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The Elgar Society Journal

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EDITORIAL

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When I took over the JOURNAL nearly six years ago, it was a euphoric time for lovers of "classical" music. The Three Tenors were household names, and even Radio One DJs were playing the odd operatic aria as yuppies discovered the joys of Covent Garden and the Coliseum. Copies of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* by 'Nige' Kennedy were selling like hot cakes. This was the breakthrough, some wanted us to believe, that would allow serious music to storm the bastions of popular culture. Well, it didn't happen, and commentators are now saying that the bubble has burst. From 10% of the UK record market in 1991, "classical" records now comprise little more than 4%, and most of those are the dreaded "compilation" albums. For we are now in the age of Classic FM. Members will know that I have sounded off about this station before. I do plead guilty to listening to it on occasions, though normally when I am doing something else, like washing-up! Classic FM has been successful beyond its founders' wildest dreams, but the signs are that it may have peaked, as last year it made a loss of £4 million and advertising airtime has had to be doubled. It has never been without its critics, and the latest of these is Alan Bennett with his reference to "Saga louts" who make up the majority of the audience. He "loathes" it for its "cosiness, its safety and its whole-hearted endorsement of the post-Thatcher world". The music does not "get much respect...It's a bit like a Reader's Digest condensation of the classics". Bennett's old friend and *Beyond the Fringe* colleague Jonathan Miller agrees, and says that Classic FM both panders to and encourages shorter attention spans. "It appears to be part of a global decline where all thought is reduced to soundbites, reflecting a deep-rooted and growing fear of seriousness", he said.

Many voices have been quick to put the other side, including a *Times* leader entitled 'Classic Priggery', which attacked "intellectual snobs down the ages". It speaks of "the familiar complaint that those who cannot take a work of art whole and pure should not nibble at its edges". Many people came to a love of poetry through *The Golden Treasury* or some other anthology, it argues; Dickens and Eliot first presented their novels in serialised form; Henry Wood's Proms consisted of short extracts from operas, etc.

But there is more to this argument than *The Times* would have us believe; for the figures for record sales and concert attendances seem to be suggesting that, far from being attracted to longer works of art, people are "nibbling" but then going away. Indeed, the Chart Information Network have just introduced a new "Crossover" Chart, comprising classical compilations, film soundtracks, Bryn Terfel singing

Broadway, Marianne Faithful singing Kurt Weill, and so on. CIN freely admit that "with the advent of Classic FM...the traditional classical market has stagnated".

No doubt my failure to jump for joy at this development will have me branded as a "purist" and a "snob". But why does it make one a snob to wish that people would move on from *Pomp & Circumstance no 1* and *Nimrod* to *Falstaff* and the *First Symphony*? We are rightly concerned when we hear of physical or emotional deprivation, yet surely millions in our society are *culturally* deprived. It is not just a question of whether we happen to like, pop, jazz, classical, or whatever. Cultural appreciation is more than just having one's senses tickled. A great work of art makes demands on those who are exposed to it; it calls for a response. If you allow it to, it could change you as a person. It is no coincidence that many composers and musicians speak of certain symphonies and other masterworks, etc in terms of a journey; Elgar described his own *Second Symphony* as "the passionate pilgrimage of a soul". It may be true, as *The Times* puts it, that "music and culture have many mansions", but is it snobbish to want people to move out of the vestibule?

And what does this have to do with Elgar, and the Society which exists to honour his memory? This issue sees the splitting of the JOURNAL into two separate publications. Interest in the man and his music shows no sign of abating, within the Society at least. The Internet holds out exciting prospects which will surely be developed over the next few years. Yet despite the vast amount of books, records and other material which has been produced over recent years, there is much to be done. The recent Barbican weekend of the three great choral works was poorly attended. Is there any way in which greater interest can be generated? Paul Rooke, the Society's new Publicity Officer, has pointed out that we are moving into a time when we shall be able to celebrate the centenaries of major Elgar works. Next year the work in question will be *Caractacus*, which has come in for a re-assessment since Richard Hickox suggested that it was something of a neglected masterpiece when he recorded it a few years ago. Perhaps local choral societies could be persuaded to make it part of their 1998 season. After that of course come the *Variations* and *The Dream of Gerontius*, and the Council of the Society has already been looking at ways in which these works can be celebrated. The Society will continue (within the limits imposed by a relatively small budget) to stimulate the production of books, recordings, and other methods of keeping the name and music of Elgar before the public.

Yet there is *still* much to be done. The writer Norman Lebrecht, who is severely critical of many aspects of the current musical scene, surely makes a telling point when he says that many people who might be interested in music are deterred from attending concerts by such things as the formal atmosphere and indecipherable programme notes. One hopes that the technological revolution - through such things as CD-Roms - will help to make the music of Elgar and the other great composers accessible to and valued by the next generation.

GEOFFREY HODGKINS

HORATIO PARKER, EDWARD ELGAR, AND CHORAL MUSIC AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Two composers who were influential both in the production and evolution of choral music around 1900 were Edward Elgar (b. 1857) in England and Horatio Parker (b. 1863) in the United States. Their paths crossed occasionally from the 1890s until 1919, the year of Parker's premature death at the age of fifty-six. Although many of their oratorios and cantatas are different in subject matter, these composers shared a similar musical perspective. This article will recount their direct associations and explore their musical kinship largely through an overview of those Parker compositions which show the possible influence of Elgar's choral writing.

Parker emerged as a major American composer with the successful New York première of his first oratorio, *Hora Novissima*, in 1893. Thereafter it became the most frequently performed American oratorio for a quarter of a century. Its success was also a decisive factor in his gaining a professorship at Yale University in 1894, a position he was to hold until his death. He was recognised as a member of the 'New England School' of composers, along with Arthur Foote, George Chadwick, Amy Beach, and the older John Knowles Paine. This group of composers was considered the matrix of American classical-music composition before World War I.

The craft demonstrated in *Hora* was developed in several prior cantatas, most of them secular, and some stretching back to his student days (1882-85) at the Munich Hochschule, where he studied under the severe tutelage of Josef Rheinberger. *Hora* was conservative for its time, and perhaps this feature accounts for its popularity. Its text, based on a section of Bernard de Morlaix's *De Contemptu Mundi* (ca. 1140), is a contemplation of paradise as symbolised in The Holy City. Parker divided the text into two parts consisting of eleven sections and arranged them as a series of self-contained solos rich in melodic and harmonic content alternating with a quartet and massive polyphonic choruses. The recurrence of various motives throughout gives the oratorio a remarkable sense of thematic unity. Example 1A shows one of the most basic recurring motives, a sequence of descending fourths in the orchestra against the choral theme at the close of Part I.

Example 1. Excerpts from *Hora Novissima*, vocal score (London: Novello, 1893).

[Allegro] A. "Tu sine Littore," p. 57, mm. 7-10.

[Chorus] *pp*

Tu si - ne lit - to - re, Tu si - ne tem - po - re,

[Orch] *pp*

Example 1B demonstrates the principal cyclic theme in the soprano against a variant of a scherzo theme in the alto, Part II.

B. "Stant Syon Atria," p. 95, mm. 1-2.

[Maestoso]

[Soprano] (Cyclic Theme)

The image shows a musical score for two voices. The top staff is for the Soprano, marked [Maestoso] and [Soprano] (Cyclic Theme). It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 9/8 time signature. The tempo is marked 'ff' (fortissimo). The lyrics are 'Re - gis i - bi thro - nus,'. The bottom staff is for the Alto, marked [Alto]. It begins with a treble clef, the same key signature and time signature, and a tempo marking of 'f' (forte). The lyrics are 'Stant Sy-on a - tri-a, con-ju - bi - lan - ti-a, mar-ty - re ple - na'. Both staves show rhythmic patterns with eighth and sixteenth notes.

Re - gis i - bi thro - nus,

Stant Sy-on a - tri-a, con-ju - bi - lan - ti-a, mar-ty - re ple - na

After *Hora Novissima*, Parker strove to infuse his oratorios and cantatas with various novel ideas, many of them intended to enhance their dramatic quality. Leading-motive treatment is a principal feature of his next oratorio, *The Legend of St Christopher* (1897-8); and vivid pictorial writing in his third oratorio, *A Wanderer's Psalm* (1900), keeps it from being a pale imitation of *Hora Novissima*. *A Star Song* (1902) shows the composer in the throes of a radical style revision, and the cantata *King Gorm the Grim* (1908) demonstrates a musical pathos worthy of its title. Two major choral works of the next decade are the Parsifal-like oratorio *Morwen and the Grail* (1915) and the morality, *The Dream of Mary* (1918), which unfolds as a series of tableaux. Mention should also be made of Parker's second opera, *Fairyland* (1915), which contains no fewer than fifteen choral sections. Here the composer appeared to be responding to his critics, who wondered why, as America's foremost choral composer, he had neglected choral writing in his first opera, *Mona* (1912). His reputation eventually grew to the extent that a leading American-music historian, writing slightly over a decade after Parker's death, declared that he could have been the "greatest of our American composers" had he been as productive in instrumental as he was in vocal music¹.

Elgar's choral writing bears some resemblance to Parker's during the 1885-1910 period, but the latter's works often preceded those of the English composer. Among the secular works, *The Black Knight* (1889-92), like Parker's *The Ballad of a Knight and His Daughter* (1885), stems from the German cantata tradition and calls for chorus and orchestra without soloists. *King Olaf* (1894-96) and Parker's *King Trojan* (1885) have soloists in addition to the chorus-orchestral texture. They, along with Parker's *King Gorm the Grim* (1908), recount Nordic sagas. The cantata *Caractacus* (1898) is similar in size and performing resources to Parker's *Dream King and His Love* (1891). Turning to religious works, Elgar's first oratorio, *The Light of Life* (1895-96), followed Parker's *Hora Novissima* by a few years, and Parker was to write two more oratorios, *The Legend of St Christopher* and *A Wanderer's Psalm* before Elgar's monumental *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900).

Gerontius may have been a revelation to Parker. Upon arriving in England for the

¹ Howard, John Tasker: *Our American Music* (New York: Crowell, 1931) p 334

summer of 1900, he received the following letter from A J Jaeger of Novello, who was in charge of preparing for publication both his *A Wanderer's Psalm* and Elgar's *Gerontius* for their respective premières :

Will you stay over for the B'ham [Birmingham] Festival? It will be the most memorable Festival to *English Art* since Festivals began : *two real creations, original, strong, beautiful*: Taylor's "Hiawatha" and Elgar's extraordinary, inspired "Gerontius", the biggest thing any English composer has ever done - you don't think much of E.E., I know, but wait till you hear this "Gerontius"².

One wonders about the cause leading to Jaeger's concluding comment in the letter above. Parker has left no other trace of his opinion about Elgar's music, although he made the occasional comments about "good performances" of *Gerontius*, as we shall see.

Parker was unable to stay for the Birmingham performance of *Gerontius* but requested an advance copy from Jaeger who, writing to Elgar 14 July 1900, commented : "[Parker] is particularly anxious to see the work & means to study it on the steamer going back [to the United States]"³. This opportunity may have influenced Parker in writing his next major choral composition, *A Star Song* (1902), parts of which are radically different from his previous choral works, as we shall see. Parker first heard *Gerontius* in its Düsseldorf performance of 1902, as well as other performances in both the United States and England over the next decade⁴. He also conducted the work with the New Haven Oratorio Society in 1908⁵. Although he neither wrote about *Gerontius* in his lectures for his Yale University students nor commented on it in his other lectures or letters (Richard Strauss and Debussy were his idols), he undoubtedly recognised its importance. In addition to *A Star Song*, his final major oratorio, *Morven and the Grail* (1915), is strong evidence of *Gerontius*'s continuing influence on his choral writing.

² Semler, Isabel Parker : *Horatio Parker : A Memoir for His Grandchildren Compiled from Letters and Papers* (New York : G P Putnam's Sons, 1942; reprint, New York : Da Capo, 1973), p 125

³ Moore, Jerrold Northrop : *Elgar and His Publishers : Letters of a Creative Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) p 231

⁴ Horatio Parker Papers (hereafter HP Papers), MSS 36, V (writings), A (diaries and jottings), Yale University Music Library. Entries for 15 November 1903, "[Frank] Damrosch rehearsal - Dream of Gerontius"; 17 November 1903, "Damrosch concert [New York Oratorio Society]"; 20 March 1909, "to Falstaff w HEK [Henry Krehbiel] Gerontius"; 6 March 1913, "went to Dream of Gerontius w/ Lady Elgar [London]". Lady Elgar's diary for the same date is considerably more informative concerning the last concert : "A. & C. to Albert Hall for 'Gerontius' enormous audience - Horatio Parker, Colvins, D'Oyleys, & K.Swan in A.'s box - all very sympathetic. Much of the performance excellent & very impressive". My thanks to Geoffrey Hodgkins for providing this and other information from Lady Alice Elgar's diary for this article.

⁵ HP Papers V, A. Entry for 19 March 1908 reads : "Gerontius, good performance".

Parker in England

The direct contacts the two composers had with each other were sporadic and confined largely to those years Parker frequently travelled to England for performances of his works, 1899-1902, and later ones during which Elgar made three trips to the United States 1905-1907. Parker had visited England earlier during the summers of 1890 and 1895 as an adjunct to his frequent European trips, particularly Bavaria, where his wife's family and many friends lived. Regretfully, his diaries mention no names of English composers or musicians he may have visited either time, although the 1895 diary lists the names of several cathedral towns.

His 1899 trip to England was to be his most important, for its purpose was to conduct a performance of *Hora Novissima* at Worcester during the Three Choirs Festival. No other American composer had been so honoured at one of England's important choral festivals, although Dudley Buck's *The Light of Asia* was performed at one of Novello's oratorio concerts in London, 1885. Parker's diary entry for 17 January 1899 reads: "Letter from Atkins - Worcester Festival - Hora Novissima!"⁶ Ivor A Atkins had become organist and choirmaster at the Worcester Cathedral less than two years before. No record exists of their acquaintance prior to this occasion, but their correspondence reveals a developing friendship over the next eight years⁷. Atkins was one of Parker's most enthusiastic supporters and should receive major credit for the latter's popularity in England.

English curiosity about *Hora Novissima*, which had received strongly favourable reviews of American performances at and after its 1893 première, may have attracted Atkins' attention. An analysis of the oratorio was published shortly after its première in the organ for the Novello publishing company, *The Musical Times*⁸. Undoubtedly Novello was eager to promote its publication of the piano-vocal score. Around the same time, Henry Knight, writing in the *Musical Standard*, called for an English performance of the work⁹, as did the *Musical Record*¹⁰. Shortly before the second American performance of *Hora*, by the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston, 4 February 1894, Parker commented that an English performance was imminent¹¹. Nevertheless, several years were to elapse before the piece was heard

⁶ HP Papers V, A. See also Semler, *Horatio Parker*, p 106

⁷ HP Papers II (correspondence) B (from others to Parker), have fourteen letters from Ivor and four from his wife, Dora (13 November 1899 - 21 December 1906). They include details about Parker's English visits, the promotion of his music, and family matters. In one letter (8 April 1901) Atkins commissioned Parker to write a part-song. Parker responded with *Come Away*. Semler, *Horatio Parker*, has published some letters from the Atkins correspondence, pp 119-121, 122-23, 127-28.

⁸ *Musical Times*, vol 34, (1 October 1893) p 587

⁹ Clipping, 22 July 1893, HP Papers, IV (clippings), E (scrapbooks), 3 (misc.).

¹⁰ Clipping, 1 January 1894, HP Papers, IV, E, 3.

¹¹ Clipping, *Boston Journal*, n.d., HP Papers, IV, E, 3.



Photograph inscribed by Parker to "Mr Mrs & Miss Jäger" (courtesy Arthur Reynolds)

in England. American tenor David Bispham claims to have been the catalyst for the event, writing that he had given a copy of *Hora* to Hans Richter, director of the Birmingham Festival, in 1898. "He showed it to others, with the result that not long after it was performed [in] Worcester Cathedral"¹².

Parker conducted *Hora Novissima* on 14 September 1899, the penultimate day of the Worcester Festival. Emma Albani, Ada Crossley, Edward Lloyd, and Plunket Greene - all distinguished oratorio singers - comprised the solo quartet. The presentation must have been one of the principal attractions, for the *Musical Times* reported that 2,380 people attended, a number that was exceeded only by

performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Handel's *Messiah*¹³. (Elgar had two works performed the day before : *The Light of Life* and the *Enigma Variations*¹⁴. Compositions by other English composers - Charles Wood, Lee Williams, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, A C Mackenzie, and Hubert Parry - were also on the 1899 Festival programme). The consensus of English criticism about *Hora* was favourable but not particularly enthusiastic. Perhaps the *Musical Times'* guarded appraisal is most representative : "[Parker] has produced a work which is not only well worth the attention of those who are seeking something fresh in the oratorio field, but which is a credit to himself and to the nation to which he belongs"¹⁵.

Parker made no mention of having heard Elgar's performances, although he probably was present at both. Nor did Elgar comment on *Hora Novissima* immediately after hearing it. Jerrold Northrop Moore, presumably quoting from Lady

¹² Bispham, David : *A Quaker Singer's Recollections* (New York : Macmillan, 1920) p 209

¹³ *Musical Times*, vol 40 [1 October 1899] p 670

¹⁴ Anderson, Robert : *Elgar* (New York : Schirmer Books, 1993) p 43

¹⁵ *Musical Times*, op.cit.

Elgar's diary, recorded "E. walked with Father Bellasis" to the performance, causing Moore to comment : "It was pure coincidence that...Edward should fall in with this old acquaintance whose entire life had been shaped by the author of 'The Dream of Gerontius' - the poem whose central expression of Catholic dying and rebirth sound through the cry 'Novissima hora est'"¹⁶. Elgar had voiced a curious opinion about the oratorio well over a year before the Worcester performance in a letter to Jaeger dated 4 February 1898 :

Hora Novissima contains more 'music' than any of your other englishmen [sic] have as yet managed to knock out including Parry Stanford Mackenzie - these great men seem to be busily employed in performing one another's works : nobody else will!¹⁷

This seeming praise for Parker's music, which Elgar could have known at that time only by means of the score, pales under the more significant part of the sentence, a jab at his fellow native composers. A few months after Elgar had heard *Hora* at Worcester, his comment to Jaeger was quite laconic : "I fear I didn't make much of Parker"¹⁸.

Parker was back in England the following summer of 1900 to conduct a very successful performance of *Hora* at Chester on 27 July and a première of his newly commissioned oratorio, *A Wanderer's Psalm*, for the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford on 12 September. The latter work must have been written in some haste, for his diary makes only one mention of it during the winter of 1899-1900. It is sectional, like *Hora*, but shorter, containing seven rather than eleven parts. Parker did not use leading motives, so prominent in *St Christopher*, but cyclic treatment of themes, including the Gregorian peregrine psalm tone, is evident. The text, drawn from Psalm 107, is enhanced by pictorial writing, particularly the central movement, "They that go down to the sea in ships". Among the associative devices here are a careening melody, an accompaniment descriptive of a heavily rolling sea, and even a choral motive quite reminiscent of the opening horn call from *The Flying Dutchman*.

Although the provincial English press was quite laudatory, the London papers spoke out decisively against the Psalm's "conservative" style and criticised its "numerous reminiscences"¹⁹. The *Musical Times* came to Parker's defence : "But such is the

¹⁶ Moore, Jerrold Northrop : *Edward Elgar : A Creative Life* [Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1984] p 290. Mention of *Hora Novissima* in Elgar's letter has been construed as a reference to Gerontius's "Novissima hora est"; however, in a previous sentence of the same letter, Elgar makes reference to Parker's *St Christopher*. Probably Elgar is writing about Parker's *Hora Novissima*. See Kennedy, Michael : *Portrait of Elgar* (London : Oxford University Press, 1968) p 63, fn 8, for more discussion on this identification.

¹⁷ Moore, *Letters*, p 65

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p 158

¹⁹ Clippings from the *London Times*, *Globe*, *Chronicle*, and *Daily Telegraph*, and from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, HP Papers, E, 5.

bold swing of the music and the certainty by which all means are used to the ends of legitimate effect and the expression of dignified feeling, that few if any, will object to being momentarily reminded of an old friend in a new guise"²⁰.

Elgar was at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival, but we have only Jaeger's opinion of *A Wanderer's Psalm*, formed while he was preparing the piece for publication. Jaeger could not help making a contrast between Parker's piece and *Gerontius*, on which he was also working at the same time. In a letter to Elgar dated 13 April 1900:

We (Novellos) are at present setting up Parker's new work (one of the Psalms) for the Hereford Cathedral Festival. This is really more urgent than yours, 'cos the Hereford show is a month earlier than the Brummagem Ditto. But we can keep both of you going with proofs. Parker's Stuff is what *pleases West & Button!* It is such good church Style!! I don't at all wish to sneer at it, for it looks powerful enough stuff. But the more nearly a composer goes to that precious "Church Style" the greater he is in the eyes of W. B. & Co so it seems to me. They cannot see much beyond the "what is" & what-used-to-be! Freshness, originality, individuality & the great Beauty that creates new wonders for us & goes for more than much solid workmanship leave them untouched & un-excited²¹.

On 12 July he wrote : "Parker's stuff...will make you laugh"²². *A Wanderer's Psalm* received its first American performance on 17 December 1900 in Boston. Thereafter, it was not heard again.

Parker was on sabbatical leave from Yale during the winter of 1901-02, and November 1901 found him in Worcester, where Atkins performed his *Service in E*. In addition, Parker conducted the Choral Society there in a performance of *Come Away*, the part-song he had written for Atkins. Although most of the year was spent on the Continent, Parker returned to England to receive an honorary doctorate of music at Cambridge on 10 June 1902. Charles Villiers Stanford was responsible for the nomination. Elgar had received an honorary doctorate from Cambridge in 1900 and was to receive another from Oxford in 1905, with Hubert Parry as the nominator. Both Stanford and Parry, composers and academicians whose popularity and position Elgar resented, were among Parker's closest English friends, for Parker was similarly a leader of the American musical "establishment".

The fall of 1902 was the peak of Parker's activity with the English choral societies. The third act of *St Christopher* was performed at Worcester on 10 September and the oratorio was given in its entirety at the Bristol Festival on 9 October. In addition, a new choral work *A Star Song* had been commissioned for the Norwich Festival, and the piece was given its première there on 23 October. The *Musical Times* anticipated the presentation of Parker's music at the three different festivals that fall by providing an extended article about him in its September issue, including pictures of Horatio as a young lad, his mother and father, and his Auburndale,

²⁰ *Musical Times*, vol 41 (1 September 1900) p 58

²¹ Moore, *Letters*, p 174

²² *ibid.*, p 213

Massachusetts, birthplace, just outside of Boston²³. Although Elgar attended the Worcester and Bristol festivals, he left no written record of comment about hearing *St Christopher*.



Horatio Parker 

²³ *Musical Times* vol 43 [1 September 1902], pp 586-92. In a letter to Jaeger, 31 August 1902, Elgar commented : "I say what an awful photo of Parker" (Moore, *Letters*, p 372). The offending photo is above.

The choice of subject and style for *St Christopher* reveal Parker to be at the turning point in his career between the older, sectional meditative *Hora Novissima* and more dramatic writing, which was to culminate in his opera, *Mona*, over a decade later. The story is about the legendary Syrian giant, Offerus, who, after serving both royalty (Act 1) and the devil (Act 2), turns to Christianity and becomes St Christopher as the result of carrying a child (Christ) across a swollen stream (Act 3). Many sections are cast in the more fluid, dramatic forms of dialogues, ariosos, and orchestral interludes. Each "scene" of each act is bound together with continuously unfolding music. Even the more traditional choruses and arias carefully reinforce the exigencies of the story.

The most striking aspect of *St Christopher* is Parker's use of a highly developed leading-motive technique. Each character in the story has a motive or motives, and these are used in the Wagnerian manner as premonitory, associative, and reminiscent devices. Furthermore, they form the basis of the symphonic interludes and penetrate even the more traditional parts of the oratorio, where they serve as head motives or are interwoven in the texture of the arias and choruses.

Example 2 illustrates a part of the oratorio based entirely on leading motives. The principal character Offerus (St Christopher) is served by three motives: "fanfare", from his association in Act 1 with the King; "search", a chromatically inflected descending sequence indicative of his search for a more powerful master; and "obeisance", an upward jump of a seventh or an octave followed by a poignant, descending line associated with his conversion to Christianity²⁴. The scene begins quietly, with the orchestra playing the search theme. The opening in C minor is well disguised with augmented triads as well as diminished intervals, all treated as appoggiatura chords. This section bears resemblance to the "judgment" motive at the beginning of *Gerontius* (bars 1-17). In addition to similar harmonic treatment, tempo, rhythmic emphasis on weak beats, and minor-resolving-to-major are other notable features). The orchestra closes the section quietly on the dominant of G, in preparation for Offerus's first entry. Mention of "Him, the Highest" is supported by the fanfare motive and a move to B \flat major, but the orchestra then pushes on to a plagal cadence in F major before modulating back to G major for Offerus's second entry. We now hear the obeisance motive, every other note of the descending scale an exquisite appoggiatura as Offerus sings glowingly of his search for the Lord. The second phrase is a sequence in A minor, and the third yet another in A \flat major. The remainder of the passage is a leisurely return to G major. The orchestra then returns to a radiant and extended version of the fanfare motive, carrying it from G to B major, to which the obeisance motive is added as counterpoint. This impressive climax is characteristic of those throughout Elgar's oratorios.

Although the section is basically G major, the pervasive chromatic harmony, numerous transient modulations, and sequential leading motive treatment all bear a striking resemblance to Elgar's technique in *The Light of Life* and later, *Gerontius*. When one considers that Elgar also alternated between more traditional choral and

²⁴ These associations are my own. To my knowledge, Parker left no record of specific identifications between leading motives and ideas or characters for *Saint Christopher*, as he was later to do for his opera, *Mona*.

Example 2. Excerpt for Act III, The Legend of Saint Christopher, vocal score (London: Novello, 1898), p. 90, m. 23 -- p. 92, m. 21.

Lento.

p [search]

pp

OFFERTUS.

91 *Andante.* *Molto maestoso.*

Ask me not my vow to break, ask me not my vow to break. Him, the

Andante. *Molto maestoso.*

f *Brass. cres.*

[fanfare]

f

High - est, will I seek;

f

Allegro.

Un - to Him, the Lord of Heaven,

Allegro.

fp [obeisance]

The image shows a page of a musical score. It consists of several systems of music. The first system is a piano introduction in 4/4 time, marked 'Lento.' and 'p [search]'. The second system continues the piano accompaniment, marked 'pp'. The third system begins with a vocal line and piano accompaniment, marked '91 Andante.' and 'Molto maestoso.'. The lyrics are 'Ask me not my vow to break, ask me not my vow to break. Him, the'. The fourth system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, marked 'Andante.' and 'Molto maestoso.'. The lyrics are 'High - est, will I seek;'. The fifth system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, marked 'Allegro.' and 'Allegro.'. The lyrics are 'Un - to Him, the Lord of Heaven,'. The sixth system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, marked 'fp [obeisance]'. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics, articulation, and performance instructions.

Example 2, continued

92

Shall my life hence-forth be given; Him . . . I . . .

seek, I hope to find, Qui-et then . . . shall

fill . . . my mind. [fanfare]

[obedience]

[fanfare]

fp dolce fp

cres. p

poco rit. a tempo.

poco rit. *Brass.* *[fanfare]*

[obedience] *cres.* *mf*

[fanfare]

solo writing and leading-motive treatment, *St Christopher* and *The Light of Life* share a distinct compositional likeness. Parker could well have been acquainted with Elgar's work (the vocal score was published in 1896).

Because of its progressive tendencies, *St Christopher* had received mixed reviews at its première by the New York Oratorio Choral Society under the direction of Walter Damrosch on 15 April 1898. The *Musical Times* soon set about encouraging an English performance of what it called Parker's new "chief choral work". "Its fine dramatic music should commend it to the attention of some first-rate choral society which would be able to do justice to its merits"²⁵. One wonders if Jaeger might have been responsible for this promotion of *St Christopher* in Novello's journal. He probably offered a score to Elgar who replied in a letter dated 4 February 1898: "I want to see *S. Christopher* soon but I must work & weep over my own tunes a little"²⁶.

The reviews of the English festival performances were more favourable than the American première of *St Christopher*. Few failed to note Parker's dramatic stance. The *Times* of London commented: "The whole seems to be contrived operatically as if it were designed for Bayreuth, or some stage where religious subjects could be presented without offending pious susceptibilities"²⁷.

The Bristol performance of *A Star Song* did not fare so well with the English press. Written during the winter of 1901 and already a recipient of the Paderewski Prize in choral composition before its première at Norwich, the composition is radically different from any piece Parker had written before. The text, by H Bernard Carpenter, is an allegory in which the morning star stands for universal love. A stanza from Part 2 shows the poet's effusive style:

Lo, the moon sinks dim
As a bead on a goblet's rim
Whence the feaster has drained, the last
spark of its life resplendent,
And the sky's deep cup downturn'd
With light unadorned,
Hangs hollow, unjewell'd with stars,
Above earth impendent;

²⁵ *Musical Times* vol 40 (1 February 1899) pp 90-91. Preceding the Worcester performance of *Hora Novissima*, the *London Standard* and *Morning Post* called *Hora* an early work and not indicative of the composer's present abilities. *St Christopher* was named as Parker's most important choral work. The *London Times* made a similar comment: "Rumour has it that we have not heard the best fruits of Professor Parker's brain, and that a large oratorio on the subject of Saint Christopher shows more clearly the present state of his musical faculties". (Clippings, HP Papers, IV, E, 5).

²⁶ Moore, *Letters*, p 65

²⁷ Clipping, n.d., inside cover to the score of *Saint Christopher*, Allen A Brown Collection, Boston Public Library.

One wonders if Elgar's quiet beginnings for both *The Light of Life* and particularly *Gerontius* may have been influential in Part I of Parker's *A Star Song* (subtitled *Lyric Rhapsody*). In the 'Introduction, Choral Recitative, and Tenor Solo', the opening is scored for the extremely high registers of the flutes and violins as background to the motive in the clarinets, bassoons, and cellos. This motive is treated with an expressiveness quite different from the usual hymn-like compactness of opening themes from Parker's previous works. The 'Choral Recitative' proceeds with each of the four parts singing in turn, accompanied by a characteristic orchestration. Example 3 shows the soprano theme, occasionally joined by violins.

Example 3. Excerpt, opening chorus, *A Star Song*, full score (Cincinnati: John Church, 1902), p. 9, mm. 4-11.

[Con moto ($\text{♩} = 164$)].

[Soprano]

f Who is this that look-eth forth _____ with the beau - ty of the

+8va - - - - -

[Stgs & Wws]

morn - ing and the bright-ness of his birth _____

+8va - - - - -

[Cl]

_____ laughs my her - ald light to scorn - ing,

English critic Vernon Blackburn, who had been quite enthusiastic about *Hora Novissima* three years earlier, was aghast : "The poem is weak...A riot of words, an almost unmeaning piling of phrase upon phrase"²⁸. Blackburn's consideration of the music was equally harsh : "[Parker] has chosen to be daringly modern...The old melody has shivered into space; even the old soupçon of imitativeness has given place to a singularly hard and dry sentiment".

As *A Star Song* progresses, the more familiar elements of Parker's earlier oratorio style reappear. The tenor solo concluding Part 1 is conventional. The remainder of the piece has more clearly etched sections with solos, quartet writing, and choral sections leading to a final large, climactic choral section.

Elgar in the United States

The three trips that Elgar made to the United States during the years 1905-07 decidedly enhanced his reputation in America. A successful performance of *Gerontius* by Frank Damrosch and the Oratorio Society of New York in 1903 set the stage for these visits. Parker's diary reveals that he was present at both the 15 November rehearsal and the 17 November concert; however, he made no other comments.

The principal occasion of Elgar's 1905 visit was the ceremony during which he received an honorary doctorate at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Parker's colleague at Yale University, piano professor Samuel Sanford, arranged this honour. Sanford had attended the Worcester Festival of 1899²⁹; however, mention of him first appears in Elgar's correspondence with his publishers the following year with a letter, 14 September 1900³⁰. Jaeger commented that Sanford and a Yale colleague, Stanley Knight, "raved" over parts of *Gerontius* sung in rehearsal by Edward Lloyd at Hereford prior to the Birmingham première. Sanford was to become Elgar's favourite American friend for over a decade until the pianist's death in 1910³¹.

Lady Alice Elgar's diary describes Professor Sanford as a very gracious host during this short visit of approximately a month. The degree was conferred at the spring commencement on 28 June. Parker played the trio to Elgar's *Pomp & Circumstance no 1*³², and the 'Meditation' from *The Light of Life* (Lady Elgar commented :

²⁸ Clipping, n.d., inside cover to score of *A Star Song*, Allen A Brown Collection, Boston Public Library.

²⁹ Anderson, p 463

³⁰ Moore, *Letters*, p 232

³¹ Anderson, p 92

³² The 'E-Mail Digest' of the *Music Library Association Newsletter* contains a query : "How...did [Elgar's *Pomp & Circumstance March no 1*] come to be such a ubiquitous feature at graduations?" Among the replies, Peter Carlin, of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, New York, noted Horatio Parker's playing at this

"[Meditation] not read rightly by Parker. March was *fine*". Lady Elgar's diary notation for 28 June reveals that the Elgars, on the whole, were pleased with the affair :

Dr.Frank Damrosch to lunch. E.just able to get up [Elgar was suffering from the unseasonable heat during the entire trip] & dress & start with Prof.S[anford] at 9.30. Looked most *beautiful* in beautiful robes. Alice) drove to the Hadleys [the President of Yale University and his wife] & Mrs.H. came with her to the Hall. Very interesting dignified ceremony. E.interested and enormously admired, also his music.

Another reason for the American trip was to make arrangements for future performances of Elgar's music in the United States. Immediately following the Yale ceremony, Elgar met with a representative of the Cincinnati, Ohio, May Music Festival to negotiate an appearance there the following spring. Elgar commented wryly in a letter to Novello chairman Alfred Littleton, "My *feelings* are dead against coming here again but my pocket gapes aloud"³³. Although the composer had earlier grouched to Littleton : "I will not go for less than Weingartner who has £2,500 [not dollars] for sixteen concerts", he eventually agreed upon £1500³⁴.

The 1906 American trip was from mid-April to mid-May. The Elgars arrived at Cincinnati on 17 April for the May Festival, which included the *Introduction & Allegro* (Elgar dedicated this composition to Samuel Sanford), *Gerontius*, *The Apostles*, and *In the South*³⁵. Elgar's letter to Littleton, 18 April, indicates his satisfaction with arrangements in Cincinnati, and Lady Elgar's postcard to Jaeger, 11 May : "E.'s works made the most *profound* impression"³⁶, express their pleasure at the Festival's outcome. On the return trip they stopped in New York. Lady Elgar's diary describes preparations for and a dinner in their honour, 10 May :

E., I think wrote, orchestrated [*The Kingdom*]. A. out with Mrs.Worthington [a New York resident who had befriended them during their 1905 trip], trying to find a black dress - Very tired of shopping. In the evening the Prof [Sanford?] had a banquet at the Metropolitan Club - Hadley - Townshend, De Cottonet Damrosch brothers, Mr.Gray &c&c&c beautiful flowers - all very successful.

Presumably Parker was among the "&c&c&c", for he recorded in his diary, 10 May: "Din to Elgar, beautiful dinner".

As was the case with Elgar's previous American trip, this one was the occasion for the making of the next. Elgar wrote to Littleton, 18 April 1906 : "It is, quite

commencement "may well have been the first among the countless times this music has accompanied an American graduation" [102 [September-October 1995]: 4]. Moore also makes a similar comment (*A Creative Life*, p 462).

³³ Moore, *Letters*, p 618

³⁴ *ibid.*, p 615

³⁵ Anderson, p 425

³⁶ Moore, *Letters*, p 643

privately, talked of having a three day festival in New York next winter & they [the Damrosch brothers] want the first [American] performance of the new work [*The Kingdom*]³⁷. The 1907 trip, from mid-March to mid-April, eventually included not only a New York performance of *The Kingdom* but also of *The Apostles*, with Elgar directing the New York Oratorio Society,³⁸ a trip to Chicago to direct the Theodore Thomas Orchestra there; and one to Pittsburgh to receive an honorary degree at the Carnegie Institute³⁹. In his diary, Parker recorded attending a dinner 27 March 1907 in honour of Elgar.

Elgar's reaction to the Oratorio Society performances is found in a letter written to Littleton from New York, 30 March 1907 : "The two things went fairly well : some points good but usually too 'assertive' for me"⁴⁰. He was much more enthusiastic about the Chicago Orchestra performance of the *Enigma Variations* in a postscript for Lady Elgar's letter to Jaeger, 7 June : "My dearest Nimrod : how I did make 'you' sound in Chicago! A fine orchestra [100] & they knew [via dear old Theodore Thomas] *everything* of mine backwards : I shed a tear over it"⁴¹.

The three American trips came at a very busy time in Elgar's life. He was fully occupied with the completion and performance of his two large oratorios following *Gerontius*. He had no particular desire to come to the United States; however, the friends he made and the success of his music here must have, in the long run, been very gratifying. These "American years" served to introduce his music in the United States no less than Parker's "English years" had carried his music abroad a half decade earlier.

The Final Decade

Elgar was to make one more trip, this one both to Canada and the United States in April 1911. A choir was assembled among singers from Sheffield and other northern choral societies to make the tour, and the composer conducted a number of performances of *Gerontius* and one of *The Kingdom*⁴². Without the excitement of introducing new works abroad, the trip was evidently an onerous obligation. He did enjoy the hospitality of Julia Worthington in New York but rejected offers of further visits : "Nothing in the world wd. induce me to spend 6 months here - not

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ Martin, George : *The Damrosch Dynasty* (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1983) p 267

³⁹ Moore, *Letters*, p 667

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p 669

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p 673

⁴² Montreal, 27 March; Toronto, 4 April; Cincinnati, 18 April (*The Kingdom*); Indianapolis, 21 April; Chicago, 24 April; St Paul, 28 April.

\$10,000,000 - this they do not understand"⁴³.

Parker's final trip to Europe was an extended one during his sabbatical of 1912-13. Much of time was spent in Munich, where he worked on his second opera, *Fairyland*; however, he did travel about Europe, attending performances and soliciting songs for a set of school music books, *The Progressive Music Series*,⁴⁴ for which he was editor-in-chief. Its distinctive feature is the inclusion of songs by many of the prominent composers of the day, both from Europe and the United States. Parker was an obvious choice to make requests of these composers, and Elgar was among them. Parker recorded in his diary 18 October 1913, "songs from Elgar". These include *The Merry-go-round*, a unison chorus; *The Brook*, for two-part choir; and *The Windlass*, for four-part chorus⁴⁵.

The years 1905-1915 found both Elgar and Parker occupied with genres other than choral music : the former with symphonic music, and the latter with opera. Elgar had risen to pre-eminence as England's most important composer, and Parker's reputation was second only to that of the recently deceased Edward MacDowell (d. 1908) in the United States. That Parker's two major operas had received prizes and nationally touted performances - *Mona* (1911) at the Metropolitan in New York and *Fairyland* (1915) as the centrepiece of a major civic celebration in Los Angeles - put him in line for an auspicious commission from America's premier choral society.

The Handel and Haydn Society of Boston wanted a major choral work to celebrate its hundredth anniversary in 1915 and asked Parker to provide one. Parker, in turn, asked Brian Hooker for a text, and the poet responded with *Morven and the Grail*. A much younger man than Parker, Hooker was a Yale graduate who had taught there briefly before becoming a free-lance writer. He had been the librettist for the composer's operas. The fact that the librettos for *Mona* and *Fairyland*, although admired for their literary qualities, were severely criticised for their lack of dramatic potency, did not seem to deter Parker, for Hooker remained the composer's librettist for nearly all his major vocal works until the end of his life.

At first glance, the story of *Morven* seems quite old-fashioned. In Part I, Morven seeks the grail in the pleasure droves of Avalon, and in Part II, he continues his quest, first among the heroes of Valhalla and then among the saints of paradise. Still the grail eludes him, but Morven eventually sees it in Part III, when he comes to realise "how man shall not cease but through light and darkness, love and pain, death and birth, live on between Hell and Heaven in wonder everlasting"⁴⁶. Morven,

⁴³ Anderson, p 101

⁴⁴ Horatio Parker, Osbourne McConathy, Edward B Birge, and W Otto Meisner, eds., *The Progressive Music Series for Basal Use in Primary, Intermediate, and Grammar Grades*, 7 vols. (Boston and New York : Silver Burdett Co., 1914-1919). Elgar's songs are found in the following : 'The Merry-go-round', Book 2, p 104; 'The Brook', Book 3, p 130; 'Windlass Song', Book 4, p 94.

⁴⁵ Anderson lists these songs as "1914?" (p 442)

⁴⁶ *Morven and the Grail*, vocal score (New York : G Schirmer, 1915) p vii

like Gerontius, is an ordinary person. he faces neither a distinct adversary, such as the quaint humanised Satan of *St Christopher*, nor the terrors of purgatory, as did Gerontius. The various heavens he visits in his quest - "pleasure", "heroism", and "paradise" - are all accepted as part of the human condition, but they are inadequate realisations of life's ultimate purpose : the continual process of self-renewal, the striving for a more perfect self-realisation.

Thus Parker had to deal with more abstract ideas musically in the *Morven* libretto than in any other of his major choral works excepting *A Star Song*. *Gerontius* must have been an important influence as he returned to oratorio writing, for it is the one contemporaneous work which he had heard several times and even conducted. Parker's use of leading motives is more restricted and less pictorial than in his earlier *St Christopher*. They take on the character of those in *Gerontius* by being developed and more fully integrated into the total work. Likewise, the solos, choruses, and orchestral interludes do not stand as entities but interact to serve an overall dramatic purpose. Gone are the large fugues and a *capella* choruses of the previous oratorios. Instead, the solo quartet and chorus are given more flexible forms characteristic of *Gerontius*.

Among the most striking leading motives is the "call", sung by the solo quartet (Angels of the Grail) following the orchestral introduction and at several places throughout the oratorio (Ex.4). In its function as a summons for *Morven* to continue his quest, this motive undergoes several transformations. Its most distinctive feature is a sudden, lurching chordal progression from F# to Bb at the cadence point. This nuance is characteristic of harmonic innovations in Parker's later writing.

Example 4. Call Motive, *Morven and the Grail*, vocal score (Boston: Boston Music Company, 1915), p. 12, mm. 1-5.

[Allegro]

Mor ven!

Mor - ven! Mor - ven! Mor - ven! Fol - low the Grail! —

[Quartet in background, or behind the stage]

As with *Gerontius*, the character of *Morven* is sometimes treated in a more dramatic, *arioso* style. Descriptive devices, such as the florid violin part accompanying a text about the sea, can occasionally be found [Ex.5].

Antiphonal writing is evident in the solo quartet line against the slower moving chorus. The lovely choral theme has an expansiveness characteristic of some of Elgar's, with its descending seventh interval. It is the principal motive throughout the oratorio's contemplative Part III [Ex.6].

Example 5. Excerpt from arioso, Morven, p. 18, mm. 1-5.

[Allegro moderato ($\text{♩} = 88$)]

[Morven]

sweep of the wind, _____ The weight of the wave, _____

p *sfz* **B**

This system contains the first two measures of the arioso. It features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower two staves. The piano part includes a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and a crescendo to *sfz* (sforzando) leading to a triplet of eighth notes marked with a **B** (breve).

The leap _____ of the sail, _____

This system contains the next two measures. The piano accompaniment continues with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and includes a *sfz* marking and a **B** (breve) marking.

[Allegro]

Mor

ven!

Mor - ven! Mor - ven! Mor - ven! Fol - low the Grail! _____

This system shows a vocal quartet in a 3/4 time signature with a key signature of two sharps. The lyrics are: "Mor - ven! Mor - ven! Mor - ven! Fol - low the Grail!"

[Quartet in background, or behind the stage]

Example 6. Excerpt from chorus, "On Earth," Morven,
p. 181, m. 8 -- p. 182, m. 5.

[Allegro maestoso] [Quartet] *p*

[Chorus] *p* Let him be-

He that hath eyes to see,

p

non legato

hold the tide's e - ter - ni - ty, Un - der the sway of the mov - ing moon, —

simile

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It features a quartet introduction and a chorus. The quartet part is marked [Allegro maestoso] and [Quartet] *p*. The chorus part is marked [Chorus] *p*. The lyrics are: "Let him be- He that hath eyes to see, hold the tide's e - ter - ni - ty, Un - der the sway of the mov - ing moon, —". The piano accompaniment includes a *non legato* section and a *simile* section. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and triplets.

Parker's attempt to modernise the oratorio received some recognition from American critics such as Philip Hale. Writing in the *Boston Herald* following its première and only performance, he described *Morven* as having an "enriched harmonic idiom", a "new sense of the delineation and emotional suggestion of instrumental timbres", a "new freedom of modulation", and the subservience of "form and procedure" to the "imaginings and the emotions, the picture, the vision and the impulse that are the real content of the music"⁴⁷. This description could easily be applied to *Gerontius*, written fifteen years earlier and certainly characterises generally the changing features of the oratorio at the turn of the twentieth century.

Morven was written close to the end of Parker's life. His death soon after World War I brought to an abrupt close a career that had begun with such promise a little more than a quarter of a century before. His exploration of opera in the early twentieth century at first added to his reputation as a leading American composer, but his two major operas have not survived their initial productions, and even excerpts are rarely heard. His enduring recognition as a composer is confined largely to choral music; however, among his major choral works, only *Hora Novissima* is heard occasionally today. Mention of him in history books is often confined to his role as a teacher of Charles Ives, and we have only Ives's comments to inform us about that relationship⁴⁸. Elgar, on the other hand, was to move on to greatness, not only through his choral works but in other forms as well. For a short period at the turn of the century, however, both were promising composers brimming with new ideas, more or less on an equal par, each aware of the other's work and perhaps wary of each other's reputation.

⁴⁷ Clipping, 13 April 1915, HP Papers, IV E 4.

⁴⁸ Ives, Charles E : *Memos*, ed John Kirkpatrick (New York : W W Norton, 1972), pp 39, 51, 86, 181, 183-84, and 258. David Wooldridge's biography of Ives, *From the Steeples and the Mountains* (New York : Knopf, 1974) contains two letters from Parker to English musicologist H E Wooldridge, one of which refers to Ives : "There was a Charles Ives in my class when I came to Yale" (4 October 1910), p 206. This is Parker's only comment about his famous pupil known to me.

ELGAR AND TCHAIKOVSKY

Digby Hague-Holmes

In the last year of his life - 1893 - Tchaikovsky travelled to Cambridge to receive an honorary doctorate of music. Elgar was to make the same journey seven years later, explaining its significance in a letter to his sister Dot : "You must not think this is a 2½d thing like the Archbp of Canterbury's degree but it's a great thing : it has, of late, only been given to Joachim, Tschaikowsky, Max Bruch & a few others".¹ By 1900 Elgar was already familiar with a number of Tchaikovsky's orchestral works. The Leeds Festival concert which, in October 1898, had premièred *Caractacus* had also included a performance of the Theme and Variations from *Suite no 3*, and in the May of that year Elgar had himself included Tchaikovsky's *Elegie for Strings* in the inaugural concert of the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society, describing the composer in the programme as "the great emotionalist".² About that time he also devised a "jape" by contrapuntally combining the opening of the 5/4 second movement of the *Pathétique Symphony* with *God Save the King* to amuse the newly-appointed editor of Novello's *Musical Times*.³ When composing the *Enigma Variations* Elgar would have known that his idea of dedicating each variation to a friend was not particularly original; and one wonders if he perhaps knew of Tchaikovsky's *Piano Trio in A minor* (To the Memory of a Great Artist), each variation of which refers to some aspect of Nicolai Rubinstein's career? Surprisingly Elgar was to quote verbatim from one of Tchaikovsky's letters (which had only just been published in translation in this country) in his 'Retrospect' lecture at Birmingham University in 1905 to emphasise the point that all composers need to constantly apply themselves : "If we wait for the mood, without endeavouring to meet it half-way, we easily become indolent and apathetic..."⁴ And when, in 1905 and 1909, Elgar took the London Symphony Orchestra on tour, and during the 1911-12 season when he was the orchestra's permanent conductor, some of the later Tchaikovsky symphonies appeared in the concert programmes which assumedly Elgar would have helped to compile. By the early 1930s, it seems that both the *Fifth* and *Sixth Symphonies* had featured in Elgar's own private gramophone record collection.⁵

Clearly, Elgar had more than just a passing regard for the Russian composer. And so one wonders how these two honorary doctors might have reacted to one another

¹ Quoted in Moore, J N : *Edward Elgar : A Creative Life* (OUP, 1984) p 337

² Dennison, Peter, 'Elgar's musical apprenticeship' in Monk, Raymond (ed): *Elgar Studies* (Scolar, 1990) p 12

³ Moore, op.cit., p 223

⁴ Quoted in Grogan, Christopher : 'The Apostles : some thoughts on the early plans' in Monk, Raymond (ed): *Edward Elgar : Music and Literature* (Scolar, 1993) p 25

⁵ Moore, J N : *Elgar on Record* (OUP, 1974) pp 89, 130

had circumstances brought them face to face? The chances are that, initially, there would have been little rapport, since neither men particularly sought out the company of fellow composers. Moreover, although Tchaikovsky was a natural linguist, with a good command of both French and German, his spoken English was poor, and thus direct conversation between them would have been difficult. Perhaps Alice Elgar could have acted as interpreter relying on her excellent German! Tchaikovsky, it is true, had made strenuous efforts to teach himself sufficient English grammar and vocabulary to read Shakespeare, Thackeray and Dickens in the original, but otherwise he had a general antipathy for most things English. Like many Russians he deplored this country's putative interference in the internal affairs of his own - in the Crimea in 1854, and during the Russo-Turkish conflict of 1877-8 (when Disraeli had dispatched a naval squadron to Constantinople to warn off the advancing Russians from seizing that strategic city). But his dislike extended beyond politics. Despite three earlier visits to this country Tchaikovsky in 1893 still considered that "...London is a most disagreeable city. There are no *pissoirs*, no shops to change money; it was with difficulty that I found a hat to fit me!"⁶ Yet he seems to have made a favourable impression on his English hosts on this occasion, all of whom found his gentlemanly good manners and politeness quite entrancing. One described him as a "finely-built man who held himself so well that he looked quite military in appearance".⁷ But even on first acquaintance the two composers would have surely had a little more in common than their apparent resemblance to military men!

In time they might have perceived that they were both, in fact, living out their creative lives in societies which, although differing considerably in structure and conventions, were nonetheless at one in declining to esteem the practice of music and the profession of composer. In Russia Tchaikovsky was alone amongst his contemporaries in choosing to earn a living from composition; others, such as Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Balakirev, and Mussorgsky, primarily pursued other more socially acceptable professions. And whilst Tchaikovsky certainly didn't experience the same social and religious slights - real or imagined - as Elgar, his homosexual orientation nonetheless made him feel alienated from the respectable and conventional in Russian society. Today's psychiatrist would probably diagnose both as manic-depressives, each being afflicted by violent mood swings, bouts of almost suicidal depression, and chronic hypochondria. Sadly, neither of them really understood his own neurosis, although Tchaikovsky was a great deal more self-aware in this respect than Elgar. But when it came to their art, they showed, in equal measure, a dedicated commitment, real self-discipline and self-control, as though their inner creative beings lived out an existence which at times was totally at variance from the troubled exterior. Nonetheless, throughout their lives, they needed the constant reassurance of others. Alice Elgar was almost nine years older than her husband; Tchaikovsky's benefactress and intimate friend, Nadezhda von Meck, was almost ten years older. Clearly, both men felt some need for the comforting support that only an older, mother-type figure could provide. There is an interesting parallel, also, in the way in which both of them - at least during their

⁶ Brown, D : *Tchaikovsky : the years of fame 1878-93* (Gollancz, 1992) p 466

⁷ op.cit., p 468

maturing years - felt a need to "hero-worship" a leading musical personality, almost regardless of the damage such "heroes" might unwittingly do to their barely-established reputations! Elgar's Hans Richter - "true artist and true friend" - must surely bear overall responsibility for the initial failure of *Gerontius*, whilst Nicolai Rubinstein - "an Olympian god"⁸ - was to cruelly rubbish Tchaikovsky's *First Piano Concerto* when he first played it. And yet, for the rest of their lives, the two composers continued to regard these figures with a respectful deference which was more than just gratitude for the way in which each had subsequently championed their music. Ironically, Hans Richter provides a connecting link because, as well as performing Elgar's major works, he was also instrumental in introducing Tchaikovsky's music to a wider European audience (for example, he conducted the first performance of the *Violin Concerto* in Vienna in 1881). But he's on record as favouring Elgar's music to Tchaikovsky's!⁹

"I can think of no more perfect form of happiness than lying on the grass drinking tea on a fine day in the woods"¹⁰. Such sentiments might have been expressed by either of them! Tchaikovsky was to share Elgar's love of nature and the outdoors as well as for sunny holidays in the one country which appealed so strongly to them both - Italy. But would the two of them have ever acknowledged each other's restless nomadic spirits - the compulsive need to be "on the move" - an escapism Elgar sought in his frequent house moves and in his hobbies, and Tchaikovsky in his often quite aimless wanderings within Russia and abroad? Tchaikovsky didn't pursue as many non-musical activities as Elgar, but that didn't mean he wasn't as interested as Elgar in everything that was going on around him. Even so, they would surely have surprised each other to discover their common interest in kite-flying! In 1886 the Russian was to write to Madame Von Meck : "I'm going out now to fly my kite. That is my passion at the moment. At the age of 46!"¹¹

As with many hypersensitive beings their perception of other people was frequently to be distorted by their own self-delusions. In particular, they tended to over-react to what they judged to be adverse criticism. This comment by Tchaikovsky to his benefactress might equally well have been written by Elgar : "I have never engaged in intrigues, I have always tried to remain aloof from factions, and I can say in all honesty that I have never knowingly done wrong to anyone in the world - yet - I have enemies in my failures, who belittle and poison any success I may have"¹² This deep-rooted feeling of distrust and suspicion appears to have permeated both their lives and aggravated their permanent sense of artistic isolation. And, over the years, religious belief appears to have offered less and less personal support. As maturing composers they had both expressed the positive side of their Christian

⁸ Orlova, A : *Tchaikovsky : a self-portrait* (OUP, 1990) p 54

⁹ Kennedy, Michael : *Portrait of Elgar* (OUP, 1987) p 130

¹⁰ Orlova, op cit, p 174

¹¹ Orlova, op cit, p 302

¹² Von Meck, G : *To my Best Friend - correspondence between Tchaikovsky & N Von Meck 1876-1878* (Clarendon, Oxford) p 336

faith in religious music which was clearly heartfelt and sincere - but, in time, this was to gradually dissolve into a sort of negative resignation, which for Elgar appears to have become an impersonal Providence and for Tchaikovsky an ineluctable Fate.

Perhaps they would have felt more at ease in exchanging their respective career circumstances, for here they had much more in common than might be supposed. Elgar has sometimes been described as a "late developer" - a label which overlooks the long period of gestation inevitable for the self-taught - but he did, at least, spring from a professional music background. Not so Tchaikovsky. No one in his family could be described as anything more than an amateur practitioner in keeping with the social expectations of most of the Russian middle class. Indeed, Tchaikovsky had spent his formative years, from ten to nineteen, studying full-time for a career in the Russian Civil Service, without the benefit of any structured musical education. In fact, both of them would have to wait until their mid-twenties for a first public performance of any orchestral music. And out of economic necessity they had both been compelled, in their early years, to eke out a living teaching others. Tchaikovsky would surely have readily agreed with Elgar's own colourful description of the pains of teaching : "like turning a grindstone with a dislocated shoulder"¹³. Tchaikovsky in a letter to Rimsky-Korsakov, passionately summoned up his own attitude : "For ten years I taught harmony, and during that time, I hated my classes, my pupils, my text books and myself as a teacher"¹⁴. They may have failed as teachers, but later on they were equally to become markedly successful as conductors, particularly in the performance of their own works.

In discussing music they would have much to agree upon. In the late years of the nineteenth century both English and Russian music had been technically and aesthetically largely outside the great European mainstream. Elgar and Tchaikovsky were both to be the major force in their own countries to change that - to save their respective musical cultures from a continuing inward-looking parochialism. They are equally on record as "disfavouring" purely programme music; and yet both were to produce a great deal of it! In Tchaikovsky's case, the major part of his programme music was to be inspired by the works of Shakespeare, a subject on which both composers would have been able to exchange views based on deep personal study. In general, Tchaikovsky was as voracious a reader as Elgar, except that his library included as much mainstream European literature as Russian. Each of them produced "pageant" music (to order) for ceremonial state occasions, and in time both were to enjoy the patronage of their respective monarchs. However, Elgar would have greatly envied Tchaikovsky's award, granted personally by Tsar Alexander III in 1888, of an annual pension for life of 3000 roubles (equivalent today of about £20,000)! The two of them wanted their music "to speak for itself"; they wanted it to be "felt" by the ordinary listener. Surely Elgar would have agreed with this letter statement by Tchaikovsky : "It's my passionate desire that my music should be widely known, and that the number of people who like it, who find comfort and

¹³ Moore, *A Creative Life*, p 177

¹⁴ Orlova, *op cit*, p 179

support in it, should grow"¹⁵. Despite this endearing wish Tchaikovsky, like Elgar, was to set limits to the extent of "being widely known". On another occasion he was to write : "The very idea that interest in my music will stimulate interest in me personally is very burdensome - the notion that some day people will try and probe into everything I've carefully hidden throughout my life is very sad and unpleasant"¹⁶. For them both the thirst for recognition, set against their paramount need for some sort of privacy, is but one aspect of their equally contradictory natures. Elgar once complained that : "Truly success is harder to bear than adversity"¹⁷; but Tchaikovsky went further : "There is even an element of tragedy in the conflict between aspiration to fame, and revulsion from its consequences"¹⁸. Why, one might ask, why do such insecure people long for fame and then find the resultant worldly success so hard to bear? And when it comes to describing the sources of their most deeply-felt music, they were equally adept at using such expressive terms as "innermost" and "insidest"; descriptions which appear to intensify the closer each identified to the persona in question - Elgar, for example, with Gerontius and Judas, Tchaikovsky with Manfred, and Tatiana in *Yeugeny Onyegin*. Under the pressure of constant re-examination they clearly felt an inner compulsion to re-enter the world of childhood, to re-experience that innocence and wistfulness so lacking in their adult lives; Tchaikovsky in his *Children's Album of Piano Pieces* and in the fairy-tale fantasies of the three great ballets, whilst Elgar casts his 'Wand of Youth' over such scores as *The Starlight Express* and the *Nursery Suite*.

But they would have found much less in common when comparing composers. They would have disagreed about the true stature of Wagner and, most emphatically, about the place of Brahms, for whom Tchaikovsky had scant regard. At least they would have been of one mind in discussing Mozart, described by Tchaikovsky as "the Christ of music"¹⁹, and by Elgar as "the musician from whom everyone should learn form"²⁰. Tchaikovsky went further : "It's thanks to Mozart that I dedicated my life to music"²¹.

Their styles of music, whilst as totally different as their musical personalities, at least share a common foundation in that they are spiritually drawn from their respective national histories, cultures and landscapes. They composed in practically all the major forms, constrained only by the principal musical outlets then open to

¹⁵ Orlova, op cit, p 203

¹⁶ Von Meck, G, op cit, p 233

¹⁷ Burley, Rosa C & Carruthers, F C : *Edward Elgar - the record of a friendship* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1972) p 91

¹⁸ Von Meck, G, op cit, p 269

¹⁹ Orlova, op cit, p 334

²⁰ Dennison, op cit, p 6

²¹ Orlova, op cit, p 334

them. For Elgar, of course, this was predominantly the Cathedral and City Festival circuit; and for Tchaikovsky, only the major city opera houses and theatres could offer a guaranteed access to the largest audiences. It may come as a surprise to note that, as a consequence, Tchaikovsky wrote over twenty major works for the stage alone, mainly ballets and operas. Unfortunately, Elgar never did complete any opera; but then Tchaikovsky never composed any music for the organ, despite the fact that for a while as a young student, he had received formal lessons on this instrument! They both display a strong gift for melody; they are brilliant and colourful orchestrators; their music, more than usual, could be described as being sourced for "movement" - Elgar in the rhythm of the "march", Tchaikovsky in the rhythm of the "dance". They express in their music the whole gamut of human emotions, even if Tchaikovsky's outpourings in this regard perhaps justify Elgar's description of "the great emotionalist". And if Tchaikovsky's expression can at times appear excessive, Elgar shows the deeper complexity and a greater restraint - in keeping with the image of an English gentleman. Nonetheless, in their greatest works, one can discern the same profound spirituality, and the same resignation at the transience of human experience. And at the heart of those same works, there is invariably a subtle private presence in those great public utterances, in sound, on the timeless universal themes and mysteries which touch us all.

But; would the two honorary Cambridge doctors have agreed on this, or indeed on anything which purported to link their respective creative lives? In 1893 Elgar was only 36. He was still too awkward socially and unfulfilled musically to have found an easy rapport with a man who, even then, at 53, was already conceiving his final statement - the *Pathétique*. Perhaps a first meeting later on - say in 1923, when Tchaikovsky would have been 83, and Elgar likewise towards the close of his own creative life - perhaps then the two men might have found that same rapport which Elgar, somewhat to his surprise, was to find with Delius in his own final years.

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DR DOUGLAS GUEST C.V.O

Douglas Guest, who died on 18 November aged 80, played a leading part in the Elgar Society's development into a national body. He was Chairman of the London Branch, the Society's first regional organisation outside the West Midlands, from its formation in 1971 until 1980. He was elected a Vice-President in 1973, and served as Chairman of the Society, in succession to A T Shaw, from 1976 to 1978.

On 9 October 1971 members resident in the metropolitan area attended a special Evensong in Westminster Abbey. Douglas Guest had been Organist and Master of the Choristers since 1963, when he had moved to London from Worcester; and for this occasion he conducted Elgar's *Ecce sacerdos magnus*: it was the anniversary of its first performance at St George's, Worcester, in 1888. A meeting then took place in the Central Hall, Westminster, at which London Branch was formed, and a Steering Committee of six was elected, with Guest as Chairman. These events marked an epoch in the history of the Society.

No time was lost. Nine days later, Committee members returned to the Abbey for the first of many Elgar Society meetings held at Little Cloister during the next decade, through the kindness of Douglas and Peggie Guest. Plans were made for the future, and the First Season of monthly meetings opened at the British Institute of Recorded Sound on 1 December.

Westminster Abbey was again the scene for "a moving and wonderful service" the following June, when a Memorial to Edward Elgar was unveiled by the Prime Minister. During the procession to the North Choir Aisle, Guest conducted a group of twenty-four eminent players, led by Hugh Bean, in the *Elegy* for string orchestra; as the procession returned, he directed the Abbey Choir in *O salutaris Hostia*; and, before the close, he conducted them in the unaccompanied elegy *They are at rest*, of which he later made the premier recording. The appeal for this memorial was made by the President of the Society, Sir Adrian Boult, and Guest played a major part in its fulfilment.

It meant a great deal to the progress of the Elgar Society that a musician of Douglas Guest's distinction should preside over the early years of its first Branch outside Worcestershire. His wide-ranging knowledge of the English musical heritage had been demonstrated by Third Programme broadcasts from Salisbury Cathedral of music by composers such as Dunstable and Tomkins; the notable stage production of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* at Uppingham in 1949; and the early performance of Britten's *War Requiem* at the Three Choirs Festival the year after its première at Coventry.

The last work must have held special significance for him. The Second World War was looming when his time as Organ Scholar at King's College, Cambridge, under Boris Ord, came to an end. He joined the Honourable Artillery Company, rising in due course to the rank of Major. He served in Italy, where he was wounded twice; commanded a Battery on D-Day; and was mentioned in Despatches for his services in Normandy in 1944. His commander-in-chief, Montgomery, believed that a leader must give firm guidance and a clear lead, and must create "atmosphere". Guest's



success in applying those principles to his work as a musician was much to the benefit of the Society. In the time of Byrd, Philip Sidney had shown that the arts could flourish in harmony with the military virtues. Alanbrooke, wartime chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, would later quote the soldier's ideal as patience, tenacity, courage, and chivalry. These were qualities which Guest brought to his musical work, and they helped to make him an admirable chairman, both at meetings and in administration behind the scenes: he recognised that the maximum of work is achieved by harmony and spoilt by friction.

His compositions include a *Missa Brevis Sarisburiensis*, written for the Choir of Salisbury Cathedral and published in 1957, and his setting of Binyon's *For the Fallen*, which was broadcast

during the 50th anniversary commemoration of VE Day. His artistry reached a peak in his work as a choral conductor. In 1975, the year the Queen appointed him a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, he conducted the Combined Choirs of St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, with the Children of the Chapels Royal, at the St Cecilia's Day Festival Service. It would be hard to imagine a finer performance of Stanford's *Beati quorum via* than the one given under Guest's direction on that occasion: the expressive gradations of tone revealed new beauties. The gestures were small; the effect was sublime.

The Roman historian Sallust wrote: "Harmony makes small things grow; lack of it makes great things decay". London Branch grew and flourished; and because of this, other branches were duly formed. The Elgar Society owes much to Dr Guest's leadership, influence, and counsel, and his name will always be held in honour.

Michael Pope

ELGAR IN MAINZ 1992-96

Last year we reported on a series of concerts featuring Elgar's music undertaken by the Mainz Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Peter Erckens during his five-year tenure as director. Dr Ursula Kramer has kindly supplied concert programmes and press notices for the various concerts, and Michael Burrows has heroically translated them. I thought members would be interested in reaction to music which we take for granted and yet must have been unfamiliar to most of those listening - including the critics.

The first concert in 1992 featured the *Cello Concerto* played by Maria Kliegel (whose recording of it is available on Naxos). The *Mainzer Rhein-Zeitung* said that she "impressed with an excellent sound, which came to fruition in full in the influentially shaping, recitative elements of the cello part. Convincing also was the forceful management of the allegro passages. The orchestral forces - in the dialogue between the wind instruments and the solo instrument - only succeeded in the final movement in reaching an independent-unified shape. Until then it was a matter, especially in the brilliantly set out string writing...of reaching out towards the soloist through tonal relationships; this worked adequately". *Das Orchester*, in writing of the concerto, described it as one "which Jacqueline du Pré snatched from oblivion a few years ago". The report went on: "The concerto has hidden problems which the soloist mastered excellently...She presented the opening recitative with high spirits...Vigorous, almost brazen *pizzicato* chords, guitar effects and brisk arpeggios testified to the technical range of the artiste, who also brought an enraptured effect to the elegiac passages. Perhaps the nobility and pessimism could have deserved a stronger consideration, but verve and passion won there".

In April of the following year Elgar's *First Symphony* shared the programme with Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*; "the fatalistic and the highly alive stood close together", said the *Mainzer-Rhein Zeitung*. "Almost completely wide, broad and on a large scale, Elgar's *First Symphony* spreads out a wealth of monumental and richly colourful gestures. At the same time closely-knit and sweeping, the network of meeting points in the score enabled Erckens and his musicians to maintain an overall view. An apparently heterogeneous first movement is shaped from within: the reflective introduction, the grandiose main theme, broad and fleetingly illuminating the strings, vigorous the wind instruments, solid the brass above all. Frequent changes of tempo showed Erckens to be a controlled and urgent master of tempo and emotion, who was able to kindle tremendous passages of turbulence and to open out passages of soft, gentle, at times sugary, finesse.

The same newspaper was similarly impressed by the *Enigma Variations* which were played in February 1994. "Edward Elgar portrayed his immediate surroundings fourteen times in equal vividness, from his wife via his chamber music partner to the dog of a friend", the reporter wrote. "The Mainz orchestra produced programmatic late-Romanticism with a sure touch - and a good deal of amusement as well. With all possible variations, caprice and good humour, the 'painterly' breadth of the theme is woven through Elgar's circle of acquaintances. Erckens devoted himself with particular warm-heartedness to Elgar's wife in sweet seriousness of an assertion of love, and in the massively built-up self-characterisation

of the Finale...Variation 9 built up magnificently, portrayed as a sort of triumph over commonplace despair. Anyone who needs such consolation would certainly have found it in this concert".

In November of the same year, Erckens bravely put on an all-Elgar concert. The *Zeitung* commented: "A symphonic programme, exclusively dedicated to the works of Englishman Edward Elgar, previously unknown in this country, would normally have had (for medium-sized halls) the effect of a bomb attack warning shortly before the commencement of the performance : everyone stays at home. Not so in Mainz. "An almost sold-out house for Elgar is not in the least surprising; Erckens has been able to unearth such treasures of the late-Romantic period already. His conducting style is convincing in works of this period, by means of a magically accurate feeling for tension, textures, and atmosphere. It also proves that ingrained listening habits of a previously conservative public are willingly enriched by novelties. It only takes time and a sure quality of what is being offered".

The concert began with *Pomp & Circumstance no 1*. "Everyone knows this piece of celebration-day music : as festively pompous as if composed for a ship launch, as sublimely showy as a coronation, as thoroughly Britishly attired as the Queen...Clearly more complex, and thus less penetratingly vibrant, the [*Introduction & Allegro* and the *Second Symphony*] cast their spell. As if Elgar had been diverted from the prudish geniality of Victorian England into the depths of the jungle in the colonies, the musical structures expand. The motival themes become more indefinable, and at the same time more a part of one another. The atmospheres glow generally between melancholic contemplation and well-known pomp, between boastfulness and deep-seated unease".

The *Allgemeine-Zeitung* wrote : "It is extremely seldom that a composer has a concert programme dedicated to himself alone. That appeared to be reserved for Beethoven, Bruckner, or Mahler. Now it also applies to Edward Elgar in Mainz, although this self-taught English composer does not appear in some very recent concert guides...At most, the *Cello Concerto* or the *Violin Concerto* are known to us; and of course the secret English national anthem which regularly ends the famous 'Proms'...in triumph, *Pomp & Circumstance Op 39, no 1*...

"Then came the real surprises; extraordinarily rich, impulsive, luxurious and vital renderings of two unknown works : the *Introduction & Allegro for Strings, Op 47* and the *Second Symphony, Op 63*. Neither work deserves the general neglect of our conductors.

"One recognises that Elgar brought with him a very personal 'handwriting', even when occasional reminders of Strauss or Mahler emerge, for example. The strongly singing melodies, the gripping rhythms, the steady luxuriousness and restrained melancholy, are lastingly impressive. It was music with substance to hear, skilfully worked out, convincingly orchestrated..." The writer commented on the "enchanted clouds of sound" which stamped the *Introduction & Allegro*. He concluded : "After this unexpectedly strong effect of Elgar's music, one asks whether further works, above all the 'more-modern' composed symphonic poem *Falstaff* could be heard. Peter Erckens is due decided thanks for his noble rescue of Elgar..."

Reports of Erckens' final concert last June focused less on the particular work - *The Dream of Gerontius* - than on his overall achievements during his years in charge

at Mainz. The *Mainzer Rhein-Zeitung* said that Erckens "in five far too short years has brought a musical level to be the standard which hitherto had been the absolute exception in Mainz...Whether [he] conducts Haydn, Beethoven, Elgar or Schnittke, it did not sound "worked-out"; it always sounded as of "lived through". The *Allgemeine Zeitung* noted that "...the works of Gustav Mahler, Dmitri Shostakovich, Jean Sibelius and Edward Elgar have been his preferences...Elgar in particular, as the father of the English symphony, he had liberated on many occasions through his interpretations from the burden of triumphalist peaks, pomp and crass conservatism. *The Dream of Gerontius*, the hymn of praise of a dying man waiting for divine judgment on his sins, all too often threatens to sink into plush floods of sound. On every occasion the piece is a challenge for the performers, because of the 'Nazareth-like' lyricism with which the Catholic Elgar wished to distance himself from the Victorian bigotry, which all too eagerly equated the Kingdom of Christ with the British Empire".

The report spoke of a "passionately executed performance" by Erckens, the orchestra playing "with verve..with great intensity", and the singers too received great acclaim. The work, "under the heavyweight surface" contains "a rich vein of contrapuntal delicacy"; 'Firmly I believe' was filled by Erckens "with an element of romantic morbidezza....The journey into heaven [ie. the beginning of Part II] took place in an ethereally light string sound. There Elgar's music is suddenly very close to Mahler's vision of Paradise". The *MRZ* was also impressed by this passage. "The delicacy, the almost tenderness, of the short instrumental opening corresponds perfectly with what the Soul of Gerontius expresses in words ("an inexpressive lightness, and a sense of freedom") The sound of the strings is of filigree, it sounds breakable and yet does not break down in any phase...Should this music, interpreted like this, be played in heaven, no one need be anxious that it would be boring there". The most impressive aspect of "this almost faultless performance" was the co-ordination of varying strands into a whole, a sentiment with which the *AZ* concurred: "They were all a guarantee for the success of a difficult work - not meant for quick consumption, certainly not for superficial interpretation. Peter Erckens did not make it easy for anyone, including himself. Perhaps that is why the departure of the conductor from Mainz will be so difficult to bear".

MUSIC REVIEW

Soliloquy for Solo Oboe with piano accompaniment, edited by R H Kay and E C Kay.
Acuta Music, Hambrook, Ledbury HR8 2PX.

It is to be applauded that the manuscripts materials for this work have found their rightful place in the British Library Elgar collection rather than into a private collection via the saleroom. This is especially pertinent in view of the regrettable unwillingness of their dedicatee to allow scholarly access to the materials during his lifetime. However, through the kindness of Jenny Goossens I was able to see the documents shortly after her father's death. In addition to the two MSS (Elgar's own short score autograph LBL Add MS 71960, and the orchestration by Gordon Jacob Add MS 71961) I noted also the following letter from the composer to Goossens on

Lord Chamberlain's Office notepaper dated 21 January 1931 :

Dear Leon.

Alas! I have been a martyr to sciatica ever since I had the pleasure of seeing you : [date?] I have managed to keep one or two engagements but that's all. However I have most of the material available & as soon as I can write decently shall get to work & let you hear.

In the meantime best regards to Mrs.Goossens & to you.

Your sincere friend

Edward Elgar

This letter questions the dating of the work in the present edition to 1930 rather than to 1931. I also noted that the generally accepted title of the movement - 'Soliloquy' - does not appear in the composer's hand in either of the MSS but it was imposed (in incongruous biro) beneath the title thus:

To Leon Goossens

SUITE

OBOE

& orchestra

LEON GOOSSENS [rubber stamp]

SOLILOQUY [biro]

In view of this, the editorial note of the present edition cannot be said to give a wholly accurate picture of the historical background to the work.

The declared editorial policy is to present Elgar's music "essentially unaltered". However, it is debatable whether the unreferenced "additional dynamics and articulation marks, pedalling and a few octave transpositions" along with the replacing of some long held notes by repeated or restuck notes (bars 33-40) can be tenable in an era of reverential Urtext editorial philosophies. Although it is useful to have, in square brackets, the metronome marks, and tempo indications of the Chandos recording it may have been preferable to place these, as well as the above editorial impositions, in a commentary and to leave Elgar's text unadulterated.

Although the typefaces of the piano score and oboe parts are superbly clear and eminently performer friendly, the same unreserved approbation cannot be extended to the absolute accuracy of the transcription. Sadly there are some "sins of omission and commission". Of the latter, in bar 3 we are denied a vital sharp to the leading note in the left hand of the piano part, and between bars 24-25 and 58-59, again piano LH, ties are omitted. Turning to the former, in his short score MS, Elgar located the oboe *acciacaturas* at the ends of bars 28 and 56 but in the present edition they have been moved across the bar lines to the first beats of the succeeding bars.

This edition nevertheless warrants a cautious welcome as being apt for the

performer who will have to be mindful that the copyright strictures extend to 2038 for the oboe and piano version, and to 2055 for Gordon Jacob's orchestration. Perhaps the implanting of Jacob's cadenza phrases into the short score to realise Elgar's *ad libs* in bars 3 and 6 raises a moot point?

Christopher Kent

BOOK REVIEWS

Edward Elgar: an essential guide to his life and works, by David Nice.

Pavilion, 104 pp. £4.99 (paperback only)

This is one of the first releases in Classic FM's 'Lifelines' series, which aims to create "an affordable series of elegantly designed short biographies that will put everyone's favourite composers into focus". A "life" of some eighty or so pages is followed by a "complete list of works" (which is of course incomplete), some recommended recordings, and a very short bibliography. David Nice is a much-respected music critic, and although he is clearly heavily indebted to Jerrold Northrop Moore's writings (which, to be fair, he acknowledges), he writes in an engaging style of his own and makes many perceptive points and a few personal observations and opinions. He is dismissive of the recent attention given to the Helen Weaver affair; "however much food the unofficial and obscurely documented engagement may since have provided for trivial romancing, the relationship is remarkable both for its rarity...and its brevity". He is equally forthright about the Elgars' marriage; "there is nothing to suggest that physical attraction played a large part in the match". Sadly there are any number of glaring factual errors which suggest both a lack of familiarity with his subject, and possibly publishing deadlines. Dates are often faulty; the death of Elgar's mother and the Covent Garden Festival are both placed in 1903; Elgar was not 75 in 1928; *Gerontius* was not premiered in September 1900, nor *The Apostles* on 9 October; William Elgar did not die 18 months after his son received the Freedom of Worcester, but rather less than nine. Confusion sometimes reigns in the area of Elgar houses; he was not born at Birchwood, neither did the sound of singing drift up to Craig Lea from the River Wye. Other more general errors are less pardonable. Parry's *Prometheus Unbound* was first given in 1880, not 1886; and New Brighton is rendered (twice) as "Little Brighton" (what can he have been thinking of?)

Nice is on much surer ground in his comments on the music, and it is here that the book comes into its own and can be safely recommended to those approaching Elgar for the first time. Recommended recordings are of course very subjective but there is little that one could really take issue with here, though I guess few Elgarians would put Hickox's *Apostles* above Boult's, for all the fine solo singing. To sum up; Nice's book fills a gap in the market (Simon Mundy's book is slightly longer and makes no attempt at musical criticism) and, with the caveat of a few factual errors, could be a helpful introduction to the composer. But a final warning. It is most definitely for readers; there are no illustrations whatsoever.

The Editor

Many figures in British music, of importance in their day but since fallen out of fashion, are now being re-examined in performances, recordings, and books : among others have been John Foulds, William Hurlstone, Ethel Smyth, and (the subject of Geoffrey Self's last book) Julius Harrison. No-one is potentially more interesting than Coleridge-Taylor, on account of his mixed race and the once great popularity of *Hiawatha*.

Mr Self's task has not been easy. The composer left no diaries or catalogues, and though a prolific letter-writer, seems not to have been an interesting one. Despite that, Mr Self has amassed new detail, largely from public records. Research of the family background through census returns has raised questions about his mother's identity, and whether his parents were ever married. At any rate, his father, a well-qualified doctor from Sierra Leone, probably never saw his baby son. His mother married (?again), and had three further children.

What a chip on his shoulder Coleridge-Taylor might have had : coloured, deserted, fatherless, poor, working-class, cripplingly shy! Instead, he seems to have maintained his sunny nature to the end of his short life. Indeed, as Mr Self suggests, with perhaps unconscious irony, his music suffered because his temperament had no "dark side".

Like Hurlstone, Coleridge-Taylor was fortunate in attracting philanthropic patrons, and during his time at the RCM (he entered the same term as Vaughan Williams) quickly made his mark. Readers of this JOURNAL will know of Jaeger's and Elgar's advocacy, which secured him his Three Choirs debut with the *A minor Ballade*. Mr Self quotes Michael Kennedy's perceptive comment, that Elgar's later derogatory remarks might have been less a musical judgment than neurotic jealousy. There are several parallels to be drawn with Elgar, among them the incessant local teaching and conducting both men needed to undertake. The saddest is that Coleridge-Taylor sold the copyright of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* to Novello, as Elgar did of *Salut d'Amour*. Elgar's fortunes did at least improve. Coleridge-Taylor all his life was driven to accept "cash-crop" jobs, and - since most of them were with amateurs - became bogged down in tiresome detail. This book too is over-cluttered with dates and place-names, but in the end one is crying out in sympathy for this poor man and his desperate attempt to earn a living for his white wife and two children. I for one would not have missed this gem of bathos : "With *Faust* established, Coleridge-Taylor's year gently ran down, but not before he had crossed the Severn to adjudicate the Newport and Monmouth Total Abstinence Society Semi-National Eisteddfod".

Mr Self covers the music thoroughly. In his Preface he admits that his judgement may appear harsh: his pages are peppered with words like sterile, banal, bland, insipid. We trust him the more when he praises, which he does as emphatically. He comes to the conclusion that among the best works are *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* and the *Symphonic Variations on an African Air*. Examining the race question, he feels that - despite the composer's three visits to the USA where he was lauded in

his own right and as a representative of black people - his identification with his father's side was humane rather than musical. He tried "in work after work to express the spirit of his father's race". He arranged African songs and dances, set words by coloured authors, "but always within the context" of European harmony, textures, vocal and instrumental usage. "Music, not the politics of race, was his mainspring". *Hiawatha*, after all, does not treat the Africans, either in their own continent or as Southern slaves, but idealises the indigenous Red Indian. What a delicious work it is, simple and delicate, and so romantic! I question Mr Self's comment that it is "symphonic in construction"; certainly there is much thematic transformation, but it is the cantata's naturalness, not any complexity, that wins all hearts. I would also have liked Mr Self to consider it in relation to other works (Boughton's *Immortal Hour* and Stainer's *Crucifixion*, for instance) whose popularity outweighed their critical acclaim. The *Variations* are symphonic and possibly in treating the bimodality of the black spiritual which is their theme Coleridge-Taylor gives freer expression to his inner self. On the whole, though, it is easy to agree that miniatures such as the *Petite Suite de Concert* show him "at his considerable best".

There are lavish musical examples, a list of works, a bibliography, a select discography, and a dozen photographs. The book is handsomely produced and is a pleasure to handle.

Diana McVeagh

The Goossens, a Musical Century by Carole Rosen.

Andre Deutsch, 1993. £20

The Goossens, originating in Bruges in the last century, were the outstanding "royal family" of musicians for most of this century. Three generations named Eugene, each with a distinguished conducting career, the third also a gifted composer; Adolphe, a horn player tragically killed in the First World War; Leon, perhaps the world's finest oboist; and Marie and Sidonie, famed harpists, both of whom made that instrument far more than just an orchestral ornament. Today only Sidonie remains, now in her 90s. The achievements in music of this remarkably gifted family have waited a long time for a chronicler, and Miss Rosen's book is a substantial one which covers their private and public lives in considerable detail, and with equal emphasis. The Goossens knew almost everyone, it seems - not just in the music world, and the text is liberally sprinkled with famous names. We learn much of the background to music activities from the 1880s on, but it is with the family of Eugene II, and their remarkable contribution to 20th century music that the book is really concerned. The habit of the Goossens in perpetuating family names is sometimes confusing, and it is necessary to consult the family tree printed in the preliminaries to remind yourself of the sometimes complex relationships.

The author begins her text by admitting that she "fell under the spell of the Goossens family", and it seems to have rapidly developed into an almost heartfelt admiration. This has its advantages in a biographical study, for she was obviously granted access to very personal family papers which might have been denied to a more academic approach, but it has its pitfalls too. Often individuals are referred to by their family nicknames (every family has them), but if at first this seems

charming, it rapidly becomes rather annoying and one longs for a more detached view. Perhaps the author got too close - while we are told of Eugene's many compositions for instance, we do not get a critical view of his work which surely he deserves. In some respects Eugene III was ahead of his time, and a re-assessment is much overdue. Equally one looks for a study comparing Leon with his oboe-playing contemporaries (we know how famous he became, but we would like to know how and why). There is more on the harpists who worked with, and influenced, Marie and Sidonie.

Despite my reservations I enjoyed the book, for it is well-written in the main, and interest in the family is not allowed to flag. Perhaps another hand will one day take an academic view. There are a number of illustrations, mostly from family snaps taken in various countries. The appendices are valuable - a select bibliography, a list of Eugene III's compositions, and a discography compiled by the late Raymond Cooke. I must declare a small interest here as I was able to assist him in the preparation of some of the information. Unfortunately, the need to publish a schedule meant that the discography is not as complete as Raymond intended, but no doubt other information will be forthcoming in time.

Ronald Taylor

RECORD REVIEWS

A Portrait of Elgar.

*English Symphony & String Orchestras conducted by William Boughton
Nimbus NI 1769 (4 CD set)*

Cockaigne, Op 40. Enigma Variations, Op 36. Froissart, Op.19. NI 5206
Chanson de Nuit & de Matin, Op 15. Dream Children, Op 43. Salut d'Amour, Op 12.
Three Characteristic Pieces, Op 10: no.1, Mazurka; no.3 Contrasts. Rosemary.
Nursery Suite. Sérénade Lyrique. Carissima. May Song. NI 7029
Introduction & Allegro, Op 47. Elegy, Op 58. Sospiri, Op 70. Serenade for Strings,
Op 20. Chanson de Nuit & de Matin, Op 15 (arr. W H Reed). The Spanish Lady,
Op.89: Suite (arr. Young) NI 5008
Pomp & Circumstance Marches, Op 39. The Wand of Youth Suite no 2, Op 1b. Three
Bavarian Dances. NI 5136

An enterprising set of four discs, newly packaged and costing less than two full-price CDs. The recordings date from 1989, 1995, 1983, and 1988 respectively. The JOURNAL appears to have made no mention of the last disc, but the first three were given generally warm and positive welcomes from Gareth Lewis, Christopher Fifield, and John Knowles. William Boughton needs no introduction to Elgarians as he is the Artistic Director of the Malvern Elgar Festival, the ESO now being resident in Malvern. Having built up an international reputation with the English String Orchestra, which he set up in 1980, William Boughton went on to found a larger "sister" orchestra nine years later. This larger ensemble is featured on three of the discs, Elgar's music for strings comprising the fourth.

This collection includes the major part of Elgar's orchestral output (excluding the symphonies, concerti, and a few other pieces), and overall the performances are excellent, with fine playing and ensemble, this last no doubt a product of the understanding between an orchestra and its resident conductor. Boughton adopts a no-nonsense approach to much of the string music : the *Serenade* is one of fastest I have heard. However he really tugs at the emotions - successfully in my view - in *Sospiri*, where he is slower even than Barbirolli! It is good to hear the two *Chansons* in their arrangement for strings by Billy Reed, though these too are very fast; it is interesting to note that Boughton takes them considerably slower twelve years later in their arrangement for full orchestra. In general Boughton has a tendency to understatement. This normally makes for fast tempi and highlights the music's energy and vitality, yet he still manages to bring out a large amount of its inner detail. The *Pomp & Circumstance Marches* are superbly done, as are the *Variations* and the two overtures. Occasionally I felt he could have lingered a little more, for instance in the 'Little Bells' from *The Wand of Youth*, where the well-known trio (used to such effect in *The Starlight Express*) needs much more expression and yearning. Only on a couple of occasions does Boughton linger to no purpose. His opening Andante in *Dream Children* is a full-blown *adagio*; the darker depths of this little piece do not need such overt expression. And I know that *Rosemary* is for remembrance, but it should be borne in mind that this piece started life in dance form, as a 'Menuetto'.

Even though most Elgarians will already possess versions of these pieces, there is much here to enjoy and to delight in. Two of the major elements in Elgar's music are its wonderful melodic invention and superb orchestration, and both are found in abundance here. This set would be an ideal introduction to someone really wanting to know more about the composer.

The Editor

Enigma Variations, Op 36. With Hindemith : Philharmonic Concerto.

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rolf Kleinert
Berlin Classics 0092702BC

Enigma Variations, Op 36. With Holst : The Planets.

London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pierre Monteux
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Herbert von Karajan
Decca 452 303-2

It is always of interest to see how others see us, and none more so than with the music of Elgar. Some honorary knights of the realm, such as Solti and Haitink, have espoused his music in a big way. Others have limited their association to one or two works of which *Enigma* is the obvious first choice. Kleinert is a conductor unknown to this reviewer, whose only desire is that he remain so. The orchestra is the Radio Orchestra from East Berlin as was, the recording (rough sound, an awful start and evident retake spots) made in 1979. Tempi are sluggish on the whole and there's barely a sense of line or structure from one variation to another. My complaints are too legion for detail. The theme itself is self-indulgent in dynamics. 'Troyte' sounds more like the end of 1812. 'Nimrod' is too fast and too loud too soon, its climax

meaningless. The Finale is generally ragged in ensemble. Perhaps if Kleinert had been conducting a British orchestra they would have knocked him into shape. It's unfortunate for him that, in the next breath, mention must be made of Monteux's famed 1958 account, whose highlight is that magical 'Nimrod' with its incredible *pianissimo* opening. Monteux was, of course, conducting a British orchestra, the LSO, with whom he spent his last working years as their Principal Conductor, 1961-64. He was an unostentatious figure on the platform, of rotund appearance, his movements small and filigree. He was fastidious in his search for detail, and had an excellent ear. This first foray into *Enigma* (and indeed into Elgar) was made when he was in his eighties. Some of the orchestral players apparently declared that his interpretation came closest to Elgar's own in their memory. One can sense the respect and veneration that the players had for their maestro in their committed and joyous playing. It is both fresh and different in approach, clearly guided by a masterful musician and utterly satisfying in its musical conception. Buy it for that amazing opening of 'Nimrod' alone, though you will find more treasures besides.

Christopher Fifield

CD Round-up

Sony have re-released Pinchas Zukerman's 1977 recording of the *Violin Concerto* with the LPO conducted by Barenboim. This is generally held to be far superior to his recent version with Slatkin (JGK thought so in his comparative review, *JOURNAL* May 1994). The fill-up on this bargain-price 'Essential Classics' is, as before, Barenboim's *In the South* (SBK 62745).

One of the success stories of the record industry in recent years is the Naxos label. Not only have they and their sister label, Marco Polo, been commendably adventurous in their choice of repertoire, but their recordings of well-known works have often been considered at least equal to full-price recordings by internationally known artistes. Their Elgar recordings are no exception, and a selection is now available on 'The Best of Elgar' (8.551 192). There are movements from both concerti (Dong-Suk Kang and Maria Kliegel), extracts from *Symphony no 1* (Hurst) and the *Variations* and *String Serenade* (Leaper). The rest of the disc is all conducted by Adrian Leaper; *Salut d'Amour*, *Pomp & Circumstance 1 & 4*, and the two most substantial works, *Cockaigne* and the *Introduction & Allegro*.

EMI are about to release three CDs of classic Elgar recordings by Sir John Barbirolli in their 'British Composers' series. They comprise the *Enigma Variations* and *Falstaff* (CDM 566322-2); the *Pomp & Circumstance Marches*, *Cockaigne* and *Froissart* (CDM 566323-2); and *Symphony no 2*, *Cockaigne* and *Dream Children no 1* (CDM 566263-2). This third disc is of recordings from the early 1950s and are all on CD for the first time. A full review by John Knowles will appear in the next issue.

The Editor

