bowing technique. His portamento is tastefully executed. His tone, the very embodiment of Elgar's favourite word *nobilmente*, seems ample and capable of many degrees of shading. The vibrato is varied, rarely becoming too wide. On the negative side, we know from Lady Elgar's diary that he was very nervous, and he had only recently exchanged his Giuseppe Guarneri 'Filius Andreae' cello for the ex-Paganini, ex-Piatti 1700 Matteo Goffriller which he would use for the rest of his career. It is possible that he and the Goffriller had not yet achieved complete cohesion. Like another tall, gentlemanly Elgarian, the tenor Gervase Elwes, Salmond could come across as rather reserved. At other times, he could sound a bit wooden. Elgar himself was not the sort of virtuoso conductor who might be able to keep an under-rehearsed orchestra on track, but he was a sterling exponent of his own music, as we know from his records. As for the LSO, even in those days London orchestral players prided themselves on their sight-reading abilities, so there is every probability that the musicians muddled through quite well.

Now for the Harbingers of Doom. It seems to me that they were all people who had inside knowledge of the fact that Elgar and the orchestra had been allowed inadequate time for preparation: Sir Edward and Lady Elgar, Felix Salmond and the young John Barbirolli, who was playing in the LSO cello section. In the history of musical performance one finds countless occasions when those involved thought that they were participating in an absolute fiasco, while everyone else enjoyed their efforts.

Alfred Kalisch, a critic friendly with Elgar and likely to be ‘in the know’, wrote that the Concerto ‘was obviously under-rehearsed’ but felt Salmond ‘undoubtedly enhanced his reputation very greatly in spite of the adverse circumstances under which he laboured’.<sup>9</sup> Significantly, only one scribe gave the performance an absolute stinker of a review. This was Ernest Newman, whose critique has often been quoted. Let us read it at greater length (he began with praise for Coates’s conducting of *Le Poème de l’Extase*):

It went a long way towards compensating us for our disappointment over the new Elgar ‘cello concerto – a disappointment not with the work but with the presentation of it. One never expects a first performance to be an ideal one, and Mr Felix Salmond, admirable artist as he is, may well be forgiven for feeling, and showing, the responsibility laid upon him. But we should like to have an explanation of the failure of the orchestra. There have been rumours about during the week of inadequate rehearsal. Whatever be the explanation, the sad fact remains that never, in all probability, has so great an orchestra made so lamentable a public exhibition of itself. Like all Elgar’s recent work, the ‘cello concerto is of a deceptively simple texture; but precisely because Elgar does without every note that is not really necessary the utmost and the right value must be given to the notes that remain. In few concertos, I should think, does the solo instrument play so continuously as this. That means that the usual orchestral outbursts of tone between the solo passages are barred to the composer. The orchestration has to be of the sort that will allow the solo instrument to be heard always; and as the ‘cello tone, from the mere nature of its range and timbre, is so easily covered up by an orchestra, a quite special scale of colour is required in the accompanying parts. This scale of colour it has obviously been Elgar’s preoccupation to achieve. Some of the colour is meant to be no more than a vague wash against which the solo ‘cello defines itself. On Monday the orchestra was often virtually inaudible, and when just audible was merely a muddle. No one seemed to have any idea of what it was the composer wanted. The work itself is lovely stuff, very simple – that pregnant simplicity that has come upon Elgar’s music in the last couple of years – but with a profound wisdom and beauty underlying its simplicity. As in his late chamber music, he makes no attempt to be modern for mere modernity’s sake. He has a language, an instrument, of his own of which he is fully master; and he tranquilly uses them for the realisation in tone of a fine spirit’s lifelong wistful brooding upon the loveliness of earth.<sup>10</sup>

Note that Newman had heard rumours of inadequate rehearsal; he was therefore primed to find fault. Like the other Harbingers of Doom, he was a member of the Elgar circle – he and his wife were in the party when the composer and W.H. Reed’s British Quartet played the chamber works in Frank Schuster’s riverside retreat The Hut at Bray-on-Thames earlier that year. His review, honest and sensitive according to his own lights, makes a vivid contrast with that in *The Times*, which bears all the hallmarks of having been written by the chief music critic, H.C. Colles. Like Newman, Colles has clearly studied the score before the concert. He gives a careful and absorbing analysis of the Concerto, but says not a word about the orchestral performance, adding: ‘Both the composer

9 *The Musical Times*, 1 December 1919

10 *The Observer*, 2 November 1919

and Mr Salmond, throughout a painstaking and sympathetic interpreter, were recalled many times at the end.’<sup>11</sup> The London correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* is another who has patently done his homework. He too gives a detailed analysis of the work, concluding:

The general impression left by the Concerto is that the music expresses with peculiar truth the character of the cello. It is essentially a cello concerto. Another point is the consummate skill with which the timbre of the solo instrument is balanced by the orchestral tone colours. The solo part is an integral part of the scoring, but it is never overwhelmed by the other instruments. It is essentially intellectual, rational music, of dignity and serious sentiment, which makes the hearer think. The solo part was played finely by Mr Felix Salmond, who seemed to have mastered thoroughly the spirit, as well as the executive demands, of the work. The composer conducted, and the reception was enthusiastic.<sup>12</sup>

Note that this critic gained precisely those impressions of the Concerto which Newman alleged were lacking in the performance. It seems clear to me that the ‘disaster’ or ‘fiasco’ element of the première – if it ever existed – has been blown up out of all proportion, and that the work received, if not a brilliant rendering, at least an adequate one, which greatly pleased the vast majority of the audience.

### *A tissue of untruths*

But the mythmakers did not rest there. Somehow an elaborate structure of supposition, nonsense and pure invention has been built around poor Felix Salmond. In article after article, book after book, you can read the following (with variations according to a particular author’s whim or fancy): that after the première Salmond never played the Concerto again in this country; that he was so ashamed of his failure that he emigrated to the United States with his tail between his legs; and that he never taught or played the Concerto in America. All wrong, wrong, wrong ...

When he got home after the performance, Elgar wrote to the orchestra to thank them for their performance and to Salmond in gratitude for his contribution. This letter has not come to light, so we do not know if he mentioned the rehearsal issue, but we do have the reply which the cellist sat down to write at 11.00 p.m. on the 28<sup>th</sup>:

It is quite impossible to tell you how very deeply your wonderful letter has touched me. I can only thank you from my heart for the great honour you bestowed upon me, & above all, for the expression of your friendship which I shall proudly cherish. I cannot say anything more, but I am certain you will understand what a joy your letter is to me.

Believe me, your affectionate friend,  
Felix Salmond<sup>13</sup>

The Cello Concerto was never going to be a riproaring success from day one. For many years it was seen as Elgar’s rather depressed response to the Great War, which had swept away the Edwardian world of his heyday, a world dominated by the certainties of the British Empire. The writer J.B. Priestley, who used the music so poignantly in his 1947 play *The Linden Tree*, certainly saw it that way. And

11 *The Times*, 28 October 1919

12 *Yorkshire Post*, 28 October 1919.

13 EBM letter 3792.

Elgar's cryptic explanation of the work as 'a man's attitude to life' was interpreted as substantiating the gloomy view, even though he had said similar things about other works. (Only in the past six decades have performances by such interpreters as Jacqueline du Pré and Paul Tortelier – building on the bridgehead established by Pablo Casals, whose interpretation was considered un-English in the 1930s – shown us that the work is by no means irredeemably melancholy. Perhaps it needed cellists of their lavish endowments and powerful personalities to take it firmly on to the world stage.)

The next development in the saga was that Fred Gaisberg of HMV wanted to record the Concerto – he had obviously not been put off by the première. As had happened with the Violin Concerto, just four 12-inch 78rpm sides would be available, but the more compact Cello Concerto would not need to be cut quite so drastically – the Scherzo would require only a small excision and the Adagio would be accommodated complete on one side. Sadly Salmond was under contract to Vocalion, so could not be considered. Guilhermina Suggia was approached but wanted too high a fee. The choice fell on the young Beatrice Harrison, who went with her sister Margaret to play the work to the composer and ended up being accompanied with inimitable brio by Elgar himself. In the session at Hayes on 22 December 1919 she did a reasonable job, setting down three movements successfully with Elgar conducting, but had to re-make the Adagio – the make-up session, originally scheduled for Elgar's stint at the studios on 24 February 1920, did not take place until 16 November, almost a year after the first one.

### *Success in Manchester*

Meanwhile Salmond, unabashed by the shenanigans over the première, gave the Concerto its second performance in Manchester on 20 March 1920, the Hallé Orchestra being conducted by none other than Coates! The cellist must have felt at least a pang of déjà vu, as his second contribution to the concert, Bruch's *Kol Nidrei*, was followed by Scriabin's Third Symphony, *The Divine Poem*, and the rest of the programme consisted of pieces by Wagner. Samuel Langford had this to say:

Among works of its kind the 'cello Concerto of Elgar will rank high. There appears to have been some want of judgment about its first performance in London, but there was no mistake on Saturday. Mr Felix Salmond played most beautifully, with a polish and finish which set the lean and incisive technique of the work in the happiest light, and gave to the clear and serene beauties of its melodies the distinction and movement of some finely slender animal. For our own part we liked best of it all the idyllic song of its first movement. The whole plan of the work seems to be to give the sense of successive intermezzi rather than of substantial movements, but the miscellaneous matter of the closing movement gives the work in the end quite the normal duration.<sup>14</sup>

In that era when North and South were like worlds unto themselves, this concert was not noticed by the metropolis-centric musicians of London; and when Beatrice Harrison was planning her rendering with sister Margaret, on the afternoon of 29 May at the Wigmore Hall, she advertised it as 'second performance' – she was on safer ground in adding 'first with piano'.

On 7 April 1920, Lady Elgar died of cancer in her husband's arms. Carice and devoted friends did their best to solace Elgar but he was inconsolable. Alice was to be buried on 10 April in her preferred place, the hillside cemetery at St Wulstan's Church, Little Malvern, and there was little time to prepare the funeral service. Frank Schuster and Carice asked W.H. Reed to bring some colleagues to play the *Piacevole* from the String Quartet, a favourite with Alice. Some sources claim that Salmond was involved but in his memoir of the composer, Reed states categorically that the other players were

14 *The Manchester Guardian*, 22 March 1920

Sammons, Jeremy and B. Patterson Parker, a member of the LSO and the cellist of his own quartet.<sup>15</sup> No doubt Salmond was one of the many who sent expressions of sympathy. On 20 August 1920 he wrote to Elgar from Brighton, describing a happy encounter with the former Alice Stuart-Wortley, now Lady Stuart of Wortley and known to the composer as his muse 'Windflower':

We have been here since the 9<sup>th</sup> & are staying until Sept 6<sup>th</sup>. I am wondering how you are & whether your long stay at Brinkwells has done you good – I sincerely hope so. I spent a delightful afternoon, before leaving town, with Lady Stuart – We gave a brilliant performance of the Concerto! How splendidly she plays – since then I have had a complete rest from the 'cello & I am sure it will do me good. The weather here has been wonderful, & the rest & thorough "laze" most enjoyable! I am looking forward so much to seeing you soon again & I only hope we may do the concerto together somewhere next season. My wife sends you her kindest regards – Please remember us to your daughter &, when you feel inclined, let us have a line to say how you are. Always affectionately

Your  
Felix<sup>16</sup>

His wish for a performance with Elgar in the next season was fulfilled at Birmingham on 10 November: the Concerto was framed by *Falstaff* and the Second Symphony in an all-Elgar programme with the Municipal Orchestra. Langford was again present:

Mr Felix Salmond played the concerto, which now becomes quite a clear work of well-calculated effect, and is bound to become a favourite with every leading player. The nobility of the work as read by Elgar today hardly appears in the score to the casual eye, and its true interpretation will need to be promulgated.<sup>17</sup>

Late in 1920 Salmond formed the Chamber Music Players, a piano quartet with William Murdoch, Albert Sammons and Lionel Tertis, and they gave their first concert at the Wigmore Hall on 6 January 1921. Within days the Salmonds' second daughter Muriel was born and on 15 January Lillian Salmond wrote to Elgar:

Thank you very very much for the lovely gift you have sent to our little darling.

I can't tell you how glad & proud I am that you are to be her Godfather. She is a very lucky little girl! I hope you will think she is sweet – Perhaps she may grow up to be very musical & then you may feel proud of her – I hope so.

Again best thanks. I am looking forward to seeing both you & your daughter tomorrow.

Sincerely yours  
Lilian Salmond<sup>18</sup>

15 W.H. Reed, *Elgar as I Knew Him* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1936), 67. The detailed report in the *Malvern Gazette* of 16 April corroborates his account. The quartet, seated in the gallery at the west end, played the opening of the first movement as the mourners entered, and the slow movement at the end of the service. Curiously, in *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (OUP, 1984), 754, Jerrold Northrop Moore purports to quote Reed's account but alters 'Jeremy' to 'Tertis' and 'Parker' to 'Salmond'.

16 EBM letter 6021.

17 *Manchester Guardian*, 11 November 1920.

18 EBM letter 6079. Muriel was christened Muriel Elgar.

On that very day, Beatrice Harrison played the Elgar Concerto at Queen's Hall, with the composer conducting the regular orchestra of Sir Henry Wood – who took the rest of the programme. The critic of *The Times*, again almost certainly Colles, commented in the usual London-centric manner:

There was no new work in the programme of the Queen's Hall Orchestra on Saturday afternoon, but the revival of Elgar's Violoncello Concerto, produced a year or so ago, and neglected since, was a matter of more importance than first performances often are. ... a performance was secured which should produce some revision of opinion among those who were disappointed by the first one. The violoncello concerto in E minor is not a work likely to create a sensation as the first symphony did, or one to arouse the ambitions of solo performers, as the violin concerto did. Probably violoncellists are right in saying that it does not 'show off the instrument', or challenge their technical powers in any conspicuous way. There are some passages which seem rather awkward for the instrument without being particularly effective. The greater part of the music moves, as it were, in a half-light; ideas are hinted at rather than fully expressed. The first three movements at any rate have more the character of a suite for violoncello and orchestra than of a concerto. Only the *finale* is developed at length. Yet the whole work is unmistakably Elgar from the first statement of the motto theme by the violoncello to the broad peroration which draws together the various threads in the *finale*. There is scarcely a phrase anywhere which one could imagine to be the work of anyone else. And in such an age of re-writing as the present one is, the power of any composer to be unflinchingly himself is too valuable a thing to be lightly passed over. Moreover, the violoncello concerto is certainly an advance on any of the previous symphonic works in its freedom from the tendency to labour the material with more or less vain repetition. If it is slight, it is quite frankly so; a whimsical fancy unifies its changing moods, and delicate touches of orchestration relieve the harmonic sentiment, and prevent it from cloying. Miss Harrison seemed to understand its character very well, and was able to keep the *cantilena* easily in the foreground, while the orchestral players showed themselves masters of the art of accompaniment. The work was sufficiently well received to make us hope that it will now take the place in the repertoire which it certainly deserves.<sup>19</sup>

This review, while expressing one or two opinions which we would not entertain today, is important because it marks a turning of the tide in the Concerto's fortunes in London, and Harrison's self-assurance as its interpreter. (Later that year she and Elgar gave it in the Three Choirs Festival at Hereford; and she also took it to Vienna.) On 27 January 1921 John Barbirolli, still known as Giovanni, essayed the Concerto in Bournemouth with the Municipal Orchestra conducted by Dan Godfrey. To his dying day, Barbirolli – in his youth yet another metropolis-fixated musician – was convinced that his had been the first out-of-town performance; but as we have seen, it was the third. On 14 March 1921 Salmond, now recognised as England's premier concert cellist,<sup>20</sup> played Brahms's Double Concerto at Queen's Hall with Sammons and the LSO under Coates; on the 23<sup>rd</sup> the unofficial Elgar quintet got together for a recital of all three chamber works, under the auspices of the London Chamber Concert Society; and on 16 June Salmond was the soloist in Strauss's *Don Quixote*, with Hamilton Harty on the Queen's Hall podium. But he had developed the notion that in the United States he would have even more of a career – and both he and Lillian apparently felt

19 *The Times*, 17 January 1921

20 By the 1920s the celebrated W.H. Squire was rarely heard in concert. As a popular composer of ballads and other agreeable trifles, and a busy recording artist, he had a steady income and could afford not to exert himself on the performance circuit.

that their marriage, now in a sticky state, would fare better there, with the Atlantic between them and Adelaide.

### *The emigration*

Early in 1922 the Salmonds left England for New York with their two children: Lillian had borrowed money to help pay for their passage and their living expenses while Felix established himself. On 29 March he made a successful recital début at the Aeolian Hall with Frank Bibb at the piano; but it soon became apparent that he would not earn much more as a soloist than he had in England, and that he would have to take a teaching post in order to make ends meet. He taught first at the Mannes School; when the Institute of Music Art (which became the Juilliard School) opened in 1924, he was made head of the cello department and professor of chamber music; and in 1925-42 he also headed the cello faculty at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia.

Salmond would gladly have given the American première of the Elgar Concerto, but he was pre-empted by the Belgian cellist Jean Gerardy, who performed it in Carnegie Hall, New York, on 21 November 1922, with the visiting Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski. Five days later Salmond made his American orchestral début with the New York Symphony under Walter Damrosch, playing *Kol Nidrei* and *Don Quixote*. On 14 December he wrote to Elgar from his home in East 76<sup>th</sup> Street:

My dear Sir Edward. We both send you our kindest greetings & wishes for your happiness this Xmas & in 1923. Altho' I have been too busy with work to write you a long letter I think of you very often & miss you more than you can think. I heard the 1<sup>st</sup> performance of "our" concerto but "entre nous" I am very glad you didn't!! I intend to play it here next season & try & give it to the public as you want it! My success continues & I know you will be very glad for us both.

Yours,  
Felix

I'll write soon<sup>21</sup>

It is clear that at this stage, Elgar missed Salmond's presence on the British musical scene. Some time in late March or early April 1923 he wrote to the cellist indicating that he still associated him very much with the Cello Concerto. All we have is Salmond's reply of 5 April:

Your lovely letter has given me the greatest pleasure. It arrived this morning & I hasten to send you some news of myself & our doings in this country, which you will be glad to hear, has shown me truly wonderful kindness – It is a joy to me to see you again & talk over all the lovely times we have had together. I think of them very often, of your wonderful stories & of our games of plate pool. What fun they were – "Eke the red"!!!

You can't think how very proud I am to have your friendship & to know that you, above all others, consider me the best interpreter of your Concerto! You will find that I have made much progress when you hear me play it again next year! Your God-daughter is growing lovelier & more fascinating every day & you would be proud of her! We are all well & I want you to know that my dear wife & I are very happy together. We have made many lovely friends here & people are incredibly good to us – Much love to you. Do write to me again. I love to hear from you – Your ever affectionate Felix.<sup>22</sup>

21 EBM letter 6222.

22 EBM letter 6327.



While Felix Salmond was settling himself in New York, in London Beatrice Harrison was establishing her status as Elgar's favoured interpreter of his Cello Concerto. On 3 July 1923 she played it again at Queen's Hall with Elgar conducting, in a programme which also included the first London performance of the Delius Concerto, directed by Eugène Goossens III; and that September she and the composer performed it at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester.

### *New world, old problems*

When Salmond finally had the chance to play a concerto in Carnegie Hall on 28 and 29 February 1924, with the New York Philharmonic under Willem Mengelberg, either the orchestra or the conductor insisted on the Dvořák, which was better for the box office than the Elgar. And after a little flurry of gigs with the two major New York orchestras up to March 1925 – he was particularly in demand for *Don Quixote* and Brahms's Double Concerto, in which his regular partner was Paweł Kochański – he was engaged only once by the merged New York Philharmonic-Symphony, for a 1939 performance of Enescu's *Symphonie concertante* with the composer conducting. His sole bookings with the Boston Symphony were two performances of Bloch's *Schelomo* under Sergei Koussevitzky in 1929; with the Los Angeles Philharmonic he played the Dvořák twice under Walter Henry Rothwell in 1925, and a pairing of the Lalo and *Schelomo* twice under Georg Schnéevoigt in 1928; in Philadelphia he had just three performances of Brahms's Double Concerto in 1932, with Léa Luboshutz and Stokowski; and it was a similar story with the other American orchestras. The emergence of Feuermann and Piatigorsky in the 1930s, and the enduring lure of Casals, all but froze him out of the limited number of cello concerto opportunities. Recital and chamber music dates were easier to come by – in January 1925 he toured the U.S. playing piano quartets in 12 centres with Harold Bauer, Bronisław Huberman and Tertis – but did not bring him much money or éclat.

In 1927 he made his first return visit to Europe with his family, giving concerts at Baden-Baden in Germany and spending some time in England: On Elgar's seventieth birthday, 2 June, he despatched a telegram from London:

Send you affectionate Birthday greetings & heartiest congratulations  
Felix Salmond<sup>23</sup>

On 3 June he gave a Wigmore Hall recital, with the Dutch composer Richard Hageman at the piano. And later that month, the Elgar chamber music quintet met for the last time, with Tertis in place of Jeremy, for a performance of all three works organised by Frank Schuster at The Hut.<sup>24</sup> Alas, while Felix and Lillian were staying at the Hampstead home of Sir Herbert and Lady Samuelson, the simmering tensions in their marriage came to a head. The resulting separation hearing is interesting for the light it casts on Salmond's American earnings: \$10,000 a year from Juilliard, \$12,000 from Curtis, \$1,000 in 1926-27 and \$1,500 in 1927-28 from his recording contract with American Columbia. He said he had never earned more than \$25,000 a year.<sup>25</sup> He subsequently obtained a divorce in Reno, Nevada, which bizarrely led to his having two wives under New York law, although his marriage to Helen Child Curtis was recognised. He and Helen, who were very happy together, went on to have a son and a daughter.

23 EBM letter 5505.

24 Although Schuster had now given up The Hut, he borrowed it back for this occasion.

25 *The New York Times*, 11 February 1928

In March and June 1928 Beatrice Harrison set down a complete recording of the Elgar Concerto for HMV at Kingsway Hall, London, with the composer conducting the New Symphony Orchestra. This performance – recently refurbished in 'accidental stereo' – shows how assured Harrison now is with the work; and unlike his indulgent direction of the Violin Concerto with Yehudi Menuhin four years later, Elgar's conducting is fully alert and insightful. In November, a second Cello Concerto recording was made for Columbia by the great W.H. Squire in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, with the Hallé Orchestra under Sir Hamilton Harty. It proved to be even better than the Harrison, in some ways. For two such successful recordings of a recent work to be made within months was a miracle; but even so, it would have been good to hear the original soloist's thoughts on the work. The intense rivalry between HMV and Columbia would have precluded Salmond's being engaged for the London sessions; and to have had him as soloist in Manchester would have robbed us of Squire's noble interpretation. So we must be content with the riches we have ...



(Tully Potter Collection)

### *Elgar in America*

At last Salmond was able to perform the Elgar in New York, at Mecca Auditorium on 16 March 1930 for the Friends of Music, with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra under Artur Bodanzky. A brief notice contained a hint that the work left some of the audience – and perhaps the reviewer – a little puzzled:

Whatever the auditors' reaction to the modern 'cello concerto of Elgar, which has at least the merit that it helps performers on the violoncello to eke out their scanty repertory, there can be no division of opinion regarding the musicianship and artistic sincerity of Mr Salmond's playing.<sup>26</sup>

That year Salmond made his Berlin début, toured Holland and spent much of the summer in Britain. On 19 July he broadcast the Lalo Concerto, with Frank Bridge conducting the embryo 'BBC Orchestra'; on 13 September he gave the first British performance of Bloch's *Schelomo* at the Proms; and on 1 October he had a recital at the Wigmore Hall. On 19 September he wrote to Elgar from his London hotel:

I am so delighted to have your most kind letter & to know that you are in town – Won't you come & dine with me & meet my charming Wife? It would be a real joy to see you & have a long talk over the wonderful times we had together! How would Sunday or Monday night suit you? Not dress, as we shall go to a quiet restaurant, sans ceremonie!

I played your Concerto in New York last March & it had a fine reception from the public – Bodanzky & the orchestra were splendid & I enjoyed the occasion enormously! How I wish you could come &

26 *The New York Times*, 17 March 1930

hear me on Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, especially in the wonderful D major Beethoven Sonata, so rarely played!! I know you would think my playing had grown since you last heard me!

With warmest greetings & much looking forward to seeing you soon.

Always affectionately yours  
Felix

P.S. We shall come & hear your second Symphony on Oct: 2<sup>nd</sup> & hope to see you afterwards for a moment!<sup>27</sup>

Assuming they managed a brief conversation on 2 October, after Elgar had conducted his Second Symphony at an all-British Promenade Concert in Queen's Hall, it was probably the last time the two men met. On 23 February 1934, Sir Edward died at his home Marl Bank, in Worcester. He had been solaced on his deathbed by the HMV recordings of his Piano Quintet and String Quartet, made at his request by Harriet Cohen and the Stratton Quartet.<sup>28</sup> On 20 May Salmond wrote from New York to Carice Elgar Blake:

You would have heard from me long ago, but I have only just succeeded in obtaining your address – I send you my deep & sincere sympathy in your great sorrow –

Your dear Father was a wonderful friend to me & I shall always treasure the memories of the many happy hours we spent together. Percy Scholes heard me play the 'cello concerto in New York in March 1930 & I hope he told your Father his impressions of the performance as he said he would –

I am proud to have had the privilege & the honour of knowing so great a man & personality as your Father was –

With kindest regards & again warm sympathy,

Believe me, very sincerely yours  
Felix Salmond<sup>29</sup>

The cellist continued his U.S. career, traversing the country and occasionally penetrating into Canada. In June 1937, on his final pre-war visit to Britain, he broadcast for the BBC and gave a Wigmore Hall recital, including the first British performance of Samuel Barber's Sonata, in which the composer partnered him at the piano. He also found time to attend Lionel Tertis's retirement party, on the 13<sup>th</sup> at Pagani's restaurant, favourite pre-war haunt of London musicians. Back in America, he formed the Trio of New York with the Russian violinist Daniel Karpilowsky and the German pianist Carl Friedberg, an exact contemporary of his mother and, like her, a pupil of James Kwast and Clara Schumann. March 1938 saw him reunited with an old friend when he gave the local premières of the Boccherini-Grützmacher B flat Concerto and Bloch's *Schelomo* in Cincinnati,

27 EBM letter 2689.

28 The Stratton Quartet violist, Watson Forbes, told me that although Elgar loved their recording of the Quartet, it did not fully represent their interpretation. Their first attempt at the *Piacevole*, lasting ten minutes, was too slow for the engineering team, who said that on both sides the label would cover the final grooves. The HMV technology was capable of cutting a six-minute side of quiet music, but on this occasion the players were asked to repeat the movement. The published version timed at just over eight minutes.

29 EBM letter 924.

with the local Symphony under their chief conductor Eugène Goossens III. In 1942, the year he gave up his Curtis teaching post in protest at not being consulted over the appointment of Emanuel Feuermann, Salmond's mother died in London. At Juilliard on 29 March 1947 he played all five Beethoven Sonatas in one evening with a fellow faculty member, Leonid Hambro, to mark the silver jubilee of his American début, and in 1948 the duo recorded them. On his last trip to England, in June 1947, he repeated his Beethoven marathon with Franz Osborn at the Wigmore Hall, and broadcast for the new Third Programme. Salmond made his last appearance with orchestra on 15 November 1947, performing *Schelomo* in a Bloch festival at Juilliard, and he died in New York on 19 February 1952, having taught almost to the end.

### *A great teacher*

Felix Salmond was greatly admired by his contemporaries. Eugène Goossens III, himself a violinist, wrote that he 'can put greater depths of meaning into a Brahms 'cello sonata than any living player',<sup>30</sup> and even virtuosity-conscious Americans admired his tone. Inevitably Salmond's transatlantic reputation rests on his pedagogy. Although not a teacher for beginners, he was just the man to give a final polish to the talents who came his way. Although some loved his chamber music classes, the violist Peter Kamnitzer told me that Salmond's idea of coaching a chamber group was to sit there saying: 'Shake it, boy, shake it!' He could be arrogant, difficult and demanding, especially in the early days, but his successes speak for themselves: Leonard Rose, Channing Robbins, Alan Shulman, Victor Gottlieb, Orlando Cole, Elsa Hilger, Stephen De'ak, Eleanor Aller, Bernard Greenhouse, Daniel Saidenberg, Samuel Mayes, Frank Miller, Anthony Sophos, Richard Kapucinsky, Edgar Lustgarten and Tibor de Machula. He laid great stress on beauty of sound and on students listening closely to their own playing, and would shout 'Sing!' at them. He taught the Elgar Concerto if asked, but no one in his lifetime could have known what an essential part of the repertoire it would become.

He programmed Bach's Suites and pieces by Eccles, Sammartini, Veracini and Vivaldi, as well as the Sonatas by Barber, Beethoven, Brahms, Bridge, Dohnányi, Enescu, Franck, Grieg, Huré, Rachmaninov and Guy-Ropartz. He was a prime mover in persuading American cellists to play sonatas in their recitals. Besides the works mentioned above, his repertoire with orchestra took in Bridge's *Oration*, Barber's Concerto and Boëllmann's *Symphonic Variations*. In an interview focused on his teaching, when asked about repertoire, he recommended *inter alia* Bridge's Sonata and 'Elgar's splendid 'Cello Concerto'.<sup>31</sup>

Salmond first recorded acoustically for Vocalion in 1920-22: Cui *Cradle Song*, Rachmaninov *Andante* (very soulfully played), Popper *Gavotte* No. 2 and *Harlequin*, Glazunov *Sérénade espagnole*, Schumann *Träumerei*, Bridge and Pierné *Serenades*, Saint-Saëns *The Swan*, and Offenbach *Barcarolle*. In 1926-29 he recorded electrically for American Columbia with the pianist Simeon Rumschisky: Bach *Arioso*, Debussy *Menuet* and *En bateau*, Pianelli *Villanelle*, Chopin *Largo*, Fauré *Berceuse*, Bizet *Adagietto*, *The Londonderry Air*, Bridge *Mélodie* and Grieg *To Spring*, plus remakes of the Saint-Saëns, Pierné, Glazunov and Popper *Gavotte*. The major duo recordings are Grieg's Sonata, Bruch's *Kol Nidrei* (cut to fit on two sides) and Beethoven's A major Sonata and 'Bei Männern' Variations. Schubert's B flat Trio, with Myra Hess and Jelly d'Arányi, is inevitably trumped by the Cortot-Thibaud-Casals version: Salmond's phrasing in the Andante

30 Eugène Goossens III, *Overture and Beginners* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1951), 153.

31 Frederick H. Martens, *String Mastery* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1923).

is less generous than Casals's. Recent additions to his discography are fragments of two Brahms Trios with Friedberg and Karpilowsky – worth having just for Salmond's solo in the B major's Adagio – and three terrific Beethoven Sonatas, Opp. 5/1, 102/1 and 102/2, from the cycle recorded at Juilliard in 1948 with Leonid Hambro. For a long time, Salmond was poorly represented in the record catalogues, but there is enough available now, on the Pristine Audio, Arbiter and Opus Kura labels, to support my view that he was a great cellist. And in 2017 Arbiter will issue more discoveries: the Debussy Sonata, a complete 1940 recital of the Beethoven Sonatas, the 'Ghost' Trio with Friedberg and Karpilowsky and most of Bach's D minor solo Suite.

*Thanks to Martin Bird for much assistance, also to Raymond Glaspole and Jay Shulman.*

*Tully Potter was born in Edinburgh in 1942 but spent his formative years in South Africa. He has collected historic recordings since the age of 11 and through them has studied performing practice in vocal, string and chamber music. For more than 40 years he has contributed to international journals; for 11 years he edited Classic Record Collector. His biography of Adolf Busch was published in 2010 by Toccata Press.*

## An enduring friendship: Elgar and Joan Elwes

### Martin Bird

In the archives of the Elgar Birthplace Museum are two letters from a young English soprano, Joan Elwes. The first is dated 12 October 1926 ...

Dear Sir Edward Elgar

I am singing the soprano solo in "For the Fallen" & also have been studying "The Kingdom" & "The Apostles" & have been asked to sing them – Do you ever give coaching lessons & if so would it be possible for you to hear me sing some time? I feel very presumptuous in writing at all to you & I hope you will forgive me for asking you – I do so want to sing your Works properly & in that spirit I write – so I hope you will not mind!

Yours sincerely

Joan Elwes<sup>1</sup>

... and the second, to Carice, written after Elgar's death, reads:

My dearest Carice

I have been thinking of you so much & have forborne to write as I knew you would have so many letters. Jop [her husband, Lindsay Jopling] joins with me in sending you our loving sympathy – we have both lost parents after long years of friendship so we know a little what it is – you & your Father were such ideal comrades & all the honour & glory & homage people are giving to genius and the nation & the worlds sympathy probably don't know that before all that you were just the happiest couple in the world – but I do hope you'll feel that intimate friendship still – we do –

Will you please say when you can come & see us

Very best love

J-I-J<sup>2</sup>

Joan Izott Elwes (1895-1961) was one of the four daughters of Edward Leighton Elwes (1848-1930). Educated at Eton and University College, Oxford, and ordained in 1872, in 1903 he was made Archdeacon of Chichester and in 1914 Chancellor of Chichester Cathedral. In 1877 he had married Emily Fownes Somerville (1853-1952), daughter of James Curtis Somerville, barrister and Deputy Lieutenant of Somerset. Joan studied 'cello at the Royal College of Music and singing with the tenor Jean de Reszke. She made her debut in 1922 and continued to sing regularly in recital and oratorio until the late 1930s. In 1931 she married the barrister Lindsay Millais Jopling (1875-1967), a godson of the artist John Everett Millais (and father of 'Windflower'). She became a singing

1 EBM letter 5764.

2 EBM letter 786.

teacher and gave lecture-recitals for children. One of her lecture-recitals, in March 1937, was at the Alice Ottley School in Worcester, where Elgar had taught in the 1890s.

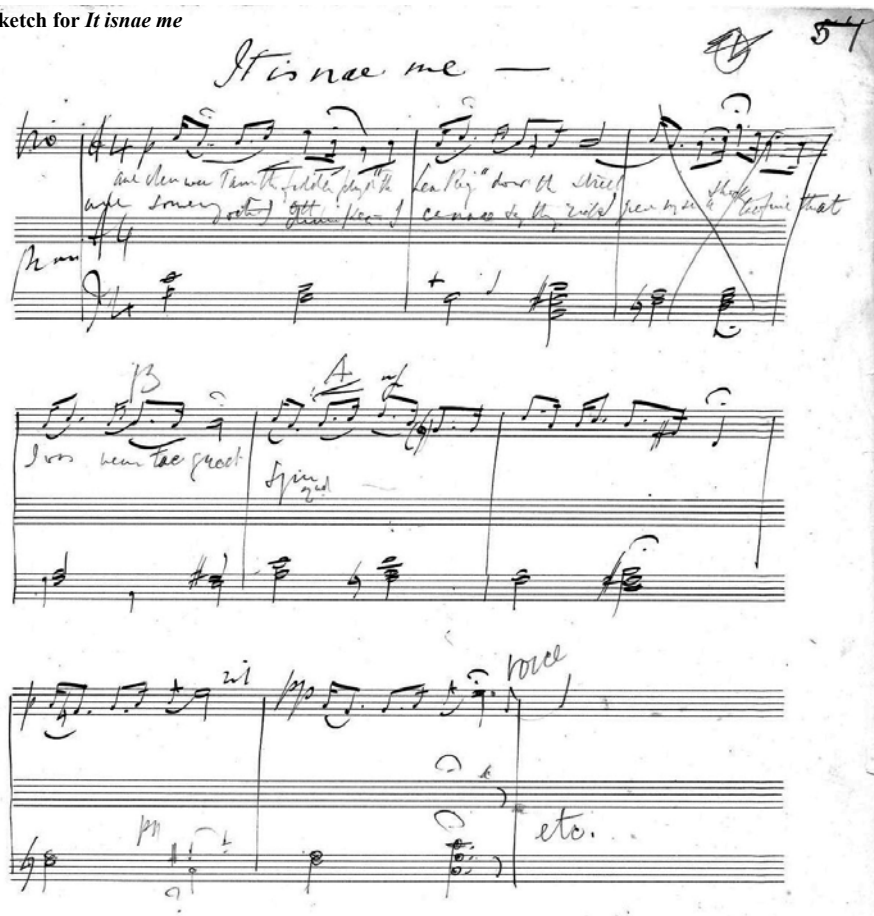
The lucky girls of the Alice Ottley School heard in the last week of term a Recital by that very accomplished singer, Miss Joan Elwes. The Headmistress, Miss H. M. Roder, spoke some cordial words of welcome on this, the second visit of Miss Elwes to the School.

Schubert songs occupied most of the programme ... Miss Elwes has a charming knack of explaining the songs and of getting the children to sing with her – even in German!

Mrs. Blake, Sir Edward Elgar's daughter, was at the concert.<sup>3</sup>

Elgar's song *It isnae me* was written for her, and the original publication is headed 'Sung by Miss Joan Elwes'.

Sketch for *It isnae me*



3 Berrow's Worcester Journal, 3 April 1937.

And this was (more than) the sum total of my knowledge of and, to be honest, interest in Miss Elwes until the publication in 2010 of Brian Trowell's edition of the solo songs with piano.<sup>4</sup> Brian's notes to *It isnae me* suggested that her friendship with Elgar might have been warmer than its heading implied, and his linking of the song with another of the same time – *Ecstasy* – with its 'partially obliterated epigraph at the end of the MS' reading 'Jovial old and nervous E.E.'s leaves wither every second' got me more and more intrigued.

It is well documented that, in his sixties and seventies, Elgar had an eye for an attractive young woman, particularly if she was a musician and especially if she was very intelligent. Did Joan fall into this category, I wondered?

Then, a couple of years ago, an old school-friend mentioned that a friend of his, Louise Grattan, had a couple of letters from Elgar to her mother which might be of interest. My interest deepened when I learnt that her mother was Joan Elwes. A few weeks later I visited Louise, and was handed three large boxes of her mother's letters, with the comment 'I think they're in there somewhere'. There had been an attempt to sort them into categories and a foolscap envelope labelled 'letters from famous people' caught my eye immediately. Inside I found, as predicted, a couple of letters from Elgar.

In the hope that there would be more, I went through the contents of all the boxes, and found not just a couple, but a couple of dozen letters from Elgar, as well as a number of others that mentioned their relationship. They are quite fascinating.

Carice, or maybe Elgar himself, made sure that no letters survive from the various women to whom Elgar was attracted, so the mere fact of the survival of some or all of Elgar's letters to Joan helps us to get a truer picture of the man.

\* \* \* \* \*

Elgar replied on 17 October 1926 to Joan's request for 'coaching lessons'.

Dear Miss Joan Elwes,  
Many thanks for your letter of the 12<sup>th</sup>; I am glad to hear that you are singing some of my music.

I am away from London and I do not give lessons of any kind but there are many people who know the works you name thoroughly well. Wishing you every success.

Believe me to be,  
Yours very truly,  
Edward Elgar<sup>5</sup>

Joan had been engaged as soprano soloist at the Eastbourne Musical Festival for *The Spirit of England*, Elgar's setting of Lawrence Binyon's poetry, and the concert, on Armistice Day, was to be conducted by the composer himself. Seemingly, neither realised that the other was appearing at the Festival.

It appears that Elgar may have felt an immediate attraction to his soloist, for on 26 November the pianist and writer Frank Howes wrote to Joan.

4 Brian Trowell (editor), 'Solo Songs with Piano 1910-1934', Elgar Complete Edition, Vol.16, (Rickmansworth: Elgar Society Edition, 2010).

5 Louise Grattan collection.

7, Park Terrace, Oxford.  
Nov. 26/26.

Dear Miss Elwes

I thought of writing a new edition of The Spirit of England The following sub-titles would be necessary:-

- (1) November 9<sup>th</sup> – A fast ride together. (Allegro Vivace)
- (2) From a Woman. (Legato ma spirituos.)
- (3) For the Fallen (from habits of abstinence into drunken ways) (Adagio – Lamentoso).

Good for Elgar. My flat is becoming habitable – not to say pleasant. I hope you will come & see it soon, when it is a little nearer completion than it is now.

Yours ever  
Frank Howes<sup>6</sup>

The next letter from Elgar to survive is in response to a request from Joan – whose recitals frequently contained groups of English songs – for a new song.

Napleton Grange, Kempsey, Worcester  
Feb 11<sup>th</sup> 1927

Dear Miss Joan Izott Elwes: (there!)

It was most kind of you to write – alas! there is no new song just yet. I am delighted to hear that you are singing the two elderly songs. If I am back from London I shall drive over to Hereford & hope to see you. In the meantime I am conducting at Queen's Hall on Monday evening 14<sup>th</sup>. If you shd. get to the concert do come round to the lonesome artists' room after.

Yours very sincy  
Edward Elgar<sup>7</sup>

Elgar's two songs for Joan – the last solo songs he ever wrote, *It isnae me* and the unfinished *Ecstasy* – were both to be composed in 1930.

He wrote to her again at the beginning of April from his London *pied-à-terre*.

37, St. James's Place S.W.1  
April 1<sup>st</sup> [1927]

My dear Joan Elwes:

Alas, for me! I only came up yesterday – conduct all day to-day – and leave early tomorrow. Your very kind invitation charms me (so do you!) but I must miss it.

I am delighted to hear you are singing at Hereford, but, here again I am unfortunate, for you are singing for some one else

Best regards  
Yours sincerely  
Edward Elgar<sup>8</sup>

- 
- 6 Louise Grattan collection.
  - 7 Louise Grattan collection.
  - 8 Louise Grattan collection.

Joan had been booked to sing minor roles in *Elijah* and Vaughan William's *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* at the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford in September.

In August Elgar wrote to Ibbs and Tillett, saying that he believed 'that Sir Henry Coward is performing *The Apostles* this season. I shall be obliged if you will strongly recommend Miss Joan Elwes for the soprano part'.<sup>9</sup> Coward had performed *The Apostles* earlier in the year, when the soprano soloist was Dorothy Silk. Within days of Elgar's recommendation, however, Joan received a letter from Ibbs & Tillett expressing their 'pleasure in offering you the following engagement. Please sign one of these forms and forward it to us by return of post, retaining the other for your guidance'.<sup>10</sup>

After the Festival he wrote to Trevor Osmond Williams, Manager of HMV's Artists and recording Department, recommending Joan as a recording artist.

... Another matter: Miss Joan Elwes, I think is a soprano who should be allowed to make more records: she sings without tremolo & the specimens I heard seemed to me to be quite successful; personally I should be glad if it might be found possible to adopt [my] suggestion.<sup>11</sup>

Joan was never to record for HMV or anyone else. A few private recordings survive.

Her family home, Glebe House, near Bramshott, Hampshire, was about sixteen miles from Carice and Sam Blake's farm near Petworth, Sussex. On 3 June 1928 'Joan Elwes to tea & we kept her to supper – sat out in garden lovely afternoon'.<sup>12</sup> The visit was returned a week later.

Went to the Elwes' to tea – Joan met us at Cowdray Park – I drove with her – & S. followed – Lovely drive & nice time – saw dogs etc – Home by 7 –<sup>13</sup>

Elgar was now living at Tiddington House, on the river a couple of miles outside Stratford-upon-Avon. Carice arrived on 19 June for a visit, and on the 27<sup>th</sup>:

Miss Joan Elwes arrd. from London to breakfast. All into Stratford then to Leamington: back to lunch – Miss Elwes took Carice (& Bridget) in her car to Petworth.<sup>14</sup>

On 31 July Elgar noted in his diary that 'Miss Joan Elwes came stayed till Friday'.<sup>15</sup> The next day: 'Miss Elwes – Boat on river – Very hot'.<sup>16</sup> She left on 3 August, bearing a letter from Elgar.

Dear Miss Elwes,  
Your singing in *The Spirit of England*, *The Kingdom*, *The Dream of Gerontius* and *Caractacus* gave me great pleasure & satisfaction & I shall be glad to hear that you are entrusted with the solos in any

- 
- 9 26 August 1927, EBM Letter Book 227.2.
  - 10 30 August 1927, Louise Grattan collection.
  - 11 15 September 1927, EBM Letter Book 227.2.
  - 12 Carice Blake diary, 3 June 1928.
  - 13 Carice Blake diary, 10 June 1928.
  - 14 Elgar diary, 27 June 1928. Bridget was Carice's dog.
  - 15 Elgar diary, 31 July 1928.
  - 16 Elgar diary, 1 August 1928.

of my works.<sup>17</sup>

At the time he had only heard her sing *The Spirit of England* in public. He continued to propose her as a soloist, for example, for his performance of *Gerontius* in Eastbourne in November 1928, a suggestion ignored by Henry Amers, conductor of the Municipal Orchestra, who engaged the contralto Margaret Balfour instead.

In September Arthur Cherrett, the secretary of the Bournemouth Municipal Choir, had written to Elgar asking his advice on a soloist for *The Music Makers*. Elgar replied: 'I think a mezzo-soprano would be suitable for The Music Makers and suggest you should write direct to Miss Joan Elwes, 105B Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, S.W.10'.<sup>18</sup> He wrote to Joan about it on 2 October, a letter typed by his secretary, Mary Clifford.

Dear Miss Elwes, Joan [amended in pen]

I hope you have had a good holiday and rest since the Festival; I am sorry I did not hear the songs but I understand they went extremely well.

I heard from Bournemouth that they hoped to engage you to sing The Music Makers: if this should be too low I think you would find it quite a simple matter to transpose some of it.<sup>19</sup>

From Carice's diary it is apparent that Joan was with Elgar on a number of occasions from the summer of 1928 on, for example, on 2 November, when Carice 'Went to Embassy Theatre Swiss Cottage to see rehearsal of [*Beau Brummel*] – Joan there – very interesting – Back to lunch with Jessie [Snow] – met Father for 4.10 train – awful crowd & train late & weird people in it –'.<sup>20</sup>

In 1929 Joan had been engaged for what was perhaps her most important and prestigious appearance to date, the Royal Choral Society's performance of *The Kingdom* in the Albert Hall on 2 March, with Elgar conducting the New Symphony Orchestra. Elgar was already in London at the end of February. Carice's diary:

Went to London by 10.30 – got lunch – met Father at flat at 2. Found him throaty – got Dr. Scott (Old Fox returning) gave him stuff – & kept him in – Joan came to dinner & spent evening.<sup>21</sup>

Rehearsal at Bert [Albert Hall] (Kingdom) 10-1 – Father did it all right – Joan took me to [Army and Navy] Stores in car in p.m. & came to tea – Mr. Howard Fry came to go thro' S. Peter. Went to Berlioz Faust in p.m. Father lived at club.<sup>22</sup>

Very cold. Did odd shoppings & packings. Performance at 2.30. Beautiful – Sat with Mr & Mrs. Elwes & friends of theirs – very thrilled. Joan sang well. Father all right – Lady S[uart]. [of Wortley] Lady [George] Arthur, Sir Neville Pearson etc etc in artist's room. Caught 6.10 down to Leamington – home soon after 8. Riotous welcome. Marco had rheumatism but better in a day or 2 –<sup>23</sup>

17 EBM Letter Book 259, 3 August 1928.

18 EBM Letter Book 259, 11 September 1928.

19 Louise Grattan collection.

20 Carice Blake diary, 2 November 1928.

21 Carice Blake diary, 28 February 1929.

22 Carice Blake diary, 1 March 1929.

23 Carice Blake diary, 2 March 1929.

Hubert Fitchew, writing in the *Sunday Times*, said that 'Miss Joan Elwes, the soprano, carried off with some credit a task to which she came comparatively fresh'<sup>24</sup>, and the *Western Morning News* thought that:

Of the soloists, all whom deserved high praise, the singing of Miss Joan Elwes was especially memorable. The pure silvery tone of her voice was exactly suited to the sentiment of the lovely words she had to sing in the role of "The Blessed Virgin". At the close of the concert Sir Elgar, with characteristic modesty, turned away and walked off the platform without troubling to acknowledge the ovation he received from the vast audience.<sup>25</sup>

Back home in Tiddington, Elgar wrote to Joan.

My dear Joan: I hope you are rested & none the worse for the trials of Saturday. It all went very well under the usual curious conditions of no full rehearsal etc. & I hope you are satisfied with your own share in the Kingdom – I hope it may lead to many engagements but don't mind what anyone says! I am to be shut up indoors for a space but have no temperature. All good wishes – Marco is not yet well & it troubles me a little.

Yours v sincy

EE.<sup>26</sup>

The Stratford-upon-Avon Festival Company's 'Shakespeare Birthday Festival' under the direction of William Bridges-Adams commenced on 23 April. On 1 May Elgar told Carice: 'No news: theatre tonight. Joan rang up this a.m. & will go also: I cd. not make out where or what she is doing I did not answer the telephone.'<sup>27</sup> Joan was en route to Birmingham for a broadcast with The Midland String Orchestra on 2 May.

Joan had once more been engaged for the Three Choirs Festival, which in 1929 was held at Worcester. Her contributions to the week were limited but telling: second soprano in *Elijah*, in which she sang 'the small but significant part of the youth, [and] made it very effective by singing from the side of the stage, thus carrying out Elijah's behest, "Go up now, child, and look towards the sea"'<sup>28</sup>; the première of Alexander Brent Smith's 'Choral Concerto', for soprano and contralto soloists and chorus, in which she was joined by Olga Haley; and some songs at the secular concert, including the premières of two by Patrick Hadley. From her lodgings Joan wrote to her father.

14, College Green, Worcester

Thursday 11.30 p.m.

by the Cathedral Clock.

Dearest Baba

It has been so strenuous attending all the Concerts that there hasn't been a minute to write, & as you will remember how occupied one is you must forgive me ... The [Wednesday secular] concert was not so awful as it might have been – & my songs went very well – & as Elgar said "they are making quite

24 *Sunday Times*, 3 March 1929.

25 *Western Morning News*, 4 March 1929.

26 Louise Grattan collection, 4 March 1929

27 EB letter 315, 1 May 1929.

28 *Yorkshire Post*, 11 September 1929.

a fuss of you” when I got several recalls.

Elsie Suddaby was left high & dry by the Orchestra who couldn't get “Sir Spit's” beat – he is said to have beaten 15 beats in one bar! in the Kaminski Magnificat. They had to stop & go on again starting in the same place together! She didn't turn a hair. It would be nice to be so sure of oneself.

The Elgar Kingdom & Gerontius were lovely performances – Dorothy hasn't a big enough voice for the dramatic parts but is exquisite in the soft ones ...

Love from Joan<sup>29</sup>

‘Sir Spit’ was the orchestra's name for Sir Ivor Atkins, who also rejoiced in the nickname ‘Saliva Atkins’!

On 10 April 1930 Atkins conducted a performance of *The Apostles* in Worcester Cathedral with the Worcester Festival Choral Society. The soloists were Joan Elwes, Millicent Russell, Percy Manchester, Keith Falkner, Richard Watson and Roy Henderson. The second half was broadcast by the BBC Midlands Region. Elgar, now living at Marl Bank, got in touch:

Marl Bank, Rainbow Hill, Worcester.  
Monday [7 Apr 1930]

My dear Joan:

I fear there is no chance of lunch etc as I ought to be in London tomorrow: I am telling Carice you will be in Coll. Yard.

I hope you are well

Yrs  
EE<sup>30</sup>

Carice made contact with Joan.

Lovely day – In town in a.m. To rehearsal in Cathedral in p.m. very good. To Apostles in evening – wonderful. Went into Atkins to tea & after performance. Graftons to supper – Joan singing – arranged to take her home – rather ill –<sup>31</sup>

Next day was a ‘Lovely day. Joan came up to start with me. Lovely run – except getting engine too hot but got it right again. Left J. at Bramshott home by 4.45 –’.<sup>32</sup>

This year's Three Choirs Festival was at Hereford, and Joan had been engaged for *The Apostles*. Just before the orchestral rehearsals in London, Carice ‘heard Father had lumbago’,<sup>33</sup> but was able to conduct. From Hereford Joan wrote to her mother: her father had died on 30 May.

29 Louise Grattan collection.

30 Louise Grattan collection.

31 Carice Blake diary, 10 April 1930.

32 Carice Blake diary, 11 April 1930.

33 Carice Blake diary, 31 August 1930.

Green Dragon Hotel, Hereford  
Sunday afternoon [7 Sep 1930]

Dearest Mama

It does seem so strange being here without Baba – & yet I feel he is here all the time –

Elgar has just been rehearsing my part with me – very kind of him – & I do hope his lumbago will allow him to conduct on Tuesday. Sickening that, he should get it just now ...<sup>34</sup>

*The Apostles* opened the Festival. *The Times* thought that ‘Miss Joan Elwes gave us moments of conspicuous beauty and was constantly sympathetic, though not always certain in attack and intonation’;<sup>35</sup> the *Gloucester Citizen* said ‘Miss Joan Elwes has now taken her place amongst our foremost festival singers. Her singing yesterday morning showed a development in the quality and measure of her voice. She gave a beautiful reading of the soprano music allotted to the Angel and the Virgin’;<sup>36</sup> while the *Yorkshire Post* thought that her ‘fine voice filled the building with good effect, and it was only a slight and occasional lapse from perfection of intonation that militated against her success.’<sup>37</sup>

That autumn Elgar wrote his two songs for Joan, *It isnae me* and *Ecstasy*. An undated letter from Elgar almost certainly dates from this time ...

Friday

Dove:<sup>38</sup>

Trains leave Paddington at

R 12.45 arr Wrcr. 2.55

R 1.45 ” 4.37

R 4.45 ” 7.8

R mean restaurant

Let me know: I am delirious with joy.

Prosperice.

My new name.<sup>39</sup>

... and an undated letter from Joan to her fiancée, Lindsay Jopling, shows that Elgar now needed her presence quite often.

... My dear I think about you such a lot too – it will be lovely to see you again on Monday.

34 Louise Grattan collection.

35 *The Times*, 10 September 1930

36 *Gloucester Citizen*, 10 September 1930

37 *Yorkshire Post*, 10 September 1930

38 Short for ‘Darling love’?

39 Louise Grattan collection

Elgar to Joan (Louise Grattan collection)

Friday  
Dove:  
Trains leave  
paddington at  
R 12.45 arr. Wrcr. 2.55  
R 1.45 " 4.37  
R 4.45 " 7.8  
R means restaurant  
Let me know:  
I am delirious  
with joy prosperice.  
my new name.

I've had an S.O.S. again from Elgar – & I've decided to chuck Croiza<sup>40</sup> & go down there on the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>

I've been asleep all the afternoon, & feel like a boiled owl in consequence, & my head is going round & round. However rest must do one good in the end

Dear I wish you were here

J.<sup>41</sup>

On 2 December Elgar wrote to Carice, saying 'I hope Joan [Elwes] will be here this week on her way back from --- ? I forget, whence',<sup>42</sup> and the following day wrote to the conductor Walter Damrosch in New York, saying: 'My young soprano friend, Miss Joan Elwes, is visiting the States again in January next. I should be very grateful to you if you could give her any introductions for singing at At Homes or Concerts: she is not giving a recital this year ...'.<sup>43</sup>

After Christmas he wrote again to Joan ...

Marl Bank, Rainbow Hill, Worcester.

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> Dec 1930

My dear Joan: Christmas is over mercifully: the weather has been dark, rainy & duller than I ever remember: two hours fine on two afternoons but that's all. Carice has been here & leaves tomorrow. I have scarcely been out on acct of my cold – & you away! 'A grey eye or so'

I hope everything goes better than well with you & that you are appreciated as you deserve – if you get 100<sup>th</sup> part of the admiration love & devotion you wd get here you will do well.

Bless you dear EE.<sup>44</sup>

... and once more on her return from the tour.

[Worcester]

Tuesday. [10 Feb 1931]

My dear: welcome home: yes: I think it is wise – you will see me very soon, very soon as I shall not last much longer.

I hope you are well: come here & rest.

Which day is Kidderminster

Love

E.E.<sup>45</sup>

Joan had been engaged by the Kidderminster Choral Society, of which Elgar was President, for a performance of *Messiah* conducted by James Irving Glover, who had been the Society's conductor

40 The French mezzo-soprano and singing teacher Claire Croiza, who was working in London.

41 Louise Grattan collection

42 EBM letter 319

43 Library of Congress

44 Louise Grattan collection.

45 Louise Grattan collection.

since its formation in 1899. He died on Christmas Day 1931.

Elgar wrote again later in the month, on Lord Chamberlain's Office paper.

Worcester

Feb 19: 1931

My dear Miss Elwes:

It was very kind of you to come and help with the music: the only dismal thing was the weather which certainly did its worst to welcome you after your long absence – an absence deeply to be deplored by your admiring friends – !!!!

I say! that's enough of that sort of thing. I thought I wd try it – but it does not work well.

I hope you had a good journey.

It is sad

Yours ever

E.E.

The enclosed was handed to me by a maid<sup>46</sup>



CITY WEDDING.—Mr. Lindsay Millais Jopling leaving St. Ethelburga's Church yesterday with his bride, Miss Joan Elwes. On the right is Sir Harold Morris, the best man.

The wedding of Joan Elwes and Lindsay Millais Jopling, 24 February 1931. (*Yorkshire Post*)

On 24 February 1931 Joan married Lindsay Millais Jopling. A lawyer twenty years Joan's senior, he had served in India as Deputy-Commissioner of Lucknow, and had previously been married to Nina, daughter of Sir John Strachey, one time acting Viceroy of India.

The wedding took place at St. Ethelburga-the-Virgin, Bishopsgate, yesterday of Mr. Lindsay Millais Jopling, son of the late J.M. Jopling and Mrs. Louise Jopling-Rowe, of The Manor [Barn], Chesham Bois, and Miss Joan Elwes, daughter of the late Chancellor Elwes and Mrs. Elwes, of 105B, Cheyne-walk, Chelsea. The Rev. W. Geikie-Cobb officiated and Sir Hugh Allen played the organ.

The bride, who was given away by her uncle, Sir Henry Maxwell-Lyte, wore a gown of white

46 Louise Grattan collection.



satin with a short train made in one with the skirt and a shoulder cape of scarlet chiffon velvet and a rope of pearls. Her veil of family old Brussels lace was held in place by a pearl fillet. The marriage took place very quietly owing to the bride's family being in mourning for Chancellor Elwes and to Mrs. Elwes's absence, through ill-health, on the continent. There was no reception, but Mrs. Elwes will give a reception at Crosby Hall in June for the bride and bridegroom.

The honeymoon is being spent on the south coast, and the bride travelled in a dress of flame-coloured crêpe de Chine with a black satin hat and a black Persian lamb fur coat and muff.<sup>47</sup>

The organist was Sir Hugh Allen, Director of the Royal College of Music.

In March Joan appeared at the Stinchcombe Hill Music Festival, and then went to Marl Bank for a couple of days – her marriage had not put an end to visits to Elgar. From there she wrote to Lindsay.

March 19. [1931] 9.30 p.m.

My own beloved Mill – Elgar has “gone round the corner” after a massive supper followed by 3 pills!! So with his best music pen I write you a hurried line!

Darling it was lovely getting your telegrams, & they made me sing well – at least I felt better than usual about everything.

Thank you for a letter to Stinchcombe & one I found here when I arrived at 10 a.m. this morning. Yes – yes I too long for Saturday. Only one whole day now thank goodness.

Great blow fallen – the list for the Gloucester Festival Sept 6. 8. 9<sup>th</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> is out Sopranos are Isobel Baillie Dorothy Silk & Elsie Suddaby. Elgar works only Gerontius & the violin concerto. So that's that. Amantissime<sup>48</sup> is down – & B minor Mass in same programme. Will Dorothy sing both? No details of who's to sing which yet. It says detailed programme published in April.

I've drunk no wine today & feel less heady than usual here – We had a lovely drive through some adorable villages this morning, Crowthorpe among them – & went into the Church to see Dingles monuments – very lovely. This afternoon after an hour's good sleep again in car all over Worcestershire & into Herefordshire – glorious. Talbot Inn at Akerdine (?) advertises “good fishing”, looks pleasant & is in the midst of heavenly country. We might try it in the blossom season some year. The country must look really look divine then.

The worst is that something leaks in one of the car's valves & fills the interior of the car with oily smoke – bad – We walked on a high common overlooking Malvern & Worcester – very near the cottage where Elgar was born – Such a wonderful view – he said it inspired his mother before he was born & is the reason of him!

The Piles ~~have~~ make me end this hastily - - - Darling goodnight

Your Joan<sup>49</sup>

Following her visit Joan wrote about a missing brooch.

---

47 *The Times*, 25 February 1931.

48 Christian Ritter: *O Almatissime Sponse Jesu*.

49 Louise Grattan collection. Louise assures me that her mother wrote ‘Piles’ and not ‘Pills’!

Marl Bank, Rainbow Hill, Worcester.  
15<sup>th</sup> April 1931

My dear Joan:

Many thanks for your note about the brooch: however it was sent off yesterday reg<sup>d</sup>, so I hope you have it safely.

I am glad you had a nice tour.

With kind regards to you & your husband

Yours sincerely  
Edward Elgar<sup>50</sup>

Elgar's letter crossed in the post with another from Joan.

Marl Bank, Rainbow Hill, Worcester.  
16<sup>th</sup> April 1931

Dear Mrs. Jopling:

I am glad you recd the brooch safely.

Dick is sending, from the celebrated Marl Bank Gardens, a small parcel of rubbish – the only things moveable but I hope there may be wonders ready for planting out later on & these may be sent – or fetched.

Believe me to be  
your obliged & grateful gardener  
E.E.

orders solicited<sup>51</sup>

In May he wrote again.

[Master of the King's Musick notepaper]  
WORCESTER.

Madam:

We are very sorry & hope you will soon be better

Marco  
Mina  
Meg  
Bridget  
Carice.  
May [Grafton]  
Edward Elgar

10 MAY 1931

P.T.O.

---

50 Louise Grattan collection.

51 Louise Grattan collection.

[Carice writing]

We believe this handkerchief is yours.

In some quite mysterious manner it fell out of my car when I got home last time & I have been looking for the owner ever since!

So frightfully sorry to miss you – I really thought I was going to see you this time! Hope you are better –

Much love  
Carice<sup>52</sup>

On 15 June Joan was again at Marl Bank. Carice's diary:

In town in a.m. Wire from Joan to say she would come that evening for night – Drive in p.m. Joan arrived about 7.30. Fine & nice.<sup>53</sup>

Poured all day – Into town in a.m. all had out photographs taken. Quite good. Bought plants. Went down with J. after lunch & collected plants & saw her off.<sup>54</sup>

Joan and Lindsay were now living at The Manor Barn, Chesham Bois, Buckinghamshire. On 27 October – election day – Carice set out again for Worcester, spending a night in Chesham en route. She 'Left home about 10.30 voted & got to Joan about 2.30. Lovely house & all very nice – Sending out notices for her concerts –'.<sup>55</sup> Her concert was a Wigmore Hall recital on 25 November.

Elgar sent Christmas greetings to Joan and her family.

Marl Bank, Rainbow Hill, Worcester.  
21<sup>st</sup> Decr 1931

My dear Joan:

This is only to carry to The Barn & to those therein all good wishes.

I hope all goes well – here everything goes wrong.

Yours sinc  
E.E.<sup>56</sup>



**Elgar, Joan and Carice photographed on 15 June 1931. (Arthur Reynolds collection)**

52 Louise Grattan collection.

53 Carice Blake diary, 15 June 1931.

54 Carice Blake diary, 16 June 1931.

55 Carice Blake diary, 27 October 1931.

56 Louise Grattan collection.



**Manor Barn, Chesham Bois**

On 23 April 1932 Joan gave birth to her first child, Jane Juliet Elwes Jopling. Vaughan Williams was a godfather.

Elgar was 75 on 2 June. Among the greetings was a telegram for Joan: 'Congratulations love and blessing = Joan Elwes'<sup>57</sup>

He had been invited to conduct *King Olaf* with the North Staffordshire District Choral Society in Hanley in October 1932, and he had asked Henry Clayton of Novello to negotiate a fee. In London for the orchestral rehearsals for the Worcester Three Choirs Festival, Elgar wrote to Joan.

Royal Societies Club, St. James's Street, S.W.1.  
31<sup>st</sup> Agt 1932

home today

My dear Mrs Jopling otherwise Joan

I was delighted to see you to-day. I am asked to conduct on the 27 Oct & you are down to sing! Can it be true? Best regards to your man & additional remembrance!

Yrs ever  
EE<sup>58</sup>

57 EB letter 1738, 2 June 1932.

58 Louise Grattan collection.

The concert also included *Sea Pictures* and *The Music Makers*, in which the soloist was Astra Desmond. The other soloists in *Olaf*, which was broadcast, were Frank Titterton and Frank Phillips (later better known as a BBC announcer). The concert was reviewed in the *Staffordshire Evening Sentinel*.

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

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

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

Miss Astra Desmond sang the "Sea Pictures" as surely no other living contralto could have sung them. In turn, defiant, vigorous, tender and instinct with youth and joy, the melodies poured forth in a stream of the purest and loveliest tone. Miss Desmond has the rare quality which brings her voice cleanly through the spume of orchestral tone; yet it is neither metallic nor reedy. The scene at the end of the songs was one of riotous enthusiasm.

"The Music Makers" is a passionate and wistful work, presenting great difficulties to the performers. Sir Edward handed over the baton to the Society's conductor, Mr. John James, to whom a major share of the credit for the evening's triumph must go.

An orchestra which numbered among its members many distinguished musicians gave the two conductors admirable service and no anxieties. Mr. Paul Beard was the leader. A large audience accorded to Sir Edward, Mr. James, the soloists and the choir a great ovation at the close of a memorable evening.<sup>59</sup>

Elgar wrote to John James on 29 October, saying 'It was a very great pleasure to be with you & all good friends in North Staffs. again: Thank you for all you did. The chorus was splendid',<sup>60</sup> and later to Joan.

Marl Bank, Worcester.  
13<sup>th</sup> Nov 1932

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

All thanks  
Yours sincerely  
E.E.<sup>61</sup>

He had 'been rushing wildly about' to conduct 'For the Fallen' in an Armistice Day broadcast from London, and to attend the Worcester Autumn Meeting 'which we thoroughly enjoyed'.<sup>62</sup>

He was in London on 21 February 1933 for a recording session with Beecham's London Philharmonic Orchestra.

59 *Staffordshire Evening Sentinel*, 28 October 1932.

60 EB Letter Book 266.

61 Louise Grattan collection.

62 Carice Blake diary, 2 November 1932.

Marl Bank, Rainbow Hill, Worcester  
18<sup>th</sup> Feb 1933

My dear Joan,

Thank you for the book – disgraceful! it was good of you to send. Are you still in possession of Cheyne Walk? I hope to be at the Langham on Tuesday for a short spell

Yours ever  
EE<sup>63</sup>

In September Joan sent him details of her forthcoming Schubert recitals at the Wigmore Hall with her accompanist Grace Shearer.

Marl Bank, Worcester.

Missed you at Hereford. Thank you for the Concert announcements for which all good wishes.

Yrs sincy  
E.E.  
14 SEP. 1933<sup>64</sup>

On 7 September, at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival, Elgar conducted his music for the last time – a performance of *The Kingdom*. Wulstan Atkins recalled:

I can see it again today: Elgar conducting, with Elsie Suddaby, Astra Desmond, Frank Titterton and Harold Williams around him, and Billy leading the orchestra, and the chorus and orchestra following his every movement and quietly and surely meeting his every wish. Elgar's movements were slight and less demonstrative than they would have been years before, and at times it was as if he was himself being carried away by his own music. But the performance was perfect and strangely intimate and reflective ... Elsie Suddaby's singing of 'The Sun goeth down', and the last chorus, 'Thou O Lord art our Father and we are Thine', with Elgar very quietly putting down his stick after the last chord had faded away, will always remain in my memory.<sup>65</sup>

On 20 September Carice 'Heard Father had bad turn but all right again',<sup>66</sup> and on the 29<sup>th</sup> noted 'Father bad with sciatica'.<sup>67</sup> At the beginning of October she was summoned urgently to Marl Bank – her 1933 diary ends abruptly on 1 October. On the 7<sup>th</sup> Elgar was taken to the South Bank Nursing Home, Worcester, and was operated on next day.

On Sunday Sir Edward Elgar had to undergo an abdominal operation for the relief of obstructions, and so far is progressing satisfactorily.<sup>68</sup>

The operation was performed by Dr. Norman Duggan. The intestinal obstruction proved to be

63 Louise Grattan collection.

64 Louise Grattan collection.

65 Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1984), 460.

66 Carice Blake diary, 20 September 1933.

67 Carice Blake diary, 29 September 1933.

68 *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 14 October 1933.

inoperable cancer. Carice was concerned to ensure that her father did not learn the truth about his condition: 'He liked to read every day that he was "progressing favourably".'<sup>69</sup>

But of course he was not. Five weeks after the operation Carice wrote to Adela Schuster, an old friend of Elgar, to say: 'The news of Father is very much the same – He has had a respite today from the pain – & has been talking to me quite happily – One is always in a kind of fever when one goes away for fear of its beginning again –'.<sup>70</sup>

On the 19<sup>th</sup> he suffered a relapse.

24-11-33 Marl Bank

Dearest Joan –

It was sweet of you to wire – I am afraid almost to tell you but it is just a question of weeks or days now – He had a sudden relapse on Sunday & is gradually getting weaker – you see – he could not be told what was the matter – you've probably realised that there is more than meets the eye – he was reading papers till a few days ago so we could not have bulletins in – & as at the beginning there was every chance he might be able to lead a fairly normal life for some months, we could not tell anyone – I didn't mean to be mysterious but the position was too difficult – Its all such a tragedy. My deepest sympathy to you in all your sorrow.

Love from Carice.<sup>71</sup>

Lindsay's mother had died on 19 November at the Manor Barn.

Marl Bank, Worcester.

Nov: 29<sup>th</sup> 1933

Dearest Joan –

So many thanks for yours – It is indeed too awful – I was sent for in the middle of the night on Sunday week – he had had a rigor & was unconscious & we felt there was no hope – On Monday morning he gradually recovered consciousness & asked for beer which he had – Since then he has slowly improved – & this a.m. when I left (I stay all night & Miss Clifford takes turn with me) I felt he was decidedly better – more sleep in the night & no drugs – we have had some awful nights –

He slept so much yesterday that I hardly spoke to him so I could not ask whether he'd like to see you – If & when I can & he says yes I'll wire to you – but he has so far only seen men friends & somehow I feel that is all he does want – Sounds odd but that seems the line he is taking – I have been working hard getting them to come & grappling with trains meals beds etc – Before I knew it was that he could not bear the idea of anyone seeing him in pain – now the pain is much less – in fact it I think it's more nerves for fear it should come on than actual pain – They think his condition may go on for some time if he has no further attack – & possibly he may get well enough to sit up – But no one can say – Last week of course they only gave him 2 or 3 days –

My best love  
your loving  
Carice.<sup>72</sup>

69 W.H. Reed, *Elgar as I knew him* (London: Gollancz, 1936), 111.

70 EB letter 6884, 18 November 1933.

71 Louise Grattan collection.

72 Louise Grattan collection.

He recovered sufficiently to return home to Marl Bank on 2 January.<sup>73</sup>

Fred Gaisberg of H.M.V. then concocted an ambitious plan for Elgar to supervise a recording of orchestral excerpts from *Caractacus* by 'phone link from Marl Bank, and this was achieved on 22 January. Elgar had written the engagement '2-5 H.M.V. Marl Bank – recording' in his diary in a surprisingly firm hand.

The following day Carice wrote to Joan.

Marl Bank, Worcester.

Jan: 23<sup>rd</sup> 1934.

Dearest Joan –

Sorry – but I could not write before – the news is very bad really – He has had awful pain ever since he came home & the last week has been going downhill very rapidly – He is now in much less pain – but drowsing all day – that sort of toxæmia [*sic*] – & frightfully muddled – & weaker – Whether he can get out of it again – I doubt – He has had other disquieting symptoms & a very mild rigor – How he did that listening to the records & criticizing I can't think – but he did marvellously – I suppose he'd thought about it a lot before & was determined to do it – he was clear as ever & could correct the slightest mistake – After it was over he relapsed with the most awful moither of mind – & has been so all night & all day – of course everyone will think he is much better from that – but alas it's not so – I can't make people believe how ill he is for they see him for a few minutes perhaps in which he makes himself rouse – & they think I'm mad – It's been too horrible the scenes of pain & musing we've had to see these last weeks – If he is [one word illegible] he is at least free from pain & quite happy – though it's awful to see for us –

Must fly for post –

So much love

Carice<sup>74</sup>

She wrote again a fortnight later.

Marl Bank, Worcester.

Feb: 7<sup>th</sup> 1934.

Dearest Joan,

Thank you so much for your letter & enclosure – I will deal with the latter – & we are most grateful for your kind thought. He has been going downhill very much the last 2 weeks – & he has come of himself to realise that he is terribly ill dying in fact – & asked for the priest – I don't think he has quite made up his mind about it yet, but anyway it's a marvellous change from utterly refusing to hear of one. Its far less worrying now he knows – one got into such awful situations – The mental confusion has been going on for days – we simply don't know how to cope with it – & he talks incessantly – It's all very frightful – no use your coming my dear at present – there are moments of clearness but very short – now the nightmare has got an awful hold & we are faced with the prospect of a stranger tonight –

73 *Berrow's Worcester Journal*. The bulletin announcing that Elgar had 'returned home to-day' was released late on 2<sup>nd</sup> January in time to make the early editions on 3<sup>rd</sup> January – by which time 'to-day' was 'yesterday' – and was printed without amendment. *The Times* realised that 'to-day' should be amended to 'yesterday', but then added to the confusion by not publishing the release until the 4<sup>th</sup>, the day after the majority of newspapers.

74 Louise Grattan collection.

So glad you are doing so much work – & being paid! I wish I could hear you – got my new car – a beauty this time – one bright spot –

So much love & thanks  
Your loving Carice.<sup>75</sup>

Elgar died on the morning of 23 February. Joan immediately sent a telegram: ‘Loving sympathy = Joan’<sup>76</sup> Later she wrote the letter of sympathy quoted at the beginning of this essay.

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1935 Joan promoted a series of six recitals at Cowdray Hall, Cavendish Square. The first was devoted to Bach, and she was joined by Leon Goossens, Vera Hockman, Pamela McKenna and Grace Shearer. The violinist Vera Hockman is better known to Elgarians as the last love of Elgar’s life. They met on 7 November 1931 when Elgar was conducting in Croydon, and kept the seventh of each month as a ‘mensiversary’

After Elgar’s death Carice seems to have had little or no contact with Joan – although no Carice diary for 1934 or 1935 survives to check. Joan’s recitals diminished, too, after the final flurry of 1935: a lunchtime recital at the Royal College of Music and an appearance at the opening of the Working Men’s College in London’s Crowndale Road being typical examples.

She did, however, offer a ‘One hour lecture recital for schools [of] Bach, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms or Wolf’, and in March 1937 came to Worcester to give one at the Girls’ Grammar School where Elgar had taught the violin half a century earlier. Carice, by this time living near the Birthplace Cottage, attended.

Very cold, snow on Malverns – Nella [Leicester] & I to Cox & Painter’s all a.m. Went to Alice Ottley School for recital by Joan Elwes with Grace Shearer – very nice – Could not get her to come up as she had to drive back & it threatened snow.<sup>77</sup>

In 1938 the Elgar Birthplace Museum was opened in time for the Worcester Three Choirs Festival, and on 1 September ‘Mr. & Mrs. [Bernard] Shaw to tea & saw Birthplace – Mrs. Shaw hung the first curtain in the Birthroom’.<sup>78</sup>

In 1947 the Birthplace Trustees set up an ‘Elgar Memorial Fund’ to raise money towards its upkeep. The main event in the fund raising was on 26 May, when Adrian Boult conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra in a concert at the Royal Albert Hall in celebration of Queen Mary’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The concert included Elgar’s *Introduction and Allegro* and Second Symphony, and all proceeds went to the fund.

Joan’s contribution was on 23 November, at a concert given at Nell Gwynn House in Chelsea, when she sang a group of five Elgar songs. *It isnae me* was not among them. May Harrison (sister of the ’cellist Beatrice Harrison) played the Violin Sonata and led a performance of the String Quartet, and Carice spoke about the Fund.

---

75 Louise Grattan collection.

76 EB letter 996.

77 Carice Blake diary, 22 March 1937.

78 Carice Blake diary, 1 September 1938.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fitting these pieces into the larger jigsaw puzzle of Elgar’s life in the ’20s and ’30s it seems to me that what we have, on Joan’s part, is an affectionate and purely platonic relationship with a very well-known musician. She was, by her own daughter’s admission, always ‘a bit of a flirt’,<sup>79</sup> and I suspect she was both flattered and slightly amused by it, too. I’m sure Elgar would have enjoyed Joan’s company and felt equally flattered, while in his mind – but only in his mind – developing the relationship into a passionate affair. He said himself of an earlier relationship ‘I was dreaming yesterday of woods & fields &, perhaps, a little drive round Harrogate – or a little play journey to Fountains Abbey or some lovely remembrance of long ago idylls. Well, I have put it all in my music & also much more that has never happened’.

---

79 Conversation with Louise Grattan, July 2014.

## Who was Sally Holmes?

### Martin Bird

John Norris, writing in the November 2010 edition of this *Journal*, said of the song *It isnae me*:

Elgar seemingly came across the words, a short (two-verse) poem expressing the painful recollection of lost love, in *Country Life* (14 June 1930). The words are in a strong and rather impenetrable Scottish brogue, recently identified by Garry Humphreys as specifically an Arbroath dialect. On the sheet music the poet is identified only as ‘S.H.’ The initials hide the identity of Sally Holmes, whose name otherwise seems lost to the world of poetry. But there is no mystification intended: correspondence between Elgar and Holmes reveals that the use of the initials arose from a misunderstanding between Elgar and his publisher after she had expressed a preference for the sheet music to carry her full name. She was at that time an aspiring novelist living in Henley-on-Thames, and only passing reference in the correspondence to visits to the Outer Hebrides hint at a possible Scottish ancestry.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from that the life and background of Sally Holmes remained a mystery until 2014, when I was able to track her down through her address near Henley and to make contact with her niece, Grace Jean Macalister (née Holmes).

Grace Sarah Douglas Holmes, always known as Sally,<sup>2</sup> was born in 1903, the daughter of Harry Holmes (1863-1931), of Balgreggan House, Stranraer, and his wife, Grace Isabel Holmes (1866-1947), daughter of Sir Francis Tress Barry.

Harry, a Lloyds underwriter, and Grace had married in 1889, and in 1891 were living at Great Nelmes, a sixteenth-century manor house in grounds of some 250 acres at Hornchurch in Essex. Still in their mid-twenties, their immediate domestic needs were catered for by a butler, housekeeper, cook, kitchen maid, two housemaids, gamekeeper, coachman, two grooms and a gardener.

Harry was the son of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Holmes (1828-1913), a Deputy Lieutenant of Essex and a JP, who lived at Grey Towers, Hornchurch, a castellated mansion in twelfth-century style, set in 85 acres of parkland. This had been built by Henry Holmes in 1876, and adjoined Great Langtons, the estate of his father-in-law, John Wagener. Henry had been a director of the Union Bank, had shipping interests, and for a time had owned the Hornchurch Brewery. His estate had a probate value of over £23,000 – nearly £2,400,000 today, using the Bank of England’s inflation calculator.

Henry’s wife, Emilie, died within four months of her husband and Grey Towers was sold. During the Great War it was the base depot for New Zealand forces in England, and became their convalescent home. It was demolished in 1931.

1 Tales from the Complete Edition – 4, “‘It Isnae Her’: Elgar, Women and Song’ (*Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.16, No.6, November 2010), 11-12.

2 A wreath at her grandfather’s funeral in 1913 bore the simple message ‘Gilbert and Sally’. Gilbert was her brother.

Grace Holmes’s side of the family was no less moneyed. Her father, Sir Francis Tress Barry, 1<sup>st</sup> Bart. (1825-1907) made a fortune from a Portuguese copper mine and, on reaching retirement age, became Conservative MP for Windsor. He represented the constituency until 1906, when the seat passed to his nephew, James Francis Mason. In 1872 he had purchased the country estate of St. Leonard’s Hill near Windsor, which he would lend to the Prince of Wales during Royal Ascot. At his death his estate was valued for probate at more than £640,000 or around £69 million at today’s values.



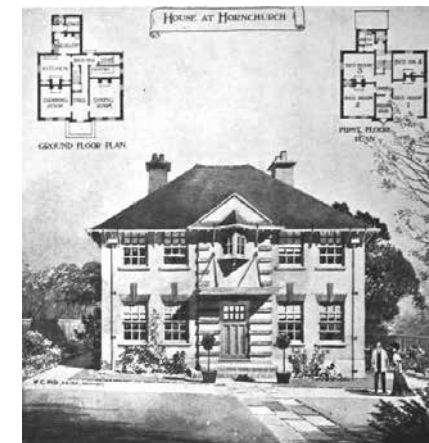
‘Grey Towers’, Hornchurch, Essex.

One endearing aspect of Sir Francis’s personality was his anonymous donation each Christmas of a newly-minted 6<sup>d</sup> to every child in the workhouses and workhouse schools of London (some 11,000 at the time of his death).

Harry and Grace’s son, Harry Gilbert Holmes, was born in 1893, and two years later the family moved to Balgreggan House in Scotland. Over the succeeding years the bulk of the Great Nelmes estate was sold off, primarily for what would today be called ‘executive housing’.



Houses built on the Great Nelmes estate. The larger house was priced at £1,025, and the smaller £575. (Walter Gray Ross, *Some Small Houses Illustrated* (London: The Homeland Association Ltd., 1908)).



The 1901 census shows the family – now three in total – at Balgreggan looked after by nine indoor servants: a butler, housekeeper, lady’s maid, cook, kitchen maid, nurse, and three housemaids.

Balgreggan House was designed by William Adam and dates from 1730. It was demolished in 1966. The Holmes family remained there until 1912 when they returned south of the border. The house was not sold, however, and for the next 20 years was rented out. It was at Balgreggan that Grace Holmes died in 1947.

Identical advertisements appeared in *The Scotsman* of 26 October 1912 and 13 May 1933.

To let, furnished, at moderate rent, for such period as may be agreed on, BALGREGGAN HOUSE and 4500 ACRES of SHOOTINGS.

Balgreggan House is situated near Sandhead, about 6 miles from Dunragit Station and 7 miles from the Town of Stranraer. It stands in wooded grounds of 30 or 40 acres, and contains 5 Public Rooms, 25 Bed and Dressing Rooms, Bathrooms &c, and ample Kitchen, Servants', and other Accommodation for a Large Establishment. There is an excellent Garden, with Vineries, Glass Houses, &c; Stable (5 stalls and 2 loose boxes), 3 Coach or Motor Houses, Harness Room, Coachman's House, and excellent Kennels.

The House is in excellent order, with new modern sanitation. The situation is very healthy, and climate mild, but not relaxing.

A splendid mixed bag can be obtained on the Shootings.



Above: Balgreggan House, Stranraer.

Below: 'Turfelde', Turville, Buckinghamshire.



Sally was born there in 1903. By the time of her contact with Elgar in 1930 she was living at Turville, Buckinghamshire, near Henley-on-Thames. Her home 'Turfelde', now Grade 2 listed, was formed from two cottages dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 2004 it featured in an episode of *Midsomer Murders*, 'The Straw Woman', where it was used as the house of Liz Francis, the local school teacher. Liz restarts the old tradition of burning a straw woman in the village, unfortunately failing to notice that the curate has been stuffed inside. While investigating the ritual further, Liz goes to the church, where she spontaneously combusts ...

But this was not Sally's only place of residence. She spent some of her time at the Trout Inn, Lechlade, Gloucestershire. The inn, which adjoins the River Thames, dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century when it was an almshouse for local workers, before becoming part of the Augustinian Lechlade Priory. It became an inn, 'Ye Sygne of St John Baptist Head', in 1472 on the dissolution of the priory. Its present name goes back to 1704. The building was enlarged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Sally was in residence when she died, on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1936, of a heart attack and intestinal obstruction. Her estate was valued at £23,347 – around £1,500,000 today.



The Trout Inn, Lechlade, Gloucestershire.

\* \* \* \* \*

Four letters are to Elgar are preserved at the Birthplace: about the publication of *It isnae me*, and about a possible setting of another poem, 'The Mackintosh's Lament'.

Dec: 15. 1930.

Dear Sir Edward,

Many thanks for your letter, and also for very kindly correcting the proof. I am so sorry about the sciatica — my father used to suffer from it a great deal, and declares that Droitwich cured him after Buxton and Harrogate had failed! But I do hope yours will "go away by itself", so to speak.

Thank you for your encouragement concerning the novel --- dozens of publishers are fated to be plagued by it before I give up hope!

With kind regards, and again thanking you –

Yours sincerely,  
Sally Holmes<sup>3</sup>

Dec: 29. 1930.

Dear Sir Edward,

Thank you very much for your letter and Xmas card – I am so sorry if I have kept you waiting for a reply, but I have been away and only returned last night. Concerning the song, I would prefer just "Sally Holmes" --- it is very good of you to have troubled about this, and thank you so much.

With the best of wishes for 1931 --

Yours sincerely,  
Sally Holmes

3 EBM letter 1248.

P.S.

I am just writing to my brother about the pipe music I told you of – he has been very ill, so I could not do it before.

S.H.<sup>4</sup>

Jan: 4, 1931.

Dear Sir Edward,

Thank you very much for your letter, but I am so sorry you troubled to write – it really doesn't matter in the least about "S.H." instead of "Sally Holmes", please don't bother to have it altered.

I am quite sure the song will be a success; my confidence is based entirely on its setting!

With kind regards –

Yours sincerely,  
Sally Holmes<sup>5</sup>

March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1931.

Dear Sir Edward,

I have at last succeeded in securing a copy of "The Mackintosh's Lament", which I enclose. I don't know, of course, if it is suitable for any instrument other than the pipes, but – of its kind – I think it is one of the loveliest and most haunting things I have heard. As you will see, it has survived since the early XVI<sup>th</sup> century, but it is doomed to die before the end of this present one; it is already almost entirely forgotten, and I do feel that it deserves to live.

I don't know how it has come to be called "The Mackintosh's" lament – in the Outer Hebrides, I have always been told that it was sung by one of nether McNeill's widows, as she walked behind her husband's coffin out of Castle Bay, Barra. I have never heard the name of Mackintosh mentioned in the Isles.

With kind regards –

Your's [*sic*] sincerely,  
Sally Holmes<sup>6</sup>

*Acknowledgements: My thanks are due to Grace Jean Macalister and Jane Adamson, Sally's niece and great-niece, for permission to publish the letters from Sally Holmes to Elgar.*

4 EBM letter 1247.

5 EBM letter 1230.

6 EBM letter 1229.

## MUSIC REVIEWS

**Elgar: accompanied part songs – *Spanish Serenade, The Snow, Fly, Singing Bird, A Christmas Greeting, The Birthright, Queen Alexandra's Memorial Ode; Pageant of Empire*; arrangements – Weber: 'Oh 'tis a glorious night' (*Oberon*); Ascher: 'Alice, where art thou?'; White: 'Absent yet Present'; Dolby: 'Out on the Rocks'; Tosti: 'For ever and for ever'**

Elgar Complete Edition Vol. 2b, edited by Donald Hunt (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2016)



ISBN  
978-1-904856-44-3

316 pp. + xxvi.

A year ago I described the 'Short Orchestral Works' as, for me, 'one of the more eagerly anticipated volumes of the Complete Edition'. Now comes another, equally anticipated, the accompanied part songs, which threatened to be an even larger (and heavier) volume than the orchestral pieces, and which sensibly has been divided into two parts. The publication of Vol.2a, *From the Bavarian Highlands*, should be imminent by the time you read this. In the meantime Vol.2b is available – on its own no lightweight – which can best be described as containing 'everything else'.

I came to this volume with three hats: the first as a conductor who has performed some of the accompanied part songs more often than I have any other work of Elgar's; the second as an avid listener eager to see for the first time in print music that I'd previously known only on CD; and thirdly to explore (polite word for hack through at the piano) the various arrangements and fragments that conclude the volume.

The first three part songs mentioned above each exist in three different versions penned by Elgar and, quite rightly, each version is included here. Sod's Law, of course, ensured that it was the first of these, *Spanish Serenade*, that has sufficient discrepancies and contradictions between the editor Donald Hunt, the author of the initial note on 'Sources and Commentary' (who does not appear to have been Donald), Novello, and Elgar himself, for me to be wary as a conductor about accepting ECE's musical text as completely representative of Elgar's true intentions.

*Spanish Serenade* was composed in 1892 as a short work for SATB chorus and orchestra, and published that year by Novello in vocal score with Elgar's own piano accompaniment. In June 1892 Elgar had sent Novello the full orchestral score 'which I trust you will print'. Novello noted on his letter 'will retain full score' and didn't print either it or the parts for another twelve years, when it formed part of Novello's project to print, in Jaeger's words, 'The Complete works of The Master ... they have undertaken to Engrave 1000 pages of Elgar Score in 4 weeks!' During the intervening period the orchestral version seems to have been performed on just three occasions – by the Herefordshire Philharmonic Society in 1893, the Worcester Festival



Choral Society in 1895, and, remarkably, by Thomas Beecham and the St. Helens Choral and Orchestral Societies on 8 November 1899 (a review of Beecham's performance is preserved in a press cutting album at the Birthplace). Finally, in 1912, Novello published a new arrangement by Elgar for two-part female voices and piano.

My doubts and confusion as to the faithfulness of the musical text to Elgar's intentions stem from the 1912 arrangement. As Donald points out, 'there are some rhythmic changes to the vocal line from the SATB version [and to the notes themselves] and some significant differences in dynamic and technical markings'. As these changes to rhythm and notes are not only inconsistent between occurrences of similar passages but appear weaker than the originals they replace, there must be a chance at the very least that they are Novello's errors rather than Elgar's changes. No autograph manuscript survives against which to check, so I would have hoped (and expected) that these differences would have been noted in detail in the ECE edition rather than commented upon in general. (Looking back at my score I see that 30 years ago it seemed so obvious that they were Novello errors that I applied a layer of Snopake and corrected them.) Seeking clarification elsewhere I turned to the overall commentary, and found 'in contrast, differences in the vocal staves of the SATB arrangements of *Spanish Serenade* with orchestral and piano accompaniment must be assumed to be engraver errors not picked up by Elgar since, in the absence of another version, that for SATB with piano accompaniment must serve as the vocal score for performances with orchestra accompaniment'. Having been thrown initially by the reference here to 'SATB arrangements' (plural) where in fact there is only one original and one arrangement, I then thought there must be differences in the vocal lines between the orchestral and piano versions. Having been through them three times I must say I can't see any, and Donald's commentary states only that 'there are some slight differences from the published orchestral score, those of sufficient note [not necessarily the word I would have chosen in this situation!] are published in the commentary'.

OK, so it's not the end of the world, but I would have hoped that a possible discrepancy that leapt out of the page when I first came to conduct the piece all those years ago, and on which I thought it necessary to make a decision as a conductor as to Elgar's intentions, would have been presented in such a way in an 'Urtext' edition that would have enabled me to make an easier, or at least more considered, decision, rather than leaving me even more confused.

I would make one further comment on the presentation of the *Spanish Serenade* from a conductor's point of view. The music of a section of seventeen bars nears the beginning is repeated (but with different words). Elgar saved himself some labour by writing repeat marks in his autograph: Novello invariably printed it as a continuous whole. As a performer the last things you need is to turn back to find a repeat (and as a conductor that last thing you need is the rustle of 100 vocal scores in a *pianissimo* passage). All ECE versions are printed with Elgar's labour-saving device – should the piano editions be published separately please may they be printed with the repeat written out *à la* Novello?

That said, the clarity and general look of the scores is a joy to behold: an amazing improvement on the Novello originals. As ever, Paul Rooke is to be congratulated on the sheer beauty of the production – these things don't happen by accident, especially when dealing with Sibelius software!

For the other part songs I have nothing but praise. It's especially pleasing to see the orchestrations of *The Snow* and *Fly, singing bird* for the first time. It's amazing what you hear when listening with the eye as well as the ear. For example, I have two Charles Groves recordings of *The Snow*. I now realise that the BBC Classics performance with BBC Scottish forces includes an organ, while the more familiar EMI one, with RLPO forces, employs Elgar's alternative cues for use when no organ is available. I find it intriguing, too, that when Elgar has, in Donald Hunt's words, 'reverted to the

smaller scale orchestra that he had favoured for *Spanish Serenade*', his inner ear should insist that *The Snow*'s orchestration needed an organ, never more than *mf*, even at the climax. At this point, incidentally, a solo 'cello plays the tune at the same pitch as the massed violins – a touch added presumably as much for the joy of the player as for anything else. It's a minor shame that proof reading hasn't noticed that the organ is missing from the list of instruments.

*A Christmas Greeting* was written for the Hereford Cathedral trebles for their 1907 Carol Concert, and is a collaboration between Edward and Alice. The Birthplace archive contains an earnest 'thank-you' letter from the head choirboy: 'Dear Sir Edward and Lady Elgar, We all feel very grateful indeed for thinking of us in such a generous manner. Mr. Carrodus and his son have kindly offered to play the beautiful movement for two violins, so we feel sure that it will be a fine performance. You will be glad to hear that the sale of tickets is good, as people are very anxious to hear your new composition ...'. Elgar includes optional tenor and bass parts for the lay clerks: an alternate Novello edition in their series of 'Two-Part Songs For Female Voices' left out the optional gents' parts by the simple expedient of scrubbing them off the original plates – both editions are otherwise identical and occupy the same number of pages. In these circumstances (a Novello marketing ploy) I'm not entirely sure why ECE includes both versions, especially as the 'gent-less' version leaves an large amount of blank space on the printed page.

We come next to *The Birthright*, of which it might be said '... and I wonder what he did *after* breakfast?'. This stirring snippet, a 'Marching Song for Boys, for Unison Singing with Accompaniment for Bugles and Drums', to give it its full title, was published in 1914 by Novello, who also issued an arrangement for SATB. I couldn't recall ever hearing it, but then I discovered that it had been recorded by Barry Collett (who else!). Listening to it, I was puzzled by the fact that Barry's buglers and drummers were playing slightly different parts to those that I had in front of me. A quick email produced a scan of Barry's copy which revealed that Novello hadn't bothered to print Elgar's bugle and drum parts, preferring to give only a few hints and leave the rest to the conductor's imagination. (On checking the commentary it would seem that it was Elgar who hadn't bothered to send his bugle and drum parts to Novello.) I must say that Elgar's and Barry's imaginations coincide remarkably ...

So it is thanks to the Elgar Complete Edition that a complete and correct version of *The Birthright* is available more than a century after it was written. The whole affair seems remarkably cavalier on the part of Elgar and Novello and, for once, I would have welcomed a little more intervention on the part of the editor. Elgar writes his bugle parts in 12/8 time, everything else in 4/4, and then proceeds to drift between the two. The right hand of the piano part for example, starts in a 12/8 rhythm, though marked in 4/4, yet doesn't contain the necessary 'triplet brackets' to make the presentation grammatically, as opposed to musically, correct. By contrast, the bugle parts, in 12/8, have unnecessary triplet brackets on three occasions out of four. To add to the confusion, the bugle cues in the piano part are given in duple time, producing a rhythm that conflicts with the triple time of the bugles themselves. And I still can't work out why the bugle and drum parts have been printed in small notes. These are normally used to indicate cues, and occasionally in the ECE to indicate passages (for example, in *Mina*) where the orchestration was completed by another hand, but in this instance everything appears to be genuine Elgar.

One thing in Novello's favour: all five verses of George Stocks's poem are printed alongside the music, which would enable you, if you were a glutton for punishment, to sing the song complete. In ECE verses 3-5 are printed only as part of the Sources and Commentary.

The final accompanied part song, *Queen Alexandra's Memorial Ode*, was, Donald Hunt tells us, was 'originally designed with orchestral accompaniment, a change of plan necessitated a hurried

arrangement for military band, which was entrusted to Captain Harris of the Welsh Guards'. Harris's appointment had been approved, somewhat grudgingly, in 1916 – a letter from the King's then Private Secretary, Lord Stamfordham, to Lord Harlech says: 'The King approves of Mr. Andrew Harris being appointed Bandmaster of the Welsh Guards, but His Majesty thinks it is a pity that this post has not been given to a Welshman'.

His arrangement is now lost, as is the orchestral material. The piece has been orchestrated, most skilfully and effectively, by Anthony Payne, and a comparison of its recording by David Lloyd-Jones and BBC forces with that by Barry Collett 'at the piano' with his Rutland singers shows just how sparse the music sounds in the bare bones of a vocal score. But within the remit of the Complete Edition, the vocal score is all that can be published here, and for the first time, as despite a considerable amount of correspondence with his publisher, it was never issued by Keith Prowse, although the firm was asked to provide copies for the choir. No printed copy is listed among the sources available to the editor.

But was there ever an orchestral version? Sir Clive Wigram, Private Secretary to King George V, wrote to Elgar on 14 May 1932, saying: 'I am sending you a copy of Masefield's poem with which the King and Queen are charmed; they think it most appropriate and are sure you will write an equally beautiful tune. As I mentioned on the telephone, the Welsh Guards ordinary Military Brass Band and a Choir will be in attendance.' Five days later Elgar wrote to Lancelot Percival, Precentor of His Majesty's Chapels Royal, to say: 'I have Masefield's poem & hope to have the M.S. ready on Monday [23 May] & shall advise you if I can bring it up. I am asking my publishers to furnish copies, & have asked them to write to you as to the size of the choir.' On the 24<sup>th</sup> Elgar wrote to Fred Gaisberg from the Langham Hotel: 'I have written a (4½ mins) ODE for the unveiling of the meml. to Q. Alexandra at St. James's Palace on June 8<sup>th</sup>:- choir & Military Band'.

It would appear from this that what he brought with him to London was the rough short score to be handed over to Captain Harris for him to arrange for military band, and that the only other manuscript to exist was the one later requested by the King's Assistant Private Secretary, Frank Mitchell, who wrote on 10 June: 'The King, as you know, greatly admired your musical setting of Mr. Masefield's Ode in Memory of Queen Alexandra. His Majesty would greatly appreciate receiving from you the original score of music, signed by yourself so that the work of the Master of the King's Musick may be preserved in the records at Windsor Castle together with the original Ode by the Poet Laureate.' It is that fair copy that forms the basis of the present edition.

We come now to Elgar's music for the *Pageant of Empire*, a series of tableaux, with words and music, depicting the countries of the British Empire, that was performed at Wembley Stadium over successive evenings during July and August 1924 as an adjunct to the British Empire Exhibition which had opened in April. Walter Creighton, a civil servant and one-time violin pupil of Elgar, had been encouraged by Frank Schuster to contact the composer, and wrote on 7 January: 'Might I come and see you? I would only take a minute of your time and explain the outline of the Pageant ... Rudyard Kipling is writing for us and we feel it unthinkable if we don't have your help as well. What we want is a March of Empire from you which will be the Leit Motive going through the three days programme'. They met, and it quickly became apparent that Elgar's involvement would extend beyond the March, as he wrote to Windflower on the 10<sup>th</sup>, saying: 'Since my return I have been trying to help this Wembley affair – an awful muddle – & I have had no moment. I have "composed"! five things this week – one about "Shakespeare" you will love when I shew it you – slight & silly'. Over the next month he worked on the *Empire March*, destined for, though not performed at, the opening of the Exhibition on 23 April, and eventually produced eight vocal items for the *Pageant*. In June he told Schuster 'I have been so overwhelmed with this silly Wembley

business that I have not put pen to paper save to walk crotchets'; and then the British summer caused preparations for the spectacle itself to be delayed, and the opening postponed. Elgar's songs, to words by Alfred Noyes, seem to have survived the first week before being quietly dropped.

Eager to cash in on the commercial opportunities offered by the British Empire Exhibition and the Pageant within, Elgar's publisher, Enoch & Son, issued both the songs and the *Empire March*, and it is the songs that are gathered together here. An orchestra of more than 100 was employed at Wembley, 'specially selected from the London Symphony, Royal Albert Hall and Covent Garden Theatre' orchestras. Two of the songs survive in contemporary orchestrations, believed to be by Elgar, and it is in these that one gets a glimpse of the grandeur that had been planned. 'The Immortal Legions', in particular, strikes me as first-rate Elgar and has something of the feeling of the Funeral March from the incidental music to *Grania and Diarmid*. Elgar's contribution to both Exhibition and Pageant has been largely ignored until recent years, and even now when setting out to listen to the music on CD with the new score I had to play tracks from three CDs (four if you include the *Empire March*) in order to hear it complete. Three hearty cheers for the Complete Edition for allowing me to study and appreciate the *Pageant of Empire* rather than ignore it.

Finally we came to the various arrangements and fragments. Of the fragments the sketches for settings of poems by Philip Marston I find the most tantalising: oh that Elgar had completed them. Another, *Bicycling solus*, is a jape in the form of a recitative and four-part Canon jotted down in a *Kelly's Directory* on a wet Sunday in June 1902 when Troyte Griffith biked over for lunch. Elgar wrote to Jaeger that day: 'Had 50 miles ride yesterday amongst the Avon country – Shakespeare & c. Oh! so lovely but solus 'cos I can't find anybody here foolheaded enough to eat bread & cheese & drink beer – they've all got livers & apparently live in the country 'cos they can't afford to be swells in a town. Oh! lor.' He wrote, too, to Dorabella: 'I have had my tyres 'going-on-into-their-3<sup>rd</sup>-season'; 1300 miles. Ought I to buy new ones or will these last without busting for a few months? P.S. I rode 50 miles (who with?) yesterday without a curse-book out all day. Lovely but lonely. (I was solus.)' The recitative is adapted from the 'Demons' Chorus – the following day Elgar went to a Worcester rehearsal of *Gerontius* for the forthcoming Three Choirs Festival.

The arrangements of the works of other composers all date from Elgar's 20s, when it was handy for Worcester folk to have someone around who could arrange a song for the musicians who happened to be available on a particular night, or could add an obbligato 'cello part to a drawing-room ballad. Thus on a Glee Club evening at the Bell Hotel in 1876 one reads that 'Mr. J.D. Price sang [John Parry's] "The Flying Dutchman", to which a band accompaniment had been arranged by Mr. E.W. Elgar, and, in response to the hearty applause which followed, Mr. Price gave "Jack's Yarn" in an equally creditable style' – James Dart Price being a lay clerk at the Cathedral, also playing the 'cello that evening (which left his fellow lay clerk Henry Brookes to play the double bass), while a trio of Elgars took up violins and harmonium. The arrangements published here are no better or worse than any decent musician could knock out at a moment's notice, but, to misquote the advertisement, 'these are not just arrangements, these are pan-shaken ready-to-roast extra-crispy King Edward arrangements'.

Martin Bird

## BOOK REVIEWS



West Midlands  
Branch, 2016

48 pp

### Michael Trott (editor): *A.T. Shaw on Elgar*

Members will have read in the August *News* of this little booklet, sold in aid of the Society, containing some of the writings Albert ('Bertie') Thompson Shaw (the Society's Chairman until 1976) on Elgar and his music.

The latter part of the book comprises Shaw's programme notes for the majority of Elgar's major works, and it is good to have them gathered together in a publication such as this. But for me the most valuable things are the articles containing personal memories of Elgar by Shaw and others, and a 1979 article for the *Malvern Gazette* on 'The Rise and Fall of the Post-war Elgar Festivals' in Malvern, in which Shaw played an active part.

The festivals were an artistic if not a commercial success and, said Shaw, in 1950 'we lost a good deal of money and had to make a heavy call on our guarantors'. Readers may be interested in Carice's view of the festival, and of Shaw, expressed in a letter to 'Dorabella' of November 1950, and unearthed in the library of the Royal College of Music by that indefatigable researcher, Kevin Allen.

It seems awful that the guarantors should be called on to such an extent. I wasn't one because I feel it's not exactly the thing to sort of guarantee your own Father's music! ... I kept well out at first. ATS is strictly *entre nous* something of a mountebank! He had an orchestra here which died of inanition ... & I could not help feeling he did this Festival (I am sure he had some good motives as well) to sort of bring himself into the lime light ... I may be wrong but that's my feeling.

I can't help feeling that Carice was indeed wrong. The Elgar Society and Elgarians in general owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Shaw, and it is good that such a book as this exists to perpetuate his memory. It is available at Elgar Society events, or by post from the West Midlands Branch Secretary. Full details were given on page 42 of the August *News*.

Martin Bird

### Gabrielle Hille-Coates: *John Coates (1865-1941)*

Andrew Neill kindly drew my attention to this short memoir of one of Elgar's favourite exponents of the role of Gerontius; John Coates, 'the "arch-chanter" John', as the composer delighted in calling him. Its author and publisher, Gabrielle Hille-Coates, is the wife of Coates's grandson, also called John (continuing the family tradition 'that the names Richard and John should alternate among the first-born sons from generation to generation'). I contacted her immediately and bought a copy.



Göttingen: Gabrielle  
Hille-Coates, 2016

66 pp + CD

The text is relatively brief: chapters outlining Coates's early years, his career in musicals and opera, in oratorio, and during and after the Great War. But the glory of this book lies in its copious illustrations, all of them in colour, and its appendices of articles, reviews, obituaries, programmes and letters.

From the family archive there are family photographs, photographs of Coates in many of his operatic roles, and of such treasured items as the book by P.H. Ditchfield, *English Gothic Architecture*, given to him by Elgar in May 1907 which contains the highlighted passage '... and from Rome [Benedict Biscop] brought vast stores of church furniture, many books, and the "arch-chanter" John, to teach his monks the music and ritual of Rome'.

The appendices include facsimiles of letters from Coates to the wine merchant and timpanist Henry Ettling (Elgar's 'Uncle Klingsor') unearthed from, of all unlikely places, the Staatsbibliothek Berlin, and including this from January 1903:

I am going up to Edinburgh tomorrow to sing "Gerontius". Elgar sent me such a nice letter for the new year & enclosed part of the original sketch of Gerontius, which of course I value immensely. What a genius he is! I feel very proud to be so identified with the interpretation of his glorious music.

The performance, by the Edinburgh Choral Union and Scottish Orchestra conducted by Thomas Collinson. *The Scotsman* declared:

Mr John Coates, who was heard in "The Messiah" on New Year's Day, greatly enhanced his reputation as a tenor vocalist by the thoroughly satisfactory manner in which he sang the Gerontius music. His voice, which is a light tenor of fine quality; was well suited to the music, his articulation was clear, and he sang throughout with much expression and fine devotional feeling.



Elgar's New Year greetings included 'a scrap out of sketch book' with the hope that 'perhaps you may stick it in your copy of Gerontius as a memory of yours most sincerely Edward Elgar'.

Coates started his career as a baritone with the Carl Rosa Opera Company; experience that came in handy at Hans Richter's performance of *Gerontius* in Manchester in November 1909 when, owing to the 'non-arrival of Mr. Robert Radford ... Mr. John Coates, at five minutes' notice and as the result of considerable pressure, sang the bass music of the Priest well as the tenor music of Gerontius ... he acquitted himself with great distinction, in spite of the physical strain put on him'.

The book also includes a CD (sadly not divided into separate tracks) containing songs by Elgar and others recorded mostly in the 1920s when Coates, although now in his 60s, was still in splendid voice. The world of historical recordings should be crying out for a CD encompassing the full

range of Coates's considerable talent. The website of CHARM, the Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music, shows that his recorded legacy includes arias from *Lohengrin*, *Carmen*, *Aida* and *La Gioconda*, as well as the splendidly titled 'Sadly groaning Verdi' from that composer's Requiem, recorded in 1910. I see from my early Ricordi vocal score with an English translation by Charles Kenney that this comes from the 'Dies Irae', which also includes the chorus 'Hark the trumpet sounds appalling' that comes – you guessed it – immediately after the passage for on- and off-stage trumpets ...

This delightful book is crammed full of unexpected treasures, and I recommend it unreservedly. It is obtainable from the author, who may be contacted by email at [g.hille@web.de](mailto:g.hille@web.de).

Martin Bird

## CD REVIEWS

**Croft: 'O God our help in ages past'**

**Elgar: *The Banner of St. George* (excerpt), Cello Concerto, *Caractacus* (excerpts), *Cockaigne*, *Dream Children No. 1*, 'Enigma' Variations (excerpts), *The Kingdom* (prelude), *May Song*, *Mazurka*, *Rosemary*, *Serenade Lyrique*, *The Severn Suite* (extract), *Symphony No. 1*, *Symphony No. 2* (extract), *Violin Concerto* (extracts), *Wand of Youth* (excerpts)**

**Elgar (arr.): National Anthem**

Beatrice Harrison ('cello); Yehudi Menuhin (violin); Princess Victoria (piano); Philharmonic Choir; various orchestras conducted by Sir Edward Elgar



Somm

SOMMCD 261-4

This four CD set is entitled 'Elgar Remastered by Lani Spahr'. That title signals the fact that, once again, Elgarians are in Lani's debt for revealing in all its considerable glory another part of Elgar's recorded legacy, much of it previously unissued.

In the *Journal* of December 2011 I reviewed Lani's restorations of the complete Elgar acoustic 78s (Music & Arts CD-1257), saying that 'while working on the purely physical attributes, Lani Spahr had discovered a previously unheard and unsuspected emotional side to the performances [which] was quite astonishing ... The whole enterprise is a total success, and truly one beyond our wildest dreams. These always were historic documents – now they are much more than that'. I ended by saying that 'Elgarians also owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Arthur Reynolds, who has lent all the records for this set, which are from Elgar's personal collection'.

Arthur also had in his collection a considerable number of Elgar's records, including test pressings and alternate takes, from the era of the microphone rather than the recording horn, and when Lani had completed the acoustic recordings he asked if he could digitise the electric recordings for archival purposes. It is these that have formed the basis of Somm's set.

The glory of Lani's earlier achievement was that he had taken acoustic recordings that had long been available on LP and CD and produced a remastering of such technical excellence and superiority that somehow the emotional side of Elgar's performances was revealed for the first time.

The situation with Elgar's electrical recordings is rather different. By the very nature of the electronic recording process the sound was more than acceptable from the start, and EMI had produced boxed sets in the LP era remastered by Anthony Griffith, and in the CD era remastered by Andrew Walter and others that revealed to the full Elgar's mastery as a performer of his own music.

Furthermore, working 'in-house', Griffith and Walter in many cases had access to the original 78 rpm 'shells' from which pristine vinyl pressings

could be made, whereas Lani had no option but to work with the material Elgar had left him. Alan Webb, curator of the Birthplace from 1966 to 1972, recalled a visit to Marl Bank in January 1931.

I was scandalised by his treatment of records. There they were, piled on top of one another, without their envelopes. He grabbed them as though they were cheap crockery, and when he wanted to hear a favourite passage again he just jabbed the pick-up down until he found it!

Damage to the test pressings is confirmed by Andrew Walter, who wrote in his essay 'From 78 to CD' in the booklet accompanying EMI's digital reissues:

... with the *Banner of St George* Epilogue I was confined ... to using Elgar's own test pressings. As is evident from the CD, Elgar's gramophone stylus has clearly damaged the records, leaving the loud choral tutti passages badly 'grooved out' so that the signal at times breaks up and distorts.

Hardly, then, a level playing field! So what of the results? EMI's sound is smoother, with scarcely a hiss or crackle. Lani's restorations can have a glassy edge to the sound, but with the compensation of more immediacy and presence. With such a variety of recordings it is almost impossible to generalise, but whichever restoration one listens to, those magical instruments, the human ear and brain, far more sensitive to circumstances than any computer programme, make the necessary adjustments within seconds, so that listening to either version is both a pleasurable and a musical experience.

\* \* \* \* \*

If that were all there was to this new set, there would scarcely be a case for acquiring it if one already had the EMI restorations. But of course there is far more to it than that: more than enough positives, in fact, to make this set essential listening for all Elgar enthusiasts.

The first positive comes from the claim – emblazoned no fewer than four times on the outside of the box – that the set offers 'STEREO reconstructions' of some performances, compiled from the simultaneous takes that were cut of each of each side during recording. It should be remembered, though, that EMI's booklet includes, in addition to Walter's essay, one by Anthony Griffith, 'The 78 Era', in which he declares that this would be an impossibility, as the two cutters would have been fed ...

... from the same mixer and microphone set-up ... to produce true stereo you must have two spaced microphone set-ups each feeding a separate mixer and cutting machine. There would have been no purpose in doing Elgar's recordings in this way. Quite the contrary: when safety-alternatives were made, the resulting pairs of sides had to be absolutely interchangeable.

To be fair to Lani, he is rather more circumspect in his comprehensive and most interesting essay in the accompanying booklet, which commences:

What exactly do we have here? This is a question I suppose will be answered differently by each person who listens to these recordings. Stereo? Accidental stereo? Binaural? Out of phase mono?

But did HMV's engineers always work in the way Griffith describes? I suspect not. The facilities of the new Abbey Road studios, where some of these recordings were made, were described in the January 1932 issue of HMV's magazine, *The Voice*.

A separate recording room is built adjacent to each studio. Each of these has two complete recording outfits, so that duplicate waxes can be made of every performance – one of them for playing back, the other to be worked into a "master". The three studios are equipped for the use of six microphones, each with a separate control ...

The recordings of *Cockaigne* and the Prelude to *The Kingdom* were made at Abbey Road on the afternoon of 11 April 1931. What is not in dispute is that two waxes were cut on separate machines as each take was recorded. This back-up meant that any mechanical fault with the equipment would not result in a wasted take. What is in dispute is whether or not the engineers in this instance enhanced the degree of technical back-up available by using two separate sets of microphones. Griffith firmly dismisses this possibility, as in his view it would have been essential to feed each cutter with the same signal to produce 'absolutely interchangeable' sides. It is too late to ask those involved at the sessions and, as yet, no contemporary documentary evidence has been found that answers the question one way or another. So we are left to decide on the evidence of our ears and of logic.

Logic first: as a Computer Operations Manager for many years my mantra was always 'don't trust the hardware and never trust the software'. To have two cutters both fed from the same microphones provides at best a limited back-up. Equipment failure of any one microphone or in the cabling between microphone and cutter means that all you end up with is two duff waxes rather than one. A 'belt and braces' approach would be to duplicate all links in the chain if at all possible, and by HMV's own publicity the Abbey Road studio, 'equipped for the use of six microphones, each with a separate control', catered for that option. It can only be logical that on some occasions a recording engineer availed himself of the opportunity of ensuring that the failure of a single piece of hardware would not ruin his efforts.

Now listen to *Cockaigne* and *The Kingdom*. In each case the back-up copy survives only for the latter portion. As you reach the point where it has been possible for Lani to combine the master and back-up copies of each take something quite magical happens, and the whole sound stage opens up before us. Suddenly we have a seat in the recording studio: admittedly not the best seat in the house, but far better than listening from outside the door

with an ear pressed to the keyhole. I for one don't really care whether the result is 'Stereo, Accidental stereo, Binaural or Out of phase mono'. It's a truly marvellous experience, and one that continues throughout the disc as, time after time, one can place the various sections of the orchestra in relation to one another. Once again I can only congratulate Lani for enabling me to experience familiar performances in a new light.

In addition to *Cockaigne* and *The Kingdom*, we have 'stereo' performances of the Cello Concerto, *Rosemary*, the 'Mazurka' from *Three Characteristic Pieces*, *May Song*, *Serenade Lyrique*, the 'March' from the second *Wand of Youth Suite*, and the hymn 'O God our help in ages past', which last must rank among the most dire performances of anything ever recorded – how could so many intelligent musicians combine to produce a performance so leaden and unmusical, even if the actual sound is superb?

\* \* \* \* \*

The remaining three discs are made up of various surviving alternate takes including, to quote the cover once more, 'NEW PERFORMANCES of the Cello Concerto & Symphony No.1'.

This is mildly misleading. The second disc, which is devoted entirely to the Cello Concerto, contains three 'new' performances, compiled from unissued alternate takes – two of the last three movements of the concerto, and one of the first three. These are interspersed with a couple of left over sides from the second movement, the complete acoustic recording and, a delightful oddity, the slow movement played by Beatrice Harrison and HRH Princess Victoria.

Beatrice Harrison had written to Elgar in May 1923, saying:

I am giving a concert at Queen's Hall early in July either on the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> at 8.30 p.m. & I do so want to play your glorious Concerto. Princess Victoria has asked me to ask you if you will conduct it, she has asked specially for the Concerto, & it will be wonderful if you will conduct it – I think the King & Queen are going, & hope to have a full house. The Concert is being given for Great Ormond St. Hospital for Children. I shall be so grateful if you will conduct the Concerto for me. Goossens is conducting the rest of the programme.

Elgar duly obliged.

The Princess's performance with Beatrice is rather enjoyable. She remains tactfully discreet whenever the soloist is playing, coming out royally only in the solitary bar that she has to herself. A rather endearing habit is to arpeggiate almost every chord – a most useful device when wishing to appear to be as one with a soloist.

As for the various 1928 recordings with Elgar as conductor, they are particularly fascinating as there are so many, and they are spread over sessions in March and June 1928. The March session seemed to be plagued with difficulties (even with a comprehensive back-up system in operation): the various rejected takes bear such comments as 'Foreign record noise',

'Buzz on end lines to be dulled if possible'. 'Try transfer. Quiet passage rather too weak ...'. This is very sad, as the solo playing on some of these is, in fact, rather better than on the eventual masters.

The booklet includes an extensive essay by the 'cellist Terry King comparing and contrasting, in minute detail, Beatrice Harrison's 1920 and 1928 performances of the concerto. I suspect this may be summed up as 'different time, different place, different mood', though it's a shame that the subtle, but telling, differences between March and June 1928 are not pointed out.

\* \* \* \* \*

The third disc contains a performance of the First Symphony 'complete with alternative takes'. This consists of seven unpublished takes combined with four published takes, thus giving us a complete performance. The recording was made in the Kingsway Hall, and as only a single cutter was in use, two takes in succession were recorded of each side. In the light of the above discussion about back-ups it is interesting to note that the second take of the first side was rendered useless because of a 'Faulty line' and was destroyed, thus giving HMV no alternative but to publish the first take, and us no opportunity to hear its partner.

As all other takes were declared suitable for publication on technical grounds, it would seem that the choice of takes was made purely on musical ones and, I have to say, in all instances bar one, I agree with the choices made by the HMV selection committee. The unpublished take for the second section of the first movement displays an extra degree of impetus – dash – verve – call it what you will, but what I think of as Elgar the conductor at his most inspired, though on the down side this comes at the expense of the occasional lapse in ensemble. Elsewhere there are disturbing lapses not only in ensemble but in concentration that seem to have caused the unpublished takes to be marked down as second best. So while it is great to be able to hear and compare individual pairs of takes (ironically, a process that would have been far simpler to do with the original 78s than with a pair of CDs) the 'new performance' has to remain a second best when compared with HMV's published issue.

Sadly neither can avoid the sudden and unmarked increase in speed at Fig.118 in the last movement (the start of a new side) where in both takes the players fly off like the proverbial bat out of hell. At Fig.141, the comparable point in the recapitulation (and some way into the last side), decorum and a steady speed prevail.

The disc is completed with one random take from the Second Symphony, three from the 'Enigma' Variations, and four from the Violin Concerto.

With regard to the latter David Bicknell wrote to Elgar on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1932 to say that:

Yehudi Menuhin has already heard the records, and after careful consideration has chosen a Master for each title. We are therefore sending you this afternoon, by passenger train, a set of the Masters which he has chosen. You will have heard how enthusiastic Yehudi is at the successful way in which the Concerto has turned out, and we can only hope that you will be equally satisfied at the reproduction of this magnificent work.

Ivor and Wulstan Atkins were at Marl Bank on 14 August, when 'Elgar played over some test records of the Menuhin concerto sessions and was tremendously enthusiastic about them, as was my father'. But three days later Fred Gaisberg, back from holiday, wrote, saying:

One of the first things of course on coming back was to hear the Concerto in Committee. The result is that the masters selected are quite different from those which we sent you and at the same time considerably better. I am, for that reason, sending you an entirely fresh set of the selected masters and would very much like you to play them over and let me know how they strike you. Here we are all entirely satisfied with the results.

It is tantalising to think that the four alternate takes offered may include some of Menuhin's preferred ones from among the 41 waxes cut at the two sessions. Given the lack of documentary evidence and the possibility (probability?) that some of the Menuhin's chosen masters did not survive Elgar's handling of them, sadly we are deprived of the opportunity of hearing the soloist's preferred performances.

\* \* \* \* \*

The final CD includes unpublished takes of *Caractacus*, *Rosemary*, *Serenade Lyrique*, *The Severn Suite*, the *Wand of Youth*, *The Banner of St. George*, and the National Anthem.

Those interested in further details of the provenance of some of these originals are referred to Jerrold Northrop Moore's masterly book *Elgar on Record*, and to his notes for the Pearl issue of Elgar's performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. One must never forget Dr. Moore's contribution to the preservation of these historic documents.

To sum up: a magnificent set and a truly worthwhile labour of love on the part of Lani Spahr which preserves a vital and living part of our musical history in a way that could scarcely be imagined even a few years ago.

Martin Bird

### **Elgar: Violin Concerto**

### **Haydn: Concerto for violin, piano and strings**

Igor Oistrakh (violin); Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Valentin Zhuk



Melodiya

CD 10 02384

This performance was recorded in the 1980s and released by the Russian Melodiya label in 1989. It has now been re-mastered and released this year. The sound is good without any of the wiriness or stridency that afflicted at times recordings from this source. What impressed me from the first was the playing of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, fully committed and sonorous without any Slavic wobbles from the brass section which sometimes bedevilled Soviet orchestras in the past. The soloist is rather spotlighted in the sound picture, but not annoyingly so, and the orchestral detail is nowhere obscured. But playing of this quality deserves to be spotlighted! Igor Oistrakh, son of the great David, was the first Russian to play and record this work, and his playing is truly remarkable. The technical assurance goes without saying, but the warmth of his tone is an added bonus. The most fearsome difficulties never sound strained, and the intonation never falters. Above all, he and his conductor feel well within Elgarian style, and the complex fluidity of the music sounds completely natural. Listen to the meltingly lovely and hushed playing of the second subject, around Fig.16 in the score, and again from Fig.34 to the end, where this same music returns with full-throated intensity - soloist and orchestra playing their hearts out.

The slow movement is finely managed, intense and soaringly lyrical, with those rich low notes beautifully captured. The Finale's virtuosity holds no terrors for Oistrakh. Strangely there is no sudden cut-off from the headlong rush at Fig.82, a momentary misreading perhaps? But the triple-stopped solo chords at Fig.84 are played dead in time, a feat in itself. The cadenza is finely managed, despite occasionally being too aggressive in the more virtuosic passages. Valentin Zhuk, the conductor, was apparently a virtuoso violinist himself, but he steers a sure and confident course through this complex and elusive work. Overall it is a passionate, emotional performance, which is what the music cries out for, and I enjoyed it enormously. With CDs of this work on my shelves from Germany, Poland, Spain, Kazakhstan and Holland it seems as though this great work has finally taken its rightful place in the international repertoire.

The companion work is Haydn's early Concerto in F for violin, piano and strings. The original soloists were violin and organ, and I must confess that the sound of the modern piano jars on me in this sort of music. I would have preferred a harpsichord. But that caveat aside, this lively performance of a charming work is an agreeable filler for this CD.

Barry Collett



Hyperion

CDA 68101

**Elgar: *In the South*, 'Enigma' Variations, *Carillon*, *Une voix dans le désert*, *Le drapeau belge*, *Pleading***

Florence Daguerra de Hureaux (narrator); Kate Royal (soprano); Yann Ghiro (clarinet); BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Martyn Brabbins

Not so long ago I was talking with a friend about the novels of P.G. Woodhouse and he asked if I had read *The Mating Season*. As he talked he laughed, recollecting the adventures of Bertie Wooster and Gussie Fink-Nottle but I could not recall whether I had read this particular story. On returning home there it was on a top bookshelf. I took it down and, immediately, I was lost in Woodhouse's world and reluctantly returned to reality. What has this to do with this recording, you may well ask. Well, coming to this CD of Elgar's Variations was like taking that book down from its shelf. It is a very long time since I last played a CD of the 'Enigma' Variations, perhaps reflecting how much these are performed nowadays either near to me or as a broadcast. So, like immersing myself in the Woodhouse novel, I was back again in Elgar's world and his glorious portraiture of his friends through the generosity of our distinguished Vice-President, Martyn Brabbins and his Scottish forces.

Despite the inclusion of the 'Enigma' Variations, this is no ordinary CD and is, in fact, a generous and intelligent addition to the Elgar recorded repertoire. At 82 minutes long it is very well filled! *In the South* was recorded over 1,500 miles further north than the Pappano recording and is cleaner and clearer with a performance that has great momentum and life. Furthermore, the musicians of the BBC SSO are more than a match for the Italians. The timpani are balanced superbly and in the loud passages are magnificent. In some performances momentum can sag after the *canto popolare* but not here for we are propelled to the end! This performance is, when necessary, terrifying and tender. It is just brilliant!

So to the Variations. I loved this performance – and performance is the word. It is one of great character and each variation is delineated with clarity and purpose. It is a recording with a wonderful dynamic range exposing Elgar's brilliant orchestration to the scrutiny it deserves. Perhaps the side drum solo (*ppp*) in the 'Romanza' could be a smidgeon louder as could the organ at the end but those are minor cavils. 'Nimrod' is broader than Elgar (but who isn't?) but creates here a subtle contrast to the wonderfully played 'Dorabella' that follows. This variation can, at times, sound perfunctory as it follows in the shoes of 'Nimrod' but not here. It has contrast and colour where needed with superb solo contributions. This, then, is one of the finest recordings of the Variations currently available. Martyn Brabbins brings his great experience to the work and his orchestra is wonderful! There are few more versatile conductors around than Martyn and like Sir Charles Mackerras he seems able to conduct music by any composer and bring something special to the performance. This is what happens here.

Then (for me) comes another great moment on this CD: 'Chantons, Belges, chantons!' I have long felt we should hear these wartime recitations in the

original language and here we have them. The anger, feeling of desecration and the rape of Belgium comes through in *Carillon* with great fervour in the French and, if recited well, these emotions should all come together to help create the impact Cammaerts's verses had at the time. *Carillon* remained popular throughout the war but, we have to acknowledge, would hardly be considered nowadays if Elgar's music was not attached to it. When *Carillon* was first performed it was given by Tita Brand Cammaerts so Florence Daguerra de Hureaux's involvement is entirely in keeping. Carlo Liten was the reciter for the first performances of *Le voix dans le désert* and *Le drapeau belge* and, bearing in mind that we presume the former is recited by a soldier, a female voice is somewhat anachronistic. I am not complaining though for Miss Daguerra de Hureaux's impassioned involvement in the words and sentiments of all three works gives them a sense of urgency which is compelling and all-embracing. You believe her completely as she grips expressions such as 'et de leur entrée triomphale, la-bas a Berlin!' and 'quand la Vengeance nous serait si bonne!'; and that is how those first listeners would have felt and why they yelled their support. In *Le voix dans le désert* Kate Royal's voice is balanced well although I feel she is just a little too sophisticated for the simplicity of the song as the girl in the ruined house longs for the spring.

Finally, and who would have expected the last track? This derives directly from the editing of Elgar's music and its publication in the Complete Edition. *Pleading*, Elgar's setting of Arthur L Salmon's song in 1908 was set, shortly afterwards, as an orchestral version. The conductor David Lloyd-Jones found that, in John Pickard's words, 'Elgar's initial intention ... was to create not an orchestral song but an orchestral miniature.' The intention, it seems, was for the vocal line 'to be taken by anyone of violin, flute, oboe, cornet or (as presented here) clarinet.' Yann Ghiro's clarinet version is a delightful addition to Elgar's recorded repertoire, as is his contribution to the Variations.

A final bonus are the perceptive notes by John Pickard who may have been responsible for bringing the score of *Pleading* to the attention of Martyn Brabbins and the Hyperion production team. This is a disc, therefore, that should be in every Elgarian's collection for the versions of the wartime recitations and this fresh and understanding version of the *In the South* and Variations. Of course it may be 'yet another' recording (and once I would never have dreamed of writing that) but you cannot hear them too often, can you? Brabbins and this magnificent orchestra are a wonderful combination and they give their all here. Now for the same forces to record *The Spirit of England* for, despite everything that has gone on since, it has been recorded north of the border before!

Andrew Neill





ICA Classics

ICAC 5138

### Elgar: Symphony No.1; *In the South*

Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia conducted by Antonio Pappano

I have often wondered why Elgar's music doesn't have a higher profile in Italy. I would have thought that his rich, sumptuous orchestration, let alone the Catholicism of *Gerontius*, would have appealed there. It's odd to think that a section of *In the South* was recorded by Carlo Sabajno and the La Scala Orchestra as early as 1909. Since then Toscanini performed Elgar throughout his life, and more recently Giuseppe Sinopoli was a committed, if controversial, Elgarian. More recently still Riccardo Muti has performed and recorded *In the South* with the orchestra of La Scala, Milan.

Following hard on the heels of Oramo and his Stockholm Orchestra and Barenboim with the Berlin Staatskapelle comes this recording taken from live performances in Rome in 2012 and 2013. Antonio Pappano, like Barbirolli, was born in this country of Italian parents, and noticing that much of this Symphony was written in Rome, has said that he was 'on a mission to bring this music back to its place of birth'. So it was especially good to hear this fine orchestra playing this Symphony for the first time, and it is a worthy performance. But it would not be my first choice for a recording of the piece. Pappano takes a broad conception of the work, sometimes a little too broad for me. There are one or two strange slowings of the tempo, just before Fig.81 in the Scherzo for instance, and at other times I wanted more Boult, or Solti-like, urgency in the performance. He takes 54 minutes 35 seconds overall (Petrenko with the RLPO, Brabbins with the Royal Flemish Orchestra, Solti with the LPO take about 49 minutes). Of course timing isn't everything – Sinopoli takes an indulgent 55 minutes, but manages more intensity of emotion. The recording slightly favours woodwind and brass at the expense of the strings. I wanted to hear more of them in, for example, the airy trio section of the Scherzo. Also the soft percussion at the end of that movement are inaudible, as is the important off-beat timpani strokes at Fig.96.

On the other hand, the Concert Overture *In the South* is terrific! Obviously the heady, sunshine filled exuberance of the work stimulated these Italians – after all, the work is Elgar's tribute to Italy.

The headlong surge which drives the opening of the work is just right, the orchestra revelling in the flamboyance of the orchestral writing. The following 'Romans' section is dramatically realized, with its thudding off-beat bass drum and strident, brazen brass relishing those grinding discords. Later the exquisite 'Canto Popolare' episode is evocative of a warm, moonlit Italian night, as solo viola, later solo horn, sing against a shimmering backdrop of high, *divisi* violins and harp, with a fleck of colour from the glockenspiel.

Despite my niggling criticisms of the Symphony, I would recommend this CD to anyone who is as delighted as I am that these marvellous works are now getting the international recognition that they deserve.

Barry Collett

In 1909, an Italian orchestra put, for the first time, the sounds of *In the South* on disc. Directed by Carlo Sabajno who, for sometime was Toscanini's assistant but a pioneer of recordings for the gramophone, the La Scala Symphony Orchestra crowded around the recording horn in Milan. The work is cut: running only from Fig.51 to the end but, through the mists of the acoustic recording, the 'Italianate' nature of *In the South* works its magic. More recently (1993) Riccardo Muti, conducting the successor to Sabajno's Orchestra the Filarmonica della Scala, coupled *In the South* with his recording of Brahms's Serenade in D major.

It seems natural that Sir Antonio Pappano (a name as Italian as Sabajno and Muti) should couple *In the South* with his first Elgar recording of the A Flat Symphony. Again we should rejoice that a non-British orchestra has recorded this great work and, of course, I find I cannot resist making comparisons with the recent Barenboim recording with his Berlin orchestra. This is different; recorded during three live concerts in Rome in January 2012. Neither the orchestra nor the audience would have been that familiar with the music so it is gratifying to hear the warm reception as the symphony ended. Indeed, the audience seems to have been as quiet as a church mouse during the performances and only the occasional sound of a page turn and the 'hum' between movements gives the 'live' nature of the recording away. This is a tremendous performance and I can recommend it whole-heartedly even if, at times, the orchestra suggests a lack of familiarity with the symphony. This is hardly surprising and, although I will not dwell on the issue, you can feel a slight hesitation say at four bars before Fig.6, for example. In contrast the Berlin orchestra had, by the time they recorded the symphony, played it a number of times in public.

I liked the natural pace of the opening and the beautifully judged *poco rit* before the launch into the *Allegro*. Then the occasional imbalance in the recording becomes obvious: when there is an orchestral *tutti* I found the harps inaudible. However, that might just be my increasingly ancient hearing! But there are wonderful moments: the *poco meno mosso* at Fig.18 and the bars before Fig.31 which are managed superbly by Pappano. He resists the temptation to slow after Fig.38 and the orchestra is splendid during the passage between 45 and 46 and, as the sun emerges at 48. What struck me, particularly, was the underlying restless nature of the movement which comes over strongly in this performance.

Throughout the *Allegro Molto* the woodwind acquitted itself brilliantly with outstanding solo moments. The timpani got lost on occasions in the recording (particularly when played *pp* or quieter). I loved the way Pappano contrasted the slow movements main theme, first played *cantabile* and in its repeat *tranquillo* and I found the tears pricking my eyes as this movement ended, the Italians succeeding superbly here. The mysterious *lento* beginning of the fourth movement is full of atmosphere and anticipation although I could have done with a little more urgency. However, the build towards the end is thrilling even if some of the orchestral definition is lost at the very end.

*In the South* recorded a year later is tremendous. It is full of Italian warmth

with the orchestra revelling in the orchestration and vivid scene painting. The 'Roman' section is really threatening and the 'canto popolare' is played with great understanding, intimacy and sympathy by the viola and horn. It is as if the tune had 'come home' as does the work if the ovation at the end is anything to go by! I prefer this performance to Muti's although the latter benefits from a clearer recording. However, this newcomer is better recorded than the symphony. This is a record I can recommend and every Elgarian should consider adding it to their collection.

\* \* \*

If the Editor decides to publish this review it will be my last under his benign regime. On my book-shelves sit a large number of volumes with the comforting words 'Edited (or Compiled) by Martin Bird' on the spine. These volumes will continue to increase and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Martin for his time as Editor of this distinguished *Journal* and for the work I hope he will continue to perform in the future.

Andrew Neill



Albion Records

ALBCD028

**Vaughan Williams: *Thee Nocturnes, A Road All Paved With Stars, Stricken Peninsula, Four Last Songs***

Jennifer Johnston (mezzo-soprano); Roderick Williams (baritone); BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Martyn Brabbins

**Vaughan Williams: *Eight songs from The Poisoned Kiss, Summum Bonum, Crossing the Bar, Wishes, Spinning Song, Lollipop's Song, Rumpelstiltskin's Song, Linden Lea, The Last Invocation, The Love-song of the Birds, How cold the wind doth blow, Dirge for Fidele, It was a Lover and his Lass, Searching for Lambs, The Lawyer***

Mary Bevan (soprano); Jennifer Johnston (mezzo-soprano); Nicky Spence (tenor); Johnny Herford (baritone); Thomas Gould (violin); William Vann (piano)



Albion Records

ALBCD029

The editor has invited me to comment briefly on these new and contrasting recordings from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, a task that I am more than happy to undertake.

The first disc, entitled 'Discoveries', commences with the *Three Nocturnes for Baritone and Orchestra*, settings of poems by Walt Whitman, and dating from 1908, the period when the composer was studying orchestration with Ravel. The manuscript short score of first and third had been donated to the British Library by Ursula Vaughan Williams, and largely ignored. The second remained undiscovered until 2000, when it turned up, fully orchestrated, among the papers of the baritone Frederic Austin. The orchestration of the first and third has been undertaken by Anthony Payne with all the very

considerable skill that has marked out his Elgar orchestrations.

Payne is also responsible for the orchestration of the *Four Last Songs*, a group composed between 1954 and 1958 which, in his words, 'seems a little bit like a marriage of convenience', rather like Richard Strauss's group of the same title, published posthumously in 1950. All are settings of poems by Ursula Vaughan Williams.

Both the *Nocturnes* and the *Four Last Songs* are examples of Vaughan Williams at his best, and I cannot imagine them better sung than by from Roderick Williams and Jennifer Johnston. It is difficult to believe that fifty years separate the two groups, so characteristic are they of the composer.

*Stricken Peninsula* is an eight-minute orchestral work 'reconstructed by Philip Lane' from the music to a 15 minute film made in 1945 for the Department of Psychological Warfare. The film can be seen online: just Google 'Vaughan Williams Stricken Peninsula'. The score, which in total lasts a little more than ten minutes, is now lost, and has had to be transcribed, à la John Wilson, from the soundtrack by Philip Lane, who has compiled a most enjoyable 'Italian Rhapsody' from its rather impressive themes. These include a march for a short scene featuring an Italian marching band and Mussolini, which provides the rather incongruous sight of Il Duce conducting Vaughan Williams.

The most substantial piece on the disc is *A Road All Paved with Stars*, rather grandly sub-titled 'A Symphony Rhapsody from the Opera The Poisoned Kiss' by its arranger, Adrian Williams, but in truth a compilation of the opera's best bits. It is rather after the fashion of Stokowski's 'Symphonic Syntheses' from Wagner operas, and no singers are required. But again there is some lovely music here.

All the music on this disc is performed by Martyn Brabbins and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and recorded by BBC engineers at Maida Vale. The BBC band in recent years has been playing better than ever, with a silky and voluptuous string sound and perfect blend throughout. Brabbins conducts everything as if he has known the music for years, and his pacing of it is a delight. The engineers do their bit, too, by producing a warm and full sound, with a wide dynamic range.

\* \* \* \* \*

The second disc, entitled 'Purer than Pearl', contains fourteen songs and duets for voices, violin and piano presented in chronological order; six of them first recordings. It is completed with eight songs from *The Poisoned Kiss*, newly arranged by Adrian Williams. I can only agree with the statement in the press release, that this 'is possibly the most beautiful recording Albion has ever made'. Unexpected treasures abound, such as the two folk songs, *Searching for Lambs* and *The Lawyer*, simply but tellingly arranged for voice and violin. Perhaps the most unexpected is *Summum Bonum*, composed in 1891 when Parry had lent Vaughan Williams some Wagner scores, and perhaps best



Idealeaudience

3075528

described as Amy Woodforde-Finden does *Tristan and Isolde*, complete with cribs from the 'Liebestod' in the piano part. But the duet to which I keep returning is the *Dirge for Fidele*, 'Fear no more the heat of the sun', for two sopranos and piano: ravishing and irresistible.

The four singers, jointly and severally, are superb, as are Thomas Gould and William Vann, and the recording, made in Potton Hall, Suffolk, is all that one could wish.

Is there no end to the riches of Vaughan Williams' legacy to be revealed by Albion? I hope not, but these CDs must rank as perhaps the finest to date in a very fine series. Highly recommended.

Richard Wiley

## LETTERS

### *Orchestrations of Elgar*

*The CD of Donald Fraser's orchestrations of the Piano Quintet and Sea Pictures reviewed in the August issue has certainly divided opinion as to the merits and wisdom of such arrangements, and there's no middle ground. Emails started to arrive within hours of the Post Office delivering the Journal, and these alternative views add spice to the Letters pages.*

### *From Ben Palmer*

After reading Richard Westwood-Brookes's abominable review of the CD of Donald Fraser's fine orchestrations of the Piano Quintet and *Sea Pictures* (Vol.19, No.5), I have cancelled my subscription to the Society.

It has been clear to me that the Society's position on arrangements is inherently negative, as in 2014 when I made a CD of David Matthews's transcription of the String Quartet with my Orchestra of St Paul's, I was told that only recordings of original works would be offered financial support. This is of course a perfectly legitimate point of view, though, in my opinion, a misguided and narrow-minded one. There was a review in the *Journal* by Roger Neighbour (Vol.19, No.2, August 2015), which was very generous about the orchestra, but fairly scathing about the arrangement: 'But why pick on Elgar, whose only quartet is clearly the gift of an accomplished chamber musician to other chamber musicians?' I was resigned to the fact that this might be the reaction from within the Society, but was gratified the disc received universally positive reviews elsewhere.

However, Mr. Westwood-Brookes's vitriolic and disdainful review is, in my opinion, unworthy of publication in a journal of this standing. Whatever one's opinion of the arrangements, to dismiss the whole disc as 'dreadful' is an appalling insult to the musicians heard on the CD, whose accomplished playing, singing and conducting is not mentioned, even in passing.

The wonderful thing about music is that it's pretty robust. Tomorrow I could record the *St. Matthew Passion* arranged for synthesised choir, electric guitars and Japanese nose flute, and, dreadful though it would be, Bach's original would still exist, undamaged and intact, just as it did when Mendelssohn performed his orchestration of the piece in 1829. And so it is with Elgar. Arrangers love and revere the music on which they work – that, Mr. Westwood-Brookes, is 'why' – and to dismiss Mr. Fraser's efforts and achievements in such a cruel and thoughtless way does great discredit to the Society, the *Journal* and, I would suggest, to Elgar, himself a great exponent of the orchestral transcription.

### *From Roger Neighbour*

How disappointing that Ben Palmer sees, in my opinion that Elgar's string quartet was the gift of one chamber musician to others, evidence of a predetermined policy of hostility to arrangements on the part of the Society. I owe it to my own integrity to disabuse him of this conspiracy theory. I'm not actually a member of the Society; I wrote simply as an Elgar-loving quartet-playing violinist,

and would not have accepted the Editor's invitation to review his CD had any pressure been brought to bear.

Mr Palmer must surely know that opinion is divided on the merits of making arrangements, and he must expect reviews to reflect this dichotomy. I hope it is not too late for him to put his toys back in the pram and cancel the cancellation of his subscription. As he rightly says, music is pretty robust, and so can be its aficionados.

### ***From Geoff Woodcock***

I must take issue with Richard Westwood-Brookes's review of Donald Fraser's orchestration of the Piano Quintet in the August *Journal*. His dismissive views are severely at odds with the reviews in the July edition of *Gramophone* and August's *BBC Music Magazine*. In the former Andrew Achenbach suggests that 'To my ears Fraser's richly upholstered orchestration works a treat yet also manages to be astutely appreciative of the simmering passion and sense of loss that permeate this wistful creation ...'. He concludes 'Devotees of the composer will, I think, find much to enjoy in this bold offering from Avie.'

Stephen Johnson, though slightly more measured, also writes positively in the *BBC Music Magazine*. He regards the result as 'pretty remarkable ... Fraser hasn't just translated Elgar's notes into rich and powerful orchestral terms, he has added (discreetly, it must be said) the kind of touches of colour and splashes of configuration Elgar himself might have introduced ... On its own terms, though, it's beautifully realised, performed with warmth and understanding, and sympathetically recorded.'

In my view, a CD which was well worth adding to my collection.

### ***From Barry Collett***

I love Richard Westwood-Brookes's review in the August *Journal*! Please tell him I heartily approve – could have written it myself!

### ***From Richard Westwood-Brookes***

I'm glad in a way that my review of the Piano Quintet travesty has stirred some response. Having had time to reflect I am in no mind to reconsider what I originally wrote.

Let me make my position clear: I have absolutely no problem with composers and musicians realising unfinished music which Elgar left behind. Sure, it can never be termed 100% authentic Elgar – it can't be – but what it does give us is an inkling of what *might have been*, and that, to my opinion is no bad thing, particularly, as in the case of the Third Symphony and the Piano Concerto it results in pieces which stand on their own feet as good enjoyable music, regardless of their provenance.

What I do take issue with however is what has happened to the Piano Quintet and the *Sea Pictures*, which to my mind is 'tinkering' of the worst kind.

If Elgar had wanted to write an orchestral piece involving a piano with accompaniment (I suppose in effect a Piano Concerto) at Brinkwells, he would have done so. He went on to write the Cello Concerto immediately afterwards and produced a fair crop of orchestral pieces in the years afterwards.

The fact that he chose to write skeletal chamber music – particularly this piece – said far more about his state of mind, both emotionally and intellectually, than anything which was a pure exercise in writing music.

So where I take great exception to this orchestral version of the Quintet is that it has destroyed the very skeletal fabric of Elgar's achievement. He clearly *wanted* the music to be sparse, dark, at times violent and angry, and always very disturbing. He dressed it up with references to Spanish monks and dead trees, allowed Algernon Blackwood to be used as some sort of 'influence' by commentators, all as a smokescreen to hide the inner meaning of what he was trying to convey in the turmoil of his mind. Having spent all these years immersed in this music I have no doubt that it is about one thing only – Elgar himself, bitter and angry, harbouring goodness knows what angsts from his troubled life – and to put a gloss on his work by orchestrating it is reprehensible. For example, how can an orchestral arrangement convey the disturbing and uncomfortable atmosphere conveyed in the very opening notes? The result, as I said in my review, conveys something akin to music from a spy movie. What about the astonishing bitter mutterings at the end of the first movement, conveyed so perfectly by the quintet ensemble?

But the worst travesty is the use of percussion at the climax of the slow movement. How the upward movement of the quintet's lyricism builds towards this climax is for me one of the most poignant and devastating moments in all music – I envisage Elgar working with hope towards what might be a new beginning in his mind, and then on opening whatever mental door he hoped was leading to a new vista realises that all that exists beyond is desolation and despair – echoed so magically by the reprise of the upward passage which despite his efforts at revival, all hope fades into oblivion. This was a man in the depths of creative despair, and to emphasise that despair with the crash of symbols and percussion is, in my humble opinion, and as I mentioned in my review, like daubing spray paint over the 'Haywain' and calling it artistic enhancement.

As for the *Sea Pictures*, composed at another point of despair in Elgar's career (he wrote in a letter, now in my possession, at the very time he was writing this piece 'I wish I could dispense with music altogether and live cleanly'), the whole point of the song cycle is that it is surely Elgar himself who is the main character. Hence the choice and chronology of the songs, and certainly the inclusion of the final piece, 'The Swimmer' which is surely about Elgar himself swimming against the tide of his fortunes at a time following his despicable treatment at the hands of his publishers over the Variations and his perceived failure of 'Gerontius'. Why otherwise would he set the passage: '...when we wandered here together, hand in hand through the sparkling weather from the heights and hollows of fern and heather *God surely loved us a little then*'?

This personal testimony can surely only be conveyed by a single performer – and the odd reduction of Elgar's orchestra with all its rich tapestry of sounds like the very ocean itself is surely tantamount to reducing the Atlantic to the status of a boating lake.

My interest in Elgar has been matched by my passion for British music in general – I was, after all, a co-founder of the British Music Society back in the 1970s.

The neglect of our home grown music is a national scandal, and in this regard the musical elite of this country, in my humble opinion, not only stand indicted but are also found totally guilty.

Rather than tinkering in this way with Elgarian pieces which stand proudly as Elgar originally wrote them in the regular performing repertoire, might I humbly suggest that conductors and their ensembles and orchestras might perhaps be better employed investigating those works by neglected British composers which equally deserve to be as familiar to the wider musical public?

How often, for example, does a symphony of Bax, Parry, or Alwyn get a regular public airing? How about the fine concertos and symphony of E.J. Moeran?

Lionel Sainsbury had to wait years before his beautiful Violin Concerto received its first public performance, and when is it ever likely to feature regularly in a major concert hall again? Even the music of more popular composers such as Gerald Finzi are not performed in the concert hall anywhere near as much as they should.

This despicable state of affairs will go on while conductors and musicians fail to include these wonderful works in their regular programmes, opting for the tried and tested stable of works from the continent. You would never find the French, Germans, Italians or Austrians, for example, being so disdainful of their own national music. They are justifiably proud of the achievements of their home-grown composers – we, on the other hand, seem to be somewhat embarrassed. Elgar's wonderful small orchestral pieces have long been dismissed as 'Salon music', the astonishing Second Symphony still bears scars of its 'end of Empire' sobriquet. (Stephen Johnson, quoted in one of the replies to my review, once confessed that an Irish musical friend told him never to play that 'disgusting' music in his presence). The music of Vaughan Williams is classified as 'cow pat' – though I fail to see how many cowpats exist in his symphonies – on the Sea, in the Antarctic, in the trenches or in a post nuclear holocaust – but there we are. I even witnessed a BBC commentator on the Proms reviling the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches as 'infamous' – presumably because this fool associated the First with 'Land of Hope' which, if he knew anything about music, never featured in the music at all when first written. And, come to think about it, how often are *they* played in their entirety?

So, perhaps an orchestra might like to give a public airing to the entire Bax Symphonic Cycle, the Parry Cycle, Moeran's Symphony, his concertos, or maybe the vastly disturbing symphonies and viola concerto of Stanley Bate: even works from Elgar and Vaughan Williams that only seem to exist on CD. That way British musicians would actually be doing something for British music – and maybe the likes of Lionel Sainsbury would get to hear his Violin and Cello Concertos more often in the concert hall.

It is a sad reflection and indeed an indictment of the way we think of our own home-grown music that in the recent poll by the *BBC Music Magazine* of 151 top conductors to find the top 20 symphonies, only nine nominated an Elgar symphony – and of those only five were British.

*Some weeks before the Journal appeared Arthur Reynolds sent me a 'blog' by the much respected writer Tully Potter and thought I might like to reprint it. Extracts are given below.*

An unnecessary Elgar recording ... Elgar wrote a Piano Quintet. I for one am eternally grateful that he spent a short period composing three great masterpieces of chamber music ... Had he wanted to write another orchestral piece, he would have done so.

I find the whole reasoning behind Donald Fraser's orchestration very strange[:] his version does not approach the singularity and particularity of Elgar's original. The twee little touches of percussion make me cringe. Why do musicians have this urge to orchestrate chamber music, or inflate it by playing it with larger numbers of instruments than the composer wanted? Do they have a basic feeling that an orchestral piece is higher in the hierarchy – more 'important' – than a chamber work?

As for the version of *Sea Pictures* on this CD, it is another dilution of one of Elgar's most impactful works ... Having the contralto's part sung by a choir means that we lose the particularity

and thrust of the original, and having the orchestral score reduced to strings means that some of Elgar's most exciting and captivating primary colours are subdued to pastels. It is oh so tasteful but again rather twee ...

## ***BACH in Gerontius***

### ***From Christopher Morley***

I admire and applaud Hugh Morris' 'fledgling' interest in Elgar's music, and I'm sure many of us can look back ruefully over so many decades and find ourselves there with such enthusiasm.

But the BACH he finds underpinning the orchestral passage as the Soul of Gerontius approaches the searing presence of God is nothing but the bass line we would expect to find within this harmonic context, and I am surprised to find my friend Simon Halsey drawing so much attention to it, especially when such a detail has no relevance to the chorus at all.

Sometimes things we say in rehearsal should never be quoted.

But my chief concern is over the subediting of this enthusiastic young man's article. Jaegar? And, most spectacularly, 'Das Land ohne Worte' in Morris's coda. He deserves more caring treatment.

*I can only, and do, apologise sincerely to Hugh Morris for my lapses in editing. They are among the reasons why I thought from the start that a term of six years as editor might take me beyond my sell-by date. Incidentally, the mini-biography at the end of Hugh's article said that he was 'hoping to read Music at the University of Manchester in September'. He tells me that he went up in mid-September; 'a mixture of unbelievably excited and petrified'.*

## RECORDING NOTES ...

By 1916, Haig had taken command of the British Expeditionary Force in France and the Germans would shortly begin the siege of Verdun. On the Home Front, there was in Britain a certain bewilderment that the Allies did not seem able to score a quick victory against the Germans; meanwhile, the country carried on and our troops dug themselves in to their trenches and in to ever more permanent fox-holes. It's all in the Bairnsfather cartoons! No dug-out was complete without a portable gramophone (wind-up) and a well worn selection of 78s, while the rum ration was the highlight of the day (and perhaps (when finally off-duty) a stroll to the local estaminet.

It was a pity that the première of Elgar's Violin Concerto had come and gone without a recording from Kreisler and Elgar (both HMV artists), but back then, the idea of such an ambitious recording must have seemed costly and over-ambitious and (moreover) in any case Kreisler was now unavailable (being an Austrian). It was actually well after the Great War before HMV tackled a complete recording of any major violin concerto ('the Beethoven', with Isolde Menges under Eugene Goossens). Meanwhile, HMV still thought itself the home of authoritative performances of music to suit all tastes, Elgar was an exclusive artiste and the news that a Columbia artiste had made an abridged recording of his concerto on four 12" sides (the young Menuhin took twelve) must therefore have been a little embarrassing.

Columbia L1071/2 (two 12" 78s) were acoustically recorded and on sale October 1916 to May 1928 and feature Sir Henry Wood with the usual session band and Albert Sammons as a most polished and eloquent soloist, full of dash and bravura. Although Sammons remade the concerto electrically and complete – it is one of the treasures of the gramophone – his first version is not quite superseded. It stands comparison with Heifetz's recording and, indeed, Heifetz himself only accepted a 1949 invitation to record 'the Elgar' when Sammons (by then suffering from Parkinson's disease) said he could no longer play it to the required standard.

Back in 1916, it seems that Landon Ronald suggested an abridged recording to preserve the idea that HMV remained Elgar's musical and recording home, whatever Columbia might get up to. Marie Hall, to whom Elgar had given some lessons when she was young, back in Malvern, was now a successful professional violinist with recording experience and Elgar agreed to cuts and the engagement of the harpist, John Cockerill, to accompany the accompanied cadenza. It was a cold, foggy day on 16 December, Marie Hall's train was late and her playing – especially her entry in the First Movement – seems a little over-emphatic to me, despite being passed for issue by the composer. They recorded the work on four single 12" sides (doubled up as D79 & D80) and all, it seems, were satisfied. Violinists do always say the orchestra is too loud! Marie Hall did not record the concerto again, but Fred Gaisberg of HMV did not forget the work and the day came in 1932 when he could offer the then elderly composer a remarkable young soloist (and the rest is musical history).

Michael Plant

## 100 YEARS AGO ...

At the beginning of September Elgar paid another visit to the Speyers at Ridgehurst, travelling with their daughter Lalla Vandervelde, a Socialist, 'in 3<sup>d</sup> class carriage so E. had to go too – gah'. On the 8<sup>th</sup> he and Alice travelled to Worcestershire to stay with the Berkeleys at Spetchley Park: 'Warmest welcome to the stately dignified delightful house'. It was, he told Windflower, a 'lovely place where I played as a child, 3½ miles from Worcester – Deerpark, fishponds etc etc – I caught 70 good fish!'. He returned home on the 18<sup>th</sup> via his sister Pollie's at Stoke Prior while Alice went directly to Severn House.

It was the time of the Zeppelin raids on London and the home counties: on the 23<sup>rd</sup> there was a 'Raid at night & 2 Zepps brought down. Great rejoicing'. On the 25<sup>th</sup> Elgar was 'out all day – Went to Brixton to see Zepp damages': that night there was 'Another raid, not in London – no military damage but many people killed & their houses damaged'. Ten airships were over England on 1 October: one 'brute being brought down at Potter's Bar. Crew taken prisoners by a single Special [Constable] – It fell near a cottage but did not touch it'. Next day there were 'Great crowds to Potter's Bar to see remains of Zepp'. On the 6<sup>th</sup> the Elgars went 'early to Bunhill Fields to see Zepp remains' on display from dawn until dusk in a specially erected marquee. Collecting boxes for the Red Cross Fund and the Kitchener Memorial were on hand, and sellers of souvenir photographs had a busy time. On their way back to Severn House they called in at the Leicester Galleries, where the pictures of Christopher Nevinson, nephew of Basil Nevinson and an official war artist, were on display.

The remainder of October was occupied with gentle social activities: lunches, tea parties, many trips to the theatre and, on the 29<sup>th</sup>, Alice went to a performance of the *Introduction and Allegro* at Queen's Hall: 'thought H. Wood conducted it better than anything else of E.'s A. had heard'. A week later she and Carice went to the 'Albert Hall thro' wind & rain to hear Landon conduct the 'Variations' – Very beautiful to hear. He played the Marseillaise to begin with with Soul-stirring effect'.

Elgar was again feeling unwell for much of this time, but on 13 November was 'better – D.G. Busy arranging Violin Concerto for Gramophone', which he was to record with Marie Hall. The whole family were at Queen's Hall on the 20<sup>th</sup> 'to hear the Violin Concerto – Salmons [*sic*] played most wonderfully but Safonoff conducted so badly, boisterous & heavy & no real reading of the wonderful work'. Two days later Elgar travelled to Manchester and conducted 'a splendid performance of 'Gerontius' ... G. Elwes, Muriel Foster & C. Mott. Halle Orch – E. had an immense ovation & everything was most successful'. Back in London he conducted 'For the Fallen' with the Royal Choral Society on the 25<sup>th</sup> and the Second Symphony at a Royal Philharmonic Society concert on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

At the beginning of December he went 'to see Lalla in her new flat – painted most garish colours under Mr. R[oger]. Fry's direction'. 'All this time [he and Alice were] immensely excited over new Government. D.G. Asquith gone & Lloyd George Prime Minister'. On the 16<sup>th</sup> Elgar recorded the Violin Concerto: 'Nice Gramophone men so kind & cheerful. Marie Hall very late, delayed in train. Lovely to hear Concerto – beautiful'. He and Alice spent Christmas 'alone togesser all day – Had a very Sweet day. No one came'.

*ISSN 0143-1269*

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