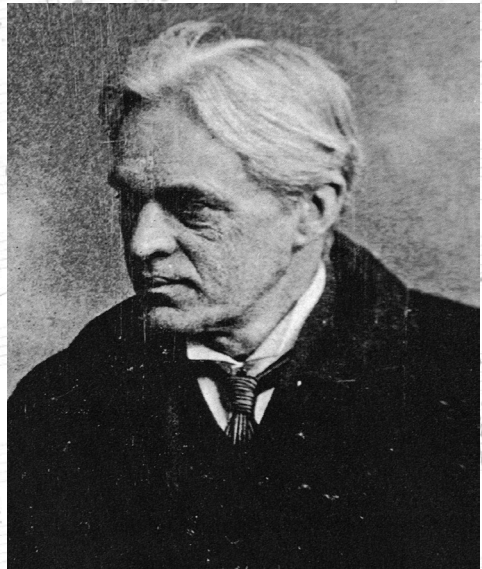


The Society

*Elgar*

*JOURNAL*



December 2019 Vol.21, No. 6



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## The Elgar Society Journal

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

*Front Cover: Max Mossel's 1896 portrait photograph of Elgar (Arthur Reynolds' Archive) and a  
photograph of Herbert Thompson in the Diary for 1909 (ESJ vol. 15, No. 4).*

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

**Presentation of written text:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Editorial

Dear fellow members of the Elgar Society,

This will be the last issue of the *Elgar Society Journal* under my editorship. Usually it hardly springs a surprise when the editorship of a musical journal changes. However, you deserve to know why this is the case after only three years, when an editor's tenure is usually five years.

I enjoyed editing the journal very much. A lot of people provided support and I hope I fulfilled to some extent the expectations of the people who asked me in October 2015 to take up the editorship with the idea to include and inspire more research from non-British countries. This is why I tried to introduce new contributors (unfortunately there have been no offers of major contributions from *female* musicologists and scholars by now) and topics that widen the perspective. I was and am still convinced that the approach to composers from Britain too often suffers from a problem that Stravinsky once described in his lectures at Harvard about his own native country: 'Why do we always hear Russian music spoken of in terms of its Russianness rather than simply in terms of music?' (Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, Harvard University Press 1947, 93.) I never think of British music, especially Elgar, in terms of 'Englishness' but always in terms of good, sometimes even great music. For me the ideal consequences of appreciating the cultural achievements of our neighbouring countries are best described by Elgar's fellow composer Ralph Vaughan Williams who once wrote: 'We should know and love each other through our art – and it must be our own art, not a colourless cosmopolitanism. I believe that one's community's own language, customs and religion are essential to our spiritual health. Out of these characteristics, the "hard knots", we can build a united Europe and a world federation.' (Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, New York 1980, 324.)

However, after long and careful consideration I decided to resign from my position as editor now. My main reason for this step is that the Brexit decision was not cancelled by the government. What happened in June 2016 and what followed afterwards reminded me of Elgar's letter about Germany when he mentioned being 'in a maze regarding events'. 'What are they doing?' he wrote on 17 March 1933 and 'are we all mad?' (Vyvyan Holland, *Time Remembered*, London 1966, 324.) In this situation, after almost 30 years' work, I see no future for any further commitment for British culture in continental Europe – which was also confirmed by my experiences with British consulates, the British Council and other institutions which showed indifference towards efforts to support the appreciation and understanding of our cultures. For the time being I am going to focus on some forthcoming book projects which will not include British music. I hope that in the distant future I will still witness Britain's return to a united Europe.

In order to support the managing committee I suggested potential editors from a non-British country – all of them people with a strong connection to British music (some of them did their doctorate on British composers). For the years to come there will now be a team of British editors with Kevin Mitchell, Andrew Neill, David Morris, Stuart Freed and Andrew Dalton. My very best wishes to all of them over the coming years.

Thank you very much to everybody who supported me over the last years and those who provided excellent contributions!

Meinhard Saremba

## Elgar's letters to Herbert Thompson

Julian Rushton

*In memoriam Martin Bird*

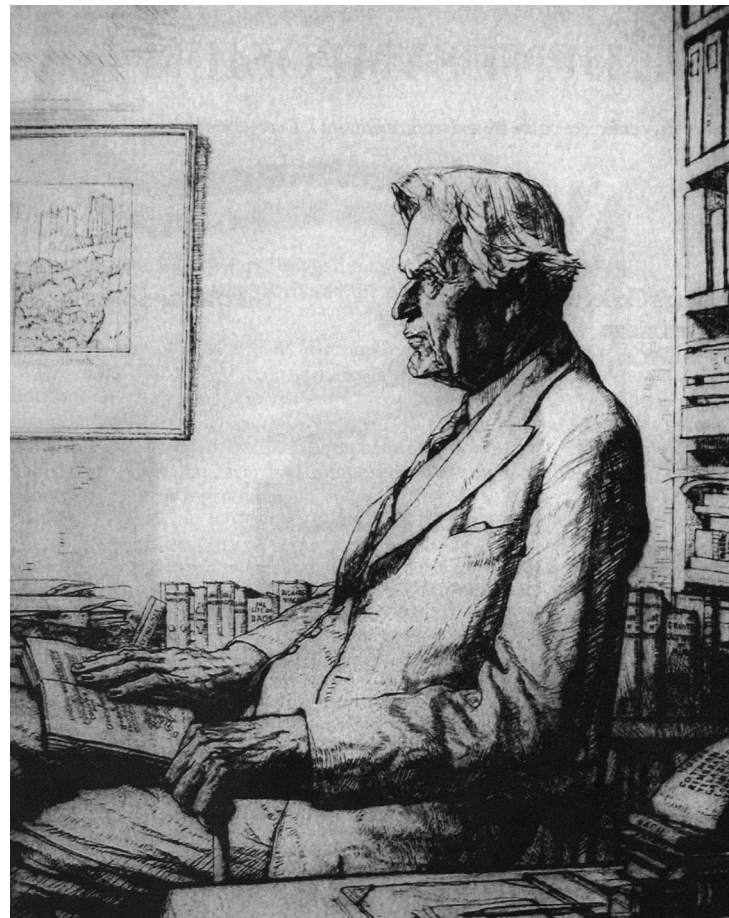
Elgar's letters to Herbert Thompson, the long-serving music and art critic of *The Yorkshire Post*, have many points of biographical and musical interest; they are preserved along with letters from Parry, Stanford, and Holst among others. Thompson bequeathed the letters, with other materials, to the University of Leeds.<sup>1</sup> Thompson wrote programme notes for the Leeds Festival (of which his father-in-law, Frederick Sparks, was secretary) and for Sheffield; thanks to his friendship with Ivor Atkins, he also provided them for the Three Choirs Festivals in Worcester. He travelled widely to report musical events; the *Yorkshire Post*, like the *Manchester Guardian*, was then a national newspaper. Thompson was also a meticulous diarist, recording, in scores and diary entries, the timings of performances. My transcriptions were destined for Martin Bird's splendid volumes of letters; I offer them as a memorial tribute to Martin, the soul of generosity in sharing information and material he had himself transcribed.

Most of Elgar's letters are on folded leaves, forming four pages. At the end of the first page Elgar habitually wrote the first word to appear on p. 2, a once common practice in printed books; I haven't repeated these words in the transcriptions. Square brackets (with one exception) identify editorial intervention or attempted clarification. Elgar's handwriting was never easy, and there remain squiggles I couldn't decipher (no doubt Martin would have done better). His punctuation is hardly a model of consistency, but doesn't usually hamper intelligibility.

Over several years, Thompson's intermittent correspondence with Elgar was as friendly as could be expected between composer and critic. On behalf of the Leeds Festival, Thompson first approached the composer in connection with his 1898 commission, *Caractacus*, suggesting that Elgar might like to provide his own notes but, as earlier with *King Olaf*, and later with *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Apostles*, Elgar did not like. Jerrold Northrop Moore, though he found no evidence of Elgar's 'supervision' of Thompson's notes, rightly supposed that Elgar was consulted 'especially as to the representative themes'.<sup>2</sup> Thompson reported in the *Yorkshire Post* on the progress of rehearsals, and both previewed and reviewed, the performance; it is hard to imagine the press paying such attention to a new work today.

1 Letters from Elgar and other composers to Thompson are in Leeds University's Brotherton Library, Special Collections MS361; his diaries are Special Collections MS880. His legacy to the University includes an album of press-cuttings, scores marked with the performance times, and a few of his holiday sketches. See also Tom Kelly, 'Yorkshire Light on the First Symphony', in this Journal, Vol. 15 No. 4 (March 2008), 17–25.

2 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar. A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 230n; see below, the letter of 18 July 1898.



Portrait of Herbert Thompson (1856–1945) in his study in 1936 (Brotherton Library)

In the library file the first Elgar letter is catalogued as 361/83, but is not the earliest; it follows 361/88 below. The actual earliest letter (361/84) uses the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society's printed letterhead, not reproduced here. The PS is surely an indication that at least locally, Elgar was already well known!

Birchwood Lodge, Nr. Malvern

June 26 1898

My dear Mr. Thompson:

Many thanks for your letters about the proposed analysis; I am so awfully busy that I dread promising to do it: you do not say if musical illustrations are to be given, the themes I mean. If they are, we might work together, i.e. I would furnish you with the salient themes & you could do the illustrative remarks: if music is to be included tell me how many examples I may give – approximately – & I wd. try not to exceed the limit.

Believe me  
Yrs very sincerely  
Edward Elgar

Will you address simply 'Malvern' – then the P.O. officials deliver at whichever house I am in – we go to the house 'in the woods' tomorrow & there is only one delivery there & the return post in ½ an hour, causing endless delay!

Thompson's *Caractacus* essay was later published separately by Novello. Elgar visited Leeds on 9 July for a choral rehearsal which Thompson attended (not only because his wife was in the chorus). His diary, in minute handwriting and making much use of abbreviations, records: 'to Queen's Hotel, where I have a long chat w. Elgar in smoking room. Discuss Engl. cond'rs & composers: orchestr'n: opera & op'a pf'ces; the Bavarian Highlands (he recommends Garmisch &c).' If only we could recover what they actually said!

Later letters use Elgar's own printed letterhead, but when he was at the 'house in the woods', 'Forli' is crossed out (361/85).

Forli-Malvern  
July 18 1898  
My dear Mr. Thompson:

I am sorry to find my Garmisch books have been 'bagged' by discriminating friends – I have sent for another & will let you have it as soon as maybe. I have some maps &c. which are very much at yr. service as we won't go this year.

Enclosed I send Caractacus Scenes I and II with the themes marked & drawn out. I don't think it matters about the orchestration. I find it impossible to give the indications as it is so complicated – couldn't it be shirked.

Tell me if what I send is of the slightest use to you &, if not, what you wd. like &c. &c. I hope you won't forget that I 'label' the themes against my better judgement, & only for conversational purposes – in my own mind they only exist as part of a whole. If you don't think the names good please alter them.

I will send the rest at [illegible] if you will let me have a card.

My wife pleads for the return, some day, of the copy which is hers I stole it.

Yours ever  
Edward Elgar

The enclosure was a printed piano and vocal score of Parts I and II, with copious annotations.<sup>3</sup> Until 15 August, the Thompsons enjoyed a holiday in Northumberland, and sent Elgar a postcard. Back in Leeds, Thompson got to work on the notes; his diary mentions Stanford's new work and on 17 August he records: 'Stay in & begin analysis of Caractacus', and on 19 August: 'Work at Caractacus analysis & get first scene done. [...] Begin 2nd scene of Caractacus. Lr. fr. E. Elgar'.] The next letter responds to Thompson's presumably numbered queries. 'Birchwood Lodge' is handwritten on 'Forli' paper (361/86).

3 Elgar Birthplace Museum MS 1440. Christopher Scobie of the British Library kindly informs me that the Birthplace call numbers will be retained in the library's catalogue entries for the Elgar material recently transferred there. On Thompson's essay, see Julian Rushton, 'Musicking Caractacus', in Bennett Zon (ed.), *Music and Performance Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain. Essays in Honour of Nicholas Temperley* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 221–240.

Forli Birchwood Lodge, Nr. Malvern  
Aug. 18 [1898]  
My dear Mr. Thompson:  
Many thanks for your card:

- I. There is an Argument
- II. A list of dramatis personae will be sent by the author.
- III. The words are printed<sup>4</sup> separately: as to I and III I have asked Messrs Novello to send proof copies to you direct.

I will let you have the remainder of the annotated voc. sc. as soon as possible: but could you return the sheet or sheets with the themes – I have lost mine & it wd be best to continue as I began.

Hope you are well  
Yrs sincerly  
Edward Elgar

On 20 August Thompson's diary records that he had finished Scene II, and could return the score, which Elgar needed to label representative themes consistently in the remainder of the work (361/87).

Forli Birchwood Lodge, Nr. Malvern  
Aug. 22 1898  
Dear Mr. Thompson:

Thinking you were away I sent a note about the dedication to your Editor sometime ago. I thought it best not to bother you during your rest.<sup>5</sup>

Here is the remainder of Carac: – I think I have followed my first plan of only giving themes that are used more than once – but I may have missed some: I need not point out that there are heaps of 'bits' not referred to & please understand that you must decide what to use.

Thanks for offering to let me see a proof. I am coming to Leeds on or rather for Saturday. I may travel up late on Friday night: I shall probably be at the Queens' [Hotel] some time but I will let you know.

Kind regards  
Sincerely yours  
Edward Elgar

On Saturday 27 August Thompson attended rehearsals of works by Frederic Cowen and Alan Gray. In the evening: 'I go down w. Mrs Sparks [his mother-in-law], & sit with her while Elgar goes through his Caractacus till about 7.45.' The next letter followed almost immediately (361/88).

Forli, Nr. Malvern  
Aug. 29 [1898]  
My dear Mr. Thompson:

There are no copies of Caractacus available for any one – when can you let me have the marked one I sent on to you? I don't want to hurry you in the least but Mr Jos. Bennett is going away very soon & wants to see it first & it would be of the greatest service to me if I could have the copy back this

- 4 At the foot of the first page Elgar wrote 'printing' but 'printed' when he turned the paper over.
- 5 The Thompsons took their annual holidays in August. The dedication to Queen Victoria had in the meantime been agreed, thanks to another Yorkshireman, the Master of the Queen's Musick, Sir Walter Parratt.

week – the ‘edition’ for sale will be commenced this week but won[’]t be ready for some time. But don’t let me hurry or worry you.

In haste  
Sincly yours  
Edward Elgar

Joseph Bennett had written the note for *King Olaf*. Elgar and Thompson didn’t meet on this Leeds visit. On 30 August Thompson records: ‘Wr[ite] Elgar & return his annotated score’. Elgar acknowledged receipt the next day – showing the Royal Mail’s efficiency in those far-off days (361/83).

Forli, Malvern  
Augst 31 [1898]  
My dear Mr. Thompson:

Very many thanks for sending the proof copy – it will be most useful.

Many of my [squiggle] words were intended, as I know you will gather, for your own eye only.

I was so sorry I could not give myself the pleasure of calling upon you on Saturday but a rehearsal of the minor parts was arranged for 12.00 & I travelled home on Monday.

Yours most sincerely  
Edward Elgar

I will look thru’ the proofs with the greatest of pleasure & will not keep ‘em a day.

The two met at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester; Thompson’s diary (13 September) records: ‘to the club, where I find Elgar, and go through the analysis of “Caractacus” with him’; (14 September): ‘Send proof of Caractacus analysis to Sparks’. This concludes the correspondence about *Caractacus*, which Thompson admired with reservations.

The correspondence of 1899 concerns the orchestral Variations (‘Enigma’), premiered on 19 June and soon to be repeated at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester (361/89).

Craeg Lea, Wells Road, Malvern  
April 9 [1899]  
My dear Thompson:

It seems ages since I saw anything of you – I took H.T. in the Mus. Times to represent you this month so I have read of you, not only there but in sundry Yorksh: posts.

These were to give notice that the below written hath gotten another house – however Malvern will find me postally, only, in case you ‘come within a mile of me’ don’t ‘stay there at night’ but come on to Craeg Lea.

I hope we can jaw sometime over the Symphony – I imagine you will be asked to analyse it for the Worcester Festival: I brought up the matter of annotation before the committee & suggested a name – not knowing you wd. care for the task – Atkins however told me he wd. rather you – so I withdrew, with the greatest pleasure & hope you are doing the whole thing.

The Variations are nearly ready – printed I mean – I conclude ‘C.A.B.’ will ‘do’ those for the Richter book but they are playing also at the Worcester Fest.

Mrs Elgar joins me in kindest regards to you & Mrs Thompson.

Always sinc’ly yours  
Edward Elgar

‘The symphony’ (perhaps the contemplated ‘Gordon’) was again deferred. ‘C.A.B.’ is Charles Barry, who wrote the often-quoted note for the premiere of the Variations. Some of Thompson’s reply may be inferred from the next letter (361/90).

Craeg Lea, Wells Road, Malvern  
June 7 [1899]

Dear Thompson:

I am glad you are disappointed about the symphony! – it will come some day but I can’t ‘afford’ to do it now.

As to analyses: The Variations do not ‘come off’ until the 19th – I haven’t seen Barry’s notes yet, so I don’t know how far they will be useful even as a base (not bass) for the Worcester book.

I will send you a marked copy of ‘Lux’ as soon as it’s definitely decided (it may be so now for aught I know) – that is if you like the plan.

I think you will like the Vars.: you may be in town on the 19th & wd. of course be at the Concert if near enough.

Kindest regards  
Sincly yours  
Edward Elgar

Perhaps urged by Thompson, Frederick Sparks was again led to expect an Elgar symphony for the 1904 Leeds Festival, but it was not to be.<sup>6</sup> The Variations and ‘Lux’ – *The Light of Life* – were performed at Worcester, Thompson providing the notes.<sup>7</sup> The next letter is on Worcestershire Philharmonic Society notepaper (361/91).

Malvern [Thursday] June 15 [1899]

My dear Thompson:

I am glad you like the look of the Vars: – they had to thin [them] for piano.

With this I send you a much marked copy of Lux Xti – I am sorry it’s so much corrected – it’s an old one & has all the revision marks in which will annoy you I fear – don’t look at them however.

I have scrawled, in a loose sheet my ‘feelings’ about the themes – some of the reappearances are too subtle to be felt by the crowd – I leave it to you to do exactly what you like about it all.

I will send on C.A.B: notes when I get them but I shall not see them until Saturday.

As to Lux – you will see that the reflective nos 8, 12, & 14 have none of this, well, I suppose we must call ‘em leitmotiven – I’m not sure if it doesn’t keep the action together.

In haste  
Yours  
Ed. E.

I had to drop into pencil near the beginning to save a minute.

6 Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 376, 391.

7 Robert Anderson identifies one of Thompson’s labels for a theme (*Elgar. The Master Musicians*, London: Dent, 1993, 405). However, this was probably Elgar’s own label; Thompson was reluctant to change the composer’s wording.

As with *Caractacus*, Elgar was dismissive about his own names for ‘representative themes’ and happy to transfer responsibility for them to Thompson (as later to Jaeger). In the next letter the square brackets in the second paragraph are Elgar’s, not editorial (361/92).

Forli

June 26 [1899] Malvern

My dear Thompson:

Here is the Richter book with C.A.B.’s notes: tell me what you think: – are you going to have music-type Examples at Worcester? It seems to me rather hopeless to attempt any analysis – in the full sense of the word – without them.

The description of the Theme is useful [(a) (b) (c) as B. has done it] for identification throughout the work: but to make anything clear by words only is an Enigma I must leave to you.

The work has had a glorious reception & Richter is going to play it ‘everywhere’.

If I can be of any service to you let me know and I am yours.

My wife joins me in very kind regards to you and Mrs Thompson (who shd. have been mentioned first!) forgive me.

Yrs sinc’y

Edward Elgar

Thompson noted in his diary that the letter arrived on 27 June (‘Lr. fr. Elgar’), adding ‘Began Elgar Variations’, using Barry’s notes and the ‘thin’ piano score. The next letter is on Worcestershire Philharmonic Society letterhead; ‘score’ means the manuscript full orchestral score (361/93).

Malvern June 28 1899

My dear T.

I should think your plan wd. be the best way: I can’t spare the score (as it is wanted for a Concert & immediately after must go to the printer).

So I send you the end of the theme completing Barry’s Ex.1 – I don’t think I would dwell on the cryptic side of the work & perhaps it will be well for my personal safety (the originals – most of ‘em – will probably be present) if you do not make shots at the ‘personal appearances’ &c. of each variationee (new noun).

Yrs ever

Ed!. Elgar

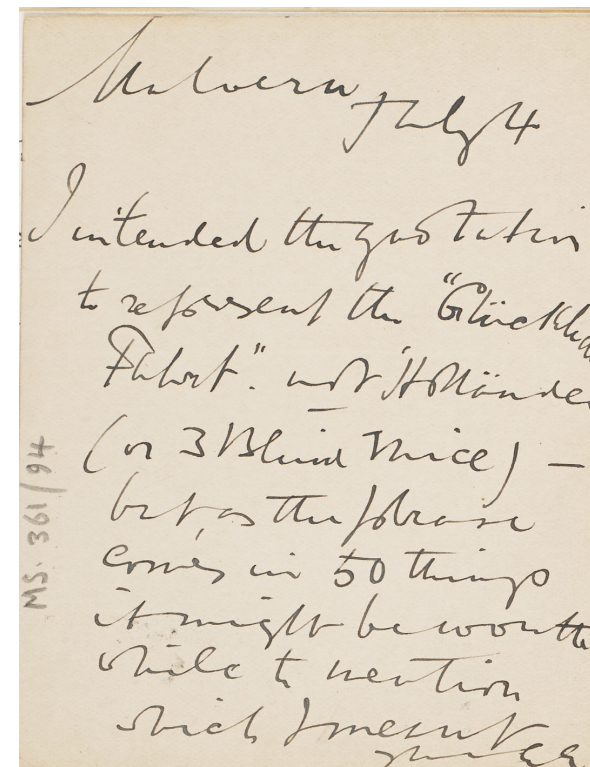
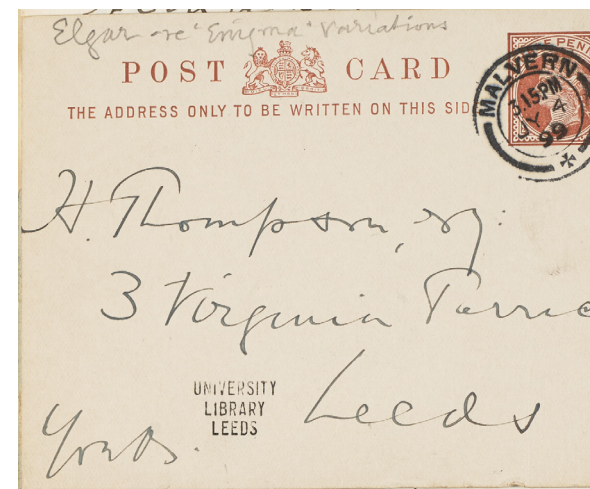
I hear that Atkins is getting on well with his festival work chorus &c. &c. I am so very glad.

Presumably Thompson’s plan was to base his note on Barry’s. The music example is not included but was perhaps on a separate slip of paper. The next item (Fig. 1) is a postcard (not, alas, a picture postcard) and refers to Variation XIII ‘(\*\*\*)’. The ‘variationee’ (Lady Mary Lygon) was by this time at sea, en route for Australia, hence the quotation from Mendelssohn’s overture (361/94).

Malvern July 4 1899 [year from postmark]:

I intended the quotation to represent the “Glückliche Fahrt” not Holländer (or 3 Blind Mice) – but, as the phrase comes in 50 things it might be worthwhile to mention which I meant.

Yours, EE



Elgar’s postcard of 4 July 1899 (Elgar Will Trust)

Thompson noted that the card arrived on 5 July. The following month ('Birchwood' again handwritten) Elgar wrote about the revised 'Variation XIV', the finale (Fig. 2; 361/95).

Craeg Lea Birchwood Lodge, Wells Road Nr Malvern  
Malvern  
Augst 23 [1899]

My dear Thompson

Many thanks for your p.c. – I am grieved to bother you about the finale – & am asking Messrs N. to send you the worn plate copy & you will at once see if your remarks require 'fitting' to it.

All the critics including Richter said my work deserved a 'big' ending so I've put it.

In great haste – but I must crowd in how pleased I am you have had a good rest.

Yours ever  
Edward Elgar

The next few letters are from 1901, and concern the Leeds Festival. The Three Choirs in Worcester included *The Dream of Gerontius*, and Thompson was to produce notes, helped by Jaeger's 1900 analysis. The comment on *Cockaigne* is of interest, a case of a composer feeling most affection for his newest 'child'. The Birchwood address is printed opposite Craeg Lea (361/96).

Birchwood Lodge  
Near Malvern  
Telegrams: Leigh Sinton  
Aug. 25 1901

Craeg Lea, Wells Road, Malvern  
Telegrams: Upper Wyche

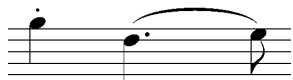
My dear Thompson:

Many thanks for a sight of your analysis which is good for jolly – you will see the few slight suggestions I venture to make – please accept all or none as it may strike you – the printer leaving out the theme & the "see Wor: Fest. Programme &x." is very like one of the 2 [squiggle] programmes which I believe was actually sold at the concert.–

Overture (or something) by somebody, or something  
(all in order)

& then by way of explanation this portentous sentence  
"Ask Jacques"  
Lovely idea.

In Ex. 7 could you add the final two semiquavers in each bar to complete the phrase? And in Ex. 17 might the

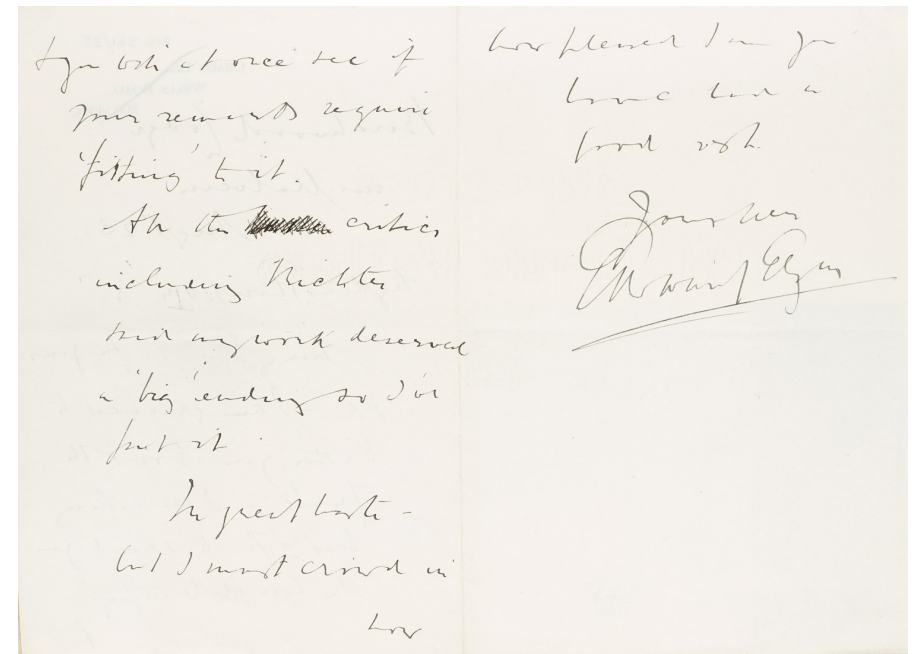
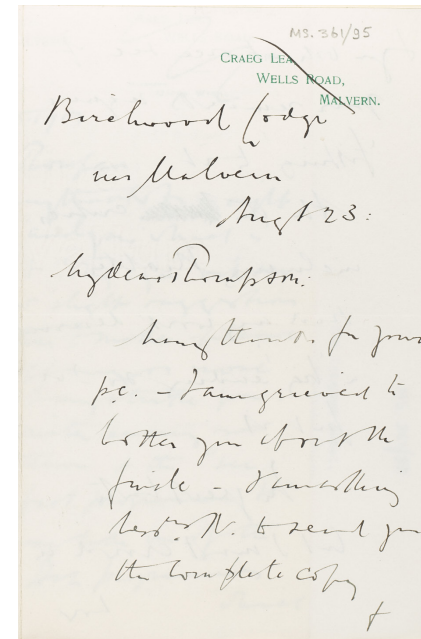


go over the V[iolin] II° part?

In describing Ex. 21 I think it wd. be clearer to word it as I have suggested – although the cpt. [counterpoint] is not printed.

Glad you have the score. *Cockaigne* is better on the whole nothing whatever wasted – not a demi semiquaver!

Elgar's letter of 23 August 1899 (Elgar Will Trust)





I am in our Cottage in the woods & I am laid up with a sprain.<sup>8</sup>

We send our kind regards to your household. Hope you have had a good holiday.

Yours ever  
Edward Elgar

Thompson's diary mentions a conversation with Elgar on 8 October. During the visit, Alice Elgar met Mrs Thompson socially.<sup>9</sup> On 11 October Thompson took tea with Walford Davies, Donald Tovey, and Atkins after the morning concert, then 'home feeling rather weary'. In the evening Elgar conducted the Variations and Thompson reviewed the 'brilliant set of "Enigma" variations' with particular warmth.<sup>10</sup>

In June 1902 Thompson was preparing notes for Worcester and Sheffield, and took the opportunity to send birthday wishes. His letters of this period survive, and I include Martin Bird's transcriptions (marked by him 'corrected'). The numbers (see note 1) are those assigned by the Elgar Birthplace Museum (EB letter 3668).

(Festival of S. Elgar.)

2. June 1902.

3 Virginia Terrace

Leeds

My dear Elgar

First: my congratulations on this happy day, which my "Musical Times" – which under its 'Baptist' writer, lives on Dates – has enabled me to 'spot'.

Then, congratulations on Düsseldorf: Strauss's speech must have been the pleasantest compliment a man could well receive. I wish I could have been there. I was at one of the Düsseldorf festls, & was invited to the Festessen, but couldn't get over my shyness, & never got beyond the threshold of the supper room!

I am "supplying" some brief notes in the Worcester progs. For economical reasons they must be brief, & music-type is generally speaking to be reserved for novelties, but Gerontius is practically new, & its themes are so significant that the principal ones must be given – Will you kindly give me any hints that may be useful? May I take Jaeger's revised analysis as authorised (I mean of course as regards names of themes &c.). Would it be easiest for you, & safest, if you were to make some red-ink indications in my pf. score?

With kind regards to Mrs. E. & yourself, in wh. my wife joins,

Yrs always

Herbert Thompson

I am delighted that you have secured the Sheffield chrs for yr. Ode! I have been telling the Leeds people how good it is, & now they'll be more inclined to believe me!

The Strauss reference is to his famous tribute to 'Meister Elgar'; the 'Ode' is the *Coronation Ode*.

8 Alice's diary merely records the weather that day, but on 23 August there was a 'dog-cart accident on the road', which could have led to a sprain. Martin Bird (ed.), *Road to Recognition. Diaries 1897–1901*, 356.

9 *Road to Recognition*, 367. There are several other references to the Thompsons in the diaries so far published (to 1903).

10 The review is quoted in *Road to Recognition*, 369.

At this date, it was expected that Edward VII's coronation would go ahead as planned. In the event the *Ode* was premiered in Sheffield, with a Leeds performance later in the year. Elgar replied from London. This letter (including the address) is typed, except for the word 'Dictated', the signature, and the PS that follows (361/97).

The Langham Hotel, Portland Place, London W

5<sup>th</sup> June, 1902

Dictated

My dear Thompson

Very many thanks for your letter which I find here on our return from Germany. We only arrived this morning early.

Thanks for all your congratulations – I wish you had been present. The performance was extremely good and uplifting.

As to the notes for "Gerontius," I quite appreciate the fact that the description for Worcester must be brief.

Yager's [*sic*] analysis is practically authorised by me as far as the choice of themes is concerned, but not always the actual naming of them.

There is a new shorter Führer by a German, which seems to be very practical. I forget who publishes it, but it was on sale during the "fest", Düsseldorf. Yager would tell you where it might be procured. I am glad you were pleased about the Sheffield chorus for the Coronation Ode. I think I did the best thing, but we shall see.

If you would really prefer some of my own remarks concerning "Gerontius," I would be very glad to help you later; but at present I am extremely busy, and therefore do not write in my own hand.

Kind regards to Mrs Thompson and yourself, in which my wife joins.

Yours always

Ed: Elgar

I think the shorthand writer's punctuation and spelling priceless so I do not touch it!

Thompson wrote again when, after holidaying, he got to work on autumn festival programmes. The cause of Elgar's 'sudden departure from Bayreuth' (missing *Götterdämmerung*) was news of Ann Elgar's illness. Thompson's reply shows him adapting himself, only too well, to Elgar's jocular epistolary style; was it this letter that caused Alice to exclaim 'I will *not* be called Mrs E.!'? (EB letter 2831).

3 Virginia Terrace

Leeds

26 Aug 1902

My dear Elgar

We were sorry to hear of your sudden departure from Bayreuth, & still sorer to learn the cause.

I am obliged to worry you again, but it is not my fault so much as yours, for now no festival programme is complete without its Elgar, so whenever I am appointed public analyst I have to make my humble endeavour to elucidate your music for the public benefit. And, as I don't want to darken counsel, or make more of an ass of myself than nature has already ordained, I must turn to you for guidance. I suppose your Ode is really to be given at Sheffield: if so, I have to concoct an analysis thereof. Will you then send me any "tips" you can as to significant themes &c? A proof with a few MS notes would perhaps be the simplest method, & give you the least trouble.

But any way that suits you will do for me!

I want to get the Sheffield notes off my mind before going to Worcester, where I am hoping to see you.

With kind regards to Mrs E. & yourself in which my wife joins, Believe me

Yrs very truly  
Herbert Thompson

Elgar wrote again in September, on Worcestershire Philharmonic letterhead, with some interesting self-analysis. ‘Scandinavian harmony’ alludes to Queen Alexandra, who was from Denmark. The editorial [fig.] shows where Elgar notated the rehearsal figures in boxes (361/98).<sup>11</sup>

Malvern Sept. 1. 02  
My dear Thompson:

I am so very sorry to have kept you so long without definite news of the ode: Mr Bennett’s analysis is not ready yet.

My idea was to write the ode on broad, majestic lines without undue complications – you will see my trail however in passages like [fig.] 3 to [fig.] 4 & much else.

The piano score gives, as usual, little idea of the orchestration & still less of the employment of the Military Band – in one place at least there is a device which wd. delight your soul – that is the uncritical part of it – at 66 where the chos. sing the big tune the M. Band suddenly bursts in with [fig.] 32! see score.

You will see I have used the Trio of ‘Pomp and Circumstance’ No. 1 as the climax of the first number [fig.] 25. The whole thing (the first No. is of course an ‘address’ to sovereignty in the abstract general tho. – very different is No. 2 we are allowed to show a personal affection to our Queen – twig the Scandinavian harmony at ‘Northern sea’.

No. 3 is frankly military, or rather naval & military & means ‘fight’ at [fig.] 36 ‘So shalt thou rest in Peace’. I have kept the audacious military tread going in the background as the whole idea is ‘if you are ready to fight there will be peace’ which is true I believe: It looks, at first, as though the words shd have been set peacefully – but I don’t think so – the promised peace in this case depends upon the military preparedness, hence the setting.

Nos 4 and 5 are obvious in construction. page 56 – I did not make a great burst on ‘great’ because here the ‘greatness’ seemed to depend upon Wisdom, Truth and blessing more than the military aspect. The last movement is of course ‘the’ tune again & fractions of the 1st movement.

You will notice that as a ‘link’ I use the phrase [fig.] 1 in several places.

You must forgive my writing however I have just at this moment heard that my dear old mother has passed away after long & weary suffering.

Yours ever  
Edwd. Elgar

On 2 October 1902 Thompson wrote in his diary ‘Beastly weather. Breakfast with Atkins. 11.30 Gerontius. 1 hr 40 m very fine pfce.’ The correspondence resumed in 1904 when wrote, congratulating Elgar on the success of the ‘Elgar Festival’ that included the premiere of *In the*

11 This letter is included in the Introduction to the Elgar Complete Edition of the *Coronation Ode* (ECE vol. 7, ed. Iain Quinn), xv, with a few different readings.

*South*. Another talking-point was *The Apostles* (the ‘not unimportant skirmishes’ may refer to the Leeds performance on 16 March).<sup>12</sup> Elgar would have enjoyed the neologism ‘medalsome’; and for the last time Thompson writes ‘Mrs Elgar’ (EB letter 3879).

11 Burton Crescent, Headingley, Leeds  
21 Mar 1904

My dear Elgar

My hearty congratulations on the capitulation of Covent Garden to the British forces! I should like to have been present at the siege, but was engaged as war correspondent in connection with not unimportant skirmishes in the provinces, in which victory rested with the Elgarian forces.

I see that a medal has been struck in honour of the Commander in chief, & I hope I shan’t be considered medalsome if I bother you by asking to whom I should address myself for a copy. I have a little collection of brazen-faced musicians: Orlando di Lasso: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner & Brahms, &, now that you are immortalized in “perennial bronze”, I am anxious not to miss the opportunity of adding you to this select little party.

I am glad that “Gerontius” will be given by each of the Leeds societies next season, but it is rather absurd that, after shying at it for four years, they should both go for it at once.

I hope you will manage to conduct each performance, with a touch of rivalry to inspire them, they should both be very good. “The Apostles” came off wonderfully well last week: without great subtlety, but fine tone & accuracy. Lane Wilson was an admirable St Peter: just the right touch of enthusiasm & impulsive here. Kind regards to Mrs Elgar

Yrs very truly

Herbert Thompson

NB The most highly finished choral perf. of Geront. I have heard was the Newcastle Society’s last December.

Elgar soon replied with neologisms of his own (361/99).

Craig Lea, Wells Road, Malvern  
Telegrams: Upper Wyche  
Mar. 24 1904

My dear Thompson

Very many thanks for your cheery letter which by a series of chances reached me in Leeds! I did not have a moment to spare or I shd. have found you out &, much as I wished it, I could not stay for the Mass.

We had a fine time in London & I wish you cd. have heard some of tone produced: it was really a sublime sound – i.e. upstairs – in the stalls the acoustics were bad.

I think Novellos have the ‘new shillings’ as they were called. I did not have time to see anything but one medal was sent to me by the artist: the alleged ‘portraiture’ of me is recognisable I believe.

I trust I have smoothen out the Leeds business which seemed to be a multitude of misunderstandments.

We leave this for Herefordsh[ire] this summer.

Our kindest regards to Mrs Thompson & yourself.  
Always sinc’y yours  
Edward Elgar

12 Conducted by Alfred Benton, the Leeds Parish Church organist: ‘better than usual but still wooden’, according to Thompson’s diary.

Elgar's Leeds visit was recorded in the *Yorkshire Post*, but Thompson was also busy (on 21 and 22 March he was in Harrogate and York) and they had not met. As Martin Bird explains, 'Elgar had gone to Leeds to see Henry Embleton of the Choral Union and John Green of the Philharmonic Society, and to make his peace with the Festival authorities after failing to produce the symphony, or indeed anything else that he had promised'.<sup>13</sup> On the causes of Elgar's non-delivery, see also the 'Coda' to this article. The 'Mass' was Bach's in B minor, in Leeds Town Hall on 23 March. Thompson's next letter follows Elgar's knighthood; the 'whole book' does not refer to Buckley's tribute biography (see Elgar's reply).<sup>14</sup> (EB letter 5218).

11 Burton Crescent, Headingley, Leeds  
28 July 1904

My dear "Sir Edward Elgar"!

I write it at length because it really looks so nice! And I like "Sir Edward" much better than "Dr Elgar", which always seemed to me rather inappropriate. Our congratulations on the most interesting of the Birthday Honours.

Tomorrow we are to have "The Apostles" in York Minster. I am a bit doubtful about the result, as I fear a band of 75 on a platform only 4 ft. high, under the lofty crossing, may not tell as it should. But we shall see.

I have been keeping a notice I have cut out of the YP for yr. benefit, & enclose it. I can only add to it my expression of satisfaction at the further proof you have just given of being very much "living". The whole book, I may add, is delightful reading.

With kind regards from us both to you & Lady Elgar,

Believe me

Dear Sir Edward,

(I do enjoy writing it!)

Yrs very truly

Herbert Thompson

I haven't yr. new address, but suppose this will be forwarded.

Elgar replied some time later with an apology (361/100).

Plas Gwyn, Hereford

Augst 15 1904

My dear Thompson

I know I began a letter of thanks to you for yr. kind congratulations but I cannot for the life of me remember if it was ever finished or despatched. This in case of failure:

Our move upset plans a great deal & things got missed.

We find this place very lovely & altho' close to the town is really more 'country' than Malvern: this you know suits me & we hope you & Mrs Thompson will see it someday.

Thanks fr. your notice of that dreadful book of Crowest: I really must get it.<sup>15</sup>

13 Martin Bird (ed.), *The Path to Knighthood. Diaries 1902–1904* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2016), 271–2.

14 R.J. Buckley's *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: Lane: The Bodley Head, 1904).

15 Frederick J. Crowest wrote *The Story of British Music* (1896); *The Story of Music* (1902) and *A Catechism of Musical History and Biography, with especial reference to English music and musicians* (1903).

Perhaps we may meet at Gloucester? or Leeds.

Kindest regards

Yours sinc'y

Edward Elgar

Thompson wrote to Elgar in 1906; no reply has been traced. The Birmingham lectures, reported in the *Yorkshire Post*, were not perhaps an entirely welcome topic. Thompson forgot, or felt no need, to write 'Sir Edward' (EB letter 3400).

11 Burton Crescent, Headingley, Leeds  
1906 Dec 12

Dear Elgar

One of your B'ham lectures gave me a delightful text on which to have some discourses, & I only hope I haven't unwittingly misrepresented you. I thought it might amuse you to see the use to which I turned your suggestive remarks –

I hear nothing of Leeds Festival doings save by side-winds, least of all from Mr Spark, with whom I find it is wiser not to discuss musical matters! But I gather that they have tried, & failed once again, to get anything from you. I can only say I am sorry, though I can quite understand that, were you to listen to all appeals of the kind, it might not be for your own good!

I have no doubt that the people who run after a composer – when he achieves success – are not always his best friends!

Believe me

Yrs v. sincerely

Herbert Thompson

In 1913 Elgar replied to a letter that must again have concerned programme notes. Elgar had been in London, using printed notepaper (the address crossed through), and adding Hereford as a return address (361/101).

75, Gloucester Place, Putman Square, [London] W  
Hereford

Augst 3 1911

Dear Thompson

Many thanks. There is not more to say about the march – please, however, (a great point) call it "The Coronation March" – I was asked to write it – it was the only March Their Majesties 'progressed' with or to & I don't want my people to think that I threw a march or it [illegible] like Tom, Dick and Harry for commercial reasons: Selah!

The thing opens in 3/4 G minor a sort of Saraband [sic] rhythm — trombones & celli & bass (surely this measure is the stateliest existing, isn't it?) repeated by violins & leads without break into the March proper which is in 4/4 in Bb Eb & related keys – construction easily followed: somewhat symphonic in places. In the middle of the movement the 3/4 Introduction recurs – the bass theme being accpd by counterpoint in the upper regions – pfff!

What a job it is for a hot day! dissection – of my own child: where's the fibre, and [illegible], banology [?]?

I snooze this week.

Yours  
Edward Elgar  
I know you are panting [?] at home.

More correspondence may have been lost with the move to Hampstead. The remaining letters are from 1913. The next uses Elgar's printed letterhead; the 'sketch' referred to is perhaps of his own analysis, since the music of *Falstaff* was well under way by this time (361/102).

Severn House, Hampstead NW  
May 26 1913  
My dear Thompson

I am glad you are 'doing' the notes: I will let you have news of 'Falstaff' as soon as I can make a coherent sketch – in a few days I hope – I may be a month. Anyhow "F" has nothing to do with 'The Merry Wives' but only the real character in 1 & 2 Henry IV & V – so that fact can settle in yr mind.

I hope you are enjoying the heavenly weather.

Yours ever  
Edward Elgar

In August, Elgar, on holiday in Wales, wrote again (on printed letterhead); the Thompsons were on holiday, in Devon, and the next letter was forwarded there (Thompson's diary, 25 August). Elgar's 'introduction' to *Falstaff* was published in the *Musical Times* in September 1913, and later by Novello (361/103).

Tan-yr-allt, Penmaenmawr, N. Wales  
August 17 1913  
My dear Thompson

I am sorry for the delay in writing about 'Falstaff' – we are rather late with the score. Hence in the circumstances would it not be better for me to write the notes myself? I would relieve you of the intolerable necessity of working without a score & wd avoid disturbing your holiday.

I do not know if anyone beside yourself is 'doing' analyses for the festival but to avoid the notes furnished by my own hand looking in any way pretentious I shd propose to say that as time was so short & the score not available I undertook to furnish the notes.

I hope you & Mrs Thompson are having a good rest & general joy.

Warmest regards  
Yours snc'y  
Edward Elgar

The next item is on lined notepaper, and is dated merely 'Saturday', probably 30 August. It seems likely that Thompson had sent Elgar some notes on *Falstaff* before receiving the above, and they reached Elgar in Penmaenmawr (the address on the letter is mostly a long, possibly satirical, squiggle); the Elgars were there until 1 September (361/104).

Pen[long squiggle]awr  
Saturday  
My dear Thompson  
Very many thanks for your MS – it was most kind of you to send it but I had already done my

introduction – I thought Novellos wanted it in the Oct. M. Times so I said 'yes' – then I found it was for September so you can guess how busy I have been [;] at printers now.

Will it be time enough if we talk over the matter at Gloucester? you will then have seen my analysis – I think it (F) will be too long for the Leeds programme but we might alter it. When do the Leeds people go to press with the programme books. I have not yet said anything to them about my notes.

Best regards  
Sincerely  
Edward Elgar

The next letter is also on lined notepaper, with no address, but 'home' is Severn House (361/105).

Sep. 2 1913

My dear Thompson

We arr'd home last night. I did not send you the M.T. as I was sure you wd. have it in the course of things. I am here until Saturday a.m. – then Gloucester.

Have you read the article & what do you think? Will you write something based on that or [should] we cut down the thing as it stands for the programme book? We are to be at Tibberton Court

Gloucester (with a JP not tho' Shallow esq.)

Kindest regards  
Yours snc'y  
Edward Elgar

Thompson received a letter from Elgar on 3 September. But he had not yet seen the *Musical Times* and Elgar evidently lent him a copy, with a note, presumably delivered by hand after they met in Gloucester (Thompson's diary records a meeting on 8 October, and on 9 October he notes 'leave MT for Elgar'). This is the last item in the correspondence; it is on printed letterhead (Three Choirs Festival / Gloucester 1913), undated, and is written in pencil (316/106).

Dear Thompson

Here's the MT. Many thanks for sketching [?] the first par: I have avoided references to the date.

NB I sketched Falstaff in 1902!

Yours ever  
Edward Elgar

### *Coda*

Elgar's view of Thompson was sometimes less appreciative than the correspondence suggests. In 1905 he proposed via Novello that if Jaeger wanted something to do while recuperating in a Swiss sanatorium, he could

make analyses of some of the old things which have never been adequately done. *King Olaf* was done by Joseph Bennett in a great hurry & many themes are left out. *Caractacus* I don't remember but I think Thompson did it more or less sketchily. I don't know if shorter things like 'The Light of Life'

and 'The Banner' are important enough, but I don't think they've been analysed at all.<sup>16</sup>

In fact Thompson's *Caractacus* programme is firmly grounded in Elgar's annotations; see above on *The Light of Life*. Perhaps Elgar wanted more detailed musical analysis. Jaeger's analysis of Elgar's longest work, *The Apostles*, is twice the length of Thompson's *Caractacus* (his second-longest work). Perhaps Novello never passed on the message – bearing in mind the cost of printing new analyses – or, perhaps on doctor's orders, Jaeger declined.

Much later, Thompson wrote to *The Sunday Times* (2 July 1933) querying Basil Maine's treatment of the Stanford–Elgar relationship.<sup>17</sup> Thompson had studied at Cambridge and was well aware of Stanford's character. Elgar drafted a response which he never sent. This somewhat downbeat ending to the Elgar–Thompson connection was published by Percy M. Young, but not the whole text of Thompson's letter (EB letter 2580).<sup>18</sup>

Sir, - I am loth to stir up muddy waters, but when my friend Mr. Ernest Newman calls attention to the disagreements between Elgar and Stanford, which I had hoped were buried in oblivion, I am moved to mention an incident which neither Elgar nor his biographer, Mr. Basil Maine, is likely to have been aware, but which came under my immediate notice.

The "Enigma" Variations were first performed in 1899, and in the following year Elgar accepted a degree from Cambridge University, the first of several such honours which were conferred upon him. Some time between these dates I came across the late Canon Hudson, who will be remembered as the founder and conductor of the Hovingham Festivals. He was one of the most prominent amateurs in Cambridge at the time, but Elgar was then so little known to the public that he said to me:-

What do you think of Elgar? Stanford is very anxious that we should give him a degree: is he really as distinguished as C.V.S. seems to think?

I recollect the incident well, and it is to some extent borne out by Mr. Maine when he recalls Sir Alexander Mackenzie's testimony concerning one whom he describes as "the versatile, impulsive, kind-hearted Irish genius", who, as he puts it, "enthusiastically drew my attention to the almost unknown newcomer's splendid gifts".

Stanford had the Hibernian characteristic of always spoiling for a fight, but he was equally ready for a reconciliation, and, though Mr. Maine has no doubt laboured to be fair, it seems to me likely to create a wrong impression when his only comment of the conferment of the degree is that "Stanford sent a telegram regretting that he was unable to attend the ceremony".

Herbert Thompson  
Leeds

Elgar's response contains 'numerous crossings-out and revisions [...] before he decided, apparently, not to send the letter after all'. When Elgar writes 'a Mr Herbert Thompson', 'a' is an afterthought, seemingly designed to distance himself from the critic despite their earlier friendly relations (EB letter 2581).

16 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers. Letters of a Creative Life II 1904–1934* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 606.

17 Basil Maine, *Edward Elgar. His Life and Works* (London: Bell, 1933).

18 Percy M. Young transcribes the letter without the crossings-out; see *Elgar OM. A Study of a Musician* (London: Collins, 1955), 235–6.

2 July 1933

Sir:

My attention has been drawn to the letter from a Mr. Herbert Thompson under the heading 'Elgar and Stanford' which introduces the word "disagreement", a word to which in this connection I definitely object. There could be no 'disagreements'. Stanford (Mr. Dr. and Knight) at various times thought it well to avoid speaking to me for periods varying very considerably in length. It was a matter for comment that such periods of silence invariably began when some work of mine was produced.

I never refused to 'shake hands' after these silences although the reason for them was never disclosed; three men whom Stanford asked to 'approach' me with a view to a renewal on his part of ordinary civilities were A. E. Rodewald, Hubert Parry and, last of all, Granville Bantock. On every occasion I hoped that the reason for 'cutting' me might be told: Stanford only said 'We (!) have been under a cloud'.

I shook hands without comment but I am still without knowledge of the reason for Stanford's somewhat eccentric silences.

Mr. Thompson's reference to the Cambridge telegram shows that he knows nothing of the matter: at that moment Stanford was very friendly to me, but he did not wish to meet Sir Frederick Cowen who was receiving the Mus. D. at the same time.

The letter is unsigned, but between 'was' and 'receiving' it seems to read 'Yours obediently' (not crossed out). Perhaps Elgar remembered that he and Alice had once been friendly with Herbert and Edith Thompson, and so withheld his response. Cowen, five years Elgar's senior and knighted only in 1901, was a possible rival to Stanford in the struggle to succeed Sullivan as the Leeds Festival conductor. On degree-day (22 November 1900), Stanford was in Leeds discussing the appointment. Elgar had earlier written to Percy Buck that Stanford if appointed 'will kill the festival artistically. Cowen is far & away the best man and failing him I am the next up'. (On 16 November Cowen had conducted the first London performance of *Froissart*.)<sup>19</sup> Perhaps, therefore, Stanford did not deliberately snub either Elgar or Cowen. But, in conclusion, it seems that the friendship with Thompson not only began, but possibly foundered, on Elgar's sometimes problematic connection to the Leeds Triennial Festival.

19 Jerrold Northrop Moore (ed.), *Letters of a Lifetime* (2nd edition, Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2012), 96; Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 201, 205.

2581  
10/3  
2004/1581

my attention has been drawn to a  
letter from Mr. Herbert Thompson  
Under the heading 'Elgar'  
Stanford introduces  
the word 'disagreements'  
a word to which <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ connection  
objects. The introductory  
of ~~Mr. Thompson's~~ ~~two~~ ~~pages~~ -  
~~2~~ ~~pages~~ ~~of~~ ~~his~~ ~~letter~~ ~~to~~ ~~me~~ ~~is~~ ~~of~~ ~~no~~ ~~use~~.  
There could be no 'disagree-  
ments'. Stanford (Mr. S. &  
Kempth) at various times  
thought to write & avoid  
speaking of me for periods  
<sup>very considerable</sup>  
of ~~very~~ <sup>considerable</sup> length. It was  
a matter of course that  
such periods of silence  
invariably began when  
some work of mine was  
produced.  
I never refused to

Elgar's draft for a letter in July 1933 (Elgar Will Trust)

2581  
2003  
3

~~in~~  
still without knowledge  
of the cause of Stanford's  
inward eccentric  
~~methods~~  
silences.  
Mr. Thompson referred  
the Cambridge telegram  
shows that he knows both  
the matter: at that moment  
Stanford was very friendly  
to me ~~but~~ but he ~~was~~  
not ~~to~~ ~~meet~~ ~~my~~ ~~at~~ ~~that~~ ~~time~~  
I believe even so as  
I believe from Berkeley  
seeing the Mrs. S. at the  
same time.

2581  
2003  
2

to 'Shakespeare's' after  
the silence <sup>at that</sup> ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~time~~  
to the room for them to  
never discuss it. I do  
Stanford called ~~it~~ ~~it~~  
worth ~~more~~ ~~than~~ ~~the~~ ~~time~~ ~~he~~  
spent in Stanford, when  
I 'approach' me with  
his paper to ~~write~~ ~~me~~ ~~on~~  
the ~~subject~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~course~~  
~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~work~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~course~~  
of the work of R. Rodwald  
at Cambridge, Boston.  
On every occasion when  
~~that~~ ~~that~~ ~~at~~ ~~referred~~ ~~to~~  
'cutting' me might be  
to ~~the~~ ~~subject~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~course~~  
of the work 'we' have  
been under a cloud  
of shadowed ~~at~~ ~~the~~  
moment but I am still

*Acknowledgements:*

The letters illustrated are published with permission of the Elgar Will Trust, and I am grateful to the Trust, and to Robert Montgomery, and to Leeds University, for permission to present the illustrations and transcriptions. I also acknowledge with gratitude Martin Bird's help and inspiration.

Julian Rushton, Emeritus Professor of Music at the University of Leeds, has published on opera, Mozart, Berlioz, Elgar, and others. His Elgar publications include two volumes for the Complete Edition (Music for String Orchestra and Songs with Orchestra), and from Cambridge University Press a handbook on the Variations (1999), and, as joint editor and contributor, the Cambridge Companion to Elgar (with Daniel M. Grimley, 2004) and Elgar Studies (with J.P.E. Harper-Scott, 2007).



Photograph of Herbert Thompson and his wife in the Diary for 1909.

## ‘The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne’: Elgar and Irish Cultural Identity

Andrew Neill

*‘Now then ride the wintry dawn where Ben Bulbin sets the scene.’<sup>1</sup>*

‘Heroic melancholy’ is how William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) described the music composed by Elgar for *Diarmuid and Grania*, a play part written by Yeats and completed in the summer of 1901. Yeats, one of the twentieth century’s greatest writers in the English language, ‘nailed’ the music with a phrase that is now usually mentioned when Elgar’s music is discussed. Nevertheless, it may seem extravagant to consume the pages of this journal in considering an almost forgotten play the published music for which lasts less than fifteen minutes. However, Elgar’s music is of the highest quality and only a little about the context of the music has been written in biographies and notes for recordings, the most extensive pieces being by Diana McVeagh in her *Elgar The Music Maker* (2007) and Percy Young’s article *Elgar and the Irish Dramatists* (1993).<sup>2</sup> There is, inevitably, more than meets the eye: the story behind Elgar’s late commission to compose the music and, later, his innocent involvement in the inevitable sniping that was part of the intellectual and cultural development of Ireland at that time.

This is also a story of misunderstandings, notably Anglo-Irish ones. There is the tension that developed between the two playwrights who were trying to collaborate: the Irish writer and dramatist George Moore (1852-1933) and Yeats both of whom managed to misunderstand each other: ‘sometimes at cross-purposes and interrupted by two quarrels, one irritable, the other acrimonious’.<sup>3</sup> At other times they enjoyed goading each other with their writing. ‘He [Moore] will be remembered less by the creations of his imagination than for his malicious and witty account of his contemporaries’.<sup>4</sup> An insensitive body of English actors was involved and the possible involvement of an almost forgotten Irish-French composer should be mentioned too, as well as the intercession of the conductor Henry Wood. Critics complained of the involvement of an English theatre company and the use of music by an English composer as well as the dubious morals of the main characters, Diarmuid and Grania. So that Elgar’s music can be placed in context, I examine the relationship between Moore and Yeats, their struggle to agree on the structure of the play, the dissent that developed during rehearsals and the critical aftermath which, of course, concerned Elgar’s music. It is also, at times, an amusing tale.

- 1 From *Under Ben Bulbin* by W. B. Yeats. The mountain is on the coast of County Sligo.
- 2 Ed. Raymond Monk, *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature* (Scolar Press, Aldershot, 1993).
- 3 Ed. J. C. C. Mays, *Diarmuid and Grania Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats and George Moore*, (Cornell University Press, New York, 2005), xxix.
- 4 Susan Langstaff Mitchell, *George Moore* (Talbot Press, Dublin, 1916), 149.

In his autobiography Sir Henry Wood recalled attending the 1901 Bayreuth Festival and meeting George Moore there. It was this meeting that was to lead to Elgar's commission to compose the music for the play *Diarmuid and Grania*:

'... in a sense I was responsible for his writing it at all. Moore had tried to persuade me to write it. I told him I was not a composer and never intended to compose again, but he was not to be put off. I made all kinds of suggestions, but nothing seemed to satisfy him. One day he asked me whether I knew Elgar. I told him I knew him very well. As he seemed to think Elgar was the man to write the music to his play, I gave him a letter of introduction'.<sup>5</sup>

During October 1899, Moore persuaded Yeats to collaborate in the writing of a play based on *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne* (*Toraigheacht Dhiarmada agus Gráinne*), an Irish legend first written down in the *Book of Leinster* in about AD 1130 but brought to wider attention by the translation of P. W. Joyce which was published in 1879.<sup>6</sup> Moore described it as 'Ireland's greatest love story', a tale mirrored in many European cultures. Diarmuid is part-Tristan, part-Siegfried but wholly Irish. Like Tristan, he betrays his leader for the attractions of a woman, and like Siegfried he is killed on a hunting trip (albeit not by treachery but by a boar). Moore, a Roman Catholic, was the son of an MP and inherited the family estate in County Mayo which provided him with a substantial income. The family moved to London when Moore was sixteen and he was to spend much of the following years in London and Paris. He was living in London when he began his co-operation with Yeats having become aware of the legend through productions such as Vincent D'Indy's opera *Fervaal* (the son of a Celtic king) in Brussels in March 1897 and Hamish MacCunn's *Diarmid* produced later that year at Covent Garden. The play, on which Yeats and Moore co-operated, to be called *Diarmuid and Grania*, was written as the 'Irish Literary Revival' was having an impact on Irish culture and identity.



**George Moore by Henry Tonks, 1901**

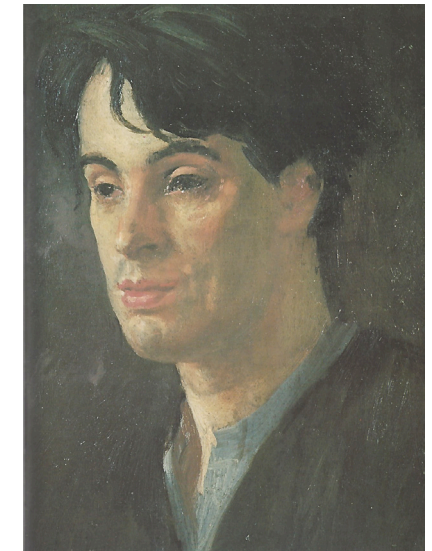
5 Henry J. Wood, *My life in music*, (Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1938), 168.

6 Patrick Joyce's version of the legend is called *The pursuit of Dermot and Grania*.

Yeats, with a protestant Anglo-Irish background, also spent much of his early development as a poet in London where his circle included Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), W. E. Henley (1849-1903) and, later, Ezra Pound (1885-1972). Figures such as Lady Augusta Gregory, the Fay brothers, Douglas Hyde, Moore and Yeats, who would be key in the founding of The Abbey Theatre, corresponded at length and Yeats kept Lady Gregory informed of the progress of the play as it headed towards its first night. This is no place to consider Yeats's increasingly conflicted relationship with England and, during his co-operation with Moore, his criticisms were as much about what he saw as 'the intellectual bankruptcy of England' as those that grew from his support for an Independent Ireland. Nevertheless, Yeats was committed to the English language as his devotion to the poetry of Blake, Keats and Shelley shows. Moore's relationship with Yeats was not easy and, although they met often, by the end of the creation of *Diarmuid and Grania* 'they had passed one another on the journey'.<sup>7</sup> *Diarmuid and Grania* opened in Dublin's Gaiety Theatre on October 21, 1901<sup>8</sup> when it was coupled with *Casadh an tSugáin* (*The Twisting of the Rope*) by Douglas Hyde (1860-1949), a play performed by amateurs in the Irish language. Both productions were the last for the Irish Literary Theatre and ran until 26 October, with three evening performances and two matinées. Although hardly a lavish production (as sketches by Yeats's brother, Jack, make clear), *Diarmuid and Grania* was initially well received by audiences and some critics. However, fatally, 'Diarmuid fell afoul [sic] of a campaign on behalf of Irish actors for Irish theatre and simultaneously of charges of historical inaccuracy and moral indecency'.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Legend**

During the time of the ancient bands of warriors known as the Fianna, Gráinne, the daughter of Cormac, the High King of Ireland, was betrothed to the chieftain, Finn MacCoole.<sup>10</sup> Finn, a widower, is much older than Gráinne and, during a feast to celebrate their betrothal at royal Tara, she spies Diarmuid – 'the most chivalrous and generous of all the warriors of the Fianna' – and falls in love with him. Reluctantly, Diarmuid agrees to flee with Gráinne after she drugs the assembled Fianna. Loyal to Finn, Diarmuid is at first reluctant to consummate the relationship but eventually they marry and have many children. Having made his peace with Finn (or so he thought) Diarmuid, while out hunting, is killed by a boar, an event ordained in his childhood. Mortally wounded, Diarmuid says to Finn: 'For when, at the Boyne, the noble gift of foreknowledge was given to thee, this



**William Butler Yeats, by Augustus John, 1907**

7 Mitchell, 102. The difficult relationship between Yeats and Moore grew worse and lasted until Moore's death.

8 All dates are from 1901 unless otherwise specified.

9 Ed. Mays, xxix.

10 The names are spelt as in Yeats and Moore's play. Finn MacCoole was a loose Anglicization of Fionn mac Cumhaill.



gift also thou didst receive – that to whomsoever thou shouldst give a drink of water from the closed palms of thy two hands, he should be healed from sickness or wounds, even though he stood at the point of death'.<sup>11</sup> Finn fetches water but allows it to drain through his fingers; twice. At last, persuaded to save Diarmuid, he produces a drink a third time but finds Diarmuid has died by the time he can carry the water to him. In the play the water is brought to Diarmuid in a helmet for the second and third time but he (Diarmuid) deliberately spills it before dying.

Most legends are grounded in some truth, a truth long-forgotten but bent by the imagination and culture of succeeding generations. The legend of *Diarmuid and Gráinne* is but one example of how tales can change over time or develop different versions suggesting alternative endings and actions throughout the story. There may be links to other legends, in this case that of Tristan and Iseult or Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere. These tales portray cuckolded monarchs (Kings Arthur and Mark) and a pursuit ending in the death of at least one of the protagonists. In Yeats and Moore's version of *Diarmuid and Gráinne* there is more than a passing similarity between the death of Diarmuid and that of Siegfried as portrayed in the *Nibelunglied* and, of course, in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*.

### *Yeats and Moore's play*

The background to Moore's courting of Yeats is complicated but both writers felt they could achieve some advantage from a collaboration based on the understanding that Moore would provide an outline of a plot with Yeats involved in re-writing and expanding the dialogue.<sup>12</sup> In a letter (1 November 1899) to his sister, Susan, Yeats mentions that he and Moore had been staying at Tillyra Castle in County Galway<sup>13</sup> and says: ' . . . have started a play with him for the Irish Literary Theatre on Dermot and Grania'.<sup>14</sup> A year later (15 November 1900) Yeats was complaining to Moore that he had made too many concessions: 'I have continually given up motives and ideas, that I preferred to yours, because I admitted your authority to be greater than mine. On the question of style however I (will) can make no concessions.'<sup>15</sup>

It is possible to see 'the seduction of an innocent genius [Yeats] by a mischievous troublemaker [Moore]'.<sup>16</sup> However, Yeats was a willing collaborator, the first draft of the play being completed by 5 November 1900, Yeats writing from his London apartment on 11 December: ' . . . I have been worried to death by my play with Moore. Now I am free for the play is finished. We passed it this afternoon'.<sup>17</sup> This was only partially true as both Moore and Yeats were to alter the text up to the first night and beyond.

11 From *Old Celtic Romances* by P. W. Joyce (Wordsworth Editions, Ware, 2000), 240.

12 In most of the publicity and, in the published edition of the play, Yeats's name is placed first.

13 The home of Edward Martyn (1859-1929), the first president of Sinn Féin.

14 Ed. Warwick Gould, John Kelly & Deirdre Toomey, *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats Volume Two 1896-1900* (Clarendon Press, Oxford), 460. Tillyra Castle was the home of Edward Martyn (1859-1923) a founder of the Abbey Theatre, cousin of George Moore and first President of Sinn Féin.

15 Ed. Gould, 585. For most of the time during which Yeats and Moore collaborated Yeats lived at 18 Woburn Buildings near St Pancras Church, Bloomsbury. He rented the rooms for 23 years; originally taking them as they were a discreet place for him to consummate his affair with the novelist Olivia Shakespear (1863-1968).

16 Ed. Mays, xxxii.

17 Ed. Gould, 600.

Arguments between Yeats and Moore continued, largely over matters of style and because of 'Yeats's evident reserve in sexual matters'.<sup>18</sup> At times neither author could agree on the spelling of many of the names of the characters in the play some of which were only settled at the last moment. Both Yeats and Moore hoped to persuade the leading English actress-manager of the day, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, to accept the role of Grania. At one stage her involvement was considered critical and both authors intended to propose that she pay £200 to each of them to 'be used as capital for [the] Dublin performance'.<sup>19</sup> Yeats also noted, prophetically, as it turned out: 'The objection to our doing the play in Dublin in May is that we would not have Mrs Pat Campbell & that a bad performance & partial failure (would endanger our) might spoil the London adventure'. Together Moore and Yeats visited Campbell in her dressing room in the Royalty Theatre in Soho and, although initially enthusiastic, she was reluctant to travel to Dublin. This led to the appointment of the F. R. Benson Company that would take the production to Ireland with Frank Benson performing the role of Diarmuid and his wife Constance that of Grania.<sup>20</sup> When, in due course, the play opened in London it was agreed that Mrs. Campbell would take the part of Grania. The death of Queen Victoria in January 1901, which led to the closure of all London Theatres, created financial hardship for many not the least Mrs Campbell who was in financial difficulties anyway. She never paid Moore and Yeats and their play never came to London.

Disagreement between Yeats and Moore continued, notably over Act II and the fact that Moore had a vision of Grania not shared by Yeats. Maud Cunard (1872-1948), Moore's mistress, was the inspiration for 'his' Grania. Moore wrote to Cunard on 18 September 1900: 'Grania, which is you, is nearly done, I shall finish it next week'.<sup>21</sup> Communication was not helped by the move of Moore from London to Dublin in 1901 although Yeats moved between England and Ireland frequently. It is clear that Yeats was content with the involvement of the Benson Company when he attended their Shakespeare cycle in Stratford upon Avon at the end of April: 'the Benson Company are playing wonderfully' he wrote.<sup>22</sup>

The main 'persons in the play' are: King Cormac, the High King; Finn MacCoole, the Chief of the Fianna; four of 'his chief men': Diarmuid, Goll, Usheen, and Caoelte; Conan the Bald, one of the Fianna; Grania, the King's daughter, and Laban, a druidess. (There are an additional thirteen other sundry characters). The story told in the play is but another variation on the ancient tale *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne*. There is a mysteriousness in the story which the play manages to sustain although leaving some doubt as to whether or not Diarmuid and Grania even consummated their relationship and not explaining why, after seven years, Finn and Diarmuid should be so easily reconciled. Grania's dilemma as she realises she may have made a mistake in running away with the conflicted Diarmuid is also conveyed even if the play lacks much drama.

18 Ed. Mays, xxxi.

19 Ed. Gould, 625. Letter to Lady Gregory, 26 December 1900.

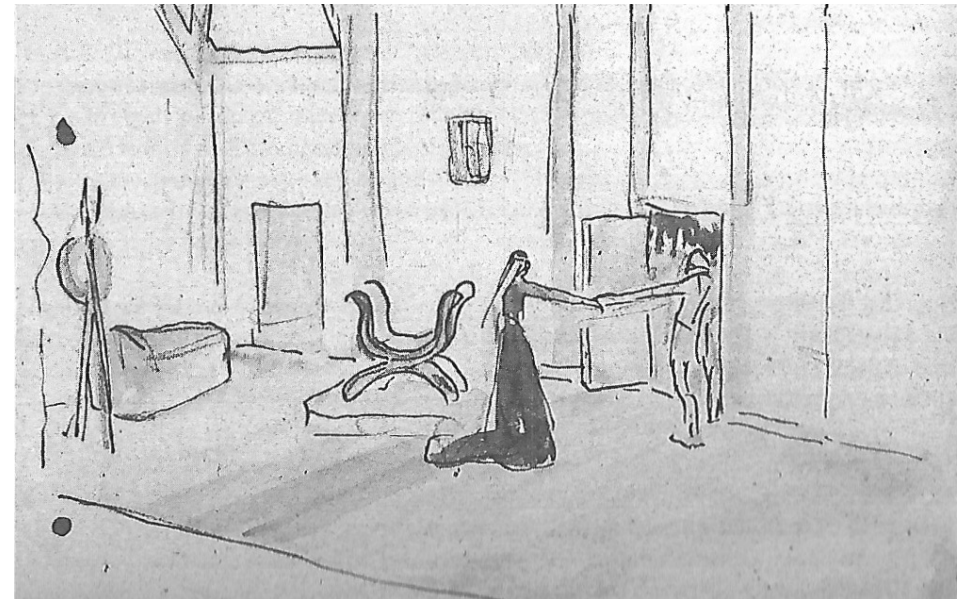
20 Sir Frank Benson (1858-1919). The Benson Company was formed in 1883.

21 Ed. Gould, 561n.

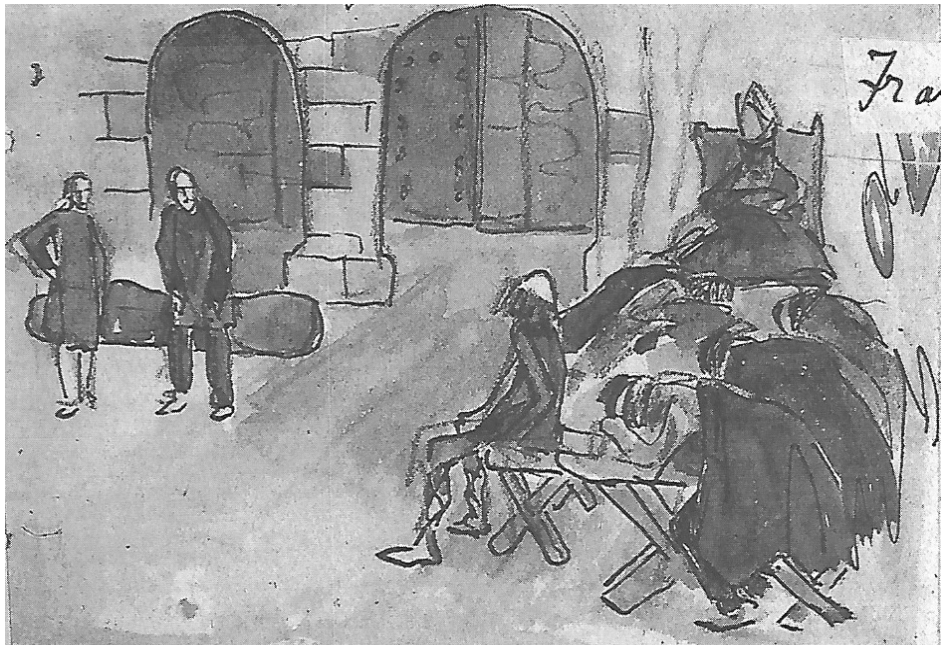
22 In early January 1901 Yeats wrote, from his London apartment, to Lady Augusta Gregory confirming that Mrs Campbell would acquire the London rights to the play but expressing some concern at the involvement of the Benson company notwithstanding his admiration for some of the actors in the company. Nevertheless, Yeats's enthusiasm for the project was clear as he was, even then, looking forward to selling the American rights to the play.



Act 1. Grania and Laban bring in the drinks.



Act 1: Diarmid and Grania leave the feast.



Act 1. The drugged Fenians at the table. Usheen and Caoelte watch.



Act 2: Grania (on ground) watches as Diarmid prepares to go hunting.

### Grania and Diarmid – The Incidental Music:

On July 1 Moore declared *Diarmuid and Grania*<sup>23</sup> finished and went in search of a composer to provide music to ‘exalt the end of the play’. On 20 August Henry Wood wrote his letter of introduction to Elgar:

‘My friend Mr. George Moore, the novelist, has just sent me a new musical Drama, which he contemplated giving a trial performance in Dublin, will you, as a personal favour to me, when you are next in town, arrange an appointment to meet him, or if more convenient, ask him to post you a copy of his Drama, he thinks it would make a good Opera . . .’<sup>24</sup>

Elgar wrote immediately to Moore who responded on 22 August, his mind on an eventual operatic composition:

‘I regret to say I know very little of your music – only a few pages but these are full of beauty and I should be pleased if my drama inspires you to write an opera. It will be produced in Dublin on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October by (Frank) Benson’s Shakespeare Company - it is based on a legend and the legend is the great heroic legend of Ireland, Diarmuid and Grania. I do not know if I or Mr. W. B. Yeats, my collaborator in this play, will be able to find time to versify it. For the moment my concern is to get you to write me a few pages of music. I feel I must have music for the end of the play and I cannot entertain the thought of casual music – a funeral march taken out of an opera and arranged to suit the occasion or a couple of Irish melodies arranged for harp accompaniment. My last act passes into a forest and horns are heard from time to time (hunting horns) and if I have the casual horns blowing whatever notes the local horn player thinks will do I shall lose all interest in the play . . . a moment comes when words can go no further and then I should like music to make up the emotion and carry it on’.<sup>25</sup>

Moore recalled:

‘. . . the memory of some music I had heard long ago at Leeds, by Edward Elgar, came to mind. If I knew Elgar I’d write and ask him to send me a horn-call. Do you know, I think I will’.<sup>26</sup>

Elgar swiftly composed the horn calls to be used throughout the play and was soon absorbed by the composition of the ‘Funeral March’. Moore met Elgar on 4 September in London and on the 28th Elgar wrote to Jaeger: ‘I have been awfully busy writing & have finished the short incidental music to the Irish play: there’s a funeral march which you wd. like & it sounds big & weird – not deep in the orchl. whirlwind sense’.<sup>27</sup>

Elgar was in Liverpool when he received another letter from Moore:

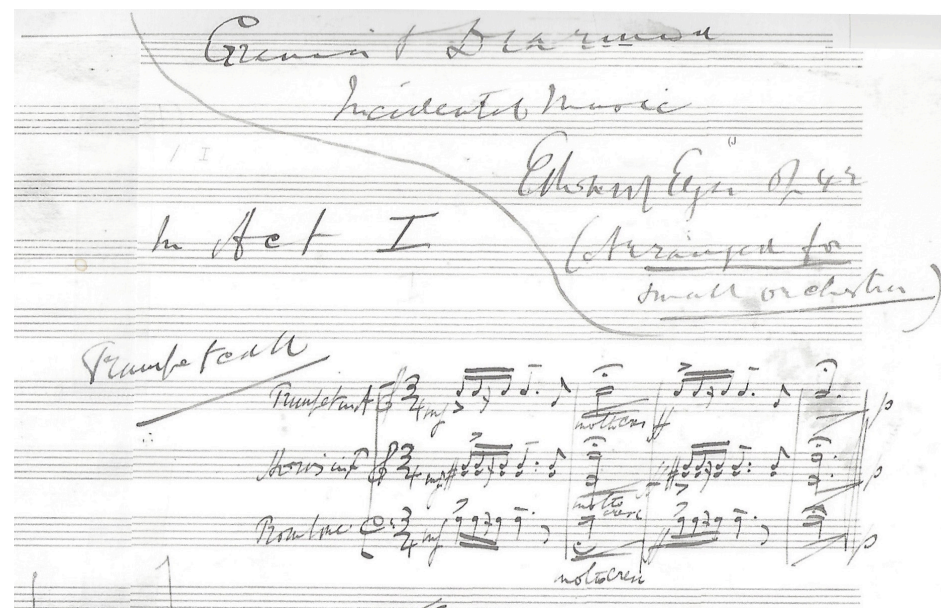
23 The title of the play when published.

24 Ed. Martin Bird, *Road to Recognition, Diaries 1897-1901* (Elgar Works, Rickmansworth, 2015), 355. Wood infers that Moore shared Yeats’s view that the London stage was the goal and that Dublin was to give ‘a trial performance’.

25 Letter from George Moore, 22 August 1901, quoted by Bird, 356.

26 George Moore, *Hail and Farewell – Salve*, (Heinemann, London, 1912), 102. Moore had attended the premiere of *Caractacus* in Leeds on 5 October 1898.

27 Ed. Bird, 364.



The first page of the score for ‘small orchestra’.

‘I enclose . . . words for the song. I feel it is a great shame to trouble you with them, my hope is that the trouble will be a slight one. The little song would probably be sung without an accompaniment, a mere folk chant, and this you could probably be arranged in an hour or so, at least I hope so’.<sup>28</sup>

Lucy Franklein, the actress playing the part of the Druidess Laban, had asked for a song to end Act One. The words had been written quickly by Yeats and Elgar responded promptly to Moore’s request by composing his setting and sent it to Dublin a few days before opening night. Later Elgar was to become familiar with composing and later conducting an orchestra reduced in size for the ‘pit’ of a theatre and he had already established the size of the Gaiety orchestra which consisted of ‘two first violins, one instrument each for the other strings, two horns, [side] drum, two “Tympanum”, simbals [sic], oboe, bassoon, trombone, and celeste’.<sup>29</sup> The music was declared complete on 2 October and Elgar sent the manuscript to Moore who then tried to persuade him to come to Dublin for the first night, but Elgar was committed to the Leeds Festival and to attending the première of his first two *Pomp and Circumstance Marches* in Liverpool on 19 October. Elgar’s contribution, anglicised as *Grania and Diarmid* when published was scored for a full-sized symphony orchestra, his mastery of orchestration subtly expressing a mist-shrouded Celtic world.

The ‘Incidental Music’ begins with an introduction during which (*moderato*) Horn and trumpet calls (now harmonised) precede a passage for strings, harp and woodwind (*andante*) before (*maestoso*) the Funeral March in A minor begins (woodwind, horns and strings). This is a cousin to the contemporary first two *Pomp and Circumstance Marches* and is set in the same key, A minor,

28 Ed. Bird, 373.

29 Ed. Raymond Monk, *Edward Elgar Music and Literature* (Scholar Press, Aldershot, 1993), 124.

as the ‘Second March’. Diarmid’s body is borne on a litter centre-stage. The music changes to F sharp minor as the death of Diarmid is marked by a tam-tam stroke and the harp becomes dominant during which Finn declaims: ‘He hears the harp-playing of Aonghus; it is by music that he leads the dead’. The music ends in a mood of stoical grief as Diarmid’s body is carried for burial by Cormac’s men to the slopes of Ben Bulben where, one day, Grania will join him. Clarinets and first violins sing the threnody which accompany Diarmid’s body: ‘Elgar must have seen the primeval forest’<sup>30</sup> was Moore’s comment. The march dies away, *ppp*, as horns, timpani and strings sing their soft farewell. This is no Wagnerian copy. Elgar does not attempt to mirror the magnificence of Siegfried’s Funeral March for the complex tale of Diarmid’s seduction into betrayal (for which he is eventually redeemed) is subtler than Siegfried’s unwitting drug-induced change of allegiance in Act One of *Götterdämmerung*.



**The burial of Diarmid:  
Ben Bulben, County Sligo.**

Laban’s spinning song considers the state of her world in a Celtic version of Wagner’s Norns: a miniature in keeping with the play’s setting but so short it leaves the listener wishing for more. The accompaniment is for woodwind, a single horn in F, harp and strings.

There are seven that pull the thread.  
There is one under the waves,  
There is one where the winds are wove,  
There is one in the old grey house  
Where the dew is made before dawn.  
One lives in the house of the sun,  
And one in the house of the moon,  
And one lies under the boughs of the golden apple tree,  
And one spinner is lost.  
Holiest, holiest seven  
Put all your pow’r on the thread  
That I’ve spun in the house tonight.

Elgar wrote to Yeats in March 1902 asking if he could be granted permission to publish *There are seven that pull the thread*. It is within Yeats’s reply that we have his perceptive understanding of Elgar’s music.

30 Moore, 105.

23 March

18 Woburn Buildings, Euston Road

Dear Sir

Yes certainly. With great pleasure. I must give myself the pleasure of letting you [know how] wonderful, in its heroic melancholy, I thought your Grania music. I wish you could set other words of mine and better work than those verses written in twenty minutes but you are welcome to them.

Yrs sincerely

W B Yeats<sup>31</sup>

The text of the song was published in *A Broad Sheet* in January 1902 but was not included when the play was published in 1951. Yeats seemed unconcerned at the commissioning of an English composer and let any ‘fall-out’ in this respect rest on the shoulders of Moore as can be seen below. When he described the March, Yeats brilliantly illustrated Moore’s observation: ‘when words can go no further, then I would like music to take up the emotion and to carry it on’.<sup>32</sup> Elgar would not hear this music until the Funeral March was performed in London’s Queen’s Hall on January 18, 1902. The concert was conducted by Henry Wood to whom he dedicated the music.<sup>33</sup>

The choice of an English composer for the play touched a raw Irish nerve. On 12 September Dublin’s *Freeman’s Journal* published a protest from ‘An Irish Musician’ whose take on the *Enigma Variations* is certainly original:

‘Dr Elgar has no connection with Ireland, and even his name is almost unknown in this island. Dr Richter and the Hallé Band lately performed in Dublin a piece of his, supposed to be a musical description of fourteen (or was it forty) of his friends, and the criticism of the wearied audience upon it was that his friends, though a singularly varied lot, were all unattractive, and far too numerous. Elgar’s name as a “scholarly musician” is well established in England, and there can be no doubt of his perfect competence to write for an orchestra. Still, the question remains, why not an Irishman?’

*Freeman’s Journal* rose to the implicit challenge and interviewed George Moore; the report of which was published the next day, 13 September:

“I quite agree with what your correspondent says. The incidental music for “Diarmuid and Grania” ought to be written by an Irish musician. . . . I did my best . . . and my first notion was to apply to Augusta Holmes [sic], the only Irish musician who writes for the orchestra.” The Interviewer interrupted: ‘What about Stanford? Is not his Irish symphony, if he had written nothing else, a work of great merit, and is he not as Irish as the lady from Paris?’

“An anti-Irishman,” said Mr. Moore “is less welcome than even a stranger. And then, is not there every reason to suppose that, even if Stanford were asked to write music for the Irish Literary Theatre, he would certainly refuse? So I asked Augusta Holmes. She would have been delighted to help us but was unfortunately going to Normandy and was engaged in important work. She proposed that

31 Percy Young, *Elgar O. M.* (London, Collins, 1955), 97. Young dates the letter as 1903.

32 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), p.205.

33 The opening motif of Elgar’s ‘Incidental Music’ music appears in *In the Faery Hills* by Arnold Bax. Whether or not Bax borrowed from Elgar or they both came across the motif independently is open to conjecture. However, it seems unlikely that Elgar had sufficient time to research much Irish music, if any, before delivering his commission. One other Elgar connection to the play lay in the part of Usheen which was taken by Henry Ainley. It was Ainley who recorded the recitation in Elgar’s recording of *Carillon* made in January 1915.

we should use the march that ends her fine symphony 'Irlande'. But it is too full of dramatic effect, and quite unsuitable for the purpose in view. You might as well play a march by Berlioz to finish 'Hamlet'."

The article ended with the following:

'Reduced to bald summary, the answer to his question, "Why is not an Irish musician engaged to write the incidental music for 'Diarmuid and Grania'?" is because Mr. George Moore does not know any Irish musicians who can write for orchestra except one in Paris who is not available'.

The 'Irish Musician' was not going to accept this and his response was published on 16 September:

'It is consoling that a mere Irish musician has elicited from Mr. George Moore an explanation as to his inconsistent action in employing the services of a newly-fledged English musician, Dr Edward Elgar, to compose the incidental music for his . . . play. Forsooth, "because Mr. George Moore does not know any Irish musicians who can write for orchestra except one in Paris who is not available"! This is really sublime effrontery from an Irishman; but, perhaps one must rather commiserate a newly-arrived Dublin resident (Moore), who has spent all his life in France and England, and of course not be expected to make the acquaintance of any common Irish musician. . . . Now, first of all, did Mr. Moore condescend to ask any Irish musician to compose the incidental music? There are at least half-dozen competent Irishmen who could undoubtedly furnish orchestra work for the play. Did Mr. Moore never hear of Mr. Brendan Rogers, the worthy organist of the Pro-cathedral Dublin? Is he aware that a famous oratorio composer still lives in Kilkenny, namely, Rev. Dr. Torrance? Does he ignore Rev. Dr. Collinson, Dr. Charles Wood, Mr. M'Clintock, Mackey Glover, Mr. Robert Dwyer, Mr. Connolly etc.?'

'Secondly, Mr. Moore says that he knows Dr. Elgar and he likes his music! Sic volo, sic jubeo! Unfortunately, however, Mr. Moore's judgement with the avowed objects of the Irish Literary Theatre that an Irish composer, who is well versed as a musical critic does not stand very high . . . It is a matter of history that Napoleon the First was enamoured musically of the tuning of an orchestra, and the late Queen Victoria was partial to the skirl of the pipes "De gustibus non disputandum". The 'Irish Musician' concludes with the reasonable point: '. . . it is decidedly more in keeping with the avowed objects of the Irish Literary Theatre that an Irish composer, who is well versed in Irish folk-music and in the traditional rendering of our ancient airs, should be selected to compose suitable incidental music for the various Irish and a Anglo-Irish plays soon to be produced in Dublin.'

Time was also running out but that was unlikely to mollify correspondents of this nature. Moore's decision not to approach Stanford may seem surprising for Stanford often stated that he was an Irishman first and foremost. Moore's decision was more likely based upon the involvement of Yeats who, in 1900, had called Queen Victoria 'the official head and symbol of an empire that is robbing the South African republics of their liberty, as it has robbed Ireland of hers'.<sup>34</sup> Stanford, knighted in 1901, 'a member of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, he was very sensitive about the position of Ireland within the Union'.<sup>35</sup> It is therefore unlikely he would have been sympathetic to working with Yeats so the approach to Augusta Holmès (1847-1903) is more logical although she had never lived in Ireland. A prolific composer of symphonies, symphonic poems, choral works and four operas, she

34 Ed. Gould, 503. From a long letter to the Editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, 20 March 1900, in which Yeats criticises the forthcoming visit of Queen Victoria to Ireland.

35 Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Ashgate Publishing Limited, Aldershot), 2002, 130.

**Gaiety Theatre, Dublin.**

MICHAEL GUNN, LES  
Ma. C. HYLAND

Telegrams—GAIETY, DUBLIN. Telephone, 599.

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**PROGRAMME . . . . ONE PENNY**

FOR FIVE NIGHTS AND  
**MATINEES—**

WEDNESDAY, AT 2.30 P.M. . . . . DIARMID AND GRANIA  
SATURDAY, AT 2.30 P.M. . . . . KING LEAR

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THIS (TUESDAY), and WEDNESDAY EVENINGS, OCTOBER 22nd  
and 23rd, 1901, at 8,  
BY REQUEST OF THE IRISH LITERARY THEATRE,  
—\* MR. F. R. BENSON \*—  
WILL PRODUCE  
A New and Romantic Play in Three Acts, entitled:  
**DIARMID AND GRANIA.**  
By GEORGE MOORE AND W. B. YEATS.

<p>King Cormac . . . . . the High King . . . . . Finn MacCool, the Chief of the Fianna . . . . . Diarmid . . . . . his Chief . . . . . Goll . . . . . Men . . . . . Ushen . . . . . Caecile . . . . . Fergus . . . . . Fathma . . . . . Griffin . . . . . Niall . . . . . Conan the Bald . . . . . An Old Man . . . . . A Shepherd . . . . . A Boy . . . . . A Young Man . . . . . Grania . . . . . Laban . . . . .</p>	<p>Mr. ALFRED BRYDENE Mr. FRANK RODNEY Mr. F. R. BENSON Mr. CHARLES BIBBY Mr. HENRY AINLEY Mr. E. HARCOURT WILLIAMS Mr. G. WALLACE JONSTONE Mr. WALTER HAMPDEN Mr. STUART EDGAR Mr. MATTHEW LANG Mr. ARTHUR WHITELEY Mr. H. O. NICHOLSON Mr. OWEN Miss ELLA TARRANT Miss JEAN MACKINLAY Mrs. F. R. BENSON Miss LUCY FRANKLIN</p>
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Serving Men, Troops of the Fianna, &c.

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Act 1 . . . . . THE BANQUETING HALL IN TARA  
Act 2 . . . . . DIARMID'S HOUSE  
Act 3 . . . . . THE WOODED SLOPES OF BEN BULBEN

Special Music Written by Dr. EDWARD ELGAR.

<p>Acting Manager . . . . . Stage Manager . . . . . Assistant Stage Manager . . . . . Advance Representative . . . . .</p>	<p>For . . . . . Mr. F. R. BENSON . . . . . Mr. JAMES FOX . . . . .</p>
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To be Followed on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday Evenings by  
**'THE TWISTING OF THE ROPE.'**  
By DOUGLAS HYDE, LL.D.  
Cast filled by Members of the Gaelic Amateur Dramatic Society.

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Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and Saturday Matinee - **KING LEAR.**

**ORCHESTRA.**

<p>Overture . . . . . Selection . . . . . Excerpt . . . . . Funeral March . . . . .</p>	<p>Shakespearean . . . . . The Lily of Killarney . . . . . Songs without Words . . . . . Diarmid and Grania . . . . .</p>
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Jules Guillon  
Arr. by G. R. Chapman  
Mentelsohn  
Dr. E. Elgar

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MONDAY NEXT—  
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**THE WEDDING GUEST**  
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Playbill: note the anglicised spelling: Diarmid and Grania.

was born in Paris the daughter of an Irish father and French mother. She studied under César Franck and initially published under the pseudonym of Hermann Zenta. *Irlande, poème symphonique* was composed in 1882. Holmès's family was sufficiently well-known to Cosima and Richard Wagner for Cosima to call Holmès's father "the old Fenian". She was similarly unconventional, living openly with the poet Catulle Mendès (1841-1909) by whom she had five children.<sup>36</sup>

### Pre-Production

Advance publicity for *Diarmuid and Grania* began in the summer. It was strangely muted with the critic Frank John Fay 'drawing attention to the baldness of the advance announcement' [by the Gaiety Theatre] of *Diarmuid and Grania* in the Dublin papers: 'Mr. Benson is to produce an original Irish play by a Dublin author'.<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting that the first Pan Celtic Congress was held in Dublin from 19 - 23 August to which delegates from Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Brittany and the Isle of Man attended. Yeats was heavily involved in the Congress which underlines the point that will emerge of how strange it was that he did not seem to realise that a very English theatre company performing *Diarmuid and Grania* in Dublin was courting criticism. On the 11 September *Freeman's Journal* ran a short notice quoting Yeats who said that the language of the play had 'the abundance of Elizabethan English'. Dublin's *Evening Herald* produced a supportive article on 14 September when equal space was given to both *Diarmuid and Grania* and *The Twisting of the Rope*. It then devotes a number of lines to the career of 'Dr Elgar' quoting the *Orchestral Times* stating that 'no English composer has made more rapid progress in the estimation of musicians.'

On 21 October *Freeman's Journal* published a long notice about both plays. The journalist seemed more interested in *The Twisting of the Rope*, but also reminded readers of the legend behind the Yeats and Moore dramatization. With the benefit of hindsight, it may seem surprising that an English company was entrusted with the production. Neither Moore nor Yeats seems to have considered this issue, but it is also clear that London was the goal and Yeats trusted Benson. Had the actors tried to convey a sense of Irishness, fully respected the legend they were performing and managed *not* to be or sound English then it might possibly have worked. However, there is a strong sense that the Irish production was doomed as is evidenced from the following: 'Many of the actors in Benson's company later became famous . . . but there were some doubts about the casting and the pronunciation of Irish names, a subject on which Yeats was exigent but imprecise. Benson's biographer records that: "they were pronouncing Diarmuid in three or four different ways and calling Grania 'Grawniar' or 'Grainyah'. [One of the actors] recalled that 'although Yeats was very particular with pronunciation, nobody could manage the name of Caoelte. The company called it 'Kaoltay'; Yeats said it ought to be 'Wheelsher'. That night Harcourt Williams was addressed successively as 'Wheelchair', 'Coldtea' and 'Quilty', to the horror of patriots'"<sup>38</sup>

None of this seems to have concerned Yeats who attended the rehearsals at the Gaiety Theatre and his last comment, before the first night, was about the involvement of a goat that replaced the sheep which Diarmuid would carry on stage in Act II. Despite all this, the opening night (Monday, 21 October) was a success and the three nights originally planned were extended to include a matinée on the Wednesday and with *King Lear* being replaced on the Friday. Both plays were

36 Holmès added the accent to make her name appear more French. If she is known for anything today it is the Christmas Carol, *Trois anges sont venus ce soir (Three angels came this evening)*.

37 Mays, 98.

38 Frank Tuohy, *Yeats* (Macmillan, London, 1976), 99.

performed together making five performances in all. As the week progressed and, despite full houses, the reputation of the play only changed once unsympathetic reviews were published.

### The Aftermath

The review (22 October) in *The Irish Independent and Nation* stated that 'the dialogue is of a high order' and described the 'Incidental Music' as 'having the true Gaelic ring and at the final death scene the effect was impressive.' Furthermore, the critic of the *Irish Daily Independent* (23 October) enjoyed *Diarmuid and Grania*, pointing out the 'clever, cultured dialogue, the handsome staging' and how 'the costumes in their rich variety, were the subject of unstinted admiration'. There is a suggestion that the production of *The Twisting of the Rope* was of more interest. No mention of Elgar's music was made. However, the critic of *The Leader* (2 November) begins by praising *The Twisting of the Rope* then saying that 'it was rather hard lines for those who went to see the Irish play (*Rope*) to have had perforce to sit out the other.'

The critic 'F J F'<sup>39</sup> of *The United Irishman* on 26 October began by describing the opening night as a 'memorable one for Dublin and for Ireland. The Irish language has been heard on the stage of the principal metropolitan theatre.' This, of course referred to *The Twisting of the Rope*. Fay then reminds readers that they will be familiar with the Diarmuid and Grania story and then pounces:

'To my mind the greatest triumph of the authors lies in their having written in English a play in which English actors are intolerable. Beautiful words abound all through the play and beautiful voices and beautiful speech are indispensable if we are to be moved. All through the play the English voice grated on one's ear, and the stolid English temperament was really at variance with what one wanted. The actors did not act the play as if they believed in it, the fact is they could not for it is not in their nature.'

No mention was made of Elgar's contribution. Fay ended: 'One incident alone would have been sufficient to damn it in my eyes. "Diarmuid's cattle are coming this way, and their sides are heavy with the rich grass of the valley which I have given you" says Cormac; and forthwith Diarmuid enters with a live lamb to turn a poem into prose.' *The Leader*, persistently unsympathetic, had run a campaign against 'the Irish Literary Society of London' claiming that 'even Mr. Yeats does not understand us, and has yet to write one line that will strike a chord of the Irish heart.'

*The United Irishman* considered *Diarmuid and Grania* once more on 2 November. The reviewer (presumably Fay) expressed the hope: 'that the authors will lose no time in having "Diarmuid and Grania" printed, because I cannot help thinking that much of the disappointment I have heard expressed about the play is really the result of the execrable, I can use no milder word, acting it received at the hands of Mr. Benson and his company'.

Another correspondent on the same page put forward a similar opinion and, on 9 November *The Leader* noted that '. . . this English travesty of "Diarmuid and Grainne" is false to the very core.' The morality of the story then came under attack. On 2 November *The United Irishman* also published an anonymous letter from a 'Parent' which began: 'I am a respectable Catholic.' The correspondent (presumably male) continued expressing disgust 'at the attitude taken by you with respect to that low and immoral play called "Diarmuid and Grania"'. The correspondent does not elaborate but goes on to say how he had found one of his sons reading Virgil's *The Aeneid* and had to confiscate the book because of the 'scandalous episode' of the relationship between Dido

39 Frank John Fay (1870-1931), with his actor brother William George Fay (1872-1947), were co-founders of the Abbey theatre in Dublin. 'Willie' Fay can be seen in Carol Reed's great film from 1947, *Odd Man Out*.

and Aeneas. These charges were supported by another correspondent, the so-called Willoughby Wallaby Wobbles of Rathgar. As Moore put it: ‘They (audiences) discovered that Grania was not as perfectly virtuous as an Irishwoman should be’.

Besides the unfortunate conjunction of a body of English actors performing a very Irish story in Dublin at a sensitive time and their play being joined with an Irish language production, it is not difficult to see why *Diarmuid and Grania* failed. Yeats and Moore were never at one with the subtle emphases contained within the tale. There is a lack of clarity too. For example, the decision of a reluctant Diarmuid to flee with Grania in Act One is not fully explained and why Grania seemed to fall quickly for Finn once she saw him again. This may be part of the legend, but it requires more ‘fleshing out’. Somehow the drama is sapped from the story; there is little of the tension that inhabits most versions of the legend (Finn pursuing Diarmuid and Grania for years) and there is little characterisation. ‘Yeats later remembered “the life-wasting folly of it all” and saying that “an unperturbable [sic] goat waiting to take its place in some pastoral scene was the only sensible creature among us when I heard an actor say, “look at that goat eating the property ivy”’.<sup>40</sup> Yeats must take some of the blame for the failure. He had encouraged the performance by the Benson company which, if it had been given to Irish actors, may well have led to a different reception. However, at the time Yeats probably conceded too much to Moore although there is little sign that he had any other ideas to improve the drama and, in any event, the London stage was always in his mind.

### Coda

What remains is Elgar’s music. It is music that made an impression. W. H. Reed recalled the first rehearsal of the music on 17 January 1902: ‘. . . I was so thrilled by the music, and by what was to my ear the newness of the orchestral sound . . .’.<sup>41</sup> The critic of *The Observer* was also excited: ‘The music is remarkably vivid. For the most part it consists of a dead march, in which are interwoven with remarkable skill, and in a manner familiar to students of Dr. Elgar’s music, the themes associated with the hero and heroine . . . The music seems to bring one face to face with the tragedy of life - its intense and infinite pathos’.<sup>42</sup> Elgar’s music also thrilled Moore: ‘I have heard the music. There is nothing in Wagner more beautiful and it is quite original – How you do hold on to that wailing phrase and what extraordinary effect you get out of it’.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps that is the point? Notwithstanding the views of ‘An Irish Musician’ both writers knew what they wanted and rather wonderfully Elgar achieved an Irishness in his art that somehow eluded the two Irish playwrights and certainly the company of English actors who sailed into Dublin and trod on Irish toes. In later years Elgar met Yeats from time to time notably in 1907 when he attended a series of Irish Plays at the Great Queen Street Theatre. Yeats was in London in October 1916, less than six months since the Easter Rising, when he joined Lalla Vandervelde at the Elgars for tea. Unsurprisingly the conservative Alice Elgar struggled with his company: ‘There seemed a lack of sympathetic spark. A. could not arouse a word from him’<sup>44</sup> despite Yeats being ‘a brilliant and witty

40 Robert Anderson, *Elgar*, J. M. Dent, London, 1993, 263.

41 W. H. Reed, *Elgar as I Knew Him* (Victor Gollancz, London, 1936), 21.

42 Ed. Bird, *The Path to Knighthood, Diaries 1902-1904* (Elgar Works, Rickmansworth, 2016), 6.

43 Quoted by Anderson, 263.

44 Ed. Bird, *Ridgehurst Friends* (Elgar Works, Rickmansworth, 2019), 216. The diary of Alice Elgar, 20 October 1916.

conversationalist’.<sup>45</sup>

Moore had, from time to time, continued to express the hope that the play would be suitable as an opera and he had encouraged Elgar to consider the idea: ‘Every time I hear the Dead March I hear something new in it . . . if you can write the whole opera in the same inspiration I cannot but think that you will write an opera that will live’.<sup>46</sup> This became something of an obsession, and Moore made the point again when he visited the Elgars at their home in Hampstead in 1914. Elgar directed Moore to a performance of the *Grania and Diarmid* music on 10 May in the Queen’s Hall. The following day he wrote to Elgar:

‘I went to hear it, and my feeling during the whole time was that I had never heard more beautiful music. My feelings of pleasure, however, were dashed by one of disappointment. After hearing the music last Sunday, I can no longer believe, if I ever believed it, that you were wise in refraining from writing an opera. I am sure you would have done better with Grania than you did with “The Crown of India”, and I believe you would have made much more money’.

Moore ended the letter:

‘But Grania inspired you to write one of your very best pieces of music, and as I have said, one of the most beautiful that I ever heard; so it really seems unaccountable wilfulness on your part not to go on with it, unless indeed, you feel that you are not an opera composer. . . . If you are going to write this opera, I would write some parts of it, and you could get somebody to versify it. I suppose Yeats would raise no objection’.<sup>47</sup>

Elgar’s view of the play was expressed in a letter to Ernest Newman on 13 November 1911:

‘I wish I could send you Moore’s — play which contained some good things.

The falling passage:



accompanied the three attempts to get water (in a helmet) to the wounded Diarmid — the soft passage (which reappears in the mid: of the March) was played during the death of Diarmid — when he hears the mysterious harp &c. &c’<sup>48</sup>

45 Ed. Bird, *Ridgehurst Friends*, 220. Quoted from Vandervelde’s *Monarchs and Millionaires*. Charlotte Speyer (1870-1965) a writer and actress was a close friend of the Elgars at this time. She was known as ‘Lalla’.

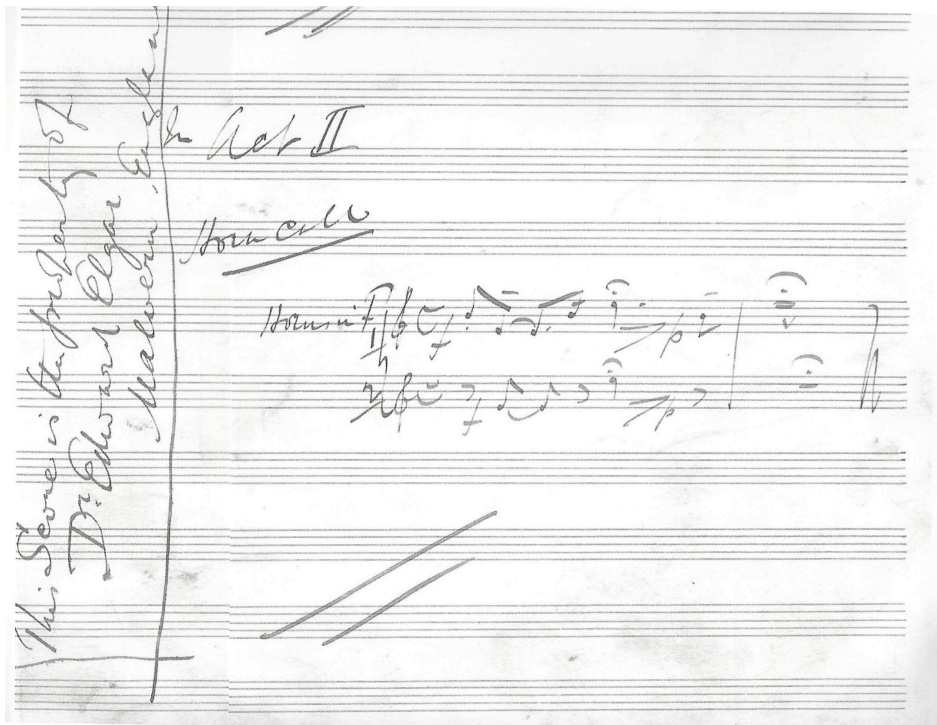
46 Ed. Monk, 120.

47 Ed. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Letters of a Lifetime* (Elgar Works, Rickmansworth, 2012), 303.

48 Ed. Moore, 272. The conductor Barry Collett has pointed out ‘that little motif occurs a lot – it is an up, down-up motif always on high strings. It first occurs in the introduction (Incidental Music) after the horn and trumpet calls. It is repeated several times. It is also in the last couple of bars of the Funeral March, just before the final pizzicato note. There is also an echo of it at the end of the song, just after the singer’s last word “tonight”.’

Yeats once wrote: 'that the arts are at their best when they are busy with battles that can never be won'. His part in the battle that was *Diarmuid and Grania* was perhaps lost from the moment he agreed to collaborate with George Moore. Emotionally, intellectually, politically and spiritually they could not have been more different. In one letter Yeats wrote: 'What a queer person he is. He is constantly likeable that one can believe no evil of him & then in a moment a kind of devil takes hold of him & his voice changes & his look changes & he becomes perfectly hateful'.<sup>49</sup> If the collaboration served a purpose for Yeats, who certainly believed in *Diarmuid and Grania* before Dublin, I would suggest its writing contributed to his growth as an Irish patriot but more importantly to his development as an artist who was to become a great one. In a letter to the *United Irishman* six weeks after the Dublin performances he was keen to refute critics who were concerned at the false treatment of the story: 'I am doing an historical note on the various versions of the Diarmuid and Grainne legend, of which there are many'.<sup>50</sup> If this underlines Yeats involvement in the Celtic revival and the creation of the Abbey Theatre he was, at the same time, leaving his collaboration with Moore behind and, within six months, his most popular play (about an independent Ireland), *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, was premièred in Dublin.

#### Horn Calls from Act 2.



49 Ed. Kelly, 536. Letter to Lady Gregory, 5 June 1900.

50 Ed. John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard, *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats Volume Three (1901-1904)* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994), 133.

As for the composer his 'March' for the dead Diarmuid with its subtle colours and harmonic changes can claim to be one of the finest of all the marches written by a master of the genre. A small but final tribute lay in the memory of Yeats: 'Elgar's music stayed with WBY and by 1935 all that he could recall of the play were "Benson's athletic dignity in one scene and the notes of the horn over the dead Diarmuid"'.<sup>51</sup> Elgar, virtually unknown to an audience in Ireland in 1901, composed music for an artistic collaboration that is, otherwise, all but forgotten. However, by a strange irony, it is the music that is remembered today.

*My thanks are due to Elizabeth Craven, a loyal society member of our Society, who helped greatly by identifying material in the National Library in Dublin, thereby saving me a great deal of time during my visit there. John Norris assisted me in providing copies of Elgar's manuscript and has advised that it is hoped to publish the volume covering the music for 'Grania and Diarmid' in the next two to three years. This will enable scholarship to be applied to the formal editing of the music and a commentary given on the music in its various forms. However, even if I was qualified to provide an analysis of the music this is beyond the scope of this article and the space available in this Journal. (Andrew Neill)*

*Andrew Neill is a former Chairman of the Society.*

51 Ed. Kelly and Schuchard, 163n.



## A Mediterranean Interlude

### Martin Bird

*At the end of 2018 Stevens Halls was contacted by the family of Lady Maud Warrender. They had been sorting through their archives, and had come across some correspondence from Elgar to Lady Maud – needless to say I was on the 'phone within minutes! A few days later copies of three letters arrived from Lady Maud's grandson, Martin Pym. Two are of no great importance,<sup>1</sup> but the third, dating from October 1905, is of considerable significance, as it contains sketches for 'In Smyrna', the atmospheric piano piece that resulted from that autumn's Mediterranean cruise on board HMS Surprise.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Windflower's daughter Clare Stuart Wortley wrote of a 'little circle of constant friends' who met in each other's houses. It comprised her parents; Mina, wife of Admiral Sir Charles Beresford; Claude Phillips, art critic and first Keeper of the Wallace Collection; and 'last but not least' Frank Schuster.

They did not meet unduly often, and none of them was exactly the centre of the circle. Art itself was the centre, I think, in all its different manifestations ...

Their procedure was to go sometimes together, but more often separately, to concerts, theatres, picture shows, & then to meet afterwards at luncheon or when permitted by the larger engagements of which they all had plenty. Then in a flood of happy enthusiasm from Frank, delicate disparagement or temperate approval from Claude, ruthless satire or honest commendation from Mina, & very direct & penetrating, & very unchanging & unyielding, praise or dislike from my mother, "the latest" would be discussed and "placed".

This "circle" had accepted Elgar at first for his music, and ended by loving him also for himself, welcoming him whenever he could be induced to come & respecting his need to withdraw himself & work.<sup>2</sup>

Schuster was the glue that bound this 'inner circle' together, and he added an outer circle that included the likes of the artist Philip Burne-Jones and Lady Maud Warrender.

Lady Maud (1870-1945) was the fourth daughter of the 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury. An accomplished singer, in November 1912 she sang the contralto solo in *The Music Makers* at a performance in

1 ...but nevertheless nice to have: no other letters from Elgar to Lady Maud appear to have survived.

2 EB letter 9766.



**Lady Maud Warrender (1870-1945)** (*Lascelles, published in The Sketch, 14 January 1903*)

Sunderland conducted by Nicholas Kilburn – its fourth ever. The song *Pleading* is dedicated to her. In 1894 she had married Vice Admiral Sir George Scott Warrender (1860-1917), 7<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Lochend, who had joined the navy in 1873. He was Captain of HMS *Carnarvon* during Elgar's Mediterranean cruise of 1905.

The Elgars also knew their daughter Violet (1896-1983), mother of Martin Pym; her sisters, Mildred Allsopp (1867-1958), wife of George Higginson Allsopp, MP for Worcester and a director of the Burton-on-Trent Brewery; and Margaret Levett (1858-1931), wife of Basil Levett, an army man and a JP; and her brother Anthony (1869-1961), the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury.

The Elgars first met Lady Maud in November 1902 when they were staying with Schuster at his house in Old Queen Street. She and Elgar seem to have hit it off immediately, and shortly afterward he sent her his recently published songs, 'In the Dawn' and 'Speak, Music'.<sup>3</sup> She sent a letter of thanks from Gopsall Hall, Leicestershire, home of the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl Howe, President of the 1903 Birmingham Musical Festival. Edward VII and Queen Alexandra were spending the weekend at the Hall, and Sir George Warrender and Lady Maud were among the house party.

Gopsall, Atherstone, Leicestershire.  
Thursday [11 Dec. 1902]

Dear Dr. Elgar, How very nice of you it was to send me your two songs. I am so pleased with them. I must tell you that I have sung "Land of Hope & Glory" a great deal here, & the King & Queen delight in it.

Mr. Perkins<sup>4</sup> is here, and we have sung it in the Chapel with the organ –

Again thanking you  
Yrs. sincerely  
Maud Warrender<sup>5</sup>

Lady Maud was heavily involved with the Union Jack Club project: in memory of those who had lost their lives in the Boer War and in the Boxer Rising in China, it was to provide 'as a national gift for soldiers and sailors a well-equipped clubhouse in London', with a large number of bedrooms available 'at a very reasonable cost', near Waterloo Station, 'which nearly all our soldiers and sailors have to pass through at one time or another on their way to various ports and depots'.<sup>6</sup> She sought to involve Elgar in the project, and, with her impeccable royal connections, sensed an ideal opportunity for the King and Queen to hear the *Coronation Ode*.<sup>7</sup> She wrote to Elgar in March 1903:

Dear Dr. Elgar,  
I am organising a great Concert this summer June at the Albert Hall for the funds of the Union Jack Club, for which we want thousands!

3 Op.41, Nos. 1 & 2, settings of poems by Arthur Christopher Benson, author of the text of the *Coronation Ode*, which incorporated 'Land of Hope and Glory'.

4 Charles Perkins, Birmingham City Organist and organist of the Birmingham Musical Festival.

5 EB letter 1847.

6 *Malvern Advertiser*, 13 March 1903.

7 It was to have received its première before the King and Queen at the Royal Gala Performance at Covent Garden in June 1902, cancelled owing to the King's illness.

I have wired Melba to Australia to ask her to sing – & we shall have the usual stars – My scheme that I want to propose to you is this – that we should have a performance of your Coronation ode – on the lines of what it should have been at the opera – you told me you had intended to have it played by orchestra, and also military band – and if you would consent to this, my idea is to have Wood's orchestra and the Guards band or bands as you would like. The Choral Society for the Chorus – and 4 soloists.

What do you think?

This would be the opportunity for the King & Queen to hear it – which they never have done, & it would mean an enormous help to my Concert. Tell me what you feel about it.

I shall be in London again in a week & we could talk it over. I am most enthusiastic about having it done as you intended – of course under your direction.

A letter would find me here on Monday morning.

Yrs. sincerely  
Maud Warrender<sup>8</sup>

The concert took place on 25 June. Lady Maud recalled:

The Hall was packed. King Edward and Queen Alexandra were present, and the scene at the end was exhilarating. Union Jacks had been served out to everyone in the audience. The waving mass of these flags from floor to gallery was an amazing sight; one felt as if encompassed by surging fields of flowers.

Lady Elgar was with me in my box, which was next to the King's. I noticed that he was fast asleep during the Coronation Ode. I was so anxious that Lady Elgar should not observe this that I made her change her place, and succeeded in distracting her attention. And as H.M. did wake up when "Land of Hope and Glory" blazed forth, all was well.<sup>9</sup>

Her next recorded meeting with the Elgars was in March 1904, during the 'Elgar Festival' at Covent Garden inspired by Schuster, who gave a dinner in Elgar's honour on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Alice wrote to her father-in-law:

Last evening our host had a dinner party in E.'s honour, to our surprise we found the dining room decorated with E.E. (initials) & the names of his works in flowers on the walls, quite lovely. Afterwards there was a reception, everyone you can think of – Lord Howe took me in to dinner & told me the King is so interested in the Festival. E. took in Lady Maud (Warrender) & had Lady Radnor on his other side.<sup>10</sup>

Henry Wood recalled the party:

Elgar, however, was in one of his very silent and stand-offish moods. In fact, his manner was so noticeable that Lady Maud Warrender, who was sitting next to me, drew my attention to it.

'What's the matter with Elgar tonight?' she whispered, 'He seems far away from us all. I suppose it is

8 EB letter 1853.

9 Maud Warrender, *My First Sixty Years* (London: Cassell, 1933), 188.

10 EB letter 4598, 14 March 1904.

because he doesn't like this sort of homage.

We all felt rather uncomfortable when Schuster rose and asked us to drink the health of his illustrious friend. We obeyed, and when we resumed our seats we naturally expected Elgar to make a suitable reply. Instead he went on talking to Lady Radnor and probably had no idea his health had been drunk at all.<sup>11</sup>

And now it is time for Mina Beresford, wife of Admiral Sir Charles Beresford, to take her place in this story, for the 'little circle of constant friends' had gathered a few evenings earlier.

E. & A. & F. dined at Claude Phillips – French Ambassador<sup>12</sup> there. Lady C. Beresford, Baron - - - ? took me in – Large reception afterwards.<sup>13</sup>

Alice records another gathering in December, at the Stuart Wortleys, by which time Lady Charles had become 'Lady Charlie'. The presence of the novelist 'John Oliver Hobbes', Pearl Craigie, was noted, as was the fact that the pianist 'Adela Verne played in the evening at wh. E. retired into a recess'<sup>14</sup>

In March 1905 the Elgars were again in London.

Frank had had our rooms redecorated, fresh books, flowers &c – We all 3 to dine with Mrs. Leggett Bruton St. Huge party. E. took in Lady C. Beresford, Claude P. took A. Music party afterwards.<sup>15</sup>

12, Bruton Street was the London home of the American Betty Macleod Leggett, wife of the millionaire Frank Leggett. After the party Mina Beresford wrote to invite the Elgars to stay at Coombe Cottage, their sixty-room mansion on Kingston Hill, to the south-west of London.

... I hope you liked & appreciated the "elegant" manners of our American hostess as much as I did. So dear, and sweet, & refreshing? but I must not be Venomous as there is no East wind today to speak of.

I know it is no good to ask you all to come here next Sunday to lunch & tea and dine but if you & Lady Elgar & Mr Schuster would come, you could do a little "serenading" if not too cold & chilly ...<sup>16</sup>

They could not come on Sunday the 12<sup>th</sup>, but the following day 'E. & Frank motored to Ham House & to tea with Lady Charles Coombe Lodge'.<sup>17</sup> Alice was 'dreffful sossy not to go, but have rather a cold'.<sup>18</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

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

12 Paul Cambon.

13 Alice Elgar diary, 11 March 1904.

14 *ibid*, 16 December 1904.

15 Alice Elgar diary, 3 March.

16 EB letter 1857, 6 March 1905.

17 Alice Elgar diary, 13 March.

18 letter to Carice, 13 March, EB letter 47.

The 1905 Three Choirs Festival was in Worcester, and the Elgars had taken Castle House for the week. On Saturday 9 September they:

Left Plas Gwyn 9.45 train Smith's Van<sup>19</sup> for luggage at Worcester. Dragon cab – omnibus from Plas Gwyn. May & Sarah<sup>20</sup> came later. Began unpacking Stores &c at once & orderings E. arrived at 4 all safe. D.G. Then Mrs. Worthington arrived. F. telegraphed he cd. not [as it was] so wet, sent lovely flowers – house got on well –<sup>21</sup>

*Berrow's* gave details of the Elgar's house party.

At Castle House, College Green, Sir Edward and Lady Elgar are entertaining Mrs. Worthington (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.), Mr. Leo Schuster, Rev. Canon Gorton, Professor S. Sanford, U.S.A., Professor Frank van der Stücken, U.S.A., Mrs. Gandy (Westmoreland), Mr. A. J. Jaeger, Miss Carice Elgar, Miss May Grafton, Mr. H. C. Embleton, (Leeds), Mrs. Henry J. Wood (London).<sup>22</sup>

Schuster's arrival was only delayed by a day. He brought news of his invitation to join Admiral Beresford, who had recently been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, on a cruise.<sup>23</sup> Beresford recalled:

Forty-four years had elapsed since I was a mid-shipman in H.M.S. *Marlborough*, flagship in the Mediterranean, when I hoisted my flag in H.M.S. *Bulwark* as commander-in-chief upon that station, in June, 1905. Those changeful years had seen the Old Navy out and the New Navy in; their revolutions had transformed the whole material aspect of the Navy; and the essential spirit of the Navy, adapting itself to new conditions, remained unaltered.<sup>24</sup>

The following morning, Elgar, too, received an invitation for the cruise. The main event of the day, however, was the presentation of the Freedom of the City, which was followed by a performance of *Gerontius*.

E. invited to Fleet. E. dined in booful robes – All to Guildhall about 9.30 A. on platform with Mayoress. Very nice ceremony & Mayor & E. spoke beautifully, Casket presented, &c – Then procession in robes to the Cathedral. Lovely sight brilliant sunshine in old picturesque streets E's Father saw from window E. looked most booful – Then beautiful performance of *Gerontius* – very hushed & wonderful. Lunch at the Mayor's – large lunch at C. House. Then to Cathedral –<sup>25</sup>

19 R.T. Smith & Co., general carriers and agents for the Great Western Railway.

20 Sarah Atkins, a parlour maid at Plas Gwyn from 1904 to 1907.

21 Alice Elgar diary, 9 September 1905.

22 *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 16 September 1905.

23 Covered in detail by Andrews Neill in 'Elgar in Smyrna, 1905', *Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.14, Nos.3 & 4 November 2005 and March 2006.

24 Charles Beresford, *The Memoirs of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford*, Vol.2 (London: Methuen & Co., 1914), 508.

25 Alice Elgar diary, 12 September 1905.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> Elgar:

Left Worcester 2.45. Seen off by Alice – Mrs Worthington, Mrs Gandy, Canon Gorton, May & Carice came just before the train started. Arrd. Paddn. – drove to Old Queen St. Bought cigarettes (Grécque), gum for labels, sent telegram to Alice. Dined at Pall Mall restaurant with Frank then to Charing Cross. P. & O. Indian Mail Boat. Hopeless confusion: left (with Barry<sup>26</sup>) at 9, good crossing to Calais – then boarded the P & O Mail. I had a berth with a young Greek. Bouillon & then to bed: did not attempt to undress. Slept fitfully.<sup>27</sup>

He and Frank arrived at Athens on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

... President of the Chamber of Commerce Athens helped us a great deal: went on to Piraeus station, arrived about 8 p.m. met by Sir Geo. Warrender & Mr Harris.<sup>28</sup> Walked (nearly dead) to electric station & on to Phalerum bay where the fleet lies, got on a small boat & came on the Surprise met by Lord Ch. Beresford (flagship Bulwark) who had been dining on board & Capt Bruen at once to bed.

Party on board  
Lady Ch Beresford  
Lady Maud Warrender  
Mrs Craigie  
Frank Schuster & E.E.

Saw the Doctor had some tea & toast, & later some beef tea & then slept 12 hours.

Deo gratias<sup>29</sup>

Pearl Craigie had been on board for more than a week.

H.M.S. Surprise, Mediterranean Station, Corfu.  
September 11, 1905.

I am having a splendid time, but it is difficult to write letters as the heat is so intense. My cabin is considered the best on board: it was built for Lady Fisher and it is on deck: quite large and most comfortable with the windows all open. We left Venice early Saturday morning: no other guests on board. Lady Maud Warrender may join us on Thursday. Here we joined the Fleet. Lord Charlie had us to tea on the Bulwark: Admiral Grenfell also took us on his man-of-war. Sir George Warrender and others dined with us last night, and to-day the British Consul and daughters come to luncheon. To-night we dine on the Bulwark. Two bands play and it is most festive. I wish I could describe this beautiful spot, but it is indescribable. As all foreign places, it looks exactly like the popular lithographs – deep blue sea, high grey mountains, cloudless sky, stone fortifications, cypress trees, olive trees, white houses with red roofs, etc., etc. The artistic pictures are more vague and imaginative – just because it is impossible to describe such a vast scene.<sup>30</sup>

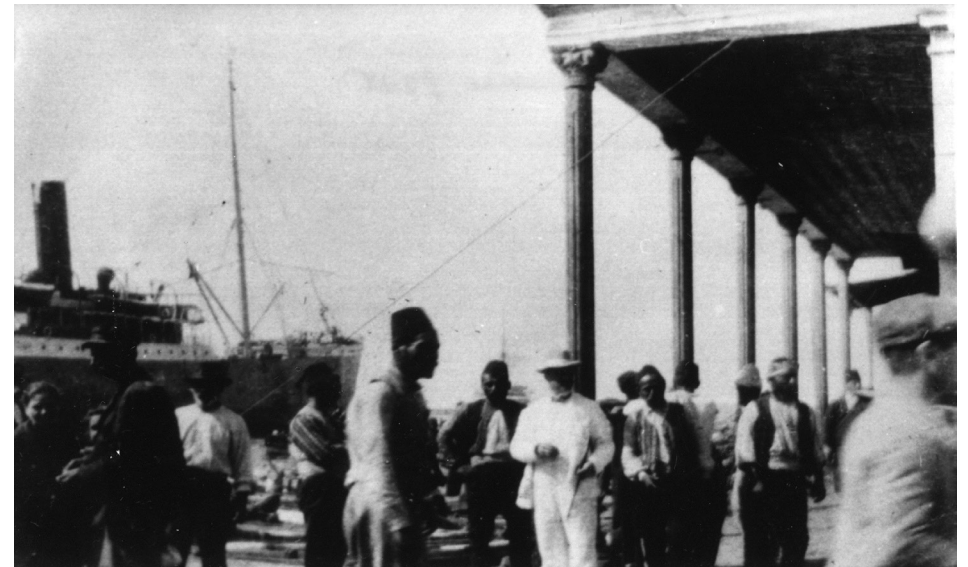
26 Schuster's secretary Cecil Barry.

27 Elgar Mediterranean notebook, which can be read in full in Martin Bird (ed.), *The Wanderer: Diaries 1905-1907* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2018), 389-409.

28 Henry 'Bogey' Harris, a wealthy bachelor and patron of the arts.

29 Elgar Mediterranean notebook.

30 Quoted in John Morgan Richards, *The life of John Oliver Hobbes told in her correspondence with numerous friends* (London: John Murray, 1911), 315-316.



Two of Elgar's snapshots taken during the Mediterranean cruise (Arthur Reynolds collection)

Maud Warrender recalled:

Lady Charlie and Mrs. Craigie had a somewhat flamboyant taste in clothes and floating veils. Their appearance on the quay was such an astonishment to the Greeks that they would be surrounded by a mob, and Frankie Schuster, Bogie Harris and I found it less disconcerting to land at another time.<sup>31</sup>

The party left the ship on the 24<sup>th</sup> in order to visit Constantinople,<sup>32</sup> and rejoined the fleet on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

... arrived at Smyrna about 2. No fleet arrived, as the Yangtse did not sail until next day we remained on board. Then came in the Carnarvon (Sir G. W's ship) & a boat came off. We all went over to the C. to tea – Sir G. & Lady M. & Mr Harris went ashore but Frank Mrs Craigie, & I remained on Carnarvon till 7. The Surprise came in & anchored & we went, with very thankful hearts to be home, on board & found Lady C. very radiant & welcoming.<sup>33</sup>

Next morning Elgar:

Rose early – glorious day. Frank. Lady M & I ashore went to the bazaar, much finer sight than Constantinople. Colour movement & camels – 100s – led by a donkey through the bazaar. Lady M. gave me a silver camel lamp in remembrance of my first eastern camel. Back to Surprise to lunch ... then all ashore: drove thro' the town right up to the fortifications – tomb of S. Polycarp – tremendous view, last part on foot to the watch tower, descended & made detour round the 'Camel bridge'. Mrs Craigie & I drove together: wonderful gorges with remains of ancient aqueducts. We were in the last carriage, harness broke – repaired with string & then wild gallop irrespective of rough road to catch the others, one horse fell – more broken harness – yells & excitement. Drove all thro' the narrow streets to quay.

This was my first touch with Asia, & I was quite overcome: the endless camels made the scene more real than in Stamboul, the extraordinary colour & movement, light & shade were intoxicating.<sup>34</sup>

On 1 October Elgar:

Rose late. Very, very hot & sirocco blowing – Peculiar feeling of intense heat & wind ... Early lunch & then (at 2 oc) ashore & drove to the Mosque of dancing dervishes ... received in great style. Music by five or six people very strange & some of it quite beautiful – incessant drums & cymbals (small) thro the quick movements. Dancing not very exciting ... Lady Maud sang & I played. To bed at eleven.<sup>35</sup>

A sketch for *In Smyrna 'In the Mosque'* is dated 1 October. Next day Elgar ...

... went ashore – got a dragoman & did the Bazaar. Back to lunch. American consul's wife friend of

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31 Maud Warrender, *My First Sixty Years* (London: Cassell, 1933), 82.

32 As the result of a clause in the Treaty of Berlin of 1879, no foreign warship could pass the Dardanelles in time of peace. The Treaty was the result of a confrontation between Russia and Turkey in which Britain became involved. War with Russia had been a distinct possibility. (Carl Newton, 'Now He Belongs to the Big World' in Kevin Mitchell (ed.), *Cockaigne* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2004), 75).

33 Elgar Mediterranean notebook.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*

Mrs. Craigie – volubly informing as to Turkish ways &c. &c.<sup>36</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> he ...

... awoke at 4 by anchors weighing, left Smyrna at five ... Weather broke. Awful squalls all day – awnings taken down – everyone ill. Dreadful day sat on deck amidships – was not really sick but headache & could not walk on acct of ship pitching &c. so violently ... End of summer.<sup>37</sup>

Maud Warrender remembered:

Unfortunately the weather broke on our way to Patras. H.M.S. Surprise had a most uncomfortable way of behaving in a rough sea, quite unlike any other craft I have ever been in, a sort of corkscrew motion which, good sailor though I am, completely defeated me. Lady Charlie was the only one who did not succumb. She even managed to sit on a surging music stool and play "The Ride of the Valkyries", and the "Fire Music" at the height of the storm, when every one else was prone, and utterly miserable.<sup>38</sup>

Next day the party:

Began packing, ready to leave Surprise at Patras – now 11 o'clock another awful squall! Sea quieter again & so lunch (the last on the Surprise) & anchored off Patras about 2 o'clock – nearly aground in harbour. Sea very rough outside. About four the Orion (Austria Lloyd) arrived but anchored outside the harbour – too rough for small boats to get out – so all ashore – Lady M., Mrs Craigie, Frank & I & three servants landed and to Hotel. Frank & I decided not to go on – impossible to get out to large Austrian steamer & the Scilla (Italian) which was in harbour & sailing same time we thought too small for comfort in the terribly rough sea. Lady M. & Mrs Craigie decided to take the Italian boat so dined altogether & saw them off. No steamer until Saturday. Went to bed early & got some sleep – the first real sleep for 48 hours.

Maud Warrender again:

At Patras, where we were to leave the yacht, there was a big sea running in the harbour. Unless we caught the little steamer to Fiume which ran only once a week, it meant staying in a very bad hotel in a very dull place. Mrs. Craigie and myself hated the idea of this, so we made up our minds to make a dash in a small boat for the steamer, leaving "Frankie Schu" and Edward Elgar quivering on the quay, not daring to face the risk of getting alongside in a horrible sea.

We just made it, but we went through a hideously uncomfortable and hot time in this fig cargo boat before reaching Fiume. There were so many figs on board that the sides of our cabins were a moving mass of white maggots, racing each other up the walls. That procession has made me doubtful about Smyrna figs ever since.

Sleeping on deck made the nights possible, and less unpleasant in the great heat of a September Adriatic.<sup>39</sup>

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36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*

38 Maud Warrender, *My First Sixty Years* (London: Cassell, 1933), 83-84.

39 *Ibid.*, 84.

Elgar arrived back in England on 12 October:

... arrived Dover at four oc – train at once to Charing X. arrd. Langham at 6.30 rested. Went to East End & tried to get Eastern food, dried fruits &c – then back to this dreary civilization.<sup>40</sup>

Elgar had returned just in time to travel to Norwich on the 13<sup>th</sup> to rehearse the chorus for the Musical Festival. Next day he went 'Back to London & on by corridor to Hereford & found my dear ones all well & safe'.<sup>41</sup> On the 18<sup>th</sup> he wrote to Lady Maud.

Plas Gwyn, Hereford.

Oct. 18. 1905

Dear Lady Maud:

I see in the World that you were at the opera last Wednesday so I send congratulations on your safe return after the adventurous voyage of the 'Surprise'.

I am sorry the 'squall' (eternally?) interrupted our serious musical conversation, but that is difficult to reverse. I hope, however, some good mayf be done someday.

My tiny camera has been successful I think & if I find any prints worth sending on I will crave permission to do so, and if you have any you can let me see I should be so very glad to have them. I left Mr. Schuster at Bologna & came on very drearily alone.

My wife joins me in very kind regards.

Believe me

Yours most sincerely

Edward Elgar<sup>42</sup>

The letter includes two sketches, one marked 'Smyrna' and the other 'Souvenir de Smyrne'. They are in 3/4 time, whereas the final version, *In Smyrna: Sketch for Pianoforte Solo*, first published as Elgar's contribution to *The Queen's Christmas Carol*,<sup>43</sup> is in 4/4 time. Paul Adrian Rooke, who has performed this little gem many times, has kindly identified the sketches as resulting in the following passages: bars 15-17; 39-42; and 48-50.

## IN SMYRNA



In Smyrna, bars 15-17

\* \* \* \* \*

40 Elgar Mediterranean notebook.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Warrender family archive.

43 (London: Daily Mail, 1905), 48-51, published 'on behalf of Queen Alexandra's Fund for the Unemployed'.

Lady Maud and Elgar remained friends for the rest of his life, and both he and Alice were present at Sir George's funeral in January 1917.

Sir G. Warrender's Memorial Service – E. & A. to the Church of the Annunciation – Very touching. Bluejackets standing by the coffin. First the Angel's Farewell, most beautifully played – Maud quite clouded in veil – & Margaret & Lord Shaftesbury with Maud – Very solemn –<sup>44</sup>

*The Times* reported:

The funeral service for Admiral Sir George Warrender was held yesterday at the Church of the Annunciation, Bryanston-street, the cremation having taken place the previous night at Golders-green. After the service the ashes were placed in a niche in the wall of the church under the altar. The King was represented by Commander Sir Charles Cust, and Queen Alexandra by Earl Howe.<sup>45</sup>

Her last recorded involvement with Elgar's music during his lifetime was in connection with a charity concert given at Wigmore Hall on 16 May 1933, at which the Violin Sonata, String Quartet and Piano Quintet were performed by Harriet Cohen and the Pro Arte String Quartet. King George V and Queen Mary lent their patronage after Maud Warrender had written to them. Harriet Cohen paid the costs of the concert, and all proceeds were given to the Musicians' Benevolent Fund.

*It is intended to publish the complete surviving correspondence between Elgar and Lady Maud Warrender in late 2020, in a volume of the 'Edward Elgar: Collected Correspondence' series built around Frank Schuster and his 'Society' friends. (Martin Bird)*

*Martin Bird (1947-2019) was the editor of Elgar's collected correspondence, Edward's and Alice's diaries and 'An Elgarian Who's Who'. He also edited the Elgar Society Journal from 2010 until 2016.*

44 Alice Elgar diary, 12 January 1917.

45 *The Times*, 13 January 1917.

P.S. This is the record I can  
get to the services' I send  
first volume: I send  
it harmonium to also  
simply to them.

Impresso.

Oct. 11. 1905

Dear Lady Maud.

I see in the book that  
you were at the Opera last  
Wednesday to send con-  
gratulations to your wife  
return after the adventu-  
rous voyage of the "Surprise".

I am sorry to disturb  
(eternally?) interrupted on  
serious

PLAS GUYL  
HEREFORD.



PLAS GUYL  
HEREFORD.

knows musical conversation,  
but that is difficult to see.  
I hope however, some good  
may be done someday.

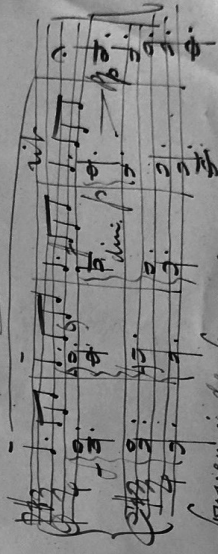
My tiny camera has been  
successful I think & I  
send my prints with a feeling  
of wish, even permission  
to show, and if you have  
any you can let me see

I should be to very glad to  
have them. I left to  
Schuster at Bologna to  
come on very quickly about  
by wife's invitation in my  
kind regards

Believe me

Yours sincerely

Alfred Elgar



Souvenir de Maud.

## An Appreciation of Elgar's Cello Concerto on the Centenary of its First Performance

**Julian Lloyd Webber**

*This article was originally written for the BBC Music Magazine. It appeared in the September 2019 edition together with a CD of the concerto played by Julian Lloyd Webber with the BBC Philharmonic conducted by Yan Pascal Tortelier. The disc also contained Vaughan Williams 'A London Symphony' with Andrew Manze conducting the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.*

\* \* \* \* \*



**Julian Lloyd Webber at a performance of Elgar's cello concerto with Menuhin**  
(Julian Lloyd Webber)

Dame Fortune was smiling kindly on me when I first encountered Elgar's Cello Concerto.

I was nine years old and my grandmother had evidently decided that it was time I heard the instrument I kept sawing away on played properly. So she bought me a cello record for Christmas. My grandmother didn't know much about classical music and I later discovered that she had been guided by the "nice old gentleman" who ran the specialist record shop on the corner. I have always been grateful to my mysterious mentor, as my present turned out to be one of the finest cello recordings of the era – the Elgar, played by Paul Tortelier with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and conducted by Malcolm Sargent.

I loved Tortelier's gentle rendition with its French accent – indeed his recording confirms my theory that the greater a piece of music, the greater number of interpretations it can take – whilst still managing to survive!

Certainly, Tortelier's account could not be more different from Jacqueline du Pré's legendary recording. Du Pré's has become the benchmark by which all others are compared - but a downside of the iconic status accorded to Jackie's very individual performance is that so many young cellists seem to feel obliged to copy it.

If there was one thing that convinced me I had the right to record my own version of Elgar's extraordinary creation (on which I was hugely helped by having Yehudi Menuhin as my conductor), it was the certainty that my interpretation was markedly different from du Pré's. This wasn't intentional. I experimented (in private!) with playing the concerto in many ways. But, once on the concert platform, I could only play it the way I felt. And I feel the composer has given us an intensely personal, lonely statement.

'Announce the hero', Casals would instruct his students at the cello's first entry in Dvorák's magnificent concerto. But Dvorák's heroics were not for Elgar in 1919. The First World War had changed everything. Cataclysmic events produce drastic reactions. People look for renewal, and Elgar represented the past. The fact that the new concerto - from the composer of the Pomp and Circumstance Marches - contained no hint of triumphalism confused still further.

In addition, Elgar's role for the orchestra was substantially different from Dvorák's. Instead of pitting instruments of similar pitch (horns, bassoons, etc) against the cello, Elgar leaves the middle ground to his soloist - further reinforcing the concerto's lonely contours.

Legend has it that the first performance was an unmitigated disaster which traumatized its soloist Felix Salmond to the extent that he never played the concerto again and fled to America in search of a new career.

Yet an unattributed review in *The Times* makes no mention of the orchestral playing, praises Felix Salmond as 'a painstaking and sympathetic interpreter' before noting that 'both the composer and Mr Salmond were recalled many times at the end'. Hardly the fiasco of legend. And - far from never playing the concerto again - Salmond went on to perform it the following year in Manchester and Birmingham and ten years later he played it in New York.

If Salmond harbored any lack of desire to suggest the concerto to promoters or teach the work to his students in his new life at the Juilliard School, it was more likely due to resentment at the vagaries of the record business than any lingering regrets about its first performance. Elgar was under contract to the Gramophone Company and Salmond recorded for Columbia Records. At first, the Gramophone Company sniffed around the Portuguese cellist Guilhermina Suggia, but she asked for too much money (bad career move!) Next it turned to a young, attractive, British cellist called Beatrice Harrison and, less than two months after Salmond had given the première, Harrison found herself in Elgar's drawing room, preparing to record it a few days later.

Yet, as with the Violin Concerto and an even younger Yehudi Menuhin, the Gramophone





**Left: Elgar and Felix Salmond (1888-1952)**  
(Elgar Birthplace Museum)

**Below: Elgar and Beatrice Harrison (1892-1965)**  
(Elgar Birthplace Museum)



Company's choice of soloist proved inspired. For, like Menuhin, Harrison showed an immediate, instinctive affinity with Elgar's mercurial temperament.

There can be no question that Elgar was profoundly affected by the First World War. He made few direct references to it but his choice of confidants – Frank Schuster and Sidney Colvin – is revealing. Both were longstanding friends and gentle souls with no direct involvement in music. To Colvin (the Cello Concerto's joint dedicatee together with his wife Frances) he wrote "I cannot do any real work with the awful shadow over us" and to Schuster he expressed his rage:

'Concerning the war I say nothing — the only thing that wrings my heart and soul is the thought of the horses—oh! My beloved animals — the men — and women — can go to hell — but my horses; I walk round and round this room cursing God for allowing dumb brutes to be tortured — let him kill his human beings but—how CAN HE? Oh, my horses'

The musicians Elgar chose to work with during the war were also gentle souls – the violinists Albert Sammons and WH Reed and the cellist Felix Salmond. All three played significant roles both in Elgar's life and his music during this terrible time. (Some thirty years later my mother studied violin with 'Billy' Reed at the Royal College of Music – 'kind', 'lovely' and 'gentle' were the adjectives she used regularly to describe him).

With the war finally over Elgar turned his thoughts to writing a Cello Concerto. It is always interesting to speculate on what drew a composer to write for a particular instrument at a particular time. Certainly cello concertos tend to be late works in composers' outputs. It is as if they are entrusting their innermost thoughts to that instrument closest to the human voice which - because of its sonority and unusually wide range of pitch – enables those thoughts to take flight.

Elgar's Cello Concerto makes unusual demands on its soloist as the composer produced, in Jerrold Northrop Moore's words, 'such a concerto of isolation, loneliness, farewell even, as had never yet been written'.

There are no traditional 'fireworks' on display, no showy cadenzas; instead lies the ultimate challenge of conveying to an audience one man's wounded interpretation of the human condition as viewed through the passage of time. Yet the concerto is supremely written for the instrument and it runs the gamut of the cello's range like no other before it.

There is an overriding arch to the work with the concerto's *nobilmente* opening returning at the end and it is important for the soloist to hold a firm vision of that arch throughout the performance. This allows plenty of room for spontaneity whilst presenting a coherent whole to the listener.

The (false?) grandeur of the opening bars introduces an unusual series of questions posed by the soloist. These are immediately followed by a first theme of such loneliness as to be unique in any concerto. Elgar's markings for this theme are revealing – there *are* none. During my studies with Pierre Fournier we worked on the Lalo Concerto together. Lalo litters his score with a profusion of markings which are nothing if not confusing so I was hardly surprised when Fournier said 'ignore all these', but I was *extremely* surprised when he added 'just like in the Elgar'. Elgar's directions are certainly detailed but they are a window to his soul – follow them scrupulously and you cannot go far wrong.

That's why the *lack* of any markings (save for *piano*) on this first theme is so significant. They are the only bars in the concerto without expressive indications. Why? Because they tell their own story.

The theme appears four times – each time with different markings which it is vital to observe. Soloists usually do this but the famous scalic run to a top E fares less well. Elgar clearly marks

its second coming *In Tempo* and on his own recording with Beatrice Harrison even makes an *accelerando*. Yet today we almost always hear it played with the same massive *rallentando* both times, reducing the thrilling surprise Elgar surely intended whilst making life extremely difficult for the timpanist whose succeeding *fortissimo* demi-semiquaver figure is forced into a tempo-free limbo!

The recitative-like ‘bridge’ to the second movement is the nearest the concerto comes to a cadenza with the soloist offering little hints of the music to follow like gusts of wind blowing across the landscape. And it’s a bleak landscape too as an impassioned solo cello outburst reminds us of the inherent harshness of nature.

The second movement proper (diddle, diddle, diddle as Lady Elgar liked to describe it) is a gift to its soloist – by no means easy but nowhere near as hard as it sounds! Magnificently written for the cello, Elgar delivers a masterclass in how to write for the instrument: ‘runs’ that lie under the hand, idiomatic use of natural harmonics and even a left hand pizzicato flourish at the finish. His orchestration – which always allows the cello to ‘come through’ – is wonderful too. As the work of a self-taught composer it’s a marvel.

The slow movement is a succinct distillation of emotions which have journeyed for many miles together to a valley beyond tears. Lasting barely five minutes its two-bar phrases are yearning yet warm, a flash of anger in the middle soon subsiding into a place of resigned serenity and comfort.

An abrupt key change interrupts the mood as Elgar introduces a nervy rhythmic figure which leads to the concerto’s second recitative-like passage for the soloist. A sudden, sparkling cello arpeggio to the instrument’s stratosphere heralds the start of the *finale*.

The last movement’s main theme is about as near to triumphalism as Elgar allows his expectant listeners to get and, even here, the composer effectively ‘sends himself up’ by allowing his soloist to introduce a ‘*nobilmente*’ figure which immediately collapses in a flurry of skittering bow-bouncing demi-semiquavers (*more* brilliant writing for the instrument). I love Ernest Newman’s description of this episode as ‘dignity at the mercy of a banana skin’. This mood of fragile good spirits is soon dispersed by a melancholic passage of beautifully melodic cello semi-quavers punctuated by sighing phrases from the violins and chilly interjections from the woodwind. The solo part is particularly interesting on account of its gestation.

Before recording the concerto myself, I asked to view the composer’s manuscript at the Royal College of Music’s library to see whether it contained any unexpected revelations. It did. The entire original solo part is crossed out at this point. Bar after bar of, frankly, workmanlike passagework has been rewritten in Elgar’s own hand resulting in the beautiful counterpoint we know today (and *please* may no-one be tempted to make a premiere recording of the composer’s ‘original’ version)! Now follows a section which reminds me of a similar place in the *finale* of Elgar’s First Symphony which Adrian Boult once described to me as ‘the part he asked the cook to write’. It is indeed a banal passage but – as I inquired of Sir Adrian – it surely only serves to underline the beauty which follows? ‘I had never thought of that’ was Sir Adrian’s gracious response.

The conclusion of the concerto is one of Elgar’s greatest achievements – a summation of themes, of heightened emotions, of unexpected key changes and total mastery of his material, culminating in an other-worldly suspension of time at the recall of the slow movement. When, finally, the solo cello interrupts the mood with a *fortissimo* statement of the concerto’s opening, accompanied this time by two slashing full orchestra chords, we are left wondering – as the concerto hurries towards its breathless end – have we witnessed a triumph or is the composer angered by the follies of mankind and the world he knew and loved collapsing all around him? An enigma to be sure – and we know that Elgar liked those.

I performed the concerto in concert many hundreds of times but I never tired of playing it. I found it to be almost eerily responsive to different conductors, orchestras, concert halls and, especially, to audiences; so much so that even in a series of three performances in the same hall with the same orchestra and conductor each performance would feel completely different.

For an extra-musical reason, one performance with Menuhin in Sydney is forever etched in my memory. I wanted to discuss some point or other of interpretation and knocked on his dressing room door. ‘Come in, come in’, cried Yehudi. I duly entered and was surprised to see him standing on his head. ‘It’s about this *accelerando* in the last movement’ I told his feet. ‘Where exactly? Show me on the score.’ Prostrating myself on the floor, I carefully placed the music upside down in front of Yehudi’s eyes before beginning a detailed discussion of Elgar’s masterpiece with the inverted maestro. I always wished the expectant audience could have witnessed this ‘cameo’!

As a British cellist performing internationally I would often be asked to play the Elgar on my travels. In my twenties and thirties this led to finding myself collaborating with renowned maestri who had never conducted the concerto before. (‘Please don’t tell the orchestra’ they would whisper.) Amongst these was Sir Georg Solti. But it wasn’t always the ‘starriest’ conductors who provided the necessary foil for my long-considered interpretation. Amongst my favourite (in other words most comfortable) partners were - in no particular order – Richard Hickox, Vernon Handley, Charles Groves, James Judd, Alexander Gibson, Neville Marriner and, of course, Yehudi Menuhin.

I have always believed that there should be a *reason* for making a recording. Adding yet another version of a well-worn classic to the overcrowded catalogue never appealed to me. So Yehudi - with his unique insight into Elgar’s music – seemed my natural partner. And so it proved. From the beginning I benefited from his benign and gentle guidance:

‘It’s too forthright’ he said of my first statement of the first movement theme, “play it as if it’s coming from a distance over the hills” – an insight that completely tallies with Elgar’s deathbed remark to Sir Barry Jackson: ‘Rather feebly’ Elgar tried to whistle the first movement’s haunting 9/8 theme. ‘Barry’ he said with tears in his eyes ‘if ever you’re walking on the Malvern hills and hear that, it’s only me. Don’t be frightened.’

On my 16th birthday, my godfather – the composer Herbert Howells – presented me with a score of Elgar’s Cello Concerto which he inscribed: ‘To Julian, from HH, to whom EE once said of this work, ‘It’s just an old man’s darling.’ One hundred years after its premiere, Elgar’s Cello Concerto is no longer ‘just an old man’s darling’ but has become a ‘darling’ for music-lovers all over the world.

*Julian Lloyd Webber is a British solo cellist, conductor and the principal of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. He was the president of the Elgar Society from 2009 until 2019.*

## Elgar as a conductor (part 2)

### An interview with Adrian Boulton

Wynne Brindle

*Some months ago the Elgar Society received typewritten transcriptions of two interviews concerning 'Elgar as a conductor' with Adrian Boulton (1889-1983) and Yehudi Menuhin (1916-1999). They were conducted by Wynne Brindle (1943-1994) but probably never broadcast although Brindle had experience of broadcasting. He worked in the BBC Film Library and then moved to the Open University as a copyright and contracts manager. He later moved to London and joined the Open College as rights manager. Just before his untimely death he founded a caring agency for the elderly and disabled. Wynne Brindle had a lifelong interest in classical music and developed a particular love of Elgar. His sister, Margaret Walter – who provided the material and a photo – assumes the Open University took an interest in 'Elgar as a conductor' although she cannot find anything to support this. She thinks that it must have been entirely her brother's own project. The Menuhin interview, which was published in the last issue (ESJ August 2019, pp. 64-68), took place about three weeks after the meeting with Adrian Boulton in October 1974. The interview is reproduced in its original wording which records the oral form (and some question marks in brackets). To facilitate the readability sounds like 'er', 'a' or 'um' are put in brackets.*

\* \* \* \* \*

The interview took place in October 1974.

*Wynne Brindle:* Can you start off by telling me what you can remember of Elgar as a conductor?

*Adrian Boulton:* Well, the first thing was you know, that people would say 'Oh yes, Elgar was a second rate conductor' – you don't have to pay much attention – it's interesting of course, and I quarreled with that very much, because I felt (*unintelligible*) it is true to say that nobody has ever conducted a work of Elgar's better than he did himself, more appropriately, more [um] idiomatically than he did himself and, ask who you like, the people who remember Elgar, that question, and they always say – 'Oh, no. Ronald was alright, Beecham was alright', you see and so on, but Elgar was the man! And so I feel, we must, [um] feel, we must realise he was a very great conductor indeed of his own music, but that is not to say that he gave a performance of his own music which was going to be just the same as a performance he'd give in another two years. In fact, I got, I used to go regularly, for a number of years I went to the Three



Adrian Boulton (editor's archive)

Choirs, where, of course, there were often repetitions of his work and I began to put in ‘E.E.’ – [um] whatever it was – 1943, ‘E.E.’, 1945, because he might put a *rallentando* in – written in, or it might not be written in, but it might go in one performance and another performance it would not go in – it just wouldn’t be there at all. And things like that, [um], the symphonies, *The Kingdom*, the Violin Concerto were full of that [um] kind of thing. Well, you can’t make lists of that kind of thing, but it was quite amusing to write some of them on to my score.

*Wynne Brindle:* How did the orchestral players cope with this rather idiosyncratic way of conducting?

*Adrian Boult:* Well, that – [a] – that [um] – I think though, after all though, when a conductor makes a slight *rallentando* at a fairly obvious place, there’s never the slightest, with an orchestra like, the [um] LSO, there’s no doubt about it – it’ll be there, or it will not be there according to the conductor. That question that you’ve asked rather shows I think that you don’t realise how very close the orchestra is to the point of a stick. They are absolutely on it you see (*mumbo jumbo*) they’re all of them playing, [um] I mean the good ones, the best ones play like that, the music is there and over, just over the top of the music they see the conductor, they see the point of the stick and the result is they don’t know if they’re playing in strict time or not, they just playing to the conductor. The conductor is dictating, as it were, [um] tempo side – the rhythmic side of the music.

*Wynne Brindle:* So with Elgar the stick beat time (*Boult:* ‘Absolutely’). What about the left hand?

*Adrian Boult:* Elgar’s left hand was a good one, I mean, he just – [um] my rule for the left hand is just, don’t use it until you want to say something the stick can’t, (*unintelligible*) something more than the stick will say. Then use your left hand and that was Elgar.

*Wynne Brindle:* What about his facial expressions?

*Adrian Boult:* All the time, full of it, absolutely, busting (?) the music – except when he lost his temper, cos that was a different thing. You [er] know the one, I think the story – well, I might give it to you, you can cut it out again [um]. It was in *The Kingdom*, and it was at Worcester and, actually the casting of *The Kingdom* that time had been, they’d been trying to get some operatic people and getting some new blood into it, and of course, the new blood at the last minute threw their hands in – most of them, and the result was that Agnes Nicholls after she’d retired was brought in to do that wonderful soprano solo in *The Kingdom*, which Elgar had, many years before, written for her. And, for some reason, [er] I don’t remember much about it, I know it was a rotten performance – the choir was out of tune and Elgar lost interest and just dashed along, and [um], well we got to the end of the third part – [um] rather scrambling – and the fourth began and, I, I talked to Agnes Nicholls afterwards about it, it was rather [er] (*unintelligible*), she said ‘yes, yes Adrian I realised the performance was really getting into rather a mess and I thought, perhaps I might get it right again with my wonderful solo’. She was absolutely obsessed by it, [um], it had been written for her; she, well she said, ‘I just shut my book and I shut my eyes and I prayed that I could put the thing right.’ And, do you know, the moment she began singing, I saw Willy Reed, the leader of the orchestra sit up, he literally sat up and played (*unintelligible*) he’d got a little solo bit just, just [er] there, and he played his solo bit [er], and she began to sing and this happened and in a minute, the whole

orchestra was focused in an utterly different way. Then Elgar took interest and, for the rest of the performance, it was splendid. But, Agnes Nicholls saved that, that [er] – did for that performance, what conductors are supposed to do, but can’t always do. (*chuckles*) Yes, [er] it was an interesting occasion, I shall [er] never, never forget it. It was palpable, the whole thing at Worcester Cathedral, I don’t know how many people felt it like I did, but there was no doubt that that was what had happened, and it was confirmed by Agnes Nicholls herself afterwards.

*Wynne Brindle:* What about Elgar’s performances of *Gerontius*.  
(*Boult keeps hitting desk, requested not to – then answers.*)

*Adrian Boult:* Yes, oh I don’t think there was anything special [um], about any of them – it was just that they [er] they were compositions that were deeply felt, the musician, the very profound musician and [um], his performances of them were always more than adequate. [Um], there is one thing I would warn you about though and that is that his [um], his actual performances were very often when they were for gramophones, they were very often [um], rushed. He had the [um] (*pause*) four minute business you know on his mind, which we are now spared because we’ve got long players and [um], he was – it was very much in his mind always that he’d got to get the thing into the four minutes. And I’m quite certain that the pace at which he conducted a good many of his own records is really not to be trusted – not to be compared with what he did actually with his performances. That (?) he would do things considerably faster without realising it probably. That it would have been faster than he would have done it in a cathedral performance – so that the [er] studio performances need not necessarily be considered authoritative. In fact nothing that you hear of Elgar’s is authoritative, because it was so different, it was often so different (*pause*) but it was always the right thing somehow. However, [um] if you have any German blood in you – you’ll say that’s impossible. (*Laugh*) I’ve had many an argument with that [er] (??), say you’ve heard of – you’ve heard so-and-so do the Ninth Symphony, you’ve said that was the finest you’d ever heard. What about so-and-so and I’d say, that was also the finest I’d ever heard. But you can’t see it [er], English people can have two or three finests. Germans can’t (*chuckles*).

*Wynne Brindle:* You were present at the first performance of the Violin Concerto? What do you remember about the performance?

*Adrian Boult:* Nothing special. It was well rehearsed and all went very smooth and extremely well. Kreisler was in great form. No, I don’t think there was anything...

*Wynne Brindle:* Don’t you have a story about a party given after the performance?

*Adrian Boult:* Yes, Frank Schuster his friend. Frank Schuster, a [um] party in his beautiful music room in Westminster, and [huh], he had rather an original idea. He had three tables, and each table was attached to one movement of the concerto and our menus were all headed with the [um] the first motif of each movement. Unfortunately, I lost mine.

*Wynne Brindle:* Was it at that party, Elgar became rather disenchanted with his own music. You relate a story about a soprano singing his song ‘Always...’

*Adrian Boult:* Yes, you see. That is a [er] silly pose, that was [er], that bobbed up as I say (*unintelligible*) a silly pose for not liking music, or not being interested in music. It would rear its

bestly head – and it did on that occasion. It was this woman, [er] well it was a small music party – there were about ten or twelve people and [um], she was going to sing a song of Elgar's. Unfortunately of course, it was a pity she'd brought it, but having brought it [er], our host of course, jumped for it and said he must have it and [er], that was enough to spoil – [er] to have spoiled Elgar's evening. At least he said so, he said so, enjoyed saying so.

*Wynne Brindle:* Would you have said it was modesty on Elgar's part?

*Adrian Boult:* No no. It was just pique actually. It was more than modesty [er], it was nastier than modesty I think, it wasn't just modesty. He had a great sense of what he could do and, you know [um], he [um] – on a number of occasions he said to people 'That's a fine tune, isn't it? You don't hear many tunes like that nowadays.' And he didn't mind saying that when he was feeling like that, but on other days he would say he just wasn't interested in music, and that was that. And when he'd said that, it wasn't any use talking about music; one switched to race – horses or whatever it was...

*Wynne Brindle:* You had a great regard for Nikisch (*Boult:* 'Yes') and you say he was able to trust his players. Was Elgar?

*Adrian Boult:* Yes, I think that was very much the same. Oh [er], any good conductor is. Any good conductor knows how much he can trust his players.

*Wynne Brindle:* Did he allow them much freedom in phrasing?

*Adrian Boult:* Yes, a good deal.

*Wynne Brindle:* How would Elgar have – let's take the Second Symphony for instance, how would he have rehearsed it? What order would he have taken it in? Was he thorough?

*Adrian Boult:* Yes. (*pause*) I think we can say he was thorough. You see they usually gave him a good generous amount of rehearsal time. [um], I made one or two odd remarks – I wrote them into my scores, but there's nothing very special. I remember the phrasing of the tune in the last movement, [um] 'basses is that awkward? Are those bows too long? I leave it to you, just do two bows to a bar if you like – I leave it to you.' *I leave it to you* was the kind of happy feeling behind his rehearsing, (*pause*) as it should be.

*Wynne Brindle:* Can we move on actually to Elgar's technique with the stick and his facial expressions. Did you ever sit on the orchestra side?

*Adrian Boult:* No, we didn't usually. We sometimes sat at the side at Queen's Hall. His face was extremely expressive.

*Wynne Brindle:* Were you present at the first performance of the Second Symphony?

*Adrian Boult:* No, I wasn't.

*Wynne Brindle:* It's a well known historical fact that the [er] Symphony had a rather mixed reception its first performance. Elgar was quoted as saying...

*Adrian Boult:* 'They don't like it Henry!'

*Wynne Brindle:* That's right. And 'They're sitting there like stuffed pigs!' It was about nine years later that you conducted the first performance of the second symphony that received the acclaim it deserved.

*Adrian Boult:* Well, I suppose you can say that really. It just, it happened that way; it was luck. I was asked by a friend – Victor Bigal the singing teacher, who had many friends in America [er] and elsewhere – all over the world really. [er], he said he'd got a friend in America who had a prodigy, a young violinist named Dushkin – Samuel Dushkin, and this man wanted to share an orchestral concert for this solo fiddler with anybody and, would I do the sharing. So we agreed – we'd share the expenses and Victor Bigal suggested that I should do the second Elgar symphony and we shared the concert; Dushkin did several solos – concertos, and I played the second symphony. And Bigal himself suggested we should do the second symphony because it had not been done in London since the war and it had not had much of an airing before the war – in fact I think it had only had one or two performances, so that we did it and it just came off – it was, [er] I don't think need claim more credit than I'm due over that.

*Wynne Brindle:* I was listening to the second symphony at the weekend – the Elgar performance, and it seems as you've already pointed out and explained why, [er] some of the tempos he adopts are at variance with his own markings in the score

*Adrian Boult:* Oh really, that's interesting – you've [er] you find that? Was that the [er] ...

*Wynne Brindle:* The 1927 performance...

*Adrian Boult:* Yes.

*Wynne Brindle:* But you also have a story about the *Enigma Variations* which, now you've told me not to treat Elgar's recordings as authoritative (*Boult:* 'No'); you say that you once turned back to Elgar's recording of the *Enigma Variations* and particularly, the theme and first variation [er] you discovered your own interpretation [er] tempos were wrong...

*Adrian Boult:* I got fast. Yes, I [er] somehow or other got very fast and I heard him – I don't know what it was, I heard either a performance or a recording and it was extremely [er] the second movement [er] the third variation – 'C.A.E.' was extraordinarily dreamy and beautiful – quite different and very much more like Lady Elgar, whom I knew of course. Oh yes. One, one can make mistakes.

*Wynne Brindle:* Do you think that Elgar – let me see I've got another quote here, I've taken copious notes –, would you agree with the theory that Elgar thought that neither composing nor conducting in itself entirely encompassed the art of making music. The perfect fulfilment of the aesthetic experience was achieved when he was able to complete the presentation by directing it himself? Do you agree with that?

*Adrian Boult:* Oh yes. I don't think I've ever heard that before, but I think it's particularly appropriate to Elgar and it's appropriate to certain of the other very great modern composers who could conduct, but I think it's most inappropriate to a great many people who are struggling to

conduct when they really can't.

Wynne Brindle: Would you apply the same thought to say, Richard Strauss?

Adrian Boult: Certainly. Strauss and Mahler I was thinking of particularly, but [er] not a number of other composers who [er] perhaps we needn't try to mention, but [um] so many conductors – so many composers spoil their music by trying to conduct it themselves. I believe Tchaikovsky did. (recording break)

Adrian Boult: [Um], I wonder, well let's take them one at a time.

Wynne Brindle: Let's start with the Cello Concerto.

Adrian Boult: The Cello Concerto, [er]. Well, I was of course sitting at that awful rehearsal, Elgar's time was running out – somebody else was blazing away with the Scriabin *Poem of Ecstasy*, which the orchestra already knew by heart and the Cello Concerto was very much neglected and Elgar told me, that he would have withdrawn it altogether, if it hadn't been that [um], he knew Felix Salmond needed it very badly. Felix Salmond needed it very badly for professional reasons – it was [er] a great thing for a young cellist of course to premiere an Elgar concerto and [um], so he left it on the programme and it had a very bad reception. [Um], I don't know whether it's appropriate again, [er] I may be wasting tape, but it might be of interest to you, but very soon after that performance of the cello concerto, which as you know had a pretty bad press, [um] I was invited by a friend – a mutual friend, to come to dinner, a farewell dinner to Felix Salmond. Farewell dinner? Never thought he was anything but an Englishman. However, when I got there, I said 'What's all this?' And he said 'You'll think me awful I daresay Adrian, but I have at this moment – it was about September, two dates in my diary – two dates, and that's all, so I'm going to America to see what happens, and of course [um], in a year in America he was the leading cellist and the leading teacher and stayed there. But that was the state (unintelligible), the country was too small then – I think it still is to support a solo string player without teaching or something else as well. And I think Salmond did quite rightly to go to America.

Wynne Brindle: What about Beatrice Harrison's performances?

Adrian Boult: Oh yes, it was lovely, it was [er] beautiful performance, but of course, she'd done it very closely with him. In fact, almost she played it [er], bits of it to him in the way Willy Reed used to play bits of the Violin Concerto. (recording break)

Adrian Boult: Well I don't know, y'know – 'Unusually modest about his music.' I don't think really that is quite the way to put it. He was modest – he might very well be modest about his own music, [um] on certain occasions because he wanted to [er] (unintelligible) talk about something else, but on other occasions he'd (unintelligible) on it and be very... I know he was very friendly. I once took a college student to tea with him to talk about the Violin Concerto – this boy was playing the Violin Concerto, and [um] Elgar was awfully kind and helped him very much. A lot of things in it...

Wynne Brindle: Did you ever see Menuhin play the Violin Concerto?

Adrian Boult: No, no... I had nothing to do with that until second, second time. (chuckles) Oh sorry, I'm making a noise! Yes, oh well I'll leave that now.

Wynne Brindle: Can I go back to the Cello Concerto Sir Adrian? Again, I've got a quotation here from Jerrold Northrop Moore who has made a study of many of the unpublished takes of Elgar's gramophone recordings. On the Cello Concerto, with Beatrice Harrison he says 'At one point in the first movement, Elgar makes six attempts. He begins to shade the orchestral part of the music on the spot, brings out sequential accompaniment, emphasises woodwind colouring, but nonetheless after doing all that, pulls the music out of shape.' Would that be general in fact?

Adrian Boult: Yes. He could do a great deal with it, really without upsetting it... No, it was matters of detail and subtle things, phrasing and so on.

Wynne Brindle: What about performances of *Gerontius*. Did you ever hear Elgar conduct it...

Adrian Boult: I don't remember what I heard. I think I heard him at least once or twice, [um] but of course, [er] I d'know; I can't feel that *Gerontius* is the what shall we... unsullied masterpiece that so many people do in preference to *The Kingdom* and *The Apostles*. I think *The Kingdom*, as one would expect from the most mature work of that kind, that he wrote – I think *The Kingdom* is the greatest of the lot. I don't think that there is a bar in *The Kingdom* that I'd want to change and there are quite a number of bars in the, [er] in *Gerontius*, part two – I don't think there's anything in part one, but in part two of *Gerontius* the music does sag a certain amount, and [um]...

Wynne Brindle: At what point would that be... the dialogue between the Angel and Gerontius...

Adrian Boult: ...I think the Angel and Gerontius go on blathering considerably too long, and of course there is the question – do those very much nineteen hundreds demons really work in 1974? I don't know.

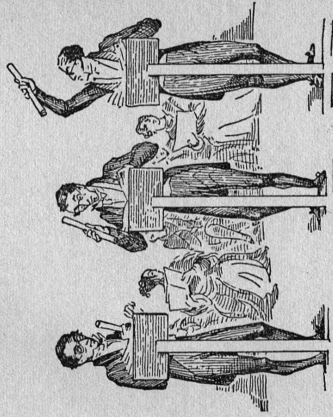
Wynne Brindle: You've just recorded *The Apostles*, which we're waiting to hear; how do you regard that – how do rate it?

Adrian Boult: Oh much higher – it's a more mature work and *The Kingdom* more still you see... *The Apostles* has its weaknesses in the very bitty nature of most of the music. I mean it's, do you see, well it's rather absurd to quote practical things like [er] recording sessions, but do you know – it was impossible when making the sessions, [er] when planning the sessions, for recording *The Apostles*, it was impossible I think to have more than one session without the chorus, which meant that we had to have them all in the evening you see – which of course is more awkward for the orchestra, but there's not really [er] more than one session (unintelligible) I suppose we mean ten or twelve minutes music which you could have without the chorus. Cos the chorus butts in all the time – [er] a stray remark, but it's got to be there, and the result was we had to do all these things in the evenings [er] when... if they'd had long morning sessions as we could in *The Kingdom* (unintelligible) really get down to it in [er], a fresh frame of mind.

Wynne Brindle: Now things would have been different in Elgar's day wouldn't they? How would he have gone about recording a Symphony; he would have had to do it in four minute takes

SIR ADRIAN BOULT

## Zur Kunst des Dirigierens



Übersetzt von Ursula von Zedlitz

BEI HEIMERAN

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Adrian Boult's 1963 book *Thoughts on Conducting* was translated into German as 'About the Art of Conducting' and published in 1965. The first pages show Carl Maria von Weber conducting in London in 1826 and the table of contents. (editor's archive)

presumably?

*Adrian Boult:* Oh yes. And of course, when Elgar was beginning, they were all in those dreadful little tiny studios the size of this room. Everybody playing on top of each other.

*Wynne Brindle:* So to sum up on the recordings... I don't know how acquainted you are with them, but you must have heard them obviously...

*Adrian Boult:* Some of them yes...

*Wynne Brindle:* How, how would you sum up Elgar's performances on record?

*Adrian Boult:* Well, I think really [er] ... Be careful, that's what it is. Just [um, er] ... Elgar was for a long time, was trammled by the, well for all his life, was tied to the four minute slice, and [um], that meant there was always this breathless feeling, that the thing, you mustn't overrun your four minutes, and that coloured his whole performance, his, his performances [er], in the recording studio in a way which of course, it didn't touch his performances in the concert hall. I think you've got to accept that...

*Wynne Brindle:* Are you aware of the recent correspondence in *Records & Recording* about Elgar's Third Symphony?

*Adrian Boult:* I'm not. I've not followed it closely, because I really can't... haven't got much patience about the whole thing (*unintelligible*), well I've seen the sketches of course and I realise that it would be quite impossible to make a work of that symphony without bunging in a whole heap of music that wasn't anything to do with Elgar.

*Wynne Brindle:* A number of people have come up with a number of theories, [um] in Reed's book *Elgar as I knew him* (Boult: 'Yes') he reproduces some of the sketches and two or three pages of full score – one critic I've read recently suggested that these pages come from a completed score for two reasons: ... and I haven't brought Reed's book so I can't show you...

*Adrian Boult:* Doesn't matter. I think I remember...

*Wynne Brindle:* But the second horn part has been, has a tied E flat from the previous page and on another page of the book he reproduces a page of full score where the first and second horn parts have tied notes over to the next page – they both appear to come from the first movement. Elgar did play through the symphony according to Fred Gaisberg of HMV...

*Adrian Boult:* There is one... yes, I think it is Gaisberg, there a one person heard Elgar play it right through and he was not a very musical parson. The only person, I do remember that. The only person who said he heard Elgar play the whole Symphony right through was a person who might very easily thought that was the whole symphony when it wasn't. That's my opinion and I can't believe that the sketches that were handed to Reith in my presence by Elgar's daughter (*pause*) were other than the complete sketches. So I'm afraid I'm not to be caught on that one at all. I don't think that's the slightest... I don't know about the ties – I've never examined them, but he might perfectly well have put them in because he thought those chords were being held over.

Wynne Brindle: One other reason: he's put rests in the silent bars which evidently was one of the last things Elgar did...

Adrian Boult: Yes, he usually do (?) it. Well...

Wynne Brindle: This might have been a decoy? Another of Elgar's Enigmas? ...

Adrian Boult: (*chuckles*) Well, I'm afraid I haven't much patience with any of Elgar's Enigmas – and (*laughs*) as for the *Variations*, don't ask me about them! (*unintelligible*) ...the music's what matters. No, I don't think there's the slightest chance of there having been more, I mean if the whole thing had been there, why shouldn't Elgar said – 'Well I'd have liked to revise it, I'm going... I can't revise it, but let 'em have it.' I don't think (*unintelligible*) written the whole symphony, I'm quite certain we'd have got it. But I think it's very unlikely that he'd (*unintelligible*) ... (*recording break*)

Adrian Boult: About the Violin Concerto, Julian Herbage, [er] the Cello Concerto, the day after Casals gave the first performance of it – his first performance of it, [um] in Queen's Hall, [um] even though of course he got a very bad press, and he did modify his performance of it – he had thought very deeply about it, he criticised one or two mis(?), well, he pounced on one or two things that were misprints he was very deeply, Casals was, he really had taken the trouble to, to do everything he could for that concerto, and the next morning we were talking about it in the BBC and, um Julian Herbage said, 'I don't care what people think, but Casals in my opinion has taken that Symphony (?) away from the parish pump and has now made it into an international masterpiece.' And I thought it was a very good point [er], if it had been a local piece up to that and now it was ... and now it was something (*unintelligible*), and of course, Casals' later performances were, were even more so. Of course you know the nice one (*chuckles*), this is not necessarily for publication, [um] when he came to record it with us and we were having great fun with it, he was really enjoying himself frightfully although he was terribly het up – terribly nervous about it all, and one moment Walter Legge came out of the recording room and said, 'Mr Casals, I'm sorry to say we can hear you singing while you were playing', 'Oh!' said Casals, 'Can you? Then you can charge double for the record!' And that was that. (*chuckles*)

Wynne Brindle: Finally can we just go back to Elgar's relationship with his players. They were obviously very fond of him weren't they?

Adrian Boult: Yes...

Wynne Brindle: And he was very fond of them?

Adrian Boult: Yes.

Wynne Brindle: So much so that he dedicated *Cockaigne* to them. Elgar, I think, can be described as a players' composer, can't he?

Adrian Boult: Oh, most definitely. Very much so. Very much so, I mean – everything he wrote was for that particular instrument – even if were transposed to another instrument. That he wrote for the orchestra – no question about that.

Wynne Brindle: All the phrase marks in the scores are directed at the player...

Adrian Boult: Yes.

Wynne Brindle: ...at the player rather than the conductor...

Adrian Boult: Oh yes. And he will, he will change for different instruments, he would change the phrasing. He might, I might have one instrument playing *legato* and a certain tune played differently next time it comes. Yes, oh yes, he was very much [um], he was, well, he was a great friend of a great many orchestral players. I remember he had a, he celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday by having three Queen's Hall concerts, [er] having his music in three, three devoted to Elgar and [um], I can show the programmes if you like, and [um] he [um], he didn't conduct, he conducted two of them I think, but at the third I don't think he did. We had several, several – Ronald did a good deal, I think I did most it, but Ronald did some, and Elgar did some, and so on (*noise: desk drawer being opened*) anyhow, at the last rehearsal, he [um], he [um] was only listening, and at the beginning he said to me, 'Adrian, you will keep the orchestra at the end of the rehearsal, I want to come and talk to them.' I said – 'Oh, that's very nice, by all means', and I think, during the interval again – I know he did it twice, 'Don't forget, I want to talk to the orchestra, you won't let them go any of them will you?' So I said, 'That's all right. That's very nice.' And let's see what year was it – do you remember? His seventy-fifth birthday – when was he born? (*Wynne Brindle: 1857*) [*general debate to work out date*] 1932 rather. (*laughter*) When the time came, I held them all and [um], he came down, and he made the most charming speech to them. It was in a way, it was a farewell, he was seventy-five – the chances were he wasn't going to conduct much more; he did actually, he conducted them – a performance of *Cockaigne*, I remember at the Proms, soon after that, but it was in a sense a farewell and it was a charming gesture of the life they'd had together – the adventures they'd been through and so on, and I thought it was awfully nice of him to do that. There they are, right across the middle (*shows Queen's Hall programme*)

Wynne Brindle: What was Elgar like as a conductor of other people's music? (*telephone rings*)

Adrian Boult: ...He was of course one of those persons who had very strong likes and dislikes. He didn't do a lot. He did one complete season with the LSO – I forget when it was, you probably know...

Wynne Brindle: Well he did a tour with them...

Adrian Boult: And a complete London Queen's Hall season.

Wynne Brindle: That would be 12.

Adrian Boult: Twelve it was and [um], he got on very well there, but they only had that one season, they never (*unintelligible*) did it. I think it was mutually really, that he felt he wasn't a general racket conductor, but I remember, he was very fond of Schumann and [um], he did quite unusual things – some of them, but they were – it was quite a successful season. (*pause*) Yes, I glad I kept these originals.

Wynne Brindle: Of course the Birthplace is full of Elgar's... Lady Elgar, and later Mrs Elgar Blake



(paper noise) kept and catalogued all the press cuttings.

*Adrian Boult:* Yes. She was very..., oh yes.... well, they both were very faithful. and careful and anxious to do the thing right. Of course, Alice was a devoted little creature; I was very fond of her. A great many people used to find her a nuisance, cos she used to hand... used to do a good deal to protect him you know, which some of his friends hated and I think he was sometimes pretty irritated himself. (laughter) Not so. It was very well meant and usually most successful. I do believe she once did a thing that didn't really come off: that was a young man – I'll tell you his name presently, a young man wrote to say he was studying *Gerontius* and he was travelling through into Wales and he would like to stop off at Worcester, Hereford or wherever they were living if he might, spend a couple of hours going through the part with Elgar... And she's supposed to have said to him 'Oh no, my dear. You musn't waste time doing that kind of thing. Just tell him you're too busy; you can't have him.' Which he did, which was unfortunate, cos the man was Elwes. He didn't know it. That always makes me doubt the story, because Elgar – if he was a Catholic, must have known the name of the Elwes family. But I suppose he didn't think and he didn't know that one of them was singing, cos Elwes had been a diplomat: he'd only just taken to singing, but I don't suppose it would have made much difference to what Elwes did with the part – still it did put off their friendship for a year or two in fact.

*Wynne Brindle:* Just to return to Elgar conducting other people's music, what was his Brahms like?

*Adrian Boult:* He was very attached to the third symphony – the third Brahms symphony. I don't think I ever heard it. I've no special recollection of hearing him, and I think I should remember certain things. No, I'm sorry... I didn't go much to those other concerts that he conducted.

*Wynne Brindle:* Of course in later life there are no recordings of him conducting anyone else's music – I think he conducted 'O God our help in ages past', but that was the only thing...

*Adrian Boult:* He did that at Wembley, and of course he scored *Jerusalem* and I suppose he conducted that sometime – I'd know... rescored *Jerusalem*.

*Wynne Brindle:* Presumably, he was temperamentally unsuited to conducting? Was the creative impulse to much...

*Adrian Boult:* Oh yes. I think it was natural for... after all Strauss and Mahler as we've said were exceptions and I think he, he enjoyed conducting the music he especially enjoyed and I dare say he'd go so far as to say (*unintelligible*) say in Brahms Three or the Schumann, but [um] a number of conductors have got it wrong he would show them how to get it right.

[*Wynne Brindle winds-up discussion and thanks Adrian Boult.*]

## CD REVIEWS

**Elgar: *Falstaff***  
**Chadwick: *Tam O'Shanter***

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

Conductor: Andrew Constantine

Timothy West / Samuel West (speakers)

I reviewed the last Orchid Classics CD of Elgar and Chadwick in the April 2018 Journal. It was a well-rounded performance of *Enigma Variations* coupled with Chadwick's *Symphonic Sketches*. It was really my first introduction to Chadwick's work, and it occurred to me that here was a composer with something to say and the skill of how to say it. His handling of a large orchestra was impressive, his colourful orchestration evocative and, at times, pleasantly quirky. Now another CD comes from the same forces, and again it makes a fascinating coupling. George Whitefield Chadwick was American, and an exact contemporary of Elgar. He admired Elgar's music and made several attempts to meet him, but he must have felt some envy at Elgar's international success while he remained very rooted in America, despite, like many of his contemporaries, studying in the conservatoires of Europe.

Tam O'Shanter is a colourful depiction of the Robert Burns poem. After a stormy opening there are episodes of bagpipes and wild Scottish dancing. It is all quite exciting, and after Tam's hectic ride homewards the music winds down to a peaceful close. It hasn't the boozy uproarious depiction of bagpipes to be found in Malcolm Arnold's Overture of the same name, nor is the melodic material as memorable, and perhaps it was the want of a totally distinctive voice that has sealed Chadwick's fate. Shades of Coleridge-Taylor, Dvořák and Rimsky-Korsakov lurk in the background, but Constantine's committed advocacy and brilliant playing from the BBCNOW make a good case for this revival of Chadwick's music. A five-minute spoken introduction to the work is largely redundant as it covers much of the same ground as the booklet notes.

In any case it is always good to hear music by Elgar's contemporaries, even if it proves yet again how Elgar towered head and shoulders above most of them. I should add now that there are actually two *Falstaffs* in this double CD set. The main focus is on CD1, when passages from Shakespeare's *Henry IV* are spoken during the performance of the music. The passages selected are meant to give background, and move the story on during the musical argument. It doesn't impress me, and it is no disrespect to the excellent Wests, Timothy and Samuel, to say that I was irritated when Elgar's carefully constructed score came to a halt to allow the dialogue. There are good reasons to hear music that is deliberately written to accompany words. Mendelssohn's



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Incidental Music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* springs to mind, or indeed Elgar's *Starlight Express* music. But Elgar did not write 'Incidental Music to *Henry IV*', he composed a tautly organised character study, and the six titles he gave to the different episodes tells us all we need to know about the course of the music. Perhaps Elgar was being over optimistic in assuming knowledge by the average listener of the events depicted, but extra dialogue does little to add to the understanding of the score.

Fortunately CD2 has a complete performance of *Falstaff*, and a very fine one it is too. Constantine obviously loves the work, and the BBCNOW play brilliantly for him. The strings are particularly stylish – listen to the rapid string triplets after Fig 41 in the score, and similarly Fig 122, where the playing is clean and exact under duress in passages which can too often descend into a muddy scramble. Falstaff's falling asleep and snores are finely etched, the hazy, tipsy atmosphere well caught. Mention must also be made of the leader's lovely solo in the first Dream Interlude, a magical few moments aside from the bustling onward pace of the story.

This brings me to my one beef about the recording, and it is one I have mentioned several times recently (the exception being the new Onyx Petrenko/RLPO Elgar CD). That is the lack of focus and impact in the recording of the percussion department. Here, strings are beautifully captured, the woodwind are alert and crystal clear, the brass sonorous, richly toned and impressive. But the poor percussionists sound as though they are in the next room. The triangle after Fig 11 and the side drum at Fig 86 are barely audible, those lovely bouncy percussion interjections after Figs 97, 112 and 118 go for nothing, the rhythmic beats of the tabor in the second Dream Interlude could be more pronounced, while the important tambourine part in the same section is again largely inaudible.

Wondering if my memory was faulty, I turned to two recordings made in the 1960s and 70s, and listened to the Dawn episode in Boult's recording of *The Apostles*. Here the important percussion writing is vivid, clear and has amazing presence. Then listen to how Barbirolli's side drummer urges the rhythm on at the striking passage after Fig 127 in his recording of *Falstaff* – a real burst of excitement.

Despite these strictures, which, like all criticism, is a purely personal reaction, I would have no hesitation in recommending this fine performance of the Elgar along with another interesting work by Chadwick, and will look forward to the next coupling of these contemporary, but very different, composers.

Barry Collett

## LETTERS

### *Editorial December 2019*

*From Steven Halls*

Sir

Having had the benefit of a preview of Meinhard Saremba's valedictory editorial in the present volume, I am writing to express how sad I was to read it. As a committed Europhile and Remainer, I have great sympathy for his position but his departure is yet another example of the self-inflicted damage we British have been doing to ourselves in the last few years of divisiveness. How ironic that the Journal's first editor from Germany, the country that Elgar visited and loved, that welcomed Elgar's music and some of whose citizens nourished and supported him for much of his life, should feel he must turn his back on us and note that he feels we are turning our backs on him.

Nevertheless, I do not regret for a single moment my idea when I was the Society's Chairman to invite him to be the Journal editor and I think he has occupied the position with the same distinction as his predecessors and brought a valuable new breadth and perspective to the task.

## ELGAR VIEWED FROM AFAR

The monthly Catalan music magazine *Revista Musical Catalana* dedicated a long report to the 'Elgar Festival' at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden in the issue of May 1904. The events took place from 14 to 16 March 1904: Various ensembles presented some of Elgar's major works and the première of *In the South*, Op. 50, given by the Hallé Orchestra conducted by the composer on the third day of the Festival. The correspondent for the Catalan magazine emphasizes the importance of the event with 'three concerts consisting exclusively of music by a single composer on earth'. The work which became famous with its performances in Düsseldorf a few years earlier, *El somni de Gerontius* in Catalan, is regarded as 'a sincere interpretation of Cardinal Newman's poem'. The new oratorio *The Apostles*, which was presented on the second day of the festival in its first London performance, was very much discussed and compared to *The Dream of Gerontius*. The writer thinks that this is not to its favour because the new work suffers from 'a lack of drive' and he thinks that for the lack of unity 'the libretto is very much to blame'. In the description of the third day the correspondent recalls Elgar's career from 'earlier works' (*Froissart*, *Caractacus*) to successes like the *Enigma Variations* and *Sea Pictures* up to the première of *In the South*, 'inspired during his trip to Italy'. The writer is even stimulated to quote Goethe in German (chapter 34 of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*) when he describes the work: 'There is really something about the luminous poetry of this beautiful country: "Wo die Zitronen blühen"' [Where the lemons blossom]. As a whole the 'Elgar Festival' is regarded as 'an important celebration in the annals of English national music'.


ANY I MAIG DE 1904 NOM. 5

# REVISTA MUSICAL CATALANA

Butlletí mensual del ORFEÓ CATALÀ

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BARCELONA

Redacció y Administració: Plassa de Sant Just, 4

PREUS DE SUSCRIPCIÓ: *Barcelona*: Pels socis del ORFEÓ CATALÀ, un any, 4 pessetes; pels no socis, 5 pessetes. — *Fira*: Pels socis del ORFEÓ CATALÀ, un any, 5 pessetes; pels no socis, 6 pessetes. — *Estranger*: Un any, 6 francs

Se suscriu, además, en las principales Librerías y Magatzems de Música

Número solt, 50 CENTIMS

parlarne, no podia may estarse d'exclamar: «Es admirable!» Bé es veritat que això, afegeixen los maliciosos, ell mateix no ho creya.

Los *Cuentos d'Hoffmann* varen estrenarse a París, en l'*Opera Cómica*, el 10 de Febrer de 1881. Aquí's van representar per primera vegada en 1887, y no s'havien fet fins ara. Han siguts molt ben rebuts per tothom, sobre tot pels curiosos— X.

LONDRES.—Ocupacions que'm tingueren allunyat de Londres me privaren d'escriure ma correspondencia del mes passat. Avuy saltaré per sobre dels concerts de dos mesos enrera, puix ja no'm sembla oportú parlarne, y també'm permetré deixar a la banda els darrers concerts, perquè, no havent pogut assistir a gaires, no vull parlar-ne per referències.

Aixís podré ocupar-me més llargament del acon-teixement sens precedents en aquest país que molts han anomenat el triomf de la música inglesa. Me refereixo al «Elgar Festival» que tingué lloch en lo teatre de Covent Garden els dias 14, 15 y 16 de Març. Y, realment, se tracta d'un acon-teixement important: tres concerts exclusivament compostos de música d'un sol compositor de la terra! Fa poch anys ningú hauria cregut que això fos possible: per ventura no era de bon to admirar tot lo exòtic y burlarse sens pietat del pobres autors inglesos? Avuy las cosas han cambiat un bon xich, y n'es bona prova l'entusiasme y las aclamacions de la gran generació, aplegada de tots els indrets del regne, que assistí als tres concerts. Y, a més de la sanció popular, també dech esmentar la sanció reyal, fent notar l'assistencia del Rey els dos primers dias y de la Reyna tots tres dias. Aquesta, pera acabar dignament la festa, cridà al Dr. Elgar y al director Dr. Richter, y ella mateixa'ls va felicitar molt expressivament.

Realment, avuy n'Eduard Elgar ha lograt imposarse en la seva terra. No hi ha dubte que té molt talent, ja ha produït obras importants. El primer dia del Festival fou dedicat a l'oratori *The dream of Gerontius* (El somni de Gerontius). Aquesta obra, executada per primera vegada a Düsseldorf pel Desembre de 1901 y avuy popular a Inglaterra, es una sincera interpretació del poema del Cardenal Neuman realçada per una tècnica molt meritoria y una orquestació brillant. El segon dia s'executà per primera vegada a Londres, *The Apostles*: Aquest nou oratori ha sigut molt discutit y, comparantlo ab el *Somni de Gerontius*, hi ha qui'l troba superior a n'aquest. D'altres, en cambi, el consideran inferior. Encara que las comparacions són odiosas, en aquest cas són inevitables tractantse de duas obras d'un mateix autor y que pertanyen a un mateix gènere. Jo confesso que trobo més espontani y molt més arrodonit el primer oratori. En *Els Apòstols* hi manca unitat; però d'això'n té molta culpa el llibret, que es una calamitat. Además, s'hi veu molt esforç y una continua preocupació de produir efecte ab medis que molts cops no són del tot lligitims. Y tot

plegut resulta forsa enfarfat. Una primera audició d'aquesta partitura sense cap preparació, es insuficient pera formarne un judici seré, puix tanta solfa no fa més que fatigar el cervell. Sentirem abduas obras en condicions acústicas molt desfavorables. La colocació del chor al fondo de l'escena fou una idea deplorable, perquè quedà completament sofocat per l'orquestra. Així, resultà deslluït el treball fet ab concienca per l'orquestra y chor de Manchester; baix la direcció del Dr. Richter.

El programa del tercer dia erall següent: *Over-tura de Froissart* (una de las primeras obras del autor), fragments de *Caractacus* (cant y orquesta), *Variacions* op. 36, *Overtura «In the South»*, *Sea Pictures* (cant y orquesta); *Overtura de Cockaigne y Marxas militars*: 1.<sup>a</sup> en *A menor* y 2.<sup>a</sup> en *D major*. El clou d'aquest concert fou l'*Overtura «In the South»*, que s'executava per primera vegada. Com ho deixa entreveure'l títol, aquesta overtura fou inspirada a l'autor durant un seu viatge a Italia, y verdaderament hi ha en ella quelcom de la luminosa poesia d'aquel hermós país:

wo die Zitronen blühen.

De tota la música del Dr. Elgar, aquesta es la que més m'agrada perquè s'aparta un xich de la fredor britànica que predomina (diguemho baixet) en tot lo que s'escriu en aquest país, donantli una austeritat y una sequedat que xocan als meus sentiments meridionals. Además, la part tècnica es perfecta, no notantshi l'enfarfat de que'm queixava suara al parlar dels *Apòstols*. L'autor mateix va dirigir la seva obra, y, un cop acabada, rebé una xardorosa ovació.

La fetxa del «Elgar Festival» serà una fetxa important en els anys de la música nacional inglesa.

El dia 17 de Març va cumplir noranta nou anys el degà del professorat musical En Manuel García, qui rebé de totes las parts del món innombrables felicitacions, testimoni de la simpatia y veneració universals de que s'ha fet mereixedor en sa llarga carrera. Establert a Londres desde l'any 1850, ocupà una càtedra a la Royal Academia de Música fins a l'any 1895, quan, havent complert noranta anys, cregué tenir dret a un xich de repòs. Anteriorment a sa vinguda a Londres fou professor de cant del Conservatori de París. L'any 1840 va presentar a l'Academia Francesa la seva *Mémoire sur la voix humaine*. L'any 1841 comensà a donar lliçons a la cèlebre Jenny Lind. A n'en García se deu lo descobriment del laringoscopi.

En García pertany a una familia de músics. Es germà de la cèlebre Malibran, morta prematurament l'any 1836 a l'edat de vintivuit anys, i de Madame Viardot-García, la distingida artista qui, retirada fa molts anys de las taules y malgrat la seva edat avançada, encara s'interessa en lo seu art.

Lo pare, Manuel del Popolo-Vicente García, nascut a Sevilla l'any 1775, fou un home molt remar-



Beatrice Harrison (1892-1965) – who ‘came to play through Cello Concerto with E. for Gramophone’ a hundred years ago – was the leading British cellist of her generation and a favourite of composers such as Edward Elgar and Frederick Delius. She gave first performances of several important twentieth century classical works, and made many recordings. The HMV publicity photograph shows Harrison and Elgar recording his Cello Concerto at HMV’s studios, using the acoustic recording process. The autobiography of Beatrice Harrison, *The Cello and the Nightingales*, was published in 1985 by Patricia Cleveland-Peckwith with a foreword by Julian Lloyd Webber.

## 100 YEARS AGO ...

On 1 September, with Elgar at the Hut, Alice went to the Philharmonic Hall to hear the Southern Syncopated Orchestra. ‘They played with wonderful rhythm & spirit & seemed possessed with music in singing & playing – Wonderful effects with banjos & brass & about 4 strings’. On the 4<sup>th</sup> she went ‘to Hampton’s re Severn House’. Billy Reed recalled that it was ‘very expensive to run, so that they were afraid they would have to sell it’. Two days later she and Carice joined Elgar: ‘Found E. all well D.G. & rehearsal in Orchard Room – Lalla [Vandervelde] very kind & welcoming Troyte there & Mr. & Mrs. Newman – After lunch Quintet & 4tet. lovely Mr. Reed, Wodehouse, Parker, Tomlinson E. played’.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> the Elgars ‘lunched at Victoria Station & on to Brinkwells’. While they were there a national rail strike began. ‘No little homely trains cross the Weald’, mused Alice, adding ‘Traitors, they ought to be shot – worse than the worst enemies’. The strike lasted until 5 October, and the following morning ‘Carice left, A. with her in pony carriage to Pulboro’ to see how trains were going on – & all promised speedy rectification – & she started’.

Edward and Alice returned to Severn House by car on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The première of the Cello Concerto was on the 27<sup>th</sup>, in a concert otherwise conducted by Albert Coates. The first rehearsal, on the 26<sup>th</sup>, was ‘supposed to be at 11.30. After 12.30 – A. absolutely furious – E. extraordinary calm – Poor Felix Salmond in a state of suspense & nerves – Wretched hurried rehearsal – An insult to E. from that brutal, selfish, ill mannered bounder A. Coates’. It was the same next day: ‘That brute, Coates went on rehearsing [until] just before one, he stopped & the men like Angels stayed till 1.30 ... Indifferent performance of course in consequence E. had a tremendous reception & ovation’. A young John Barbirolli, playing in the orchestra, ‘wanted to say “Go home, sir, refuse to conduct it until you can have a proper rehearsal”’.

At the beginning of November Elgar was in Worcestershire for a concert and visits to his sister Pollie at Stoke Prior, and to the Atkins and Leicesters at Worcester. When he returned on the 7<sup>th</sup> Alice was ill in bed, but ‘came down & made all ready for E’. Next day she stayed ‘in bed till evening. E. not vesy well in evening & very unwell in night’. Sir Maurice Abbott-Anderson was summoned, and ‘came to see E. who was much, much better D.G. He saw A. too who was rather badly & went on being so all day & next day’.

Elgar was in Brussels and Amsterdam in the second half of November for concerts, returning on the 27<sup>th</sup> – ‘A out of bed for his return’. He was off again at the beginning of December to the Kilburns in Bishop Auckland for more concerts, returning on the 4<sup>th</sup>. On the 9<sup>th</sup> Carice set out for a well-deserved holiday in Switzerland. Alice was ‘raser a poor thing still ... Miss Harrison came to play through Cello Concerto with E. for Gramophone’. It was recorded on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, ‘the only time A. did not go with him’. They spent Christmas ‘all by their souses, vesy quiet hapsy day’.

Martin Bird

*ISSN 0143-1269*

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