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Front Cover:
The Island of Yns Lochtyn, near Llangrannog, Ceredigion (Cardiganshire in 1901).

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> Books: Author, *Title* (Place of publication: Publisher, year of publication), page[s]. Thus: Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1993), 199.
>
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End a footnote with a full stop, please, and never put a comma before a parenthesis.

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

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

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Editorial
The Shock of the Not So New?

The three issues of the *Journal* published during 2022 will each contain an editorial written by one of the other members of the editorial team. This will allow the lead editor to concentrate on the publication of the book celebrating the formation of the Society's London Branch in 1971.

It is unlikely that most readers of this will have, at the most, anything other than a passing knowledge of the 'rapper' Kanye West. It was with some surprise that I observed that the 'Culture' section of *The Sunday Times* of 13 February 2022 carried a sub-heading about Mr West: 'The origin [sic] story of a troubled genius'. To me, this emphasises the point that contemporary over-use of the words 'great' and 'genius' has diminished their impact. Society in general has somehow become complicit in allowing these words to become commonplace. The application of 'great' to a work of art or 'genius' to a creative artist is a matter of opinion, which is in these times frequently applied with little thought or with obvious prejudice. On the other hand, some opinions may be accepted and become a universal truth. Few would dispute that, for example, Leonardo's 'Lady with an ermine' is a *great* work of art painted by a *genius*. In music, similarly, some may agree that J S Bach, Berlioz, Beethoven, Mozart, Verdi and Wagner are geniuses. There lies the rub. There are those who loathe the music of Berlioz, despise Wagner for his opinions and the 'interminable' length of his operas, and others who find Verdi a poor relation when stood alongside his German contemporary. Furthermore, there are some decisions or opinions which seem so bizarre that they appear risible to others. I can only presume that the Nobel Committee for Literature knew what it was doing when it awarded the 2016 Prize to Bob Dylan, a singer of modest talent (if that) and a writer of what I have always found to be pretentious and vacuous lyrics. Others I know are equally astonished that I should think like this. Dylan was followed in 2017 by Sir Kazuo Ishiguro which makes the former's award seem even more bizarre.

In a lecture in 2003, Michael Kennedy rightly placed the great British composers of the Renaissance such as Byrd, Carver, Shepherd and Tallis into a class and time of their own.[1] This avoided the problem of comparing these geniuses with those who rose to prominence in the 19th century; an impossible task. Comparisons are, all the same, essential if we are to place Elgar in context. In addition we might separate Purcell and, after him, the implacable genius of Handel who, inconveniently for some, settled in London. Handel's genius for melody, theatre, and hard work over-shadowed the likes of Arne and Boyce. What, I wonder, would these composers have achieved if Handel had remained in Germany. Were they over-awed by Handel, are they still over-looked because of his music or were they just lesser composers who, even before J C Bach moved to London in 1762, had to cope with such a powerful figure in their midst? Then Joseph Haydn came and conquered London 'Society' in 1790 and, within a generation another genius, Felix Mendelssohn, became the darling of the Queen and her court: his choral music again over-shadowed much of what was home-grown and the work of the leading British composers of the

1 Ed. John Norris & Andrew Neill, A *Special Flame* (Elgar Editions: Rickmansworth, 2004), 1.

late 19th century. Could any of these be called 'great'? For the sake of argument, I mention Cowen, Mackenzie, Stanford and Parry. Virtually forgotten today, the music of Cowen and Mackenzie appears on the occasional recording and the latter is largely remembered for his time as Principal of the Royal Academy of Music. Some readers of this will feel strongly that both Parry and Stanford were 'great' composers. Perhaps they were composers who wrote some 'great' music but cannot be placed on the level of 'greatness' occupied by contemporaries such as Brahms and Dvořák. This is, of course, a matter of opinion and, again, there are those reading this who will disagree – vehemently - with either contention.

So we come to Elgar who, rather like Handel 180 years or so before, planted his flag at the centre of British musical culture. However, Elgar's music is often considered by overseas writers as reactionary, over-scored, and barely worthy of consideration when placed alongside his contemporaries. This begs the question, 'are they right'? It is, of course a matter of opinion.

These thoughts came to my mind recently when reading some old cuttings. I came across a review from June 2016 by one of the (then) music critics of *The Sunday Times*, Paul Driver. In his article he expressed some fascinating and challenging ideas when reviewing a London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) concert conducted by Sir Antonio Pappano at the Barbican, and a Philharmonia (PO) Concert under Esa-Pekka Salonen at the Royal Festival Hall. He began his piece wondering if Elgar knew the music of Stravinsky:

> The close conjunction of such masterpieces (Elgar's Symphony No 2 and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*), one a quasi-terminal ramification of grand late-Romantic style, although none the less modern for that, the other a modernist tabula rasa so terrifyingly unprecedented that the 'wipes slate' never could again be filled, is intriguing to contemplate. It came to my mind on hearing Antonio Pappano conduct the LSO in the Elgar Symphony at the Barbican three days after the PO gave a concert comprising the burlesque *Renard*, the one-act opera *Mavra*, and Les Noces. *The Rite of Spring* had figured in a previous concert.

Driver continued, reflecting perceptively on the Beethoven Violin Concerto, which had formed the first half of Pappano's concert:

> …Beethoven sustains our interest unfailingly: indeed, by a paradox of his art, the more inexorable seeming he reprises, the more the structure feels dynamically impelled. Of course the two composers do have (and for all Stravinsky's antipathy to 'expression') much in common – notably a rhythmic power and effectiveness hardly to be matched.
>
> An alarming intransigence of rhythm marks out Elgar's Second Symphony and must have been one of the reasons why that Queen's Hall first performance was received tepidly. It wasn't a scandal like *The Rite's* Paris world premiere, but the English equivalent something rather worse: 'manslaughter', i.e. unintentional killing, (to steal a joke from the critic Hans Keller), by sheer politeness. Yet, as Diana McVeagh suggests in the preface to the Eulenberg score, 'perhaps … in some ways their sober reaction was a true one' – to so emotionally complex and ambivalent a work.
>
> The drumming-up of what now seems prophetic terror (World War 1 just three years away) must have had - because it still has - a shock-value arguably transcending *The Rite of Spring's*, for it intimates an all too actual, rather anthropological horror. And Elgar's masterful way of insinuating uncertainty into affirmation, of fringing beauty with despondency, and even undermining his closing major chord with a penultimate harmony of heart-rending dissonance, is liable to leave an audience as much dazed as dazzled.
>
> The score of the Second Symphony sits on my shelf, as it happens beside *The Rite of Spring*: two astonishing explorations of the near-continuous large-orchestral tutti. Living through Pappano's driven, clear, burningly intense account of the Elgar, I felt not only that the works are indeed akin, but that - speaking, as it seems to ever more intently, to my own experience – it is the Elgar that is the more modern.

Driver makes a remarkable claim which will be laughed at by some, horrify others and even be derided by those who consider Stravinsky one of music's seminal figures. However, I find his piece thought-provoking, and it has made me think deeply about both of Elgar's symphonies; two of the most original of the 20th Century. As is so often the case, Diana McVeagh gets near or to the truth about this monumental composition. Elgar could never claim to be a 'seminal figure', an accolade which I believe he would have hated. However, we can easily forget how radical and original his music sounded for the audiences of his time: perhaps by reading Mr Driver's stimulating comments some doubters might reconsider their opinions of Elgar's music and where it stands within the musical canon.

Elgar's self-teaching and the long journey to greatness makes him unique as a leading British composer who could produce a Symphony as complex as that in E flat as well as a dozen or more other large-scale masterpieces, one of which is his *Variations*. Elgar's ability to capture the personality of those he portrayed keeps the music evergreen. It is one of the reasons why Ashton's ballet *Enigma Variations* has remained in the repertoire and why learning more about each character allows us a greater appreciation of the music. That is partly why I find the story of Richard Baxter Townshend so interesting. Townshend saw the 'Wild West' in its beauty, danger and vividness during the period between the end of America's Civil War and the coming of the motor car. Kevin Allen, who has done so much to portray important personalities who were close to Elgar, such as August Jaeger and Hugh Blair, completes his portrait of Townshend in this issue of the *Journal*.

Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* also figures in this issue, its place stimulated by the interest of Britten in the work and a re-reading of Diana McVeagh's analysis and celebration of a visit to the Welsh Coast 37 years ago. Several prominent musicians contribute to this assessment of a masterpiece and, in so doing, stimulate some re-thinking about how we might approach the work and how it might be played. This Society has always attempted to place Elgar and his music in context. With virtually every note of Elgar's music recorded and more books written about him than any other British composer it is unsurprising that few new recordings of his music or books about him now become available for review. Although somewhat selective, we continue to review books and recordings we feel will be of interest to the members of the Society and recordings of music by Elgar's contemporaries such as Vaughan Williams and a work like Wolfrum's *Ein Weihnachtsmysterium* which figured briefly in Elgar's life. In addition to a CD review by Relf Clark, Kevin Mitchell has explored Elgar's association with this music.

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

'Pictured Within' - Richard Baxter Townshend: Part Two: The Variation

Kevin Allen

From the *Tenderfoot in Colorado*

More power to your elbow. Give it to those enemies. So glad I ain't one!'

'RBT' to Elgar

Hurrah for the tee's flat stand,
Your ball on its pinch of sand,
The slow back swing,
The loose wrist fling,
And the drive which is simply grand!

From 'Inspired Golf'

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight!

Shelley

Once returned from America, Townshend took a post at Bath College[1] teaching languages, a thoroughly respectable position from which to resume his courtship of Dorothea Baker. Relatives certainly seemed keen to see them settled. One of them recalled a large family wedding at Wimbledon in the summer of 1880.

> My Uncle Dick was back from Colorado, and my Aunt's old school-friend at Miss May's School, Clifton, Dora Baker, had also come. My brother and I . . . being apparently the youngest present, had to lead the procession from the large Drawing-Room to the Wedding Breakfast in the big Dining-room, and I remember that Dora Baker and my Uncle Dick were also paired off, and sat next each other, and seemed very friendly, and their happy engagement was announced soon after.[2]

They were married the following summer, from Hasfield Court, walking the short distance to the Church along a carpeted path bedecked with flowers strewn by 'a band of village maidens', according to a report in the *Gloucester Citizen*.[3] It was a local 'event', 'the interest felt in it being all the greater on account of the popularity which the fair bride herself, together with the rest of the family, had won by their active interest in the well-being of the inhabitants of the locality'. Dorothea wore an ivory-shaded satin dress, trimmed with white lace, a gold necklace studded with pearls, gold earrings and a gold bracelet, the latter presented by the servants at Hasfield Court. It was also reported that the bridegroom gave each of the four bridesmaids a silver bracelet, and that he presented the bride with a gold and silver locket, a silver cardcase, a filigree silver cross, and a ruby ring. Clearly that final trek from Texas to Leadville had brought in plenty of the 'spondulics'.

In the custom of the day, the *Citizen* listed the wedding gifts, great and small, for all to see. Amid the tea and coffee services, d'oyleys, silver teaspoons and claret jugs which were in abundance, certain items catch the eye. Pupils at Bath College thought enough of their new Master to supply a silver-mounted oak salad bowl and a butter-cooler and knife; Dorothea's friend Alice Roberts, her mother and brother offered Cashmine silver salt cellars. Others, thinking the table well enough equipped, bore in mind the couple's shared interests and turned to the bookshelves,

1 Now the Bath Spa Hotel.

2 From the unpublished Autobiography of EM Townshend, Gloucestershire Archives D10632, transcribed by Mike Skinner.

3 30 July,1881.

providing editions of Tennyson, Scott and Moore, while the Reverend W.S. Symonds gave a copy of his excellent historical novel, *Malvern Chase*. The happy couple left that afternoon for Clifton, the first stage of their wedding tour; they would afterwards visit Ilfracombe 'and other beautiful spots on the Devon and Cornish coasts'. Perhaps Dorothea had Geology in mind, for she may well have visited the area previously in connection with her work in providing illustrations for the good Mr Symond's *Records of the Rocks*. Such a combination of honeymoon and hobby would have been entirely characteristic of the Townshends' marriage, a mutually supportive scholarly and literary partnership, and one which would prove as productive in its own way as that of Edward and Alice Elgar. There would be no children.

After some five years at Bath, Richard abandoned schoolmastering and the couple returned to Dorothea's home ground, acquiring a large house, Hillfields, at Redmarley; evidently the horse-trading profits had been wisely invested and the 1891 Census would find him 'living on own means' and maintaining a household of three servants. The move enabled an easy resumption of the old friendship with Alice Roberts, as well as proximity to Dorothea's family at Hasfield Court nearby. No doubt the Townshends shared Alice's excitement over her literary projects, and were in due course introduced to her fiancé, Edward Elgar.

The Townshends visited the United States together in the summer of 1888, Richard understandably being keen that his wife should see something of the country, although the trip seems to have been confined to 'tonified' areas such as Boston. Dorothea recorded her verdict in a letter to a sister-in-law; amid various discomforts she was impressed by the special atmosphere of Wellesley, the women's college.

> We have come home thinking England such a nice country! America is so rough – it is hot & noisy & there are so few servants & people speak so loud & bang doors!! We were a week in Boston which was charming in spite of the heat. I saw many professors for the American Cambridge is close to Boston - & also at Wellesley such a lovely *woman's* college holding hundreds – in the middle of a park with a lake and lovely gardens – quite like Tennyson's description in the Princess! Then we went to stay with Col. Holt, Dick's friend at Portland, Maine -a goodsized town. Col. Holt is very intellectual & original & it was very like living in one of Howell's novels. We also stayed with some charming cousins of mine near Montreal – the head of the Theological College, but it was too hot to venture to Niagara – the thermometer was 96 degrees in New York! The voyages were very tiring tho' I am a good sailor one gets so tired of holding on all night, & having to make a run for the staircase & going down stairs when you meant to go up! We came back in the Umbria, one of the 'greyhounds' of the Atlantic & really it was as comfortable as a ship could be, with electric lights in the cabins & music room & roses on the dinner table. I am afraid Dick is wicked enough to scoff at Mr Keeley's motor![4] He says it was talked of in America ten years ago and is 'about *bust* up now!' Isn't he bad! I think however I feel more interest in the ways forces work than in finding out new forces - new gold mines won't make the work much better![5]

William Dean Howells was a prolific American novelist of the realist school; Dorothea, her literary tastes evidently well established, concluded her letter with some opinions of other writers, English and American.

Alice and Edward Elgar's engagement took place that September, and they married the following May; their relationship with the Townshends can now be traced through Alice's diary

4 John Worrell Keeley (1838-1898) was a fraudulent inventor who claimed to have discovered new means of power production by 'etheric' or 'vaporic' force.

5 Gloucestershire Archives D10632, transcribed by Mike Skinner.

entries, brief though some of them are in the early days. Over the next two years Richard and Dorothea called on the newly married pair several times during their unsuccessful London venture, and the Elgars spent a few days at Hillfields in the September of 1890. 'E walked with Mr Townshend' Alice noted. Later that year came the first of several invitations from the Bakers to spend part of the Christmas holidays at Hasfield Court. Once there Edward 'walked to Hillfields and shot'. Townshend had of necessity learned marksmanship in his American days, and loved teaching others; no doubt Elgar received plentiful instructions on how to 'draw a bead'. He was preparing to give a talk about his adventures two days later to the Hasfield guests, but 'heavy snow Mr Townshend cd not come over to lecture'. The parties assembled again at the same time the following year, with more walks and shooting and this time, some rowing on the Hasfield lake. Indoor entertainment was provided by what Alice called 'Music & Coruscations' in the Court's superb music room, followed next day by a 'Concert & Yarns' in the school room; Townshend was able to give his talk at last.

Oxford, Scholarship and Friends

There were other things on his and Dorothea's mind that Christmas, nevertheless. Earlier in December Mrs Townshend senior had written to a relative,

> Did you know that Uncle Dick & Aunt Dora have given up Hillfields & have gone to Oxford, & are hoping to take a house there. They are for the present quite settling down there hoping to find a suitable house. They both like it much. Uncle D. is going to do a little coaching, & has had a young lady pupil for a fortnight, wh. he says he greatly enjoyed.[6]

That 'suitable house' was a substantial property on the Woodstock Road, in the special atmosphere of North Oxford, which the Townshends occupied for some years before acquiring an acre of land on the Banbury Road nearby, closer to Park Town, where they built a substantial six-bedroomed house to their own specifications.[7] The land was purchased from the famous Miss Beale, of Cheltenham Ladies' College, who may have originally acquired it as a possible site for St Hilda's Hall, later St Hilda's College. The handsome house was set well back from the road, and the Townshends occupied it for the rest of their lives. It boasted extensive servants' quarters, a Conservatory and a Loggia with a tiled floor, and was set in grounds sufficient to develop an orchard, a rockery, a kitchen garden, a lime and poplar avenue, and a tennis court. No doubt the house was festooned with trophies of Richard's American days and he was remembered as sitting at his desk in a converted saddle[8] and breaking a piece of bread before meals, sprinkling it with salt and throwing it over his shoulder in imitation of a Red Indian ritual. The habit was noted by a visiting cousin, who remembered that Richard and Dorothea had designed the house so as to have separate studies at the top, 'an excellent plan giving them solitude, more light and air, and lovely

6 Gloucestershire Archives, D 10632, transcribed by Mike Skinner.

7 117 Banbury Road, now the North Oxford Overseas Centre. I am most grateful to the Director, Mrs Emma Young, for providing copies of various conveyances and other documents from the Townshends' time there.

8 From the script of a talk to Elgar Society Southern Branch given by Claude Powell, younger son of Dora Powell.

views'.[9] Those studies were to be well used.

The couple's move to Oxford offered them all the advantages and stimuli of a University City, with its range of social activities and academic contacts, learned societies, and for Richard, sporting opportunities. And with the resources of the Bodleian and other libraries available, and a direct rail line to London and the British Museum, they would be better able to pursue the lives of research and writing on which they had clearly decided. Individually and jointly, they would produce some 27 books in a variety of genres over the next 30 years. Richard's were sporting manuals, novels, translations and reminiscences of his American days; while she sometimes collaborated with her husband, Dorothea's interests were in short stories of a didactic, improving nature for children, the kind of books that provided ideal material for school prizes. They were usually firmly rooted in a historical context – *Captain Chimney Sweep, a Story of the Great War* and *A Saint George of King Charles's Day* are typical titles – although she ventured into Irish folk-territory in *The Children of Nugentstown and their Dealings with the Sidhe* in which the Nugent family are saved by fairies.[10] She complemented these books with several substantial and scholarly biographies: of the Royalist courtier and diplomat Endymion Porter; of the First Earl of Cork, Lord Treasurer of Ireland, together with his sons an important figure in the success of the Protestant cause in Ireland; and of George Digby, Second Earl of Bristol, the Royalist supporter who suggested the impeachment of 'the five members' to Charles I. Dorothea thought that 'of all the centuries England has lived through, perhaps the seventeenth is the easiest for us moderns to understand' and her interest in the Civil War period was one shared with her husband. Dorothea's writings, while remaining largely unknown among a wider public, have merited her a brief entry in the *Oxford Companion to Edwardian Fiction*.[11]

Dorothea Petrie Carew thought that her cousin's interest in Ireland and Irish genealogy was the equal of her husband's, and the Townshends' first joint publication, *An Officer of the Long Parliament and His Descendants*[12] was a detailed account of Colonel Richard Townesend's activities during and after the Civil War, and the lives of his successors. It is a well-documented mixture of history, anecdote and genealogical research, and has provided the foundation of all later investigations into a remarkable extended family.

Inspirations at Hasfield

If that year of 1892 was an auspicious one for the Townshends and their writings, it was no less a one for Elgar, for they met that Christmas as guests at Hasfield, where on 22 December Alice noted, 'Acting in the evening', possibly the occasion of those vocal gymnastics of Townshend's which passed into family lore and which caught Elgar's ear so vividly. Dora Penny related such an incident, albeit at second-hand -

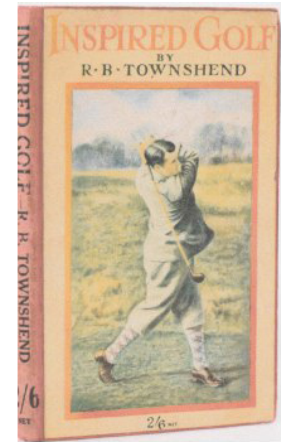
> They were doing some amateur theatricals at Hasfield Court, the home of W. M. Baker, and someone was wanted to take the part of an old man. No one could be found who was really suitable so they ran in R. B. T., who was staying there, to act – much against his will. He had never taken part in anything of the sort before and, I was assured, never did so again. The difficulty was in what sort of voice should he speak? His voice sounded as though it had never broken. He spoke in a kind of high falsetto - rather a soft voice, and one which was eminently suitable for telling Negro stories of his travels and life in Colorado and for the same reason he was a capital reader of *Uncle Remus*. He decided to put on a deep bass voice for the old man's part, but he couldn't keep it up and his occasional lapses into his ordinary voice convulsed the audience![13]

9 Dorothea Petrie Carew, *Anything Once* (Penzance: Wordens of Cornwall, 1971), 58-59.

10 'I am very deep in Celtic books just now,' she once wrote to Alice, 'Douglas Hyde's Irish Literature is so very suggestive.' EB 10408, undated.

11 Kemp, Mitchell and Potter, eds., OUP 1997. The content is almost as much about 'RBT' and 'WMB' as Dorothea and her work awaits more thorough appraisal.

12 Henry Frowde, 1892.



The next day Townshend provided the composer with another creative stimulus – 'At Hasfield. E learnt golf'. It was entirely typical of him that Townshend, a lover of outdoor activity, was a devotee of the game, and characteristic of his didactic side, that he should want to teach others. A member of the Oxford University Golf Club, and its future Treasurer, he published many years later a manual describing his own system of play, *Inspired Golf*.[14] It was written in a tongue-in-cheek, conversational style – 'Here is the secret out at last. Practise it, yes, practise it assiduously with faith and hope, and what before seemed impossible will come easy to you'. The 'secret' was Townshend's method of holding the breath during the stroke – hence 'inspired' golf. The method certainly seems to have been successful in all senses with Elgar, who was immediately hooked on the game; the pair played almost every day for the remainder of that holiday and early in the New Year of 1893 Elgar made sure to invest in some clubs and outdoor wear, including gaiters. He found the four guineas - no trifling sum – to cover the entrance fee and subscription to the Worcestershire Golf Club and would play frequently for the next eleven years, until he left Malvern for Hereford. But it was more than just a game for its own sake, and Elgar achieved no particular distinction as a golfer. Rather, Townshend introduced him to an activity which offered easy access to the kind of open-air exercise which stimulated his musical thinking, and which enabled him to socialise with the kind of people who could be of help to him. For the next few years Elgar and his teacher played whenever they met up at Hasfield, and Townshend began to come to Malvern to do battle at the Worcestershire Golf Club, although finding the non-members' fees somewhat exorbitant. So keen was he to play that on one occasion when Elgar was *hors de combat* with a muscle strain he 'came over from Hasfield & played solus 18 holes, then came with E to Forli had stout & oysters'.

The golfing friendship continued to ripen when the Townshends took a house in Malvern Wells, close to the golf course, for some weeks in the spring of 1894. They were joined by Dorothea's sister Mary Frances ('Min'), and Alice had plenty of opportunities for tea-time calls with her old girlfriends, while Elgar and Townshend took to the links and seem to have played golf almost every day during much of April. The next month came a first invitation to the big house in Oxford, and the Elgars spent three days being shown the sights, including the Shelley Memorial, Magdalen College, Worcester Gardens and the Bodleian Library. The invitations were repeated over the next few years and Townshend would escort further expeditions round the Colleges, the University Galleries, and Port Meadow. But it is difficult not to be struck by references in Alice's Diary accounts of

13 Dora Powell, *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation* 4th Edition (London: Scolar Press, 1994), 124. She thought that the incident took place 'about 1895' before she had any connexion with the family.

14 Methuen, 1921, reprinted 2004, Kevin Allen, Alverstoke.

these visits, not so much to places, as to people. The Townshends were clearly a sociable couple, with extensive contacts among Oxford's academic community. Alice recorded 'crowds of people to tea' on one occasion, and she noted having encountered Frederick Conybeare, a Professor of Theology, John Earle, a Professor of Anglo-Saxon, and Charlotte Moberly, Headmistress of an Oxford Girls' School, as dinner guests. And the 1901 Census would find Townshend enjoying a break in Northern Ireland together with various University friends including John Munro, Rector of Lincoln College, Edward Thomas Bullock, Professor of Chinese, and John Stenning, Fellow and Lecturer in Divinity and Hebrew.

Such contacts were a sign of the way that the move to the University City enabled Townshend's metamorphosis from frontiersman to writer, scholar, and respected member of the academic community. A keen photographer, he became a member of the Oxford Camera Club, as well as the Golf Club, and spoke to the University Anthropological Society. He took his Cambridge MA, enabling him to become a member of the Senior Common Room of Wadham College, and further polished his scholarly credentials by undertaking translations.[15] His sporting interests did not diminish with advancing years, and the Wadham Gazette[16] shows him supporting the College by lending nets for tennis, subscribing towards a new cricket pavilion, and playing golf against the Junior Common Room. Unfortunately, an excess of enthusiasm in running with the Wadham boat during Eights Week one year led to a broken leg; he was cheerfully described as 'making a splendid recovery'.

These were of course the years of Elgar's gradual emergence as a composer, and the Townshends would have heard much of the success of such early works as *The Black Knight, King Olaf* and *Caractacus* through the family grapevine. 1898, the year of *Caractacus* and the conception of the Variations Op 36, was a busy one and there seems to have been no meeting with Townshend until the March of the following year. Closely following co-variants Mary Lygon and Richard Arnold, he was an early guest at Craeg Lea, the Elgars' imposing new house at Malvern Wells, overlooking the golf course. A week after they had moved in, Alice 'made ready house & met Mr T at Wells Stn & brought him up'.[17] Townshend and Elgar played golf all next day, and the following morning. Some ten days later Townshend, a true golf obsessive, was wielding his clubs again while staying with a relative at Star Hill, Woking, playing on a course uncomfortably close to the local crematorium. In the first of several characteristic letters to Elgar that have survived, he offered golfing badinage, gallows humour and family news, sprinkled with a little Spanish gleaned from days in New Mexico. It speaks much of Townshend's relationship with Elgar, and offers a vivid impression of the man and the flavour of his conversation.

> My dear Elgar, No, I've not come here to be cremated, though the crematorium is in full view – say about a drive, a brassy, and a mashie shot – from the golf course, but to play golf with my nephew Brian while his family scour the country round on cycleback looking for an eligible suburban residence at a suitable rental with all the modern improvements, good air, a fine view, and handy to a good links.
>
> In short what they want is another 'Craeg Lea' within 50 minutes of London by rail. But they haven't found it yet. The golf tho' is all right, tho' it adds a new terror to being off your game and burying your ball almost out of sight in the sand bunkers (which are real sand – expert credo Ricardo) when you reflect that you are digging graves only by a slight anticipation, for the course is laid out – it is a beauty – over the land purchased by the Necropolis Company. I wish you could be here and play a few rounds with me but I suppose that isn't to be hoped for. How I did enjoy my little trip to Malvern and our doughty struggles on the links. I hope – on reflection – I didn't say anything very bad in the bunkers for I did manage to find most of them, didn't I? or at least the inborn wickedness of the ball made it go there.
>
> I am so glad to think of you there in such a charming abode as Craeg Lea. I've quite fallen in love with it.
>
> I left my lady wife at Hasfield pretty well for her. I can't give much of a report of most of them there. – Mary is very pulled down with a sort of chill that makes her quite weak and the two younger boys with sore throats. [sic] But I expect they'll mend all right.
>
> My service to your worship and la senora c.m.y.p.b. (N.B. This is not the Spanish I use in a bunker)
>
> Su hermilde servidor
> RB Townshend[18]

Perhaps Elgar had mentioned his hopes for the success of the big new orchestral work he had completed over the winter, although we do not know when Townshend's rôle in it was directly divulged. After some uncertainty the Variations were given a successful first performance in London that June. There is no evidence that the Townshends were present on that historic occasion, but they must soon have heard of the work's success, and Richard was quick to send a particularly warm and empathetic message of congratulation and encouragement.

> My dear Elgar, I must just put in a line to say in my native Irish, 'more power to your elbow.' I am glad that it has gone so well and that people have tumbled to it. Do go ahead my dear fellow with vim vinegar and vitriol and just make things hum. This is not my native Irish but my second-nature American and it means just the same. If I was to say 'Macte nova virtute puer sicitur ad astra' it would express the sentiment only in more classical style. I think you must be feeling rather good just now, and just want to say hurrah.
>
> Ever yours,
> RB Townshend [19]

Townshend enjoyed a success of his own that year, with the publication of his first novel, *Lone Pine*, a 'Western'.[20] A well-crafted example of the genre, not without echoes of Rider Haggard and clearly with its roots in its writer's experiences, it describes the doings of Stevens, an American prospector, living in an Indian village in New Mexico. He has become a respected member of the community through his white man's superior expertise, enabling him to significantly improve crop irrigation. The story builds to a fine climax as Stevens enriches the community by discovering a lost silver mine, heroically fighting off hostile tribesmen by performing almost impossible feats of shooting and slaughter, and 'getting the girl' in the process. But Townshend was keen to paint

15 e.g. Tacitus, *Agricola and Germania* (Methuen, 1894).

16 I am grateful to Dr Jeffrey Hackney of Wadham College, Oxford, for information from this source.

17 Like Craeg Lea itself, Malvern Wells station was handy for the golf course. It was served by no less than two railway companies.

18 EB 10410. 9 April [1899] transcribed by the writer.

19 EB 9406. Undated. Transcribed by the writer. Given the content I think its insertion at this point is not unreasonable. Of the Latin quotation a friend explains, 'The dictionary offers as typical explanations, 'Bravo! Hail to thee! Well done! That's right! Go on!' My edition of Vergil . . . gives a straightforward translation . . . 'Blessings on thy young prowess, my son; this is the path to heaven.'

20 Methuen, 1899, reprinted 1913.

Stevens as a man of civilised, humane values nevertheless, and took care to issue a warning of the desensitising effect of violence.

> He looked at his bandaged left hand, and passed his right over his forehead, and, as his brain cleared, the whole of the morning's work came back to him like a flash.
>
> 'I had to kill them, but I hate to think of it now. It was a butcherly job. That's not the way I want to live. Yes, I hate it,' he repeated, standing in the middle of the empty room. He felt an unreasoning repulsion when he thought of the light-minded crowd that had cheered him so wildly on his return from the slaughter, and had laughed and jested over it. 'Killing men is a mighty serious matter, whatever they may think,' he muttered gloomily,' but most of these folks don't see it in that light'.

Townshend could not resist occasional Classical and literary references in *Lone Pine* - the title comes from a poem by Heine - together with much authentic description of scenery and *mores.* The secret of its success lies in the way it brings Townshend's two lives, of adventure and scholarship, together. Of its kind, it remains eminently readable.

While staying at Hasfield the following April, Townshend got in touch with Elgar to arrange some golf. He found the composer, deep in the composition of *The Dream of Gerontius*, suffering a period of ill-health which would keep him indoors for a fortnight; Alice and Carice caught the infection too. Although 'badsley' Elgar made his friend a spirited response – sadly not preserved – in which he revealed certain plans for the Demons' Chorus. Townshend replied,

> My dear Elgar, I want to send you a picture of me dropping large tears at hearing of the woeful plagues that beset your house – I fancy that quite Aeschyean style at the end of the paragraph. But you make me laugh so consumedly with your jests and your hopes of being able to put your enemies to H-ll in the new Op. spoil it quite. But you are mending (I hope) all of you and if so be I will try to drop in on you April 25 (if you really be mended) when the brutal 10/- a day will (I hope) no longer be extracted from the Uitlander [i.e. non-member] golfer in Malvern. My address till that date is expected to be at Hawse End, Keswick, More power to your elbow. Give it to those enemies. So glad I ain't one!
>
> Ever your affectionate,
> RB Townshend[21]

One of those enemies was Charles Stanford, 'who combined an Irish bluffness with cocksure and patronizing familiarity that grated on Edward's susceptibilities'; Elgar found his music 'neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red-herring'. His name was metamorphosed into 'Satanford' in one of the Demons' motifs.[22]

Elgar was well enough to play 'for 1st time since illness' when Townshend duly visited a fortnight later on April 26th, and stayed to tea. Nevertheless, as Alice noted, her husband was 'writing vehemently' at *Gerontius* that very day. Elgar had agreed to compose the work for performance at the Birmingham Festival in October, and although he had been considering the setting for some time, the burden of composition, against tight rehearsal deadlines and with much complicated proof-reading to be undertaken, was enormous. He would have to work almost non-stop until August to make sure the music was ready on time. But as he was the first to point out, Elgar was the last person to sit at a desk all day, scratching his head with his pen and hoping for inspiration. So, there would be no lessening of his golf; quite the opposite in fact. Alice's Diary records no less than 71 visits to

21 EB 9405, 14 April [1900]. Transcribed by the writer.

22 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar, A Creative Life* (OUP, 1984) pp 298-299.

the Club that year,[23] including thirteen during March, the month that saw him sending two batches of short score to Novello. Golfing and composing were going together in fact, and, in enthusing Elgar to take up the game, Townshend had achieved more than he knew. Elgar now found the game an essential part of his creative mechanism. He often jotted down musical ideas in the open air, and he sent a friend a couple of MS bars (the 'appalling chord' which introduces the Angel of the Agony in Part Two of *Gerontius*) saying they were 'made probably on the golf links'. He told his first biographer that golf was a grand game because you couldn't think of anything else while playing[24] – allowing a mechanism by which the subconscious mind continues its work.

'Not too blessed serious'

Some years earlier a group of musical friends, led by co-variants Winifred Norbury and Mary Lygon, had joined to set up a new orchestral and choral society for Worcestershire with Elgar as conductor. He was determined it would break new ground and adopted the 'Wach auf!' (Wake up!) motif from *Mastersingers* as the Society's motto. Elgar emphasized the point by arranging for some special stationery bearing a rising sun design by another co-variant, Troyte Griffith. It caught Townshend's eye and he responded in a letter acknowledging Elgar's Cambridge Doctorate and saying something of his Anthropological research.

> My dear Elgar, How delightful of you to send me a chirpy line and how good in this dull winter to joy to see the brilliant rays of the rising sun at the head of your paper.
>
> Do you [know] the rhyme of
> 'The Jolly Old Sun where goes he at night,
> And what does he do when he's out of sight
> Old Time and his dry glass scorning'
>
> h'm how does it go on?
>
> '– but we all of us know
> He's a jolly red face
> When he gets up in the morning'
>
> Your sun is green but that's only the complementary colour to red, eh? He looks jolly. Oh me, it does me good to hear you make a joke again, not that we are too blessed serious here in Oxford. But I would I had you on our links with these clubs and doing the true St Andrew's swing. That's my form. I feel older alas! But I try to 'follow through' still.
>
> I think we go to Hasfield for Xmas and if so I must make a desperate effort to get around to Craeg Lea be the wild winds what they may.
>
> I send you a bushel of my "shot rubbish" about early man (as well as a 'yarn'). If you could only get hold of some of Ung's music (if he was an artist in that too) would it be weird!
>
> Ever yours most warmly
> RB Townshend M.A.
> I'm not a Doctor yet! But I'm jealous.[25]

23 It got off to a good start on 6 February, when Elgar made a hole in 2 at the 16th, his best ever score and one which found its way into the Club records.

24 Robert J Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1905), 40-41.

25 EB 9404. 13 December, 1901. Transcribed by the writer.

'The Fellowe is Dangerous'

Over several Hasfield gatherings a running Civil War 'jape' had been evolved by William Baker's three sons, who took on the characters of Prince Rupert, the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Rochester, dressing in period costume for greater effect. They, and Elgar naturally, were Royalist supporters, while the Townshends inclined more to the Roundhead cause. At Christmas 1902 the situation called forth one of Elgar's best efforts in literary pastiche, warning of Richard's skill at arms and Dorothea's with the pen, in mock seventeenth-century English. It suggests something of the atmosphere of the Hasfield house-party badinage.

> [. . .] Trustie watchers state yt. yr. H'nesses most secret Businesses are knowne and publicklie gossiped in ye Tnes; further, it is sd. yt. two rebellious persones (wh. by leading outwardlie seeming quiet and respectable lives have imposed upon and hoodewink'd ye Burgesses of Oxforde) are plottinge to descend this daye on the neighbourhood of ye Forte for purposes deadlie agt. it and, belike, agt. yr owne Persone if not ye Kings.
>
> Ye Twaine travel in ye publicke wains to disarm suspicion and can easily be waylaid and quieted. Altho' one Nanty Ewart, known to yr. H'ness as a true man tho' something of a Roysterer, hathe sworne to smite the knave over the costard and to slit his weasand, and again (after his thirde can) to burie a yard of steele in his Waine. But more certain steps shd be taken: the Fellowe is dangerous and hathe skill in the uses of ye musketoon and petronel: the ladie rebel useth her pen cruelly & hath written much against ye King and also in praise of his Enemies, nath'less, in despite of wh: their memorie still stinketh.
>
> From a well-wisher
> Beware or ye be wo.[26]

A Last Night Under the Stars

In the summer of 1903 Townshend undertook a last sentimental journey to America, this time without Dorothea, for he was keen to go West, revisiting old haunts in Colorado and New Mexico. He found that much had changed in the 27 years since his cattle-ranching, gold prospecting and horse-dealing days. The buffalo had all but disappeared, the Indians were on reservations, trains now boasted fully upholstered cars, electric light, and mirrors, and there were more Churches and schools. Many old friends were dead; of those who survived, some recognised him and some did not. He was delighted to accept the hospitality of one who did, his old friend John Miller. Now approaching 60, Townshend prided himself on his fitness, stripping to bathe in rivers whenever he could, and undertaking lengthy walks among the mesas, taking his Kodak with him, not a rifle now, and he photographed assiduously on this visit. The camera was a bulky heavy affair on a tripod, which required lengthy time exposures and which sometimes let him down, but he was able nevertheless to take many historic images, particularly of the sports and religious rituals of the Pueblo Indians.[27] And the camera afforded a special moment, when Townshend encountered a large snake, lying perfectly still in the hot sun with its head uplifted. 'I think there was a sort of green and gold sheen on the scales about his head,' he wrote; 'he lay like a long jewelled barbaric ornament flung chance-wise on a ground of yellow clay and grey lichen'. A Professor friend had asked to be sent a snake embalmed in formalin, but Townshend found he could not hurt the creature

26 Percy M. Young, ed., *Letters of Edward Elgar and Other Writings* (London: Bles, 1956), 111.

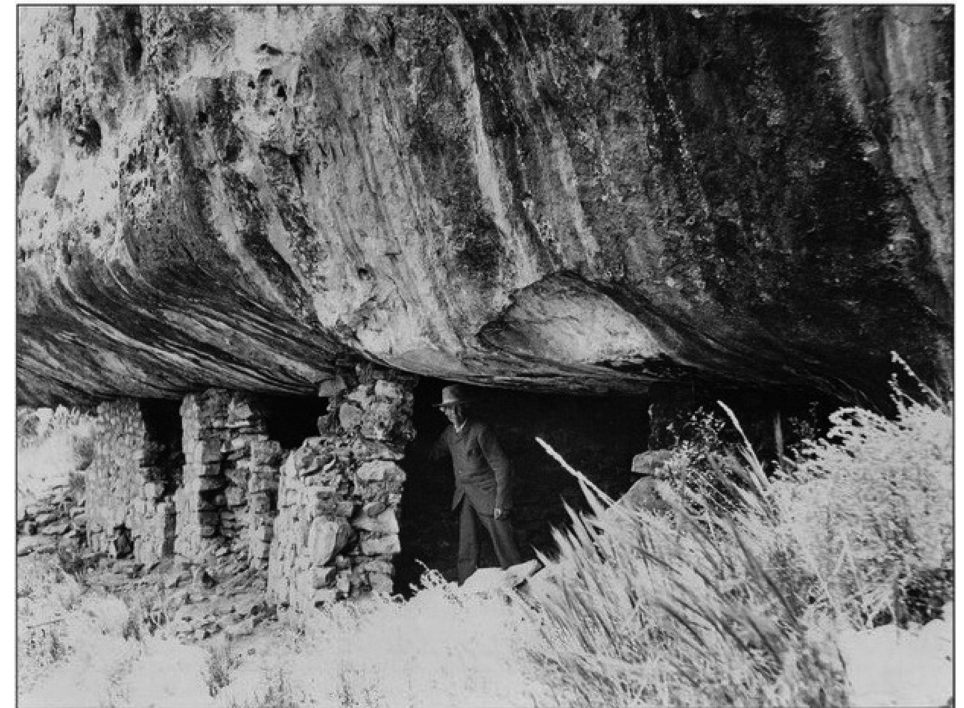
27 Some 100 photographs taken during this trip were subsequently donated to the Royal Anthropological Institute, London, where they are known as the Townshend Collection.

and went on his way, only to return with his camera a few moments later and take a photograph. 'You may perhaps one day see his sun-picture in the museum' he concluded, 'but you will never see his skin there'.

Townshend finished up at the Grand Canyon, already a popular tourist centre, exploring as much as he could while doing his best to avoid the hordes. Falling in with a friend of John Miller, he undertook an expedition to the bottom of the Canyon equipped with two mules, bedding and 'plenty of grub'. Dorothea's absence meant that Townshend wrote to her regularly, and in their immediacy and vividness these letters are among the very best of his writings. 'Always, always the roaring, roaring of the water in our ears', he told her, when they made camp that night.

> Oh, such a night was that for me in my blanket under the stars, my first for twenty-seven years! It was hot, but a little canyon breeze blew through one's covering and cooled one. I watched the Great Bear set, for he sank far below the cliff-top; indeed from where I lay, the North Star was only a little finger's breadth above the rock. I slept well but light, waking half a dozen times like an Indian to watch the stars and the reflection of the distant lightning where a storm was bursting in Utah up on the North Rim.[28]

Townshend Exploring a Rock Dwelling 1903 (Pitt Rivers Museum)
Possibly photographed in the Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado



28 RB Townshend, *Last Memories of a Tenderfoot* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1926), 189.

And Dorothea could have no cause for anxiety about the commissariat. ‘Oh, your camper is now up to date’, he told her. ‘Canned Californian cream for coffee, tomatoes with your beef steak, fried potatoes and onions, and canned peaches for dessert. Didn’t we feast just.’

‘That’s no end interesting . . .’

‘It is very tantalising to only know the Variations thro the piano version & I wonder when Oxford will not try them!’ Dorothea had written to Alice.[29] The opportunity came in the February of 1905, when the University awarded Elgar an Honorary Degree at the instigation of Hubert Parry, Professor of Music. It was a three-day affair, including the award ceremony itself and a concert comprising *Blest Pair of Sirens* and the Choral Symphony together with the Variations. The Elgars spent two nights in Oxford enjoying the famed hospitality of William Spooner, Warden of New College, and his five children (‘charmed with the family Spooner’, wrote Alice; they were ‘delightful & most appreciative of E.’), before lunching at Banbury Road *en route* for Malvern and home. No doubt Dorothea enjoyed her opportunity to hear the Variations; Parry had booked the new London Symphony Orchestra for the concert, and composer and band found an immediate rapport. ‘Variations more splendid than ever. E. conducted superbly; & Orch played superbly for him. Great crowd & ovation.’ But if Dorothea was gratified, her husband’s reaction may have been less enthusiastic. ‘Dorabella’ recalled joining him at a later Oxford performance of the work and finding him ‘rather bored – he was entirely unmusical’. After some explanation Townshend could only reply, ‘That’s no end interesting, but I wish I could see it just as you do!’[30]

Later that year Alice herself again found warm welcomes from Townshends and Spooners when she visited Oxford while her husband was away on his Mediterranean cruise, but with the demands on Elgar’s time that came with his growing fame, and the moves to Hereford and London, there would come be less contact with the Townshends and less correspondence with them. They would not meet up again at Hasfield until the September of 1910, when composer and variation enjoyed yet another outdoor activity - ‘E & Mr Townshend played bowls’.

Meanwhile Richard and Dorothea’s writing was continuing apace. The latter’s magnificent book on the Earl of Cork had appeared in 1904 - ‘Thank you so much for your letter about my Earl,’ she wrote to Alice, ‘the reviews are most kind’ and the following year husband and wife collaborated on another ‘Western’, *The Bride of a Day.* Richard’s *magnum opus* at this time was a handbook on shooting, *The Complete Air Gunner,* so successful that it was reprinted in the 1980s. Townshend had maintained the skills in the use of the ‘musketoon and petronel’ and was keen to see such skills developed more widely, particularly among the young. He took part in the famous competitions at Bisley and arranged to give his friends’ sons target practice in his large garden, even setting up a modified barrel structure equipped with saddle and stirrups so they could imitate shooting on horseback. In the wake of the Boer War he attended a meeting in Oxford’s Corn Exchange called to discuss the formation of a Rifle Association for the City together with (in the class distinctions of those days) a Working Men’s Rifle Club ‘for practice on winter evenings. The late war has shown the necessity’.[31] The movement was a growing one, thriving on patriotic zeal and fears of an invasion, fears which led to the formation of an Empire-wide defensive organisation, The

29 EB 10408, undated.

30 Powell, op.cit., p 108. William Meath Baker’s response on the other hand, was entirely different. He was so taken aback by the aptness of the ‘R.B.T.’ Variation on one occasion that he could only exclaim, ‘Well I’m damned!’

31 *Oxford Times*, 9 November, 1902.

A ‘nephew’ (Bernard Keeling) and ‘niece’ on a wooden horse (Photo-Bernard Keeling)

Legion of Frontiersmen; the title page of Townshend’s manual proclaimed him to be a member. (The Legion developed its own uniform and medals but never achieved any kind of official recognition.) Townshend further developed his firearms training in the First World War, joining the University Volunteers and running daily classes for all comers (‘and very good shots I made of them’) until his health failed in 1916.

The Complete Air Gunner was systematic and methodical in approach, written in a conversational tone, its various points often backed up by anecdotes of Colorado days. Published in 1907, it appears now to be very much a document of its time, whatever its technical merits. Townshend began the first chapter, ‘The heart’s desire of every right-minded boy is to prove himself a man, and he is secretly convinced that the first quality of a man is to be a warrior. Our boys have inherited this conviction from very far back’. The spirit was caught by the reviewer of the *Oxford Times,* who wrote ‘Every boy who reads this book – and we hope it will fall into the hands of a good many - will long to have Mr RB Townshend for a coach . . . we have seldom, if ever, read a technical treatise so brightly written or one which showed so complete a mastery of the subject . . . it is the next best thing to having Mr Townshend at his elbow’.[32]

Something of that *Boys’ Own Paper* world emerges in Townshend’s relationships with various great-nephews. One, a pupil at the Dragon school, remembered several invitations to meals. ‘He was a very genial and amusing old boy. I remember that he taught me to lasso in his garden. This

32 Ibid., 3 August, 1907.

accommodated a wooden horse - basically a barrel. There is a photo of me astride it.'[33] Townshend was an 'Uncle Dick' figure now, nostalgic as well as avuncular, living his youth over again by offering careful practical advice in which schoolboy devotion to cricket and tennis was taken for granted. At the Christmas of 1917 he wrote to another young relative,

> My dear Dick, I hope you have had a happy return home. I can remember 60 years ago when I first came home from school, and very jolly it was. I am sending you a present for Xmas a little early, both to save the postmen trouble and to give you a chance to use the things at once. There are two cricket bats I made of a willow tree I cut down last spring. If they are too long for you, you had better take a saw and cut off a bit of one at the bottom till you get it about right. I hope you like working with tools. I do well: it was fun for me to make them. Also I enclose an old tennis racket, boy's handle, which you will be able to use. What bats and racquet handles (racket & racquet are both right I believe, but racquet is 'righter') chiefly want is a little linseed oil rubbed in occasionally to keep the wood from splits. Don't oil the string. What is good for racquet strings is a little copal varnish but that is only wanted, say, once a year; and I have just varnished this. Also I have put in a few balls of sorts. Remember not to hit a hard solid ball with a racquet, or you'll soon spoil it. I have put in one hard ball and you can try it with the bats, but if it makes dents in them you had better keep it for something else. The old tennis balls do well for small cricket. Any of the balls will do for practice catching in all sorts of ways, over their heads, and jolly good fun. And girls can play catch as well as boys, sometimes I like playing anything with somebody else very much better than alone, but one cannot always get somebody, and with a ball one can do a bit of solitary practice by shying it against a wall and catching it or if it comes back low along the ground fielding it as at cricket. It is dull alone, but a few minutes one can stand it, and it does help to make one active and give one a good and quick eye and hand. Please give my love to all your people,
>
> Every your affect'e
> Uncle Dick[34]

By now over 70, Townshend had become a very familiar figure in Oxford, a familiarity marked not only by his various activities, but by his appearance, as had been the case throughout his life. His cousin Dorothy remembered him as

> . . . a striking figure well over six feet tall, with a mane of snow white hair; he was almost totally deaf, but persisted in whirling about Oxford's busy streets on his tricycle. Luckily everyone seemed to know him, and got out of his way, as he certainly would not have heard vehicles coming from behind. He still played tennis and still often beat younger men.[35]

Dora Penny added a brick-red face and bright blue eyes and a love of unusual clothes to the description, and confirmed the tricycle, adding that with characteristic Townshend practicality, he had devised a warning bell which rang continuously as he pedalled.

> It was dreadful! Cycling with him one day I called out:
> 'Why *do* you let that bell ring all the time?'
> 'So that people can hear me coming. I can't hear *them!'*[36]

33 Letter to the writer from Bernard Keeling, 13 July 1995.

34 19 December, 1917. Gloucestershire Records D10632, transcribed by Mike Skinner.

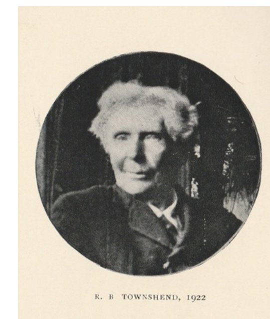
35 Dorothea Petrie Carew, op. cit., p. 59.

36 Dora Powell, op.cit., p. 125.

The old friendship with the Elgars remained, even if contact had become minimal. Carice stayed with the Townshends twice in 1913, and returned to the Banbury Road house for several days in 1916 so she could visit her father who had been taken ill on a train and transferred to an Oxford Nursing Home. Dorothea wrote Carice a brief but heartfelt letter of condolence on Alice Elgar's death in 1920 – 'your darling Mother must be enjoying heaven everything that was good & beautiful seemed her natural element. She & I were together in so many joys & sorrows I cannot think of this world without her'.[37] Ageing and increasingly infirm, Richard began to put his literary house in order, paying affectionate farewell to the game that he and Elgar had played so often, in *Inspired Golf.* And drawn to look back over his life, he began to assemble his many talks, articles and 'yarns' into more permanent form, establishing his legacy as an historian of the West by producing a first volume of reminiscences, *The Tenderfoot in Colorado.* Elgar evidently heard something of it and expressed interest, and in reply received a last letter from his old friend.

> My dear Elgar, How very charming of you to remember about my mavericks. I've got a whole blessed book coming out now of my adventures in Colorado pub. John Lane. At least the contract is signed but I can't swear when it will appear. I'm much better: you know I've been crippled a year and a month now and still have two nurses one for day and one for night. This makes it impossible to ask guests or you know how we should love to have you here. But if ever you do pass through drop in! I'm 76 now and it does my old heart good to talk over old times. D. had stood it wonderfully.
>
> Ever yours,
> RB Townshend[38]

The Tenderfoot in Colorado duly appeared early in 1923, published in both England and America. Elgar took up Townshend's invitation to 'drop in' that February, breaking a train journey at Oxford and taking a cab to Banbury Road. '. . . They were delighted to see me,' he wrote to Carice, 'he's getting very old and deaf, poor dear'.[39] Such was the immediate success of *The Tenderfoot* that Townshend began work on a second volume that he did not live to finish, writing and dictating notes to Dorothea up to his death on 28 April, some two months after Elgar's visit. A last poignant twist was added when Elgar, concerned perhaps to bring some cheer to his old and ailing friend, motored over with Carice unannounced. 'Went to see Townshends at Oxford,' she wrote; 'great shock found it was his funeral'.


R. B TOWNSHEND, 1922

37 EB 401, April 1920.

38 EB 6253. 30 June, 1922. Transcribed by Martin Bird.

39 Martin Bird (ed.) *Darling Chuck: The Carice Letters* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2014), 294.

Last Memories

Dorothea devoted herself to her husband's memory for much of the remainder of her own life, donating albums of his photographs to the Pitt Rivers Museum[40] and editing his papers into further volumes of reminiscences and stories. Elgar wrote of Townshend's books being 'so well known and appreciated'; such was the success of *The Tenderfoot in Colorado* that *The Tenderfoot in New Mexico* appeared later the same year, to be followed by *Bullwhack Joe, the Yarns of a Tenderfoot* in 1925, and *Last Memories of a Tenderfoot* in 1926. They were quickly recognised for their importance as vivid and graphic descriptions of a vanished world, and were widely- and well-reviewed by the leading newspapers and journals of the time. The *Evening Standard* compared Townshend the writer to Fenimore Cooper, Mayne Reid and Bret Harte, while *The Times* referenced Defoe and the *Sunday Times* thought him 'the intellectual comrade of Dana and O. Henry'. Townshend's books remain eminently worth reading for specialist and general reader alike; they have that special quality and intensity of being written by a man living his life over again, and to read them is to live that life with him.

Dora continued her own writing, producing her biography of George Digby and a final children's book, *What Happened at Garry Eustace*. Early in 1928 Elgar was in touch to ask for a photograph of her husband to illustrate the pamphlet being produced on the subjects of the Variations to accompany the Aeolian Company's piano rolls. He found a ready and cheerful response, together with family news and a suggestion for a musical setting.

> What fun! It will be a delightful collection. Every time I hear the Enigma I think them more like Bill [William Meath Baker – 'W.M.B.'] and Dick and with the photographs they are truly more of a monument to those we love than anything in a cemetery. I am so glad you saw Bill - he is so much alone now it must have done him good. The Pennys are with me now & send their love.
>
> Now you are motoring about the country I wish Oxford would come in your way. I should like it so much.
>
> I have always meant to make bold to ask you – if you have ever kept in mind Chesterton's Lepanto – for it cries out for a setting by you! If you haven't got it handy, I'll send it! The importunate Widow??[41]

Dorothy Petrie Carew remembered Dorothea as a charming old lady who gave delightful parties.

> She and I, despite the difference in age, took to each other, and I used to stay with her often after I left Oxford, and kept in close touch until her death at an advanced age. She always urged me to write, and by her approval of some of my efforts and more by her too flattering estimate as an attractive girl gave me the self-confidence I still lacked. The approval of people of whom one is fond is the best possible spur to further efforts. Cousin Dorothea was, naturally, entirely mid-Victorian in outlook, but all the same she gave me some very sage advice on men and manners.[42]

40 Where they remain available for inspection and study.

41 EB 5589. 10 February [1928] transcribed by the writer.

42 Dorothea Petrie Carew, op. cit., 59.

The Spirit of Delight

When Townshend was photographing the Jemez people during his return visit of 1903, some of the younger men, not knowing him, tried to interfere. 'One of them did the buffoon rather with me and pretended to try to get the camera away,' he wrote in a letter to Dorothea which she included in *Last Memories of a Tenderfoot*, 'but I told him I knew he was a *Koshare*, and I was a Koshare too! And it made them all laugh so that it went'. 'Koshare' - delight-makers - were to be found in every tribe, their task being to keep the people happy and merry. Richard Baxter Townshend was an unusual man of many parts – classics scholar, cowboy, prospector, teacher, sportsman, raconteur, writer; and he remains not without importance as an historian and anthropologist of the West. But such qualities by themselves might not have made a 'Variation'. Elgar himself intuited that quality of 'Koshare' in Richard Townshend and transmuted it into teasingly affectionate music evoking those hilarious house-party amateur dramatics which none of the participants would forget. Dora Penny once reminded 'R.B.T.' how the composer called him 'the Delight-maker'.

'Yes, that was after those theatricals when I did the old man,' he replied. 'Those *were* the days!'[43]

My grateful thanks to Helen Bartlett, Senior Archivist, Gloucestershire Archives; Sarah Gould, Merton Heritage and Local Studies; Jeffrey Hackney, Emeritus Fellow and Keeper of the Archives, Wadham College, Oxford; the late Bernard Keeling; Dr Chris Morton, Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford; Anne Petre, Assistant Keeper of the Archives, Oxford University; the late Claude Powell; Ellie Reid and Stella Wentworth, Oxfordshire History Centre; Rachel Roberts, Archivist, Cheltenham Ladies' College; the late Alderman Mike Skinner, Cheltenham; Jennifer Thorp, Archivist, New College, Oxford; Colonel John Townsend and the Townsend Family Records website; Sarah Walpole, Archivist, the Royal Anthropological Institute, London; and Emma Young of the North Oxford Overseas Centre, 117 Banbury Road, Oxford.

Copies of many of Richard and Dorothea's books are available online, either as original copies or as reprints.

43 Dora Powell, op. cit., 108.

‘Majestic but fiendishly demanding’: Interpreting Elgar’s Introduction and Allegro for Strings, Op. 47

Andrew Neill

In June 1985 Elgar’s biographer and (then) Chairman of the Society’s London Branch, **Diana McVeagh**, organised a trip to the Welsh coast so that members of the Society could explore the area that inspired Elgar’s ‘Welsh Tune’. This was also an opportunity to discover more about the melody itself and how this came to be at the heart of the *Introduction and Allegro*. This event was recorded in this *Journal* in September that year and it was re-reading this valuable article that prompted what follows.

By the time this article is published Elgar’s *Introduction and Allegro* will be 117 years old. In the century following the first performance of Dvořák’s *Serenade for Strings* in 1876, string ensembles were increasingly well served, at times brilliantly, by composers as diverse as Britten, Grieg, Holst, Schoenberg, Strauss, Stravinsky, Suk, Tchaikovsky, Tippett, Vaughan Williams and Walton. Elgar’s masterpiece from 1905 was given its premiere on 8 March that year by the recently formed London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) with Elgar conducting, a concert which also included *Enigma Variations*, the music for *Grania and Diarmid* and the premiere of his third *Pomp and Circumstance* march. The quotation, by Richard Morrison, at the head of this piece, hints at the challenge a work of this nature had for any orchestra which had yet to come to terms with Elgar’s idiom. Morrison continued by emphasising: ‘the ebb and flow of rubato, the restraint, the wistfulness, the nobility’.[1] This was not obvious to those first audiences, for when the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* was first performed by the Hallé Orchestra, on 7 December 1905, Hans Richter, in his first concert with the orchestra, seized on the tepid applause and conducted the work again, much to the surprise of the audience and, no doubt, the Hallé players. 58 years later Ken Russell, in his BBC Monitor film *Elgar*, used the *Introduction and Allegro* as a counterpoint to his image of the young Elgar riding first a pony and then a bicycle over the Malvern Hills. Russell’s image and the accompanying music - thrilling, tender, energised and reflective - gripped the imagination of many when they saw the film for the first time.

***

I asked several practitioners to comment on their own experience of performing and interpreting this exceptional work. **Sir Andrew Davis** generously agreed to contribute the following:

1 Richard Morrison, *Orchestra The LSO: A Century of Triumph and Turbulence* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), 41.

In composing the *Introduction and Allegro* for the newly formed London Symphony Orchestra, Elgar very deliberately set out to write a work that would impress with the virtuosity that the ensemble was touting as something new in the city’s musical life. As a violinist himself he knew how to write both what sounded impressive but lay comfortably under the fingers and also what would truly test the mettle of the players and push them to their limits. As any performer of the piece knows, he chose the latter course. In all the string orchestra repertoire it is, in my opinion, by far the most demanding - and I’m including Tippett’s *Corelli Fantasy*! There’s nowhere for anyone to hide. It needs on the one hand great flexibility to achieve the sense of improvisation that must be all pervasive and on the other the acutest rhythmic discipline.

The interpretative decisions that must be made start right at the opening: what kind of length and weight should those accented triplets have? As you would expect, there have been many and varied answers: Boult for instance made a recording with the BBCSO in Maida Vale studio 1 in 1937 in which said triplets are well separated and rather aggressively hammered out - his later recording with the LPO is a bit less stern but still heavy and ponderous. This to my mind sets up the wrong mood, which should I think be bold and flamboyant but with a sense of élan, even in G minor! Bar 5 brings another question: how fast should the quartet set off?

The answer in most performances seems to be at the speed of the coming *Allegro* section, but Elgar’s tempo marking is only *Allegretto*. In the bars before figure 2 what about the *ppp arpeggios* in the violins? They should, I believe, have enough clarity and presence to give the moment a kind of meaningful holding of the breath. In the passage for the quartet before the *Allegro* begins, Elgar’s *piu mosso* tends to be too often ignored. If these examples seem minutiae, it is precisely such minutiae that determine the ebb and flow and thus the perceived shape of the whole Introduction.

The subtlety of instrumentation is remarkable throughout. The dialogue with the solo quartet for example is not always clear cut; the use of smaller subdivisions of the main string body against them produces an extraordinary variety of texture. And listen to the way the solo viola’s first presentation of the Welsh theme is coloured by the gentle amplification of the violins or to the later singing of it by the quartet in unison but with the second violin and cello *tremolando sul ponticello*. The degree to which one chooses to point up these moments gives the conductor myriad colouristic opportunities. This is of course one of the ways in which Elgar stands head and shoulders above any British contemporary. One has to look to the likes of Ravel and even Webern(!) to find an equal sense of nuance.

In general, I’ve been a stickler about not losing the clarity of the smaller notes in any given passage - Toscanini’s *non mangiare le piccole note* - but the opening of the *Allegro* is one example where such punctiliousness is misplaced! It’s all about sweep and *Schwung* as the Germans say. At this point for me it’s as though a broad vista of the English countryside opens up, yet when the continuous semiquavers begin, I always think we’re in an express train with the scenery flying by! And it’s here of course that the virtuosity of the violins in particular is so dazzling (and dazzlingly tricky!). Rehearsing this can involve painstaking repetition and patience on everyone’s part.

After the second appearance of the Welsh theme, still heard ‘as though from afar’, we expect some kind of development section, don’t we? Cue the masterstroke: ‘a devil of a fugue’, as Elgar wrote to Jaeger. And in case we thought virtuosity was to be reserved exclusively for the violins, everyone’s powers are here tested - it’s ‘the devil of a double bass part’!

The rhythmic discipline I referred to earlier is paramount. Any hint of rockiness in ensemble always used to terrify me! Of course. other themes are interwoven in the most organic way as countersubjects - so it is a kind of development section after all. The way it winds down and leads to the recapitulation must appear seamless and inevitable; maestri, don’t get too slow too soon!

As may be apparent, the performances I have given of this wonderful piece always involved meticulous preparation, but they have given me great satisfaction and joy, at no moment more than

when the Welsh theme finally blazes forth with a radiance and sheer opulence of sonority never surpassed in the string orchestra repertoire. I trust that many a conductor now beginning a career will experience this joy too. But beware! It's not a work to put together in a hurry!

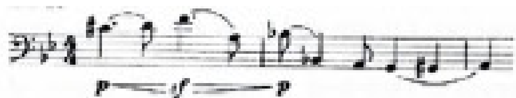
***

There is, as Sir Andrew points out, 'No working out part but a devil of a fugue instead. G major & the said divvel in G minor with all sorts of japes and counterpoint'.[2] Michael Kennedy stressed its complexity: 'Every means of exploiting the power and variety of stringed instruments is used in this concise, free ranging yet almost classically designed work. Open strings, triple stopping, grace notes, *pizzicato*, *ponticello tremolo*, use of mutes – all these devices are called into play'.[3] With the improvement in the quality of orchestral playing after World War 1, orchestras became confident enough to include the work in their programmes even if it took audiences some time to appreciate its qualities.

Elgar employs four themes, including the 'Welsh' theme, the first of which (for the full ensemble) dominates the first four bars:

The second theme is stated by the quartet (bars five and six):

The third theme, in bars seven and eight, is stated (quartet) in the bass:



2 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, *Volume II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 607. Elgar's postcard to Jaeger, 26 January 1905.

3 Michael Kennedy, *Elgar Orchestral Music* (London: BBC, 1970), 41.

The 'Welsh Tune' is announced (bar 16) by the quartet's viola, *dolce,* its importance emphasised by the *pizzicato* of the other instruments in the quartet. This is, perhaps, one of the few occasions when Elgar showed interest in what might have been a folk melody:

In Pursuit of the 'Welsh Tune'

The 1985 trip to Llangranog and Yns Lochtyn was dogged by bad weather and several events had to be re-arranged to accommodate performances indoors as nothing could be performed outside as planned. Diana wrote about the event for the *Journal* (Vol. 4. No 4)[4] and included her own research into the melody, as follows:

> I aimed at recreating Elgar's own experience. His account runs: 'on the cliff, between blue sea and blue sky, thinking out my theme, there came up to me the sound of singing'. The fall of a third, he thought, was common to the songs, which he said he heard from Yns Lochtyn. So I tried to arrange for us to be on Yns Lochtyn, and for a choir to sing to us from below.
>
> Sing what? When Percy Young's and my books came out in 1955, the *Western Mail* carried an article on them by Wil Ifan. In this he said that John Davies (in 1955 conductor of the Treorchy Male Choir, in 1985 director of the Fishguard Festival) guessed that Elgar might have heard a neighbouring Sunday School outing, and that one of the tunes was the hymn *Moriah*. So, the local Blaenporth Choir, at our request, prepared, among other things, *Moriah*.
>
> Yns Lochtyn? On our own feet we clambered up, then down, to look at that tiny but steep-sided islet at the low north end of the great peninsular. Unlikely that Elgar could have climbed onto it without grappling irons, and if he had, the great bulk of the cliff behind him would have cut off the sound of singing. So, presumably he thought that Yns Lochtyn was the name of the whole headland.[5]

4 A report of the visit by Ronald Taylor can be read in the *Journal*, Vol. 4 No. 3 (September 1985). A photograph shows a happy but wet group standing on the beach below Llangranog.

5 The photograph on the cover of this *Journal* shows Yns Lochtyn at 'the low north end of the great peninsular'.

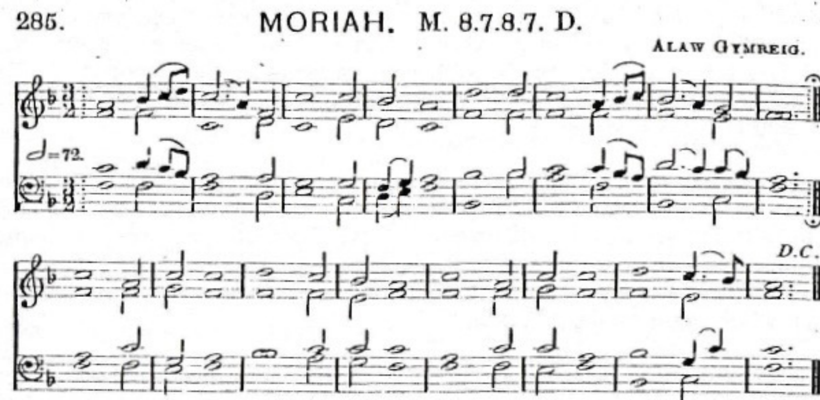
From OS Explorer 198: Cardigan & New Quay

Between blue sea and blue sky? Before our visit Geoffrey Hodgkins asked the Meteorological Office (Met) for details of Elgar's days there (they are for Aberporth, a few miles south).

16 August 1901 (Friday). Partly cloudy. Max temp 65. Wind SW, force 3-4.
17 August. Cloudy with rain, heavy at times. Max temp 65. Wind SW, backing SE, force 3 increasing to 5.
18 August. Partly cloudy, brightening later. Max temp 69. Wind S, force 4 decreasing to force 1.

Writing for his programme note in 1905, 'brightening later' may well have become 'blue sea and blue sky' in [Elgar's] mind's eye of happy memory. As Wil Ifan said, who in 1901 was in his 'prime as an open-air choralist' and took part himself in waggon outings to that coast, 'it never rained, or if it did, it made no difference; I can never think of Aberporth or Llangranog without the sun and the singing'.

The Met details of our visit in summer 1985 are unprintable; and the Blaenporth choir, with great zeal, had prepared a concert setting of *Moriah* with extended piano accompaniment (a piano on *those cliffs*?) so our chapel listening was scarcely authentic. But afterwards, in the pub next door to where Elgar had his meals, members of the choir ended their spontaneous extra recital with a plain unaccompanied and fervent singing of *Moriah* which nearly lifted the roof. So if our research could not be accurate in the letter, we certainly shared in the spirit'.



In 2007, in her *Elgar the Music Maker*, Diana revisited the *Introduction and Allegro* which she labels 'a masterpiece, individual, compact, varied, and integrated'. She goes on to ask:

> …but what of the Welsh theme? Attempts to identify the original are scarcely profitable, for the falling thirds is common to many Welsh hymns and folksongs. More important is what it came to stand for in Elgar's imagination. He did not use it where it might have been expected, as the second subject of the *Allegro*. Instead, it seems to be a symbol of a secret unattainable goal, heard first as a fine *dolce* thread of solo viola, then dying away to nothing over falling chromatics, then (after cue 15) with all four soloists in unison, muted, but two plain and two *tremolo, ponticello*: shimmering, haloed by distance, as Elgar first heard it, and left incomplete. Not until the very end (cue 30) is it allowed a firm striding bass and a *tutti* statement.[6]

Elgar's sketch from 1901 might have become a song or been used in a piece for full orchestra. His sketchbook shows the tune 'assigned to cor anglais'[7] but, put away, it was when he heard singing in the Wye Valley that he remembered the tune and, although he hoped there was Welsh feeling to the melody, the eventual commission from the LSO drew from Elgar the statement that 'the work is really a tribute to that sweet borderland where I have made my home'. Memory plays tricks on us all but this tune or phrase came to mean a great deal to Elgar and is unforgettable once heard. Looking again at the weather report for 18 August 1901: 'Partly cloudy, brightening later. Max temp 69.[8] Wind S, force 4 decreasing to force 1' it looks as if the end of the day may well have become fine and probably clear, so that 'blue sea and blue sky' perhaps become fused in Elgar's mind together with a memory of what he had heard, even if neither coincided.

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6 Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 92. In a conversation with Diana (17 February 2022) she expressed the opinion that *Moriah* was unlikely to be the origin of the 'Welsh Tune'.

7 Robert Anderson, Elgar (London: J. M. Dent,1993), 373.

8 20.5 degrees Celsius. A mild late summer's day.

The first page of the autograph full score.

Playing Op. 47

Below are edited transcripts of conversations with practitioners: eight string players and four conductors. Where possible I have attempted to maintain the 'voice' of the speaker without prejudicing the flow of what they had to say. Inevitably, as these conversations progressed, the later ones benefitted indirectly from the wisdom gleaned from earlier discussions as I posed my questions. That may explain a certain imbalance and why I have included the dates of all eleven conversations during January and February 2022.

Sir Andrew Davis's comment that 'In all the string orchestra repertoire it is, in my opinion, by far the most demanding' led me to ask some orchestral string players about their approach to playing the *Introduction and Allegro* and their thoughts on the work.

Claire Parfitt is a First Violin Tutti Player in the LSO, a position she has held since 1988.[9] As she says, it's 'her first and last job' and she is proud to be a successor of W H Reed who went on to lead the orchestra, and befriend and assist Elgar in compositions such as his Violin Concerto.

> Elgar certainly knew what he was doing in composing the *Introduction and Allegro* – each of the parts in the fiddles[10] are sometimes 'divisi' giving an easier part underneath so that is one of the reasons why it is perfect. It is also one of the reasons a good County Youth Orchestra or a good school orchestra such as Chethams and the Purcell can play it. Many say it is incredibly difficult, but it isn't – provided you are a reasonably proficient player – a good amateur orchestra will cope more than satisfactorily. Most first violins like it when they are opposite the seconds - as in a Haydn orchestra – the basses at the back – giving a cushion of sound. However, with antiphonal violins, it is harder to keep together. Personally, I do like an antiphonal effect. Many years ago, before the LSO, I played as part of the quartet with that big sound surrounding me; it is like being in an amphitheatre of sound.

Claire considered the question of the quartet playing with the first and second violins opposite each other (antiphonally) in line with an antiphonally placed orchestra. She felt this was 'food for thought' and would discuss it further. She then considered the question of why the *Introduction and Allegro* is not played more often nor more widely. She felt it was

> …because it is English, and the English tend towards understatement. It may be considered a fill-up by some conductors but then they wonder how to balance the winds in a later piece. If the concert starts with the *Introduction and Allegro,* then the wind and woodwind come in cold afterwards. Nevertheless, it is grossly overlooked by conductors. Professionally it has everything in it – it is just wonderful and satisfying to play; it is very violinistic. The fugue is in my head all the time! For many years we hardly played the music of Elgar and then Sir Colin Davis came along and converted many of us to Elgar's music; but he [Elgar's music] is never taken on tour!

Thomas Eisner is a member of the first violin section of the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO), joining the orchestra in 1986 after a spell with the Aarhus Orchestra.[11] While playing in Denmark he formed a love of the music of both Delius and Nielsen. Tom 'would be over the moon' at the prospect of playing the *Introduction and Allegro* again.

> I love it and I first came across it when I was a member of the Cheshire Youth Orchestra in 1974 and came to the work totally fresh. Hearing the viola theme ('Welsh Tune') for the first time made me cry. Every time I hear it now, it produces the same reaction. I think the whole timing of the piece is just right; it feels like a journey. The string writing is wonderful – violinistic is the word! I love the way Elgar recaps. It reminds me of Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* while the *Allegro* suggests the music of Mendelssohn, his *Octet* especially. Composers living as the 19th Century developed spent a lot of time travelling by train and could not fail to be influenced by the rhythms of a journey. This, to me, seems clear in, say, the sound of the anvils in *Rheingold* and in the bars beginning at Cue 10 in the *Introduction and Allegro.*

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9 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 2 February.

10 As with all the strings in the orchestra.

11 Transcript of a conversation held in the *Arab Boy*, Putney, on 16 February.

Ensemble has to be right; I remember playing the piece in Aarhus under a conductor (whom I shall not name). The orchestra had never played it before, and the players found it very difficult to keep together and he got very angry indeed. Nowadays most British orchestras know the piece and ensemble issues can be resolved quickly. However, if an orchestra does not know it then it can be very difficult. There are passages that are always challenging: in the Brahms First Piano Concerto there is a very difficult passage which has to be worked on as does the fugue in the *Introduction and Allegro* and, what is more, Elgar gives the beginning of the fugue to the 2nd Violins, the 'cannon fodder'.

Given a choice, Tom would go for the largest body of strings with an equal number of first and second violins (16) but would not divide them. He has not played in the quartet but would welcome the opportunity to do so. We discussed overseas performances and Tom felt that Elgar's symphonies were now more widely accepted. He attended the recent Philharmonia Concert of the A Flat Symphony under John Wilson and pointed out the coincidence that the Aarhus Orchestra were playing the Symphony that evening too. In conclusion Tom said how he would love to play the *Introduction and Allegro* in a Cathedral acoustic with the Vaughan Williams *Tallis Fantasia.*

Scott Dickinson has been Principal Viola of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra for twenty years.[12] He led the violas of the Sinfonia of London in some of the recordings made by John Wilson, notably Britten's *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*. Scott told me how pleased he was that we had also involved John Wilson in our discussions as he thought the *Introduction and Allegro* 'really suits John's clean, meticulous and yet totally passionate approach to music making'.

We began by considering the relationship the Orchestra enjoys with Martyn Brabbins (that 'good friend of the BBCSSO') and his own with Martyn who had, over the years, given him great help and advice: I told him of the rewarding conversation I had enjoyed with Martyn the previous evening. Scott expressed his love for the *Introduction and Allegro*

…the mix of virtuosity and sincerity, its panache, and the physicality of the way it is written. It is one of the most physically enjoyable pieces to play. You get this great swagger right from the opening bars. It is not at all easy to play but everything is so inter-twined giving a sense of complete abandonment, an extrovert nature which is quite rare in Elgar's music, and it really works. The 'Welsh Tune' reminds me of Elgar's other use of the viola in the opening of the First Symphony and, of course in *In the South* and in the *Variations* 'Dorabella' and 'Ysobel'. Rather like them, I wonder is the 'Welsh Tune' sombre, is it tender, is it introvert, or is it something that is always generous because of the way it begins?

It is a sign of great music that you cannot describe it in words. The *Introduction and Allegro* is such a multi-faceted, complex work and, as you play through it, I can imagine Elgar challenging himself to explore his orchestrating skills. For example, it is *genius* the way the 'Welsh Tune' comes back – the accompanying *sul ponticello* glitters giving it a silvery quality.

In the First Symphony we use part of the second movement in auditions because the detailed markings are so clearly written – it shows how Elgar has such vision and clearly relishes the detail. For example, just after cue 5 in *Introduction and Allegro* why does the solo cello have the grace notes only with the orchestral second violin? You can see how Elgar is playing around in such a way that his orchestra might become either one for a baroque Concerto Grosso or something more ambitious and even more versatile. Elgar gives the players a sensation rather like being part of a choir - a small part of a great unity of sound. The way the bows dig deep into the strings and the way he animates the chords gives the feeling of being part of a great choral tradition. I dearly, dearly, love it!

12 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 18 January.

I would be relishing the prospect of playing the piece; wondering how introverted the 'Welsh Tune' is or is not and thinking of the great impact on morale it has within the strings of the orchestra. Even though there are some very tricky places it has a great sense of inevitability about it: propulsion, which has such a feel-good factor. I am reminded of the fugue at the end of the Britten's *Bridge Variations*. The solo quartet actually avoids having to play some of the most difficult music because they have the soaring line over the top. I am sure that Britten was very influenced by the piece when he wrote the finale: his big Bridge theme comes in the quartet while the rest of the strings are burrowing away.

I pointed out that, despite Britten's apparent loathing for Elgar's music, he bought the score of the *Introduction and Allegro* shortly before he commenced work on his *Bridge Variations*.

For me Britten is the ultimate virtuosic scorer – his instrumentation is so incredible. In the Elgar I am reminded of Britten the way he marks his score. In bar three he marks a *tenuto* on that chord and then two up-bows afterwards. That is the sort of thing Britten would have done.

Finally, we touched on the issue of divided violins and Scott noted that in their hall it can be very difficult to coordinate across the orchestra; especially in Elgar's two symphonies, Walton's First and Rachmaninoff's Second; 'they have as many notes in them as any Symphony!'

Chris Yates is in his 33rd season with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) and is now Lead Viola.[13] He joined mid-way during Sir Simon Rattle's tenure but could not recall the last time he performed the *Introduction and Allegro* with the orchestra and would be delighted to do it again as 'it is such great piece to play: one of the high spots of the repertoire and any string player would consider themselves lucky to be performing it'.

Chris has also played viola in the quartet, thereby leading the great 'Welsh Tune'. He acknowledged that the viola parts are technically very well written for the instrument, particularly as he stressed the string parts in Elgar's Symphonies are some of the hardest there are. In the *Introduction and Allegro* the parts are challenging but they are so well written that a player, fresh to the work, will soon work out how they are going to play their part and obtain great satisfaction thereby. Elgar, as a violinist clearly wrote well for the strings and, 'as the lead viola you have to make the most beautiful sound you possibly can – it is, after all, an opportunity to produce an exquisite sound, beautifully phrased with the joy of playing in what is a masterpiece'.

Chris felt the *Introduction and Allegro* needed a large body of strings, say 14.12.10.8.4. These numbers then get the depth of sound which you only get with a big body. Chris called the *Introduction and Allegro an* extraordinary work and agreed that it ends with a tremendous amount of joy and energy. 'You cannot say that about many 20th Century masterpieces!'

Alice Neary, principal cello of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, played the *Introduction and Allegro* as a member of the quartet under Martyn Brabbins shortly before Covid affected concert going.[14] She would be thrilled to play it again, particularly because of the work's Welsh associations. Her reaction to the thought, like the other players interviewed, was 'fantastic – it has such a distinctive sound – I love it'! She agreed with Sir Andrew Davis's use of the word Joy 'it is just so thrilling to play. The divided string sections help create the incredibly rich textures, and the contrast with the intimacy of the string quartet with the full orchestra is such a brilliant concept'. Alice played the cello in the quartet in the Brabbins performance, but she recalled that the violins were not divided. She agreed that the quartet parts are easier than the orchestral ones making

13 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 31 January.

14 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 15 February.

comparisons with the Baroque Concerto Grosso and *Pulcinella.* 'Of course, Elgar's quartet has to stand out on the one hand but blend in on the other. The challenge is to ensure that the real quartet sound is balanced against the full orchestra'. With the 'cushion of sound' surrounding the quartet, Alice agreed that, at times, it may be difficult to hear her fellow quartet members, but it is so well-written that this is rarely a problem. 'I prefer a full-sized string section for it gives a richness to the sound and enhances the difference to the quartet. It makes the balance of the piece easier. We would love to record the *Introduction and Allegro* with Martyn Brabbins, particularly as the orchestra has a claim to the Welsh Tune'!

We discussed the lack of interest in the work overseas and Alice agreed that 'with its captivating sound this is something of a mystery'. She drew attention to Elgar's very specific writing 'there are so many intricate details; with virtually every note there is an accent or a line which he uses to convey the emotions he wants. Some conductors and players might become bogged down with this and fail to understand the underlying emotion in the music. There is a youthfulness to the *allegro* music and, if you do not have the necessary lightness of touch and energy, it can sound stodgy and heavy going. If that is missed, then the piece can possibly be disappointing'.

Alice's father-in-law, John Adams, was principal viola with the Hallé at the end of Barbirolli's time and participated in at least one broadcast of the *Introduction and Allegro* under 'JB'.

Jonathan Aasgaard is Principal Cello of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, having been with the orchestra for 22 years. Born in Norway he settled in Liverpool, where he raised his family.[15] We talked briefly about some of the recordings the orchestra had made under Vasily Petrenko especially that of *Sea Pictures* and *The Music Makers* with Kathryn Rudge whom he admires greatly. Although Petrenko has yet to programme the *Introduction and Allegro* with the orchestra, Jonathan agreed that his precise musicianship would suit the work well, even though, 'emotionally, I am more in the Barbirolli camp. I appreciate what Vasily achieved with Elgar although it is not how I hear it in my head'. He confirmed his enthusiasm for the *Introduction and Allegro*

> It is a really wonderful piece of music. It is such a fun piece to play. I took part in the recording made with John Wilson last year. I led the cellos in the disc of British string music made last year which included Britten's *Frank Bridge Variations* but for the recent recordings which includes the *Introduction and Allegro* I moved to one side for Richard Harwood (Principal Cello of the RPO) as the section leader and for Bruno Delepelaire, the leader of the cellos in the Berlin Philharmonic – a wonderful cellist – who played in the quartet for the recording of the Britten.
>
> The *Introduction and Allegro* is, of course a virtuoso piece and, in preparing for a performance you have to look at the tricky corners and be ready to be very flexible although there are so many passages that are so hard to keep together. You have, almost, to be able to play without thinking. I can see why it was considered difficult when composed and I suspect it received a few below par performances. Nowadays we have some of the trickier passages included in our auditions. As a member of the quartet, you play the more lyrical (romantic) music and there is a similarity in the last variation in Britten's *Bridge Variations* the quartet has soaring, high parts while the rest of the strings are playing very hard, rhythmic music which is really very awkward to keep together – so the principal cellist is spared! Clearly Britten learnt from Elgar too. There is no composer that makes you reflect as much as Elgar I find – he makes you reflect on yourself and life in general. I remember playing the First Symphony in Evian with Rostropovich. He was terrible at conducting it but he felt the music somehow!

15 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 18 February.

Jonathan has played the *Introduction and Allegro* in Norway and in France and Germany and the involvement of Delepelaire suggests the music travels more effectively than we might have imagined.

Sally Morgan, for 28 years a member of the Double Bass section of the CBSO, expressed her enthusiasm for Elgar's composition and the excitement she would feel if she was invited to perform it again.[16] It is 'a really challenging but hugely satisfying piece to play'. She would need to study the part again and would choose to practise it beforehand. She recalled that she may have played an excerpt of the *Introduction and Allegro* when she auditioned for the CBSO and feels there are a number of stylistic similarities with Mahler (composing at a similar time) in that he very often introduces us to different instrument groups one by one.

> Elgar's experiences, obtained from his father's music shop especially his study of Beethoven scores, comes across in his bass parts. I adore the music of Beethoven and Brahms and, if you have the knowledge of Beethoven and his bass parts, as it seems Elgar did, then this fed through into his own composing style. I love the bass parts – all of them – in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony which are brilliantly written. Elgar's ability to teach himself various instruments is clear in his own writing for the Double Bass, particularly in the *Introduction and Allegro.* He uses the low (bottom) notes really carefully with the soft notes poignantly at the end of phrases colouring the work in a similar way to Beethoven.
>
> Elgar constructs the work rather like a Bach Prelude and Fugue. I love the way he does not use all his instruments at once – unlike so many composers – like Mahler he holds back; they were like painters using the instruments as colours to build a picture. In the *Introduction and Allegro* I think it is particularly obvious. As a bass player, you have to wait for your moment in the *Allegro*. It is a difficult part, but Elgar does not leave out the basses. So many composers use them as purely an accompanying instrument. He gives his tunes to all the sections. Much of the writing does not sit easily under the fingers; you need really skilful fingers which can combine with the staccato use of the bow! There is a real tension in the fugue; as a player you can be on edge with the syncopated theme, but then the tension is released in a great *arpeggio* section played by all the strings. Elgar knows how to support his players. It is a really exciting piece to play with every string player getting that marvellous tune.

In tackling the issue of rarity of performances, Sally feels that string works in general get neglected and orchestras could do more to play pieces like this. 'The *Enigma Variations* has a tricky part for the Double Bass, but in some of his other pieces Elgar gives the basses little to do'. We then considered the reasons why the *Introduction and Allegro* does not travel overseas. Sally felt that English music is possibly culturally unfashionable on the continent. 'CBSO's past Music Director Sakari Oramo showcased English and Scandinavian music, and Andris Nelsons took the *Enigma Variations* on tour, but, of course, many conductors have their own preferences and skills or niches. The concert halls of Europe have just not experienced a work such as the *Introduction and Allegro*, but if they did they would surely love it!'

Kevin Rundell Principal Double Bass with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO), confirmed the high opinion that British string players have of the piece.[17] However, not many of those in the orchestra who come from overseas know or are familiar with works like this or English music generally. 'I think that Dvořák's *String Serenade* or Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings* are more accessible to our overseas players'.

16 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 9 February.

17 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 6 February.

Kevin would love to play the *Introduction and Allegro* again

> for it illustrates a number of things: you have some quite heavy playing when you have the semi-quavers at first and then, once you get to the fugue it is an opportunity to show off the string playing. It is great for a string section to be on the stage - especially a large one - as I think it works better with a large orchestra.

Kevin agreed that 'it was not a very popular work outside of England'. One of the problems he feels is that the orchestra's repertoire must be compatible with going on tour. 'It is not a work that Germany or Spain would happily take although we performed the *Enigma Variations* in the Bucharest Festival last summer. However, I am surprised it is not played more often; I cannot remember the last time I played it!'

I mentioned what I felt is the irresistible beginning and the likelihood of an audience falling for it. Kevin agreed but said 'we are English, and the music speaks of Englishness'. This is a question that I pursued further taking, as an example another masterpiece which is emotionally the opposite of the *Introduction and Allegro,* Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen.* Did it, for example. seem or sound German? Kevin felt it did, 'its resonances and Strauss's music' seemed to him German.

> We were for a time, known as the orchestra that played the great German romantic symphonies under conductors such as Haitink, Tennstedt and Masur but, with the appointment of Edward Gardner, this is likely to sustain the changes to the overseas programming begun by Kurt Masur.

Kevin ended by telling me that his great-grandfather was a founder member of the Double Bass section of the LSO, which suggests he could have played in the first performance of the *Introduction and Allegro*. He told Kevin's family that another bass player, Victor Watson, asked Elgar if he would write a Double Bass Concerto which Elgar agreed to consider! Of course, nothing came of this. Kevin's grandfather, John Silvester, also took up the instrument in 1910 and he and Watson both joined the LPO in 1932 when it was formed, Watson being appointed Principal.

Conducting Op. 47

Martyn Brabbins took time out from rehearsing Janáček at the ENO to discuss the challenges of conducting the *Introduction and Allegro.*[18] He began by relating how he had conducted the work last year with the Netherlands Philharmonic

> …the members of which had not played the piece before. I insisted on having antiphonal fiddles which adds another layer of complexity to the ensemble challenges of the piece. Elgar's counterpoint is indeed full of *jolly japes* and there are difficulties for all the players aligning, especially in the fugue - no easy task. The key is making the other players aware of what is going on in the other parts so that they know what to listen to in order to make it come off the page. It is a lot about balance, so that the right voices can be heard at any one time such as in the wonderful scale section where the instruments fly up to the stratosphere (five bars after Cue 14 and one bar before Cue 29).
>
> Then there is the question of the antiphonal fiddles where the firsts begin and the seconds answer, and if you are at the back desks of both sections, perhaps separated by 20 metres or so, it is clearly going to be a challenge because of the physics. Elgar, because he knew what was what, also knew these things were possible. Even the inner voices are interesting. Somehow, he makes them rewarding to play – part of the explanation why all the players with whom you discussed this piece were so enthusiastic at the thought of playing the work. It is such a great piece to play for it has everything in it! I often point out, particularly when doing works like this abroad, that we (the British) were pretty good at this sort of thing - it is not only Elgar - just think of Tippett, Vaughan Williams and Walton. There are some great masterpieces of the string repertoire which we should be proud of. Another thing that strikes me, when I think of Elgar's visit to Llangrannog and that tune, is that it may not be original folk music but there is something of the folk about it which I compare to that wonderful melody, the 'Canto Popolare' which forms part of *In the South*. It (the 'Welsh Tune') has a different feel to the rest of the *Introduction and Allegro* which makes the piece something very special.

18 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 17 February 2022.

I then pointed out Tom Eisner's observation that the second violins begin the fugue. Martyn continued

> …the best thing one can do as a conductor is to give a very clear lead and usually the players ask me to give three, four, go; not just an upbeat. It works and, of course Elgar marks the passage *piano* which is in contrast to the rest of a work which requires you to play something that is rhythmically and technically demanding; but it can be made to work.
>
> I always use a quartet taken from the section leaders of the orchestra and, of course as the Sinfonia of London in 1963 was not a permanent body it is not surprising that the Allegri Quartet played too. I imagine, if Mark [Elder] did not use the principals of the Hallé they would be somewhat miffed!

Martyn then referred to the concert with the BBCNOW in Cheltenham (see the interview with Alice Neary) and confirmed 'it was an all string programme. We did the Tippett *Corelli Fantasia* so it was a real work-out for the orchestra with two orchestras making it even more technically challenging'. I asked if the Vaughan Williams *Tallis Fantasia* was similarly challenging and Martyn replied

> No, you treat the second orchestra as soloists. They are too far away to react to you so you have to react to them, taking the main orchestra to them, balancing in relation to the delay between the two. The Elgar is definitely a work that can travel; there was no question of getting the Dutch orchestra on side for we did Thomas Adès and VW 5 in the same programme, and the players loved the whole package!

I concluded by telling him of Alice Neary's comment that he should record the *Introduction and Allegro* with her orchestra – 'after all it contains a Welsh tune'!

John Wilson, who was busy preparing for his next recording, took time to talk to me, recalling:

> When I was eleven, I bought my first record (with my own money) the Barbirolli recording with The Sinfonia of London, so I came to the great Elgar and Vaughan Williams pieces at the same time. With the (new) Sinfonia of London we recorded the *Introduction and Allegro* in August [2021] which will be coupled with *Late Swallows* by Delius, the Vaughan Williams *Tallis Fantasia* and the Howells *Concerto for String Orchestra*, which was composed, it seems to me, very much in the shadow of the *Introduction and Allegro*. Howells could not have written his piece without knowing the Elgar and Vaughan Williams works. The String Orchestral music tradition is quite rich in Britain for two reasons. First, because of the influence of the Elgar and then because of the existence of Boyd Neel who commissioned so many works. Apparently, he was personally very charming and could get anybody to write for him. For example, he commissioned Britten's *Bridge Variations*. In

terms of the British repertoire, the Elgar showed everybody that followed what was possible – he told Howells to 'study *Messiah* if you want to write for a string orchestra'. Knowing that Elgar wrote for the strings from that angle is important for there is a naturalness in the writing for strings in *Messiah* – it is completely idiomatic writing and that is where Elgar scores in this work – it is idiomatic and challenging but ultimately players are grateful to play it (the Elgar) because of that.

I am aware of the pitfalls in the music and it is really useful to work with players who understand Elgar's style. When I have worked with players abroad the challenge is to get them to understand Elgar's style. I find my way is through the music of Brahms. The quiet music is suggestive of a real presence but the Novello parts do not help – they are very *dodgy* and I have been working with Elgar Works to produce performable versions.

Regarding the quartet, I have done it both ways; with a separate quartet and with players drawn from the orchestra as in my recent recording. I feel the quartet has to produce a different sound and I want the rest of the orchestra to play like the quartet. We really sweated in the recording, and I used a small body 8.6.4.4.2 of strings plus the quartet– but we got a good sound![19]

Edward Gardner, Principal Conductor of the London Philharmonic and Chief Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra talked to me from Munich.[20] This was a different conversation to that which I had anticipated. A dose of Covid, which had delayed the rehearsals of *Peter Grimes*, meant Gardner had given Elgar's work a great deal of thought and come up with some points which I found stimulating as well as surprising! What a fascinating discussion we could have witnessed if these five great maestros - devotees of Elgar's music - had sat down together with the score of the *Introduction and Allegro* in front of them!

We began by discussing his 2017 Chandos recording with the Doric Quartet and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. In preparation for our conversation he had just been re-watching the film about Sir Adrian Boult[21] in which the great body of strings of the Philharmonia Orchestra

…are working flat out: all those repeated down bows! It is astonishing and recalled the 1963 Barbirolli recording in which you can hear a great quartet vying with the bigger body of strings. Dividing violins is a default setting for me although it may not be essential for a work like the *Introduction and Allegro* and the players would find it much easier if I did not place the violins antiphonally; that fugue is ferociously difficult, but I would undoubtedly use antiphonal violins in the Symphonies.

This is certainly one of the greatest things Elgar wrote but I have considered the question: why is it not considered as iconic (particularly overseas) as other string pieces and why I don't take it abroad - what is it that holds it back? I do not believe the Symphonies are resisted any more and even *Falstaff* interests overseas orchestras as a change to *Enigma* or the Cello Concerto. The *Introduction and Allegro* is difficult to put together as it needs commitment from everyone to make a decent performance – it is *Mozartian* in a way, needing incredible virtuosity and beauty of sound at the same time and, if it is an ensemble, you do not trust completely it is hard to make the piece work.

As I thought about this work more and more and its wistful beauty I realised I loved hearing that wonderful theme ('Welsh Tune') but is it something that exists better in our minds than actually in performance (rather like Strauss's *Four Last Songs*)? Listening to Boult's performance of the fugue and the density of the writing – there is so much going on – it is not easy to hear the detail. In other words, do we get more out of listening to this work (as with the Strauss) at home than in any of the greatest concert halls of the world? I think the fugue may come over as a little bland even cerebral; something even academic which is in contrast to the emotions generated in the rest of the music.

I raised the example of another masterpiece, Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen*. This is, of course a profoundly different piece to Elgar's composition. Why *Metamorphosen* should be performed frequently in Britain without intimidating a potential audience and why the *Introduction and Allegro* has, apparently, little appeal to a German audience was a mystery to me. Gardner felt the emotional temperature of this work had an intensity he did not find in the Elgar piece. Thinking again about the fugue and its rhythm Gardner suggested it was the equivalent of a photographic negative of the lyricism of the rest of the *Introduction and Allegro.*

I asked Gardner if he would be prepared to programme this with the local Bavarian orchestra if he was invited to conduct there. He confirmed that he is often asked to programme British music 'but I feel "they" look for emotional depth and I would be happier programming the *Serenade* or the symphonies. I fear the fugue would come across to them as a little emotionally bland in a way – they would relish everything else but not warm to the "exercise" in the middle of the work!'

Gardner reminded me that he was conducting *The Dream of Gerontius* in this year's 'Proms' and 'there is nothing in that where the emotional temperature drops for a milli-second!' We ended our conversation with Gardner worried that he might sound very negative when he was trying to think in depth about the music of a composer whose music he loves. I assured him that this love came over clearly and that he had thrown some stimulating thoughts into the ring!

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In his 'General notes on performance' for the *Complete Edition: Music for String Orchestra*, **Julian Rushton** wrote

In *Introduction and Allegro* Elgar's string writing is notable for its range and brilliance, for taking advantage of open strings (presumably determining his choice of G as tonic), and for frequent indications of harmonics.

The LSO presumably possessed contrabasses with a lower range than is allowed by the standard modern tuning (E_1 A_1 D G). The three stringed basses (tuned G_1 D A) may have survived into the 20th century. *The New Grove* states 'Not until the 1920s was the additional E string expected of most professional players'. Nevertheless, Norman Del Mar asserts 'composers of romantic and later eras generally assume the existence of at least some basses in every orchestra capable of producing the low notes down to C_1 [an octave below the cellos]'. In *Introduction and Allegro* Elgar's basses descend at important junctions in the musical form to Eb_1 (b20), then D_1 (bb.52-3), 196-202), and D_1 is notated in *Sospiri* (b.20).

In *Introduction and Allegro* the music for solo quartet is slightly less demanding than the orchestral parts, and could be played by section leaders, but Elgar specified that the quartet should sit apart rather than be played from the front desks. His experience as a violinist led him to prescribe fingering in several passages, including the term *restez* meaning 'remain in position.[22]

Professor Rushton also made the point that 'Elgar's instrumentation is designed for the then

19 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 1 January.

20 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 17 February.

21 *A.C.B.*- A Portrait of One of the Century's greatest Musicians Sir Adrian Boult C.H. (1889-1983) (ICAD 5140).

22 Julian Rushton, *Elgar Complete Edition: Music for String Orchestra* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Society Edition), xi.

usual seating arrangement, with first and second violins on the left and right of the conductor'. From my limited research for this article, it is clear there is no standard regarding seating. We know that Sir Adrian Boult would have had no other arrangement than divided violins, but David Jones has confirmed that for most of the Hallé concerts he attended Sir John Barbirolli conducted with the first violins on his left with the second violins behind the first.[23] On occasions he might change the seating depending on the work he was conducting and the acoustic of the hall or studio.

From talking to those who remember Barbirolli's concerts such as David Jones and Brian Pidgeon it is clear that it was Barbirolli's usual practice not to divide his violins antiphonally. The LP sleeve photograph of his famous last recording of the *Introduction and Allegro* with the Sinfonia of London and the Allegri String Quartet in 1963 shows the cellos and double basses arranged behind the main of body of strings (Claire Parfitt's 'cushion of sound'), the first violins to the left with the violas behind leading round to the second violins. The quartet, left to right is first violin, viola, second violin and cello, therefore placing the latter in front of the second violins which are out of sight. This may be a posed publicity photograph and indeed our ears tell a different story: Barbirolli's second violins 'sound' as if they are placed to his right and, unsurprisingly, it also sounds as if he seated the string quartet similarly for the recording.

The Sinfonia of London recording with Sir John Barbirolli in The Kingsway Hall, London, 1962.

23 From an email to the author, 5 February.

Recording Op. 47

We are fortunate that two distinguished recording producers were able to comment on the challenges of recording the *Introduction and Allegro.* **Andrew Keener** kindly wrote the following:

> I suspect that like most music lovers, I've always held close to my heart a handful of pieces which retain their fascination, and which seem self-renewing on each re-hearing, while other repertoire may come and go in my affections. Producing my fourth recorded Vaughan Williams symphony cycle, for instance - such a privilege! - has revealed new insights every time, the varied sound world of these masterpieces emerging as fresh and emotionally involving to me as when I first heard them. Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* is another such piece. As for many young record collectors, Barbirolli's 1962 EMI account, recorded in London's Temple Church, opened the door for me to this work, a miraculous essay in string writing - technically, emotionally and structurally.
>
> When I came to produce recordings of it myself, it seemed to me that in matters of securing a natural recorded balance, less was more. It's very tempting to put microphones where they're not needed – and to use too many of them. Of course, a sympathetic acoustic makes a relatively purist approach easier. In this respect I was lucky in each case: my gifted colleagues who were engineering had the opulence of St Augustine's Church in Kilburn for Richard Hickox's 1991 EMI account, the natural warmth and richness of Manchester's Bridgewater Hall for Sir Mark Elder's 2003 Hallé recording and, for Naxos, the hallowed surroundings of Watford Colosseum (formerly Watford Town Hall, the setting for countless epoch-making recordings through many decades) in 2014 for Julian Lloyd Webber and the English Chamber Orchestra.
>
> So out went separate microphones for the string quartet which sits in front of the main body of strings. Too many recordings betray a 'pasted on' sound for these four soloists, clearly sitting in front of dedicated microphones. Elgar's string quartet should sound integrated, unlike the solo strings in Vaughan Williams' Tallis Fantasia, where three distinct layers of perspective are the soul of the work (a church acoustic is ideal here, in which the soloists who make up Orchestra II can be placed at a distance, often with no microphones anywhere near them).
>
> A few recordings of the Elgar have featured an established string quartet – the Allegri in the case of Barbirolli's EMI taping. It's a nice idea as long as the four instrumentalists retain a chamber music-style of interplay with the full strings. Star-system grandstanding in front of the orchestra is surely inappropriate, sitting uneasily beside the subtlety of Elgar's *tutti* scoring which gives the quartet its place in the sun without the players ever having to force their sound. Nevertheless, the quartet has to hold its own against the larger body, and – it is purely my opinion – that body should be large! Or at least be set in a spacious acoustic. It should also be an orchestra in which each player relishes to the full, and is capable of realising, the exultant virtuosity of the writing. A single 'passenger' at any moment, and blend and amplitude fly out of the window before the unforgiving scrutiny of the microphones.
>
> The conductor has also to display a sure instinct in negotiating the transitions and myriad tempo changes in this work; Elgar marks ten of the latter in the first four pages of the score before the solo viola's heart-stopping rendition of the 'Welsh Tune', all of them tricky moments which in the wrong hands can becalm the work within its first minute. If the music takes wing as it must, and the transitions feel organic, the producer is spared becoming a pedant, having to request too many retakes. No work suffers more than this one does from too frequent interruptions from the control room.

The issue of divided violins came up when I interviewed **Brian Pidgeon**.[24] Brian played in the National Youth Orchestra and he remembers the enormous power of the cellos and basses

24 Transcript of a telephone conversation, 6 February.

on the right in Hallé concerts conducted by Barbirolli which he attended in the 1960s. When he heard Vernon Handley conduct the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for the first time, he initially found the divided violins produced a somewhat diffuse sound in comparison. His first Elgar symphony recording (as a producer) was the highly regarded Naxos issue of the A Flat with George Hurst conducting the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. Brian has produced three recordings of the *Introduction and Allegro* for the Chandos label; most recently that with the Sinfonia of London conducted by John Wilson. He also produced the recordings of Sir Andrew Davis with the BBC Philharmonic and Edward Gardner with the BBC Symphony and the Doric Quartet.

For the Sinfonia of London recording (which was part of an intensive three weeks of recording last August and which miraculously was unaffected by Covid), Wilson was able to attract players from around Europe. For some of the other full orchestra sessions the cello section included the principals of the Doric quartet and Berlin Philharmonic, Hallé, Philharmonia, Royal Liverpool and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestras!

> I just sit there and wallow in it all! The players know that with John in charge they will sound better than anything they have taken part in before, giving more than they perhaps know they have inside themselves! We have just recorded Rachmaninov's Second Symphony and I was almost in tears by the end. However, when John came into the control room, he said that he thought he could get even more from the players. He went back and what he achieved was extraordinary.
>
> The Wilson Introduction and Allegro sessions were very different from those with Davis and Gardner because of the smaller body of strings with, of course, the highest quality of players. Consequently, there was no lack of power. The main challenge, as a producer, was to ensure the quartet had enough bite. The CD release will, to a certain extent, mirror the repertoire of the 1963 Barbirolli disc.

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I leave the last words to our President, **Sir Mark Elder**, with whom I enjoyed a rewarding conversation about Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* during which he echoed Sir Andrew Davis's enthusiasm for the work.[25] 'I think it has a very substantial reputation as a great work. I have rehearsed and played it often. There are, of course, wonderful works for strings such as Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* and the Dvořák *Serenade* which I much prefer to the Tchaikovsky'.

Sir Mark does not feel the Elgar piece is neglected:

> …the biggest challenge is its difficulty. No matter how many times you play it you still have to focus on it for it does not come easily. There are, as everyone knows, at least two sides to Elgar: on the one hand there is the magical dreamer and, on the other the muscular, thrusting, energetic part of his personality. Characteristically, Elgar eventually gave into Jaeger's suggestion that he write a piece for the LSO strings. He has given us is a thrilling virtuoso masterpiece with the string quartet leading the other sections but forming a separate entity. A large part of the charm and power of the piece comes from the interplay between the larger and smaller groups. That quality is at its most touching as he introduces the lovely 'Welsh tune' on the solo viola. Its tenderness, its intimacy forces the dynamic energy with which the piece opens to quieten down in the most Elgarian manner.
>
> Elgar's idea of dispensing with a traditional development section and foisting on the players the fugue is highly original. He knew exactly what challenge he was giving his players. It is really hard but very satisfying and the peroration of the work is very thrilling as the 'Welsh Tune' thunders out for the last time.

25 Transcript of a conversation held in 'La Pulcinella', Covent Garden, 11 February.

> It is a piece you can certainly take abroad, even if you cannot take everything Elgar wrote. For example, I have conducted the *Introduction and Allegro* with the Chicago Symphony, which has a great string section and was a great success. However, many years ago, before the Berlin Wall came down, I conducted *Falstaff* with the orchestra of the Komische Oper in East Berlin and I remember how, in the end, the players loved and respected the music.

Sir Mark confirmed he would always divide his violins and place the members of the quartet in front of the respective sections of the orchestra.

> No matter how you lay out your orchestra, you still have to work out the problems particularly in two or three famous passages. At the very end there is an example of Elgar's mastery. The last sound is an immense *pizzicato* chord for all the strings. However, the double basses are asked to play the final note with their *bow* in order to give a firmer resonance to the fundamental note. Strangely, one rarely notices it - but you would if it was not there.

In Conclusion

The comments of the writers and interviewees with whom I discussed Elgar's composition raised some interesting questions some of the answers to which are potentially profound and beyond the scope of this article. What is clear is that Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* is loved by all the string players with whom I discussed the piece. Some points arose that achieved an importance I had not expected such as the 'pairing' of the work with Britten's *Bridge Variations* which, to me, makes more sense than the usual *Tallis Fantasia* of Vaughan Williams, a work inhabiting a very different world. There were contrasting views as to whether the violins should be divided in a performance. In this regard Sir Mark Elder made the point that the term 'second violins' gives a false impression because they should be the same number as the first violins. After all, the demands on both the first and second violins is no different and, certainly in this work he feels to call them 'seconds' is misplaced and unfair.

It is of course the conductor who must worry about ensemble and balance and one can imagine many a conductor looking at the score for the first time and thinking there are easier pieces to introduce to the orchestra he is about to conduct. Leading conductors such as those interviewed above can programme British music when they conduct an overseas concert but that is not the same as an overseas orchestra and conductor programming works such as the *Introduction and Allegro* as a matter of course. Having said that, most of the conductors who contributed above felt that there is an increasing awareness overseas of music of this quality.

The players all spoke of the sonorities of Elgar's brilliant writing and hinted at the joy of playing a composition of such great virtuosity and passion. It would seem made for some of the great orchestras of Europe and North America with their renowned string sections. On the other hand, we have to acknowledge that there may be a problem with the exportability of British music; a problem which is hardly new. There is little doubt that Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* would sit high on any list of his key works and of those that *can* and *should* travel and that there are more than enough great works that overseas concert promoters should be clamouring to hear. Consequently, the question 'Why is it not performed more?' in Britain let alone overseas, begs to be asked. Some of my interviewees have pointed out that there is little interest abroad in our musical heritage with this, perhaps, emphasised by the lack of performance of this composition – of all compositions. Others made clear that it is performed abroad, and they have performed it in concert halls on the Continent and elsewhere.

However, is there a barrier to the performance of works like this, as Claire Parfitt wondered? Is it because this work is British and there is an impression that the British tend towards understatement and British compositions are then avoided? Kevin Rundell echoed this thought; but it is surely impossible to apply the word 'understatement' to the *Introduction and Allegro*! In my conversation with Kevin, I used the example of Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen* and why, in comparison, the *Introduction and Allegro* is so little played overseas. Kevin said 'they do not know what they are missing'. It would seem incumbent, therefore, on those who manage tours of British orchestras abroad to consider promoting works like this as part of the orchestra's programme and more fundamentally the orchestra's heritage.

This is a commentary which celebrates a masterpiece: a joyous work that is loved by performers and conductors alike. What is clear is that Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* is thrilling to perform and can be a life-enhancing experience for listener and player. It ranges from *fff* to *pppp* and covers virtually every emotion. Above all it is a work that dispenses 'joy', a word that appears more than once above. Sir Andrew Davis wrote of the joy he experienced in preparing the work particularly 'when the Welsh theme finally blazes forth with a radiance and opulence of sonority never surpassed in the string orchestra repertoire'. Few who read this are likely to disagree.

I am grateful to our President and two Vice-Presidents for contributing to this substantial piece: Sir Mark Elder, Sir Andrew Davis, and Martyn Brabbins. John Wilson, fresh from recording the work, and Edward Gardner were also generous with their time as was Andrew Keener in providing a written opinion from the other side of the mixing desk. I wish to thank all those who shared their enthusiasm about Elgar's great work: Jonathan Aasgaard, Scott Dickinson, Tom Eisner, Sally Morgan, Alice Neary, Claire Parfitt, Brian Pidgeon, Kevin Rundell and Chris Yates for their valuable opinions from their respective orchestras and Helen Petchey, Stephannie Williams, David Jones, Andrew Keener, Chris Morley and Julian Rushton for their advice and wider assistance.

The Sinfonia of London recording in St Augustine's Church, Kilburn, September 2021. Photograph courtesty of Chandos records.

Andrew Neill is a former Chairman of the Society.

Elgar's Performance of Philipp Wolfrum's *Ein Weihnachtsmysterium*

Kevin Mitchell

Philipp Wolfrum's *magnum opus*, *Ein Weihnachtsmysterium* was premiered on 12 December 1898 in Heidelberg with the composer conducting. Exactly three years later, on 12 December 1901 the work was given its British premiere, conducted by Elgar at the ninth Worcestershire Philharmonic Society concert. Elsewhere in this issue, Relf Clark has reviewed the new recording under Stefan Vanselow: I set out here Elgar's involvement with the work.

Philipp Julius Wolfrum (17 December 1854 – 8 May 1919)

It is not clear how Elgar first came to hear of the piece, although from the correspondence with Wolfrum, he may have been informed of the work by Professor Joseph Buths. However, the first mention of it by Elgar is in an undated letter from Birchwood Lodge (probably written in the

summer of 1901)[1] to Martina Hyde the joint secretary of the Worcester Philharmonic Society:[2]

> I am so woefully taken with Wolfrum's Weihnachts Mysterium that I have wired to Germany to enquire price of vocal parts I have only the full score. It is simply beautiful & I wd. like to shew it you. The vocal score is 9 mk. I wish you wd. wait until I hear – a post or two. You see the work is just right for Xmas & I shd. not like to lose the chance.[3]

He wrote again to her from Birchwood on 23 August 1901:

> (We must sing in German). I am sorry I have no vocal sc: only the full score. Wolfrum wants I believe to present me with the voc. sc. & is now on a journey. I hope you will be able to smooth over the Committee & do it. It will fill the programme. It is most easy & I think just the thing.[4]

The precedent that choral works must be sung in their original language had been set for the first Worcestershire Philharmonic concert on 7 May 1898, when Humperdinck's cantata *Die Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar* was sung in German at Elgar's insistence, despite most of the choir (and the conductor) knowing little or nothing of the language. Rosa Burley, a member of the chorus, recalled that 'the result was more satisfactory musically than linguistically …[and] for the most part strange chewing noises were produced that sounded like no known European language'.[5]

In September Elgar and Alice stayed at Hasfield Court for the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival and on 13 September he heard *Messiah* where one of the soloists was Luisa Sobrino.[6] Elgar sought her for Wolfrum's work: Jaeger contacted her and wrote to Elgar:

> I have seen Mme. Sobrino re Wolfrum's thing, & she is most anxious to sing under you. So I daresay you can make her a fairly low offer. She leaves it to you to suggest a fee, since she esteems the honour more than the money. At the same time I don't think you can offer her less than 12-15 Guineas, can you? Is that within the means of your swell Society. Tell me your views & I feel sure you can come to terms.[7]

Elgar wrote to Miss Hyde on 19 October: 'I think Mad Sobrino shd be engaged if you can do it on your own responsibility'.[8]

On 12 September Philipp Wolfrum wrote to Elgar from Heidelberg: 'I am absolutely delighted at your decision to perform my 'Christmas Mystery'. I send you my warmest thanks. Unfortunately, some of the tempi vary from the score so I would like to draw your attention to the correct marking:'. He then set out a number of metronome speeds.

1 Elgar was at Birchwood Lodge from 20 July to 15 August 1901, when he went to Cardiganshire.

2 She was joint secretary with Winifred Norbury of Sherridge.

3 Undated letter, 1901 (Martin Bird transcription, Elgar Birthplace letter, 11018).

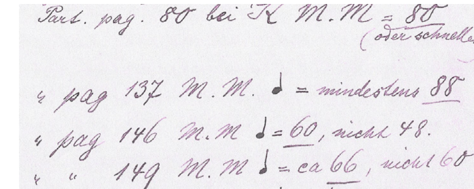
4 Letter 23 August 1901 (Martin Bird transcription, EBL, 11038).

5 Rosa Burley and Frank C. Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: the record of a friendship* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 107. This was the first performance of the cantata in England.

6 Luisa Sobrino (*c*.1860-1933), soprano soloist and like Jaeger a native of Düsseldorf.

7 Letter early October 1901, Jerrold Northrop Moore, ed., *Elgar and His Publishers: Letters of a Creative Life*, *Volume I 1885 – 1903* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 302.

8 Letter 19 October 1901 (Martin Bird transcription, EBL,10841).


Part. pag. 80 bei K M.M = 80 (oder schneller)
" pag 137 M.M. ♩ = mindestens 88
" pag 146 M.M ♩ = 60, nicht 48.
" " 149 M.M ♩ = ca 66, nicht 60

Extract from Wolfrum's letter of 12 September 1901, EBL 7603
('Part.pag' = score page; 'oder schneller' = or faster; 'mindestens' = at least; 'nicht' = not.)

He continued: 'I would also suggest that if the music is being played "openly" the choir should be standing during both preludes. Finally, the best position for the Evangelist is to stand next to the organ. The closing scene should be linked to that of the Three Kings without any long break'. Wolfrum was concerned about the translation of his libretto both for the concert and for the English piano transcription and wished to ensure this 'was not only accurate but matched the notes'. He asked if the publishing of the English libretto (and later the English piano transcription) should be handed to an English publishing company and asked Elgar with his

> … high standards to check the translation and … bring it into unison with the music. If you could be understanding, an enormous weight would be lifted … I do not speak English and have no English connections … My friend Buths wrote to me about your estimable compositions. Would it be possible for me to have some sight of these? … I am happy to release the translation of my article from the Bayreuth newspapers. I suggest however the caption should be 'From the Bayreuth Press'.[9]

Philipp Wolfrum's twelve-page note on 'A Christmas Mystery', written in September 1899, which had originally appeared in *Bayreuther Blätter* was translated by Lady Hampton, a member of the chorus, and printed in the programme for the Philharmonic concert.

Alice Elgar who was fluent in German, took up the correspondence with Wolfrum. He in turn, replied very formally to her on 19 September:

> I thank you for your correspondence, written in the most beautiful and admirable German. I am ashamed that I cannot reply to you in English. I trust the enclosed piano piece will express my grateful feelings. I am very glad to follow your kind advice and to give permission for the English text to be printed in the programme book for the first performance in Worcester. I would ask however that any reproduction in English should be expressly forbidden … For the words of the Bible which appear in my libretto I would ask that they conform to the Authorised English version … I would be most grateful if you could send me at your earliest convenience the English text. Perhaps my friends in Bayreuth will be able to help me. I am now about to study with genuine excitement your husband's compositions. Dr Richter has written to me to say that Edward Elgar is England's foremost composer. What an honour it is for me that he has accepted my works so affectionately. I am ashamed to say that I know almost nothing about your husband. I hope you will not think badly of me for this when you hear that I live in a small town surrounded only by 'Professors'. This makes it all the more important that I should be able to forge a spiritual relationship with Meister Elgar.

9 Letter 12 September 1901 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7603).

With great respect, I remain
Your ever grateful
Wolfrum[10]

He wrote to Alice on 22 October:

> I received yesterday the English translation of my article about 'The Christmas Mystery'. Allow me to thank you for giving me the honour of being translated into English and also for your kind letter of 16 October. Unfortunately I am unable to comment on the translation. For that I must await my wife's return, which will be in the next few days. May I ask you to obtain for me 18 copies of the article? I would – if you wished – arrange to send you in return 18 copies in German.
>
> *The Dream of Gerontius* is for me still a dream. I hope to see it made reality in Düsseldorf.[11]

Elgar told Miss Hyde that: 'I must find out from Wolfrum the exact length of the work'[12] and, presumably in response to Elgar's enquiry, Wolfrum wrote again to Alice on 13 November: 'My "Mystery" takes just under two hours and eight minutes without an interval, but I suggest some break of about 15 minutes'.[13]

As the concert approached Elgar wrote in a humorous vein to Martina Hyde on 20 November:

I Please coach your local shepherds
II Please have organ tuned and in good order
III Please see Foregate St station-master about trains – extra coach
IV Please have the streets kept quiet during the concert
V Please don't forget my chair – my back is in two pieces this p.m.
VI God save the King
VII Also yours truly
Ed. Elgar [14]

Elgar was in London (and Ridgehurst) from 25 November to 3 December and he had hoped to rehearse with Luisa Sobrino during his stay, but this was not possible as she advised him on 25 November:

> I am so sorry I shall not be able to arrange to have the pleasure of meeting you this week and avail myself of your valuable help in looking through Wolfrum's 'Weihnachtsmysterium'. I am singing at Hereford tomorrow, and in Scotland for the rest of the week returning to London next Monday 2nd after which date I am at your disposal any day convenient to you.[15]

She was able to come to Craeg Lea on the morning of the Elgars' return from London on 3 December to rehearse.

10 Letter 19 September 1901 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7604).

11 Letter 22 October 1901 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7599).

12 Letter 19 October 1901 (Martin Bird transcription, EBL 10841).

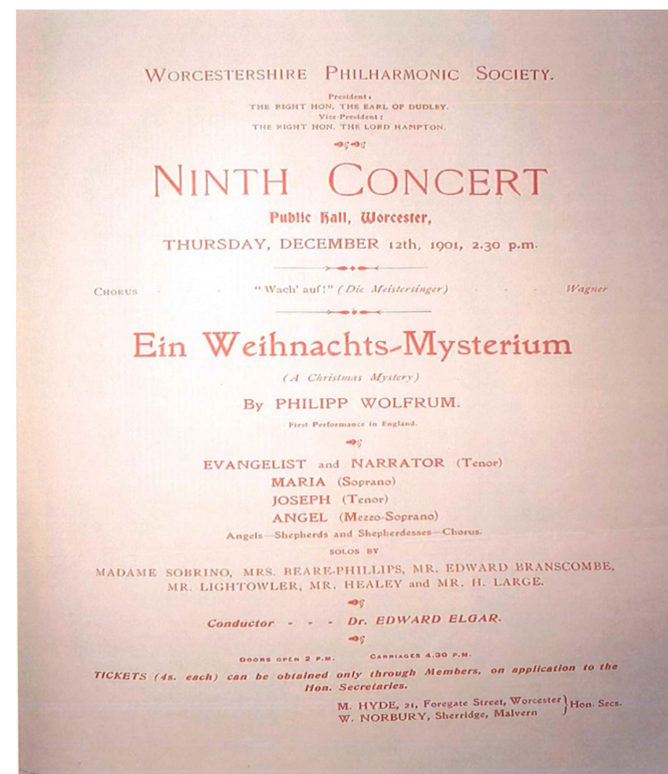
13 Postcard 13 November 1901, (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7591).

14 Martin Bird, ed., *Edward Elgar: Road to Recognition, Diaries 1897-1901* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2015), 384.

15 Letter 25 November 1901 (Martin Bird transcription, EBL 3087).

Wolfrum wrote to again to Alice on 4 December:

> I am now in possession of the piano transcription of *The Dream of Gerontius*. For this, I thank you and your respected husband from the bottom of my heart. I shall use my next free days to immerse myself in the work. My thanks also for being so kind as to send me the programme of the concert … With reference to the translation of my article in the Bayreuth newspapers, my wife and Mrs Daniela Thode (the daughter of Mrs Cosima Wagner) have confirmed this has been executed with affection and poetic skill. In this connection I owe them (or rather Lady Hampton) my warmest thanks. Can I ask you to convey my compliments to the lady? Would it be in order for me to dedicate a piano piece to her? … I would wish – with my love and gratitude to you – that my modest work might be worthy of the interest of the respected Elgar family, after you have heard it performed. Should I send copies of my piano pieces to people of influence in order to ensure wider distribution? May I ask you to let me have some names?[16]



Notice for the Worcestershire Philharmonic Concert on 12 December 1901 - Elgar Birthplace archive.

16 Letter 4 December 1901 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7598).

On 12 December Elgar conducted Wolfrum's composition, with Luisa Sobrino, Mary Beare,[17] Edward Branscombe, Frederick Lightowler (a Lay Clerk at the Cathedral), John Healey (a Malvern schoolmaster) and Henry Large (a Worcester newsagent) - the last three were members of the Society who sang the roles of the three shepherds. Elgar wrote a programme note for the concert:

> The intention and scope of the work performed today are sufficiently explained in the composer's letter to the editor of 'Bayreuther Blätter', reprinted in the programme.
>
> Since its first production about two years ago in Heidelberg, the Mysterium has been performed in many of the large towns in Germany with the greatest success. Critics have been unanimous in appreciating its charm, the simplicity, the direct and moving expression imparted by the musicianly use of the ancient melodies which WOLFRUM has so deftly interwoven in the fabric of his composition.
>
> The technique is beyond criticism, and one must admire the daring with which the musician has completed the task he had set himself; it is a bold thing in a sacred work, which most hearers will probably persist in calling 'an Oratorio,' to throw over the whole convention of the Oratorio-maker, fugues, canons, &c., and to give us a piece of pure and expressive music. The Chorales naturally have not the striking effect on English ears that they possess for the German people: tunes inseparably connected with certain ecclesiastical seasons and with certain sets of words (hymns), have a sort of practical as well as poetical significance to the people who have all their lives been accustomed to sing them in their proper place. But if this aspect of the work does not appeal to our deepest feelings, we can all feel the beauty of the simple melodies of the folk songs, and the almost infantine tenderness of the music, woven (always with consummate art) round the gentle and gracious Christmas scenes.
>
> The members of the Philharmonic Society will not treat this performance as an ordinary, conventional concert, which in England is supposed to begin 'loud' and end 'louder', whereupon the audience is dismissed with a feeling of satisfaction that they have not met altogether in vain. In listening to this work, one's feelings become elevated and purified, and one's thoughts are taken with more than superficial understanding to those words recorded by the Evangelist, 'Except ye … become as little children'.[18]

The local newspapers reviewed the performance. *Berrow's Worcester Journal* reported:

> 'A Christmas Mystery'
>
> Despite the wintry weather of Thursday, there was quite as large an audience as usual; at the ninth concert of the Philharmonic Society. Dr. Elgar, the conductor, has taken the society out of the beaten track. In an appreciative programme note, introducing the work, which the society of Thursday performed, Dr. Elgar wrote: 'The members of the Philharmonic Society will not treat this performance as an ordinary, conventional concert, which in England is supposed to begin loud and end louder, whereupon the audience is dismissed with a feeling of satisfaction that they have not met altogether in vain.' … The audience listened to foreign words, and realized that the language of music is universal. To a complete understanding of the whole they were aided by Lady Hampton's paraphrase of the book, and her translation of the composer's account of his inspiration and intention. To Lady Hampton the gratitude of the audience is due … The finished performance reflected credit upon the society and upon the conductor. It was an ambitious undertaking. The chorus, not very strong numerically in tenors and basses, sang with a good measure of confidence, and with more expression than might have been expected, considering that some of the chorus, probably many, may not be very familiar with the German tongue. The orchestra, strengthened in parts by professional help, performed excellently, and the solo work was quite satisfactory. The work selected was especially appropriate to the season, and may aid those who were privileged to hear it to appreciate better the significance of Advent.[19]

Here is the review in *The Worcester Herald*:

> Worcestershire Philharmonic Society's Concert
> A First Performance
>
> Their ninth concert was given by the members of the Philharmonic Society, yesterday (Thursday) afternoon, and was attended by a very numerous and interested audience. These concerts are usually attended by a large number of musical amateurs and others interested in music from city and county, but the attendance on this occasion was exceptional. Probably the novelty of the concert was the cause. Dr. Elgar, the popular conductor, is nothing if not daring, and this trait in his character was exemplified by his introduction to an English audience for the first time a new work, 'Ein Weihnachts Mysterium' (A Christmas mystery), by a German composer Herr Philip Wolfrum.
>
> Herr Wolfrum's work was produced about two years ago at Heidelberg, and since then it has been performed at many of the large towns in Germany with the greatest success. Although it is impossible to fully appreciate such a composition on a first hearing, those who were present at the Public Hall on Thursday will fully endorse the opinion of the critics, who have been unanimous in their praise of the charm, the simplicity, the direct and moving expression imparted by the musicianly use of the ancient melodies which the composer has so deftly interwoven in the fabric of the work. As Dr. Elgar said: 'The technique is beyond criticism, and one must admire the daring with which the musician has completed the task he had set himself; it is a bold thing in a sacred work, which most hearers will probably persist in calling an oratorio, to throw over the whole convention of the oratorio maker – fugues, canons, etc. – and to give us a piece of pure and expressive music'. Dr. Elgar admires this boldness, and seems to wonder at it; yet it is what he himself has done to a certain degree.
>
> Of the merits of the performance it is almost unnecessary to speak, for it is well known that what Dr. Elgar undertakes he does thoroughly. The splendid band under his control gave a rendering of the music which it would be difficult to excel, either in the lighter parts or in those broad and massive passages which characterize the work. Dr. Elgar's skill as a conductor was never more exemplified, and the effects which he succeeded in producing were little short of marvellous. As for the chorus, they gave an effective rendering of the music, despite the undue predominance of the female voices. The chorus 'He hath showed strength with His arm', was a capital performance, as was the one, 'It is the Lord Christ'. The opening chorus of the second part was nicely sung, and the concluding numbers were given with the necessary energy and expression. Only once, in the chorus 'Rejoice, ye Christian folks', was a slight unsteadiness apparent.
>
> Madame Sobrino sang the music allotted to Mary effectively … Madame Mary Beare undertook the mezzo-soprano work. Her voice is mellow, full and pleasing, and she sang with effect. Mr. Edward Branscombe … gave a successful rendering of the trying music of the Evangelist and the Narrator … Mr. F. Lightowler, Mr. H. Large, and Mr. Healey sang the three shepherds' music successfully.

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17 Sister-in-law to Dr Buck of Settle.

18 Programme for the Ninth Worcester Philharmonic Society concert, Public Hall, Worcester, Thursday 12 December 1901, Elgar Birthplace 2004.028. The 50-page programme contained details of all those involved with the Society, including non-performers and the English translation of Wolfrum's text by Lady Hampton together with Wolfrum's article on the work. The concert began with 'Wach auf' from the third act of *Die Meistersinger*.

19 *Berrows Worcester Journal*, 14 December 1901.

At the close of the performance, the audience were loud in their applause. The concert passed off most successfully in every way, and Dr. Elgar is to be congratulated upon this, and also upon the fact that he has been the first to introduce into this country a composition so full of charm, life, and vigour.[20]

The World also reviewed the performance:

… quite the most interesting musical experience of the autumn, if not of the whole year, might have been enjoyed by those who took the trouble to go to Worcester (of all places in the world). But I do not believe that many people in London even knew about it, and I am quite certain that not many people from London were present on Thursday when the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society – as conductor of which Dr. Elgar displays almost unsuspected abilities – produced, for the first time in England, the 'Weihnachts Mysterium' of Wolfrum. It will be a thousand pities if the 'Christmas Mystery' is not heard again soon and often.[21]

The January 1902 edition of *The Musical Times* carried a review:

There is much in the work that is at variance outwardly with our preconceived notions of the devotional in music, but in its true inwardness it is profoundly reverential, and essentially German, and it seems safe to predict that the essential kinship between the two great nations will enable English music-lovers to overlook the strangeness and appreciate it at its full worth: the spirit is closely akin to our own, which underlies it. Dr Wolfrum has not written an oratorio, but he has attempted to compose the music to an old mystery play in a style which takes into account all the most recent developments in music … Dr Wolfrum has moreover a very keen sense of beauty in orchestral tone colour, a very fine instinct for dramatic proportions, and above all a genuine melodic gift … In conclusion, it may be mentioned that the writer heard the work rehearsed in the morning and performed in the afternoon of the same day – a very severe test – and was far more deeply moved by the second playing than by the first.[22]

The Annual General Meeting of the Worcester Philharmonic Society took place on 4 February 1902 in the Foregate Hall, Worcester. Elgar spoke at the meeting:

Dr. Elgar said it rested with the members themselves to make the society successful. He urged them to interest others in it and to secure new members. He heard more of the Philharmonic Society in Germany and in London than he did in Worcestershire. It had brought itself into the notice of the musical world of England and Germany by its introduction to England of the 'Weinhachts Mysterium', which was now down for performances in other English towns.[23]

Immediately after the performance Elgar contacted Wolfrum, who replied on 13 December:

Dearest Colleague
Your telegram of yesterday, which arrived in the evening, was a real pleasure. I feel I may conclude from it that the work of a little-known composer did not rouse in you, the acknowledged English maestro, that feeling that we call in German 'boredom', something that my detailed studies of choral works suggest does not occur rarely. I am so proud that you have accepted my work and if it is successful in your (sadly still completely unknown to me) native country, I must put any success down chiefly to you, the brilliant and imaginative stimulator and dispenser of life. Since I am hoping to make your intellectual acquaintance in the next few days, I hope also to be able to meet you personally and to tell you again how deeply grateful to you I am. Could you please convey my warmest respects to your dear wife, the untiring and kind correspondent in our musical exchanges? I hope it would not seem presumptuous of me if I requested (for my publisher) any notices in newspapers that she may possess. Unfortunately I do not speak English. If I did, I would spare myself no effort to find the most tender and heartfelt English words by which to praise and bless your artist's heart.

Might I be allowed to request from you a picture of yourself?
My thanks from my heart
Your warmest and best greeter Philipp Wolfrum[24]

Julius Buths was to conduct the first German performance of *Gerontius* in Düsseldorf on 19 December. The Elgars set out on the morning of 16 December, met Jaeger at Victoria station and arrived in Düsseldorf at 11.30 the following day. The performance was a triumph. Unhappily, Wolfrum was unable to hear it. He wrote to Elgar on 22 December:

My dear Elgar
I am currently very busy as a 'Pifferari' [an itinerant player of a small bagpipe or oboe], mainly on the trains. I want to just thank you most warmly but in haste for your lovely long letter and tokens of kind feelings. Because of a scenic [?] performance of my work I could not get to Düsseldorf. I cannot tell you how sorry I am. I think Buths will write to me tomorrow about the performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. I am sending the piano transcription today to those ladies who have been described to me as friendly.

I thank you and your dear lady wife for the newspapers. In the New Year I hope to write to you more fully and to tell you how dear to me are your kind feelings.

For today my warmest Christmas greetings
Yours
Wolfrum[25]

Dr Clark has indicated in his review of the CDs that *Ein Weihnachtsmysterium* may have had an influence on the making of Elgar's oratorio *The Apostles*, which was in the offing. However, it could have influenced a more immediate work, for on 28 October when Elgar was heavily involved in preparations for the forthcoming Worcestershire Philharmonic concert, the pianist Fanny Davis wrote to Elgar requesting if he had anything for piano for her to play at a recital in London on 2 December. She wrote again on 6 November and the first sketch of the *Concert Allegro* was written on 16 November. On 21 November Alice recorded that Elgar was busy with his Piano Solo piece and he sent seventeen pages of manuscript to Miss Davies the next day, with more shortly thereafter. He heard her play the work in London on 26 November and went to the recital on 2 December. *The Times* reviewer found it a marriage of Bach and Liszt.

Richard Strauss after hearing Wolfrum's work pronounced that it contained 'Bachian skill united with Lisztian ecstasy'.[26] Therefore, in the light of these comments and the juxtaposition of

20 *Worcester Herald*, 14 December 1901.

21 *The World* printed in *Worcester Herald*, 21 December 1901.

22 *The Musical Times*, 43 (1902), 39.

23 *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 8 February 1902, Martin Bird, ed., *The Path to Knighthood: Diaries 1902 -1904* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2016), 11.

24 Letter 13 December 1901 (Geoff Scargill translation. EBL 7596).

25 Letter 22 December 1901 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7595).

26 Stefan Vanselow, note for the CD recording of *Ein Weihnachtsmysterium*.

the names of these two musical giants, is it too fanciful to suggest that *Ein Weihnachtsmysterium* had a subliminal effect on the *Concert Allegro*?

Wolfrum sent a postcard from Heidelberg postmarked 23 January 1901:

> Dearest Friend
> I thank you most warmly for your lovely card and friendly offer. Novello did indeed approach me but they have not replied to my letter of 10 January. In it I asked them to make me an offer (I have no business experience). I also invited them to an important performance on 20 January in Frankfurt am Main, when Burgstaller (Bayreuth) and an excellent Maria from Holland sang. As I said, I have had no reply. Perhaps Novello did not receive my letter. If you were able to inquire for me I would remain your most grateful
>
> Wolfrum[27]

Envelope addressed to 'Dr Elgar, Composer' at 5 to 6 am on 4 February 1902 and received in Malvern at 11.30pm on 5 February 1902, EBL 7600.

Their subsequent correspondence dealt with the proposed publication of Wolfrum's score by Novello. Wolfrum's letter is postmarked 4 February 1902.

> My dear friend
> I received yesterday from Novello an offer. May I impose on you to be so kind as to advise me in this matter?
>
> Novello are working on the assumption that the price of the piano transcription should – as is usual in England – be kept very low. They are proposing to publish an octavo edition, including text translated at their cost into English, at a price of 3 Marks 60 Pfennig (3.50 net). Out of this sum they would allow me 50 Pf (6d). This means that I would receive one seventh of the selling-price in the shops, that is fourteen and two sevenths percent. They would also require sole rights to the choral parts.

27 Postcard postmarked 23 January 1902 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7593).

> Do you not find that too little? I have had to go through all the pressures and crises of the *'Mystery'* at my own cost since I received very little, actually nothing, from German publishers for my earlier works. As a matter of honour etc I did not do any further work on the piece so I did not publish the *'Mystery'* in spite of receiving quite handsome offers. I have however now made excellent progress. I have composed a considerable number of pieces (150 scores, 1000 piano pieces etc) and spent 8000 Marks. I handed over the whole business to a commissioning publisher, Rochow, in Heidelberg and – after two and a half years – all the costs have been covered from sales. Future income will come to me, apart from 10% to the commissioning publisher.
>
> In addition it is to be hoped that the number of performances will greatly increase, especially when pictures and scenery [sic] are taken into consideration (which is being looked at today for the first time) and a theatre takes over the affair.
>
> Novello will not consider any of this for England, though they are considering performances in the colonies and America. (Boston and New York are possibilities.) They have not mentioned the libretto, which will bring in a great deal financially.
>
> Dear friend, what do you think? Should I insist on an appropriate contribution for all that they are demanding? In my experience production costs are not large. Finally, I would have to carry out further work on the textual documents and on simplifying the piano transcription.
>
> If Novello are not willing to offer better conditions could I not ask the German publishers with branches in London: Breitkopf and Härtel or Schotts and Sons to take the work on?
>
> Might a performance this year in England before the end of the year be possible? Please do not lose patience with me! Might it be possible to thank the master of *The Dream of Gerontius* in person during the Lower Rhine Music Festival in Düsseldorf?
>
> Your devoted friend
> Wolfrum
> I look forward to your response[28]

> Dear Friend
> With the most grateful thanks I am just getting round to answering your very kind letter (I have been involved in a performance of Berlioz' Damnation de Faust. Once again, the tenor was the man you recommended!
>
> After much careful reflection I have come to the conclusion that the best way forward would be to keep to the path that I have started. I feel that Novello proposal is quite acceptable and realise that it is down to you that it has been made. But since I have no idea how things will turn out in America and England I do not on the one hand want to see Novello suffer any losses, but on the other hand I do not want to lose the possible income from the sale of the libretto or the choral parts. Novello are proposing to give me only about 15 % of the sales from the piano pieces, for which they have fixed a very low price, and nothing else.
>
> Up till now I have borne the whole risk of the publication (something like 8000 Marks!) and now honestly feel I want nothing more to do with the matter. I am not concerned at risking perhaps a further 2000 Marks on the publication on the publication of the English piano transcription and the choral parts.
>
> Strictly 'entre nous' I have received an offer from Breitkopf and Haertel to manage sales in London, Brussels, New York in return for compensation [guarantee?] of 10% of the selling price!

28 Letter postmarked 4 February 1902 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7600).

Do you not agree that this is more acceptable than Novello's offer? In any case I need to take into account that there would be no problems in arranging performances if I put the whole matter into the hands of Breitkopf.

Above all, I trust that there is no question of my losing your friendly protection for my music.

Could I ask you to read the manuscript of my piano transcription before it goes to the printer?

Please write to give me your opinion before I give Novello my final answer.

I hope you are well and send my best regards to your good lady wife.
Wolfrum[29]

He wrote again on 24 March 1902 outlining difficulties with Novello over his score:

Dear Elgar
On my travels the enclosed letter from the publishers, Novello, has arrived. You will see that they will not agree to any of my requests to publish a prose version of the text and the choir parts. I wrote to them also suggesting that the piano transcription should be priced higher, since your *Dream of Gerontius* is priced higher than what they are proposing for my *Mysterium*. They have not agreed to that either. Nonetheless I am inclined to let them publish, particularly as that is your advice. But even though I will let them go ahead, I have a number of issues to raise with them: 1. They should publish the simplified piano transcription. 2. They should make sure that the translation (provided by a 'first-rate' translator) corresponds exactly to my music, subject to checking.

Would you hold it against me if I thought of taking the whole thing over and – at my own risk – passed the marketing to Breitkopf and Härtel, who have branches in London and New York? I need reassurance that if I did this I would not be forfeiting your protection for my work. Would you be willing as it were to intervene with Novello and Co on my behalf so that these gentlemen at least do not do anything that may harm possible performances of my work in England?

Would you be willing to let me have some words of reassurance from you?

Until the 15 April I can be reached at: Lonzier near Montreux in Switzerland.

Sincere and grateful good wishes
Yours
Wolfrum[30]

On 26 August Wolfrum wrote again from Heidelberg seeking Elgar's assistance with galley proofs of his score:

Dear Friend
I want to respond to your kind permission to send you a galley proof of my work, with a request that you mark in red or blue everything that you feel must or should be corrected. Would you be so kind as to write a key to any abbreviations on the first page? I'd like to leave the markings of the instruments in German but include the English equivalents in brackets.

With a thousand thanks and greetings
In admiration
Wolfrum

PS Isn't the English translation of the text brilliant? (It's by Constance)[31]

29 Letter 22 February 1902 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7602).

30 Letter 24 March 1902 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7597).

31 Letter 26 August 1902 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7589).

He wrote again. His postcard is postmarked 18 October 1902:

Dear Friend
I am happy and touched and owe you great thanks for the figure of the Christ Child you have sent me from London. The English piano transcription and choral voice parts of my *Christmas Mystery* are at present on hold but I expect everything will be completed by the middle of November. Constance Bache's translation has turned out very well. I hope you will allow me to send you the final draft. Till then my very best wishes and warmest congratulations on your recent great successes. Please remember me to your good lady wife.

Your devoted Wolfrum[32]

Postcard from Wolfrum 18 October 1902, EBL 7592

He wrote to Elgar from Heidelberg on Christmas Day 1902:

My dear friend
What must you think of me? Not until today – as I sit next to the Christmas tree – have I been able to thank you for your great generosity in taking on the task of proof-reading my *Mysterium.* This reminds me how a year ago you devotedly and affectionately took the performance of this work into your artist's hands.

I had hoped to send you, along with my thanks for your kind proof-reading, a copy of my piano transcription. But this has been delayed and delayed. I am currently in a mad rush of work: lectures, tutorials, modern music. On 8 December I had to travel to Vienna for a performance of the *Mysterium*. This meant that I could not carry out my intention to write to you. There has been more work to do on the piano transcription and libretto. As a result I am not in a position even today to send you the piano

32 Postcard postmarked 18 October 1902 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7592).

transcription. It will follow. The libretto had to be printed in New York in order for it to be protected from being reprinted. The *Mysterium* has been booked for a performance for the Handel Society in London. I am cognizant that I owe all this to you. I am hopeful that everything will be completed for the University Anniversary in July. I have devised new arrangements for the orchestra and choir. I am hoping that the electric organ action will have arrived from London (Hope-Jones) and cannot wait for the moment when *The Dream of Gerontius* becomes reality.

Mrs Cosima Wagner was in Heidelberg recently. As a thank you for the performance of works by Bach, which were given in the church and my home, she presented me with the last hat that Franz Liszt wore, together with la Sainte Bible and la Vulgate which were always with the Meister during his life. These relics have been a great joy to me.

Please do not be angry at my long silence. Please accept once more my gratitude, and to you and your gracious wife I send my heartiest good wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Ever in admiration
Your
Wolfrum[33]

Plans were afoot to perform the *Mysterium* at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival in September 1903. Wolfrum wrote to Elgar from Venice on 11 March 1903:

My dear Sir and Friend
I send you – together with my dear friend R Strauss, who came to stay with me yesterday - my best wishes from Lagunenstadt.[34] At the same time I want to thank you most warmly for the kind approval of my Christmas *Mysterium*, written by Dr Sinclair. But will you allow me to put a question to you in confidence?

Might it be possible for me to conduct the first substantial performance of the work in Hereford, to show how I would wish it to be performed? Recently, I had to sit through a really poor performance in a large town in Germany, given by a conductor who was something of a show-off. Of course, this could only happen if Dr Sinclair were not offended and also if I could be reimbursed the travel costs. A kind response from you via the Vienna poste restante would be safest.

Please pass my best wishes to your good lady wife.
In gratitude

Wolfrum[35]

Wolfrum's work was performed in Hereford Cathedral on 10 September 1903, but Alice does not record that Elgar attended the performance. Wolfrum did not come to England to hear the performance.

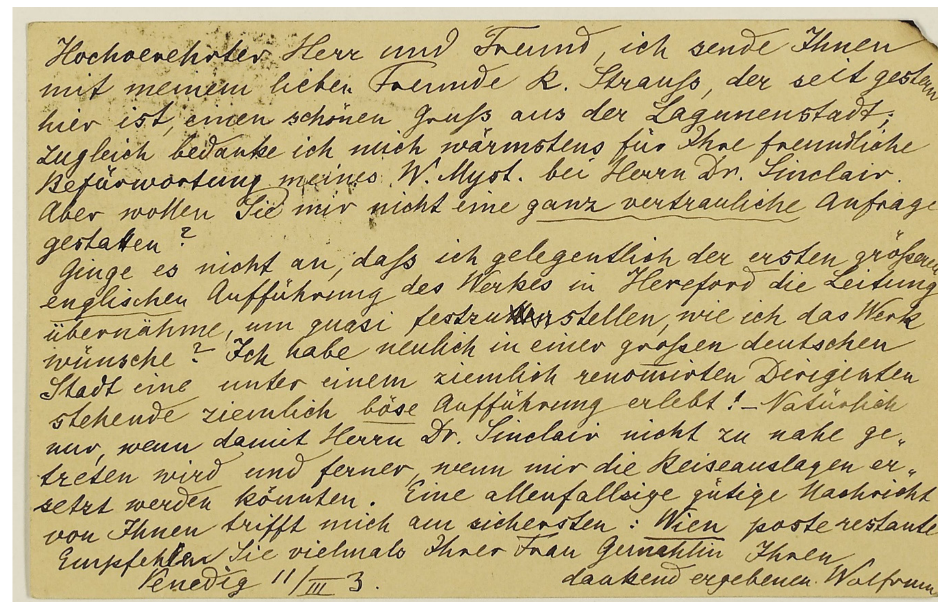
His final letters to Elgar concerned organ-building matters in Germany.

My dear Friend
Now that the organ revolution has to a certain extent settled down, I want to thank you most sincerely for your lovely letter to Wangerooge. Following a number of files and letters emanating from Mr Voit it would seem that the English firm has been putting him off for several months and have finally told him that they can't manufacture what he wanted. Voit was supposed to be handing over the organ on 1

33 Letter 25 December 1902 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7605).

34 Town built on a lagoon.

35 Postcard postmarked Venice 11 March 1903 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7593).


Hochverehrter Herr und Freund, ich sende Ihnen
mit meinem lieben Freunde R. Strauss, der seit gestern
hier ist, einen schönen Gruss aus der Lagunenstadt;
zugleich bedanke ich mich wärmstens für Ihre freundliche
Befürwortung meines W. Myst. bei Herrn Dr. Sinclair.
Aber wollen Sie mir nicht eine ganz vertrauliche Anfrage
gestatten?
Ginge es nicht an, dass ich gelegentlich der ersten grössern
englischen Aufführung des Werkes in Hereford die Leitung
übernähme, um quasi festzustellen, wie ich das Werk
wünsche? Ich habe neulich in einer grossen deutschen
Stadt eine unter einem ziemlich renommirten Dirigenten
stehende ziemlich böse Aufführung erlebt! – Natürlich
nur, wenn damit Herrn Dr. Sinclair nicht zu nahe ge-
treten wird und ferner, wenn mir die Reiseauslagen er-
setzt werden könnten. Eine allenfallsige gütige Nachricht
von Ihnen trifft mich am sichersten: Wien poste restante
Empfehlen Sie vielmals Ihrer Frau Gemahlin Ihren
Venedig 11/III 3. dankend ergebenen Wolfrum

Wolfrum's postcard to Elgar from Venice dated 11 March 1903, EBL 7593.

June but the firm has produced nothing of the console and the furniture which they were contracted to deliver. Voit has broken off the deal and is now in the process of constructing an electrical/pneumatic instrument drawing on German experience and models.
Isn't that dreadful of the English firm? By the way, they have removed the name Hope-Jones from all their business publications!
Apart from your welcome telegram and kind card I have only received from Hereford some newspapers, which were all under-stamped. The last delivery also required me to pay a surcharge. I did not accept it.
As ever, a thousand thanks.
Yours truly
Wolfrum[36]

My dear Sir and Friend
I would be incredibly grateful if you could be so kind as to ask (via this letter) Mr Hope-Jones or the eminent organ company using his system whether the consoles with electric cables could be sent to me immediately. I have heard that an organ-maker in Durlach (Baden): Veit and Sons, was supposed to have installed a mobile console with electric action in the City Concert Hall in Heidelberg on the first of June. He has been saying that the organ will arrive any day and is going into raptures about it – all about this latest English equipment (I have not heard about this just through books but from an American pupil). Yesterday this man announced to Heidelberg Council that he was not going to be able to install the console – the English company/factory had let him down and he was proposing to install another system: electric/pneumatic etc, etc. I no longer trust this fellow but if our organ is not ready soon I shall be eternally embarrassed.

36 Letter 2 August 1903 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7594).

> Please, dear friend, could you contact one of your organ sources to report to me on the situation as soon as possible? Otherwise I shall drown myself in the deepest part of the sea!!!
> Thousand congratulations on your '*Apostles*'.
> With greetings of admiration to yourself and your wife
> In gratitude
> Wolfrum[37]

Wolfrum, in agreement with Heidelberg's City Council, organised a three-day Music Festival held on 24 – 26 October 1903. The venue was the new Heidelberg Civic Hall where the performance space was 'equipped with the most up-to-date innovations of appearance and acoustic effects'. Wolfrum conducted the concerts. He sent Elgar full details probably hoping to entice him to Heidelberg, but Elgar did not travel to Germany for the Festival.

A Christmas Mystery received another performance on 11 September 1930 at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival, but it is not known if Elgar attended. Dorothy Silk sang the part of Mary, Steuart Wilson was the Evangelist and Narrator, with Joan Elwes as the Angel of the Annunciation.

I am very grateful to Christopher Bennett who kindly provided me with documents, including the programme for the WPS concert on 12 December 1901 and copies of the letters from Philipp Wolfrum to Edward and Alice Elgar. I am immensely grateful to Geoff Scargill, who kindly put aside his other work and immediately tackled the translation of Wolfrum's letters at very short notice. I thank him for undertaking this task, which sent him back to his Oxford Duden dictionary. I also thank the late Martin Bird whose invaluable database of letters and documents I have readily drawn upon once again.

Kevin Mitchell is the Vice-Chair of the London Branch, and, as Lead Editor, one of the editorial team for the Journal.

THE THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL
1930.

HEREFORD
MUSIC MEETING

(Being the Two Hundred and Tenth Meeting of the Three Choirs of Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester for the benefit of the Widows and Orphans of Clergymen in the Dioceses).

THURSDAY MORNING,
September 11th, at 11-30 & 2-30
In the Cathedral.

A Christmas Mystery .... *Wolfrum*
Parsifal (Finale Act I) .... *Wagner*
Pianoforte Concerto .... *Mozart*
Psalmus Hungaricus .... *Kodaly*

WORD BOOK—PRICE ONE SHILLING.

The Congregation is requested to STAND during the Prayers.

Three Choirs Festival Programme for concert on 11 September 1930 - Elgar Birthplace archive.

37 Letter 21 August 1903 (Geoff Scargill translation, EBL 7590).

Memorial to Philipp Wolfrum in Peterskirche, Heidelberg.

BB & EE – A Personal Response

Adrian Brown

Reading Andrew Neill's article on Britten and Elgar (*Journal*, December 2021) brought back many happy memories. As a student who was studying conducting at the Royal Academy of Music, one of the first things I did when coming to London in 1968 was to join the London Symphony Chorus under John Alldis, whom I knew from an Ipswich connection. I had already that year sung Haydn's *Seasons* under Britten in the Aldeburgh Festival Chorus at Snape.

During my time at the Academy I got to love Elgar's music more and more, not least due to the very knowledgeable influence of Maurice Miles. He actually took the orchestra through *Gerontius* on my 21st birthday!

Great joy when in 1971 our then chorus master Arthur Oldham, a great close friend of Ben, told us we were to record the work with Britten. I had by 1971 purchased my tiny print miniature full score! Only a hundred main chorus singers were used (twenty tenors). I was lucky and I went down to my home county to take part over four days, staying in a quasi-hotel in Thorpeness.

Britten came to a preliminary London rehearsal at Cecil Sharp House. Ben and Arthur greeted one another with great affection and the work that evening was vivid and memorable. During the proceedings of that week I noted in my score all that Ben 'did' and I still possess it, along with notes of many misprints. Ben showed great care for newly found detail which with his interpretation blew the dust off the work.

The Maltings at Snape was very crowded for this recording. The orchestra was on the floor in front of the stage, the chorus in the raised orchestra seats with the 'luxury' of Willcocks with King's College Choir behind us - as far back as possible to get some distance effect. I felt that the acoustic was, for all the perfection of Snape, a little cramped for this large work. Britten had recently performed the work with Cambridge University Music Society.

Britten was, from the start, totally interested in sentiment and not sentimentality; the tempos adhered to the metronome marks. I noticed he had a brand-new cream Novello score (I was jealous). When years later I saw the facsimile of the Autograph Score it became obvious to me that Ben had looked at it as well. Most notably Britten had added a drum roll over the cut off both times in the Prelude. No one had done this before, not even EE. When, those few years later, I studied the facsimile it was however clear (despite the muddle in the autograph) that the Bass Drum is not to 'do' the cut-off! There are many other places where the Aldeburgh Composer had checked with great care the Malvern One! I remember talking to his regular leader Emanuel Hurwitz about Ben's reading of any work: he said, in a leg-pulling way, that sometimes it was 'too' Britten, as if Britten had written it himself!

Note that with a composer's touch Britten adds a *sforzando* to the timpani seven bars after rehearsal cue 113. My other observations were that tempi were brisk ('Go Forth' an example) and forthright in 'Sanctus Fortis'. An *animato* was anxious and hurried. Also, he had noted, as do I now,

that often what was *con sord* (muted) in the horns in the orchestral parts was actually 'stopped' in the manuscript; a totally different thing. I hope this is observed in the forthcoming new edition along with many errors that still pervade this masterpiece.

A few more recollections of fine observations of the score by him. 'Praise to the Holiest' is approached with mastery and 'the great blaze' never inflated. He observes to a nicety the *molto stringendo* into 'O Loving vision' at 75. Also, to 'sew the music together' he moves into the fugue double chorus at 89 with supreme ease, to establish the tempo which instead of bumping up now and again as the music culminates, he gradually gets to go faster and faster. It is with great observation too that at eight bars after 100 he does not do the ritardando until it is printed. A first performance! One must remember that Britten had a fine conducting technique to achieve all this. He was wonderful.

We did at times feel Pears was tired and not in such fine voice as in the Boult TV recording a couple of years earlier. Yvonne Minton was a pregnant Angel and one take of 'Alleluia' was recorded minus the top 'A': after the birth of the baby she went into Decca to put in the said note. Shirley-Quirk was totally at one with Britten's unsentimental approach.

That was Britten; a total genius, A man determined to get to the root of music and any work he tackled. He was soon to be 60. He joked with Arthur that it was really his 90th birthday. Little did we know how ill he was. He loved working with amateurs, community musicians. He was at his best with us and at his best for Elgar. So many vivid memories of 50 years ago. Life changing for me.

Elgar medallist, Adrian Brown, comes from a distinguished line of Sir Adrian Boult's most gifted pupils. After graduating from the Royal Academy of Music in London, he studied with Sir Adrian for some years. He remains the only British conductor to have reached the finals of the Herbert von Karajan Young Conductors Award: the Berlin Philharmonic was the first professional orchestra he conducted. In 1992 Adrian conducted the St. Petersburg Philharmonic and in 1998 Sir Roger Norrington recommended him to conduct the Camerata Salzburg. Adrian has conducted many leading British orchestras including the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the London Sinfonietta. In November 2018 he formed the Elgar Sinfonia.

ELGAR'S PUZZLES

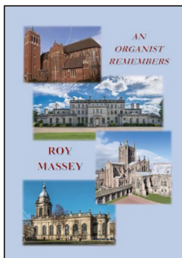
For some time the Elgar Society has had a policy not to become involved in proposed 'solutions' to the hidden theme of the *Enigma Variations*. the Dorabella Cypher and the Soul enshrined in the Violin Concerto, and such proposals that have been received have not been published by the Society.

However, it is recognised that for some these matters have a fascination and perhaps these mysteries have increased awareness of the man and his music. The Society continues to receive proposed 'solutions' and whilst these have not been published in The *Journal* or *News* it accepts that these may be of interest to a wider readership.

The Society notes that a dedicated independent Facebook page has been set up in order that these questions should be given circulation and so that the written 'solutions' can be seen generally. Thus those who wish to contribute to the arguments should post their pieces to www.facebook.com/groups/1577560725930465.

It must be stressed that the Elgar Society in no way accepts, sanctions or approves the content of this independent Facebook page or endorses any of the 'solutions' so proffered.

BOOK REVIEWS



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Salisbury: The Royal School of Church Music

178 pages 2021

An Organist Remembers
Roy Massey

Birmingham and Hereford necessarily feature prominently in any account of Elgar's career, Birmingham for such things as William Stockley's concerts, the four important premieres that took place there, and the composer's unhappy tenure of the Peyton Professorship; Hereford for the years at Plas Gwyn and for the roles respectively played by the subjects of Variation XI and the dedicatee of the fifth march of *Pomp and Circumstance*. Here is the autobiography of another Midlands musician, one who was born in Birmingham less than three months after Elgar's death and whose long, varied and distinguished career embraced for nearly three decades the responsibility for the music at Hereford Cathedral. Roy Massey was educated at Moseley Grammar School and then at the University of Birmingham, where he read Music (and where by then the Peyton Professor was Sir Anthony Lewis). His early experiences as a chorister at a local church, St Martin's in the Bull Ring, drew him to music in general and to organs and organ-playing in particular, and in due course he studied with David Willcocks, who at that time was Organist of Worcester Cathedral: it underlines the teenaged Massey's ability and promise (and presumably the care with which he was drilled by Willcocks) that in July 1952 he obtained the ARCO Limpus Prize without any rehearsal on the RCO organ. From 1953 to 1960 he was organist of the church of St Alban-the-Martyr, Bordesley; and from 1960 to 1965 he was at St Augustine's, Edgbaston. There followed a break from Birmingham (his first) and from 1965 to 1968 he combined the duties of Warden of the Royal School of Church Music, Addington Palace, Croydon with those of Organist of what is now Croydon Minster. When he returned to Birmingham, in 1968, it was to become Organist of St Philip's Cathedral and Director of Music at King Edward's School. The Hereford appointment came in 1974.

Percy Hull had retired from Hereford Cathedral in 1949, having two years earlier been knighted for successfully resurrecting the Three Choirs Festival after the Second World War.[1] His immediate successors were Meredith Davies (1950-1956), Melville Cook (1956-1966) and Richard Lloyd (1966-1974).[2] Dr Massey's appointment followed Lloyd's move to Durham Cathedral, and with the post of Organist and Master of the Choristers came the conductorship of the Hereford Choral Society and of course major responsibilities in

1 Shaw, H. Watkins, *The Succession of Organists of the Chapel Royal and the Cathedrals of England and Wales from c.1538* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 143.

2 Shaw, op. cit., 143-4.

connection with the Three Choirs Festivals: he was conductor-in-chief at nine of the festivals, and it was during those Hereford years that he acquired such distinctions as the Lambeth doctorate (1990) and the MBE (1997). Retirement from the Hereford post came in 2001, but active, high-level involvement with music has continued: from 2003 to 2005, for example, Dr Massey served as President of the Royal College of Organists.

This is a book that happily complements Michelle Whitefoot's recently published work on the Worcester Festival Choral Society,[3] and there is much in it for those who attend the Three Choirs Festivals and take an interest in their history. As the title more than implies, however, it is aimed chiefly at organists, and much information is imparted about Dr Massey's church and cathedral work, his recitals, and various organs played by him over the years. Although both organ sonatas of Elgar are within his repertoire, he does not appear to be quite as much of a devotee of the composer as, say, his former colleague Donald Hunt, but he describes his feelings of reverence on being at The Oratory, Birmingham and seeing the manuscript full score of *The Dream of Gerontius*, the one lodged there by the composer himself; and an organist who names his cat 'Dorabella', and who begins his memoirs with a photograph of the representation of Elgar in the grounds of Hereford Cathedral, is clearly an Elgarian. Dr Massey is candid about the difficulties he had to overcome when the Hereford post obliged him to conduct a festival chorus and orchestra with relatively little prior experience, and he refers in a certain amount of detail to his first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*, which took place at the Hereford Festival of 1976. But it is clear throughout the book that notwithstanding his Three Choirs and other responsibilities, the Church of England and its music, and a striving for perfection in its daily services, have always been at the centre of Dr Massey's activities, and clear that these things have always been even more important to him than his wide-ranging and much-admired work as a concert organist, organ consultant and conductor.

This is a sunny volume. Dr Massey is light years away from the crabby, clergy-hating stereotype that lies behind the well-known joke about organists and terrorists. He is warmly appreciative of colleagues, both clerical and musical, and there is much here, particularly for aspiring musicians, about the importance of creating and maintaining good working relations with others. Dr Massey's personal gifts are underlined by his success in recruiting choir and chorus members and in particular by the truly remarkable way in which he persuaded H.P. Bulmer Ltd, the Hereford-based cider maker, to pay for the restoration of the Father Willis organ at Hereford Cathedral; but criticism is given when properly due, and organ historians will be grateful for the frank assessment of the late Henry Willis 4 (as well as the splendid photograph

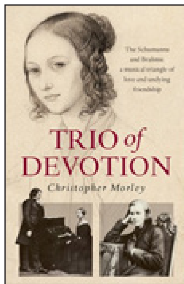
3 Whitefoot, Michelle, *A Choral Chronicle* [:] *the history of the Worcester Festival Choral Society* (Shelsley Beauchamp: Whitefoot PR Limited, 2020). The book was reviewed by Kevin Allen in the August 2020 edition of this journal, q.v.

of the Hereford console in its original, i.e., G.R.S., condition).[4] Nor is there ambiguity about the author's view of such things as 'worship songs' and the Downes concert organ at Gloucester Cathedral.

Dr Massey has a way with words, whether delivered off the cuff at gatherings of organists; whether delivered formally, as at Donald Hunt's memorial service; or whether, as here, taking the form of continuous prose.[5] This is a good read. It is perhaps a pity that the book lacks an index, and the recital programmes have not emerged from the printing process with quite as much clarity as one would wish. Moreover, there is some presumably unintended repetition (we learn twice about the shortcomings of the Johannesburg organ) and the relative paucity of dates means that when exactly an event took place is not always entirely clear;[6] but it would be most ungenerous to labour such points.

Warmly recommended.

Relf Clark



Brewin Books

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62 pages

Trio of Devotion
Christopher Morley

That good friend of the Society, Christopher Morley, has delved into the lives of Robert and Clara Schumann, and their complex relationship with Johannes Brahms. This changed for Clara, notably after Robert's death in 1856, and Morley has taken the original approach of writing a novella about these three geniuses, which is a mixture of fact and conjecture. However, much of this story is true and he lays bare (in more ways than one) the tragic life of Robert and the development of the relationship between Brahms and Clara. The book is of interest to Elgarians for several reasons, not the least being Elgar's admiration for Schumann's music: 'my ideal!' Clara Schumann was also the teacher of Fanny Davies (one of Clara's finest pupils) the dedicatee and performer of the premiere of the *Concert Allegro* in 1901.

Morley makes use of letters, diaries and his imagination to enter the charged world that developed within the Schumann family. Brahms became part of this and Morley portrays the intensity of the feelings Clara and Brahms developed for each other as Robert sank into madness. He spares no punches as he tackles the attraction Brahms later felt for the Schumann's younger daughter, Julie.

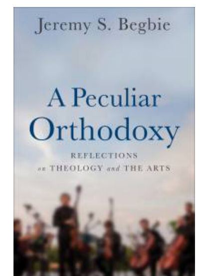
This is not a book for the squeamish as Morley does not gloss over the physical side of Clara's relationship with her husband (all those children) and (possibly) Brahms. Her relationship with the latter suddenly changed and Morley's suggestion as to why this happened is certainly plausible. This change and Brahms' later rejection by Julie Schumann goes to suggest some of the reasons why he might have built a carapace around his heart, allowing his emotions to become obscured except through his music.

There are a number of vignettes which make the book more than just a story. For example, on a visit to Britain, Clara and her daughter Marie stayed with Dr Arnold (the grandfather of RPA in Elgar's *Variations*) at Rugby School. They were both 'bemused when a young man was presented to them as the school's finest sportsman. "In Germany we would have had the school's finest scholar presented to us"' wrote Marie. Sadly, nothing seems to have changed in 170 years!

Morley gives us an insight into the challenges facing Clara as a concert pianist, recitalist, teacher and widow of a renowned composer, as well as a composer herself. That she managed all this and cared for six surviving children and an increasingly disturbed husband makes her one of the 19th century's most remarkable women. This is not a biography of three great musicians but an imagined and plausible glimpse into their relationships, which coloured the art of them all.

Andrew Neill

A Peculiar Orthodoxy: Reflections on Theology and the Arts
Jeremy Begbie



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214 pages

This volume brings together nine essays by Jeremy Begbie, Thomas A. Langford Distinguished Professor of Theology at Duke University and affiliated lecturer in the Faculty of Music at Cambridge. A teacher of theology and a professionally-trained and active musician, Begbie specialises in the interplay between theology and the arts, particularly music. Sir James Macmillan and Paul Spicer are among the leading musicians with whom he has worked. As he writes and demonstrates in the present volume 'not only does theology illuminate music, but music illuminates and enriches our theology'. An engaging and enlivening speaker, Begbie gave a most stimulating talk at the Worcester Three Choirs Festival last year 'Seeing and Hearing'. Deftly illustrated on the piano, he addressed the questions 'What can music teach us that images cannot?' and 'What can a composer do through music that a painter cannot?'

One of the essays included here will be of particular interest to readers of this *Journal,* 'Confidence and Anxiety in Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*'. This has been previously published in a notable collection of pieces by various

4 Strictly, it was 'Henry Willis 4' rather than, as Dr Massey gives it, 'Henry Willis IV'. Mr Willis himself told me that 'IV' suggests 'Ivy', a girl's name, and he was reluctant to give the impression that there was anything feminine about him (unlikely though it was that anyone regarded the Captain Bligh of organ-building as lady-like).

5 Those whose appetites are whetted by the present volume should consult Shaw, H. Watkins and Massey, R., *The Organists and Organs of Hereford Cathedral* (Hereford: Hereford Cathedral Organ Committee, 2005).

6 The date of Dr Massey's winning the Limpus Prize is by courtesy of Andrew McCrea of the RCO.

writers, *Music and Theology in Nineteenth Century Britain*, edited by Martin Clarke[1] which was positively reviewed by Geoffrey Hodgkins in this *Journal* in December 2014. Published at £60, that book is now listed at £125 in hardback or £45 in paperback. By today's prices *A Peculiar Orthodoxy* is good value at £18.99.

In using the word 'peculiar' Begbie has in mind both the strangeness and distinctiveness of biblically based theology 'centering on the embodiment of the world's Creator in a crucified king, and a God who is perplexingly threefold' (pages vi/vii). For a robust and unashamed Trinitarian belief to interact with the arts is not to control or confine artistic creativity, but rather to liberate and open up possibilities. Whilst there is some engagement with visual arts and literature, including a perceptive essay on the Seventeenth Century poet George Herbert (himself highly musical, as Begbie reveals) music is the art which pervades these essays.

This review will concentrate on music, discussing some of the essays, with fuller consideration of the *Gerontius* chapter. Begbie's writing combines precision with passion and enthusiasm. His engagement with a range of academic disciplines is impressive and, happily, footnotes are at the bottom of the pages. The book is well printed and fully indexed.It is no surprise that Begbie is keen on J.S. Bach. In 'Created Beauty: the witness of J.S. Bach', a theological account of created beauty is adumbrated, and the music of Bach contributes to this understanding. Indebted to the work of Laurence Dreyfus, Begbie demonstrates how 'invention' and 'elaboration', 'exploring the potential of the musical material in hand', are central to the way Bach works, enthralling scholars and players. Attentive listeners, too, he may well have added. This essay could well enhance appreciation of Bach's well-nigh inexhaustible corpus.

Admirers and detractors of Elgar's music not infrequently label it as 'sentimental'. Begbie is wary of sentimentality, which he characterises as emotionally superficial, trivialising evil and evading costly action in the world. In 'Beauty, Sentimentality and the Arts', Begbie distinguishes between sentimentality and advocates ways of construing beauty which avoid 'the pathologies of sentimentalism', the Three Days of Easter crucial to this understanding.

I take issue with Begbie seeing the final movement of Tchaikovsky's *Pathetique Symphony* as an all-consuming wallow. In tension with this, however, Begbie refers to the movement again in another chapter 'Faithful Feelings' writing of it as 'concentrated grief in music', surely nearer the mark.

Contributors to a recent episode of the Radio Four series *In Our Time* gave a more judicious evaluation of sentimentality when considering Dickens' *A Christmas Carol.*

There is considerable overlap of material between the chapters of 'A Peculiar Orthodoxy' which is advantageous in such a closely argued, demanding volume, Begbie frankly acknowledges the repetition in his introduction to the

1 Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012

chapter 'Natural Theology and Music'. Previously published in a reference book this succinct essay helpfully encapsulates key themes expanded in other essays.The *Dream of Gerontius* chapter is a valuable contribution to the extensive literature on what Begbie calls 'one of the undisputed musical masterpieces of the nineteenth century', albeit one surrounded by 'profound ambivalence'. *Gerontius* is depicted as 'a work of consolation and comfort, borne along by broad currents of affirmation, confidence and hopefulness' yet with darker colours streaking through, 'an unresolved oscillation between confidence and anxiety, striving and shrinking, reaching forth and holding back', attributes discernible across a range of Elgar's music. As in other essays, Begbie's engagement with other writers is impressive, drawing shrewdly upon recent Elgar scholarship, notably the 'double edged emotional vocabulary' which Matthew Riley hears in Elgar and the tonal structures Elgar deploys, as identified by J.P.E. Harper-Scott, exemplified in the First Symphony as well as *Gerontius*. Relating the ambivalence of his music to the contradictions of Elgar's personality, there's an eloquent quotation from Charles Edward McGuire and an account of Byron Adams' somewhat tendentious views. Begbie observes that 'Elgar's faith waned considerably in later years' though it is regrettable he does not refer to *Providence and Art* by Geoffrey Hodgkins[2] whose scrupulous and sensitive discussion could have sharpened the point.

As might be expected, Begbie's particular insights are in theological matters. He gives an illuminating and succinct account of the Roman Catholic dogma of purgatory and Newman's mature understanding of it. Begbie's claim that Newman emphasises the 'purifying role' of purgatory, rather than punitive beliefs, needs some qualifying. After all, the Angel holds the Soul 'o'er the *penal* waters' and, in lines not set by Elgar, Newman writes of the Soul

> A double debt he has to pay-
> The forfeit of his sins

Throughout the essay Begbie returns to 'one of the most celebrated moments in *Gerontius* - the Soul's lightning-brief encounter with God, from which he instantly recoils', "*Take me away*"'. With an agonising sense of uncleanness the Soul faces purgatory whilst singing of his 'Absent Lord'. Elgar clearly grasped the absence of God for the Soul in purgatory. In a telling letter he wrote to Jaeger

> Please remember that none of the 'action' takes place in the *presence* of God: I would not have tried *that* neither did Newman[.] The Soul says 'I go before my God'- but *we* don't [-] we stand outside - I've thrown over all the 'machinery' for c[e]lestial music, harps &c'[3]

Begbie proposes that, at its deepest level, Elgar's oscillation between confidence and anxiety concerns a *theological* ambivalence. The persistent

2 Elgar Editions: Rickmansworth, 2002

3 Letter dated 17 April 1900 quoted in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and His Publishers Vol 1* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 175.

oscillation between confidence and anxiety in *Gerontius* is encapsulated in words of Newman which Elgar chose not to set

> And these two pains, so counter and so keen –
> The longing for Him when thou seest Him not;
> The shame of self at the thought of seeing Him,-
> Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory.

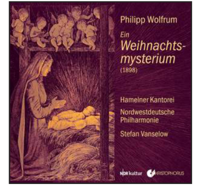
There is indeed a 'sharp contrast' between Newman's understanding of the Christian post-mortem encounter with God and the witness of the New Testament writers whom 'it is hard to believe . . . would imagine approaching God after death with the plea "Take me away"'. In the New Testament, purgation is necessary indeed. It is taught as taking place 'through Jesus Christ in the power of the [Holy] Spirit', not in a post-mortem place with an absent Lord. There is an *assurance* in the New Testament and a conviction that shame, 'highly appropriate in this life' has been taken care of in the reconciling action of God in Christ. This note of assurance is 'of a radically different register' than we find in *Gerontius.* Interestingly, Begbie approvingly cites Joseph Ratzinger, who became Pope Benedict XV1, as giving an account of purgatorial cleansing fire as 'the Lord himself' rather than a post-mortem state distanced from God as in Newman's understanding presented in his 'poetry of dogma'.

A Peculiar Orthodoxy is a demanding read though most rewarding, not least for Elgarians.

William Cole

A former Chairman of Southern Branch, William Cole joined the Society in 1986. He retired following a career with theological books in 2019 and serves as a Church of England Reader in the Lichfield Diocese.

CD REVIEWS



Christophorus

CHR 77458

Philipp Wolfrum: *Ein Weihnachtsmysterium*, Op.31
Joo-Anne Bitter (soprano), Anne Schuldt (alto), Pawel Brozek (tenor), Martin Berner (baritone), Hans Christian Hinz (baritone), Hamelner Kantorei an der Marktkirche, Jugendkantorei Hameln, Philipp-Wolfrum-Ensemble, Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie,

Stefan Vanselow

On 19 December 1901, Elgar attended the second complete performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. It took place in Düsseldorf, where the work was presented as *Der Traum des Gerontius*, Newman's text having been translated by Professor Julius Buths (who was present at Birmingham Town Hall on 3 October 1900 and in spite of all the problems on that occasion greatly impressed). Exactly one week before that second performance, at a concert given in Worcester by the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society, Elgar had conducted Philipp Wolfrum's *Ein Weihnachtsmysterium*, Op.31, and perhaps his choice of the work was a way of thanking Buths in advance by making clear his admiration for German musical culture. At any rate, according to Percy Young this performance by Elgar was the first in England,[1] and Wulstan Atkins adds that the Wolfrum work made the concert especially interesting for his father:

> … now long forgotten, [it] was first produced in Heidelberg in 1899 [*sic*], and had created a great impression in Germany in the many performances it had received there, because it had broken away from the normal oratorio form, and in consequence had greatly interested both Elgar and Atkins.[2]

Notwithstanding the 'great impression' and 'many performances', it appears that the work may have failed to impress Atkins, for according to Boden its only subsequent performances within the Three Choirs ambit were not at Worcester but at Hereford, at the festivals of 1903 and 1930;[3] and Elgar himself appears to have had no more dealings with it, although in a letter to Frank Schuster dated 13 February 1905 he recommended the fourth scene of Part II, *Die drei Könige aus dem Morgenlande*, for inclusion in an LSO concert

1 Young, P.M., ed., *Letters of Edward Elgar and other writings* (London: Geoffrey Bles Limited, 1956), 98.

2 Atkins, E.W., *The Elgar-Atkins friendship* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles (Publishers) Limited, 1984), 60. Atkins gives an incorrect date: the work was composed and first performed in 1898.

3 See Boden, A., *Three Choirs* [:] *a history of the festival* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1992), 280.

on 19 March.[4] How did Elgar come to know about the work? There had been correspondence between him and Wolfrum in the period 1901-3, and perhaps the answer lies there;[5] but by the turn of the century Elgar knew a number of other German musicians, both in this country and in Germany itself, any one of whom could have been a conduit (as well as Breitkopf und Härtel, who published it and who in 1896 had published his Sonata for Organ, Op.28).

Wolfrum was born in 1854, in the Franconian town of Schwarzenbach am Wald, and studied at Munich's Royal Conservatory of Music, where his teachers included Rheinberger (for the organ and composition) and Franz Wüllner (for choral singing and conducting).[6] In 1884, after six years spent working as a teacher, Wolfrum moved to Heidelberg, where he became both a professor and the Director of Music at the University, and it was here that he spent substantially the whole of the rest of his life. He seems typical of a certain kind of German musician at that time, and indeed later, in the nation's history, the kind that taught at university or conservatoire level, played the organ, directed choirs, and managed to keep composition and in particular musicology in orbit around these core activities.[7] Like his friend and younger contemporary Max Reger, he was a traditionalist. His work as an organist must have kept before him the German traditions embodied in the organ works of such composers as Buxtehude and J.S. Bach, and especially those works of theirs that are based on the melodies of the Lutheran church; but he evidently kept abreast of contemporary developments as well (for example, it is a measure of Wolfrum's commitment to the music of Franz Liszt that some of the volumes in the Liszt Complete Edition were his work). And whereas Reger seems, for all his chromaticism, to have been firmly on the side of Brahms, it is clear that Wolfrum had much sympathy with Wagner and had an altogether more catholic outlook.

Ein Weihnachtsmysterium nach Worten der Bibel und Spielen des Volkes,[8] to give the work its full title, was Wolfrum's magnum opus. He wrote it in 1898 and on 12 December that year conducted its first performance, which was given at St Peter's, Heidelberg by the Heidelberg Bach Society (a body founded by Wolfrum in 1885 and active today as the Heidelberg Bach Choir). When Wulstan Atkins used the phrase 'normal oratorio form' he was no doubt thinking of such works as *Messiah*, in which the text is conveyed by a sequence of relatively short movements embracing genres such as recitative, aria, chorus, etc. What was novel about the Wolfrum work (in the context of the history of oratorio) was the way in which it followed Wagner's example by welding text and music into lengthy movements having through the use of representative themes a quasi-symphonic integrity; and the work is Wagnerian in the additional sense that Wolfrum subscribed to the concept of *Gesamkunstwerk*,[9] i.e., the idea that a work of art should embrace all the arts. He prefaced the score with a list of the various popular and sacred sources on which he based the work, which include plainsong melodies, Lutheran chorales and Christmas carols, and he made the point that although, like any other oratorio, the work was capable of being performed in a church or concert hall, it was intended to be treated as a kind of mystery play; and to that end he gave detailed notes on staging, direction and lighting, and contemplated that the orchestra, as at Bayreuth, would be out of sight.

The work was published by Breitkopf in 1898 and initially enjoyed much acclaim; but Wolfrum's music failed to survive the consequences for German musical life of the First World War. Nor did it survive the emergence of the modernism exemplified by the works of Hindemith and those of Schoenberg and his disciples; and Wolfrum, like Reger, died at a time when the international situation ensured that his passing was obscured by weightier matters and probably went largely unnoticed.

It is not very hard to account for the work's neglect. The timings here are 62:11 for the *Erster Teil*, 38:41 for the *Zweiter Teil*. This is a lot of music, both for performers and listeners; the need for a large number of soloists - here as in *The Apostles* - creates an obvious financial and practical obstacle; and its subject must surely have the unfortunate effect of making it seem out of place at any time other than Christmas (although there is of course the option, as Elgar suggested to Schuster, of performing 'bleeding chunks'). Reviewing a work previously unknown and without being able to compare earlier recordings is not easy: the history of music criticism is littered with the gaffes of those who spoke (or wrote) too soon; but a fair provisional conclusion is surely that this is not a case of 'new light' dragging a failure out of honourable obscurity. All of the music is accessible, much of it is by any yardstick beautiful (Elgar's advocacy speaks for itself), and this is certainly a recording for those who like to drill down into the more remote substrata of Elgar studies, for there may well be a certain amount here for anyone contemplating a thesis (or an essay in this journal) about the influences that shaped *The Apostles*.

The performance, which is live, is both spirited and polished, and more than deserves the hearty applause with which the final track concludes. For English purchasers there is a workmanlike translation of the liner notes, which are well worth reading (it is a pity, though, that they fail to include a translation of Wolfrum's text).

Relf Clark

4 Young, P.M., op. cit., 143. It appears from the Elgar diaries that Schuster was not persuaded.

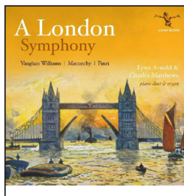
5 Kent, C.J., *Edward Elgar* [:] *a guide to research* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 472 and 478.

6 Wüllner was the father of Ludwig Wüllner, who sang in the 1902 Düsseldorf performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*.

7 It is worth comparing and contrasting Wolfrum (1854-1919) with his contemporary Hubert Parry (1848-1918).

8 'A Christmas mystery after words from the Bible and plays of the people'. The text is by Wolfrum himself.

9 'Total work of art'.



Albion Records

ALBCD046

Ralph Vaughan Williams: *A London Symphony*, arranged for piano duet by Archibald Jacob
Elizabeth Maconchy: *Preludio, Fugato e Finale*
Gerald Finzi: *Eclogue*, arranged for two pianos by Howard Ferguson and adapted for piano and organ by Charles Matthews
Lynn Arnold (Piano) & Charles Matthews (Piano & Organ)

I must confess from the outset that, like my fellow reviewer Relf Clark, I do not for the most part care for piano arrangements of orchestral works. These certainly had their place in the days before recordings and radio broadcasts enabled audiences (particularly those outside major cities) to hear performances but with today's ready access to music via a bewildering array of media, usually in first-class sound, it is difficult to see how such arrangements remain of any appreciable value. It is true that, occasionally, a previously unnoticed detail of the music is uncovered (although sometimes the composer may not have intended or wanted this!) but overall much more is lost than gained. However, I freely acknowledge that my misgivings are not universally shared.

VW's *A London Symphony* was probably his favourite. It was his first entirely orchestral symphony (after *A Sea Symphony* of 1910) and is somewhat programmatic, with many references to London at the time of composition, now sadly all but disappeared. It should be added though that VW wanted the symphony to be heard as absolute music, and in 1920 suggested that a better title might have been 'Symphony by a Londoner'. First performed in 1914, VW revised it many times, notably in 1918 and 1920, before further cuts in the 1930s. The original score from 1914 was not heard again until the late Richard Hickox recorded it with the LSO in 2001[1] – the general opinion thereafter was that VW was right to make the work more concise, albeit that c.20 minutes of lovely music was thereby lost. The arrangement for piano duet recorded here was made in 1924 by Archibald Jacob (better known as the author of the textbook *Musical Handwriting*) when broadcasting was in its infancy and electrical recording had not quite commenced. Although I do not have a copy of Jacob's score, it seems to me that the arrangement is well done, given the limitations inherent in the process. The piano is a percussive instrument and cannot sustain as is, for example, possible on an organ. So, to take just one passage, the wonderful opening of the slow movement with muted strings and cor anglais solo, cannot be effectively conveyed on the piano – or two pianos. The *scherzo* seems to me to be the most successful part of the arrangement – this is incidentally of the 1920 version of the symphony, i.e. with some cuts from the original but not as many as in the final published version of 1936.

The Maconchy piece is not an arrangement; it was actually written for piano duet, and was first performed, by Susan Bradshaw and Richard Rodney

1 Chandos CHAN 9902

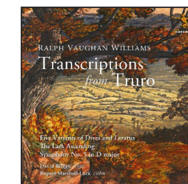
Bennett, at the Wigmore Hall in 1968. Dame Elizabeth Maconchy was one of RVW's favourite pupils but certainly by this stage tonality was somewhat flexible in her output. It is a refreshingly acerbic interlude on the CD and on repeated listening I came to appreciate its qualities more and more.

Finzi's *Eclogue* is usually heard with piano and string orchestra, and forms the slow movement of a proposed but unfinished piano concerto. It is an exquisite piece, and one of the composer's relatively few purely instrumental works. It was published in the usually-heard version, after Finzi's death. The arrangement for piano and organ recorded here is by one of the soloists on this recording, Charles Matthews, and is based on Howard Ferguson's previous arrangement for two pianos. The organ is better able to reproduce the string band although piano and organ are not perhaps ideal bedfellows. Overall, I thought the arrangement successful, although not for a moment replacing the usual version.

The performances by Charles Matthews and Lynn Arnold are excellent as is the recording. Albion's extremely high production values are all very much in evidence, with detailed and knowledgeable notes by the indefatigable John Francis and the performers. Notwithstanding my reservations about piano arrangements *per se*, I can warmly recommend this CD to all those who wish to explore two well-known works in a different guise.

David Morris

Transcriptions from Truro
Vaughan Williams, *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus, The Lark Ascending*, Symphony No. 5 in D major
David Briggs (at the organ of Truro Cathedral), Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin)



Albion Records

ALBCD 049

On 21 December 1910, Ivor Atkins reported to Elgar as follows:

> I played the slow movement from the Vn Concerto on Saturday [17 December 1910] to a crowded Organ Recital congregation [at Worcester Cathedral]. (The place was thick with motors; really the town was *full* of them!) It went *finely* – I must throw modesty to the dogs as I am my own reporter – and sounded magnificent. People were enchanted and judging from the letters I have received and the things that have been said by word of mouth few things I have done have ever given so much pleasure.[1]

In the Library of Worcester Cathedral is the scrapbook in which Ivor Atkins preserved his organ recital programmes; they reveal numerous instances of his playing transcriptions of orchestral and other music, and not only that of Elgar. On 16 March 1899, for example, his programme included a movement from Mozart's Clarinet Quintet, the prelude to *Parsifal*, and the

1 Atkins, E.W., *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles (Publishers) Limited., 1984), 213. The violinist is not identified, either by Wulstan Atkins or by the programme itself.

finale of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony; and his transcription activity was not limited to recitals, for in 1909 Novello published his organ arrangement of the slow movement of Elgar's First Symphony, and years later he enlarged the Elgar canon by fashioning a second organ sonata (Op.87A) from *The Severn Suite*. Atkins was not of course alone in making and playing transcriptions. His colleague at Gloucester, Herbert Brewer, made a number of Elgar transcriptions and was greatly admired for his playing of transcriptions generally; and those who use old-style editions of the organ music published by Stainer & Bell will be aware, even if they have never played them, of Henry G. Ley's transcriptions of movements from such works of Vaughan Williams as *A Sea Symphony*, *A London Symphony*, and the *Five Mystical Songs*. The transcriptions of Atkins, Brewer, Ley and many others were products (or as the case may be legacies) of the days before the gramophone and broadcasting, when live music was nothing like as accessible as it is today and when organists performed a valuable and pleasure-giving (see above) service by playing them. In time, the practice came to be frowned upon, so that in 1963 a pair of organ connoisseurs could declare that it was one 'in very poor taste'.[2] Taste has changed yet again, however, largely as a result of the remarkable efforts of David Briggs and other virtuoso organists of his generation, such as Thomas Trotter and Wayne Marshall, so that nowadays the practice of making and playing transcriptions is back in favour. Clearly, though, it can no longer be justified by claiming that few opportunities exist for hearing the music as the composer intended: the first two items on this disc are more than familiar, especially to devotees of Classic FM; and even as unlikely a figure as the Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts had a soft spot for *The Lark Ascending*.[3] Nor can anyone describe the Fifth Symphony as obscure or rarely heard. What justification is there, then? First, it can be interesting to hear in a quite different guise music one is familiar with: the experience can sometimes elucidate the music by, for example, bringing to prominence aspects obscured by the original medium. Secondly, a transcription can acquire a life of its own. No one asks whether J.S. Bach's transcriptions of Vivaldi are faithful to, or as aesthetically pleasing as, the originals. They are among the glories of the organ repertoire. *The Ride of the Valkyries*, in the arrangement by Lemare, can be rather more exciting than any of those well-known French toccatas; and although the second of the Elgar organ sonatas is a transcription, it is much more suited to the instrument, and far more rewarding to play, than the first, which was of course expressly written for the organ. As against these justifications, and no doubt one could think of others, the practice of performing organ transcriptions can side-line the great works expressly written for the instrument, of which there are many.

Anyone listening with an innocent ear to the first track of this CD might think that this is an organist improvising on *Dives and Lazarus*, for whereas the original has all the ravishing qualities one associates with the string orchestra music of Vaughan Williams, here the work sounds sepulchral and portentous, and the final bars have something of the slightly embarrassing incoherence one associates with organ improvisation when the player is manifestly struggling to fill those remaining pre-service moments (indeed, listeners who attend Evensong would not be entirely surprised if those bars were followed by a distant tenor singing 'O Lord, open thou our lips'). It is the same in this performance of the Fifth Symphony, where the end of the finale might cause certain listeners to have a mental picture of choir and clergy filing into their stalls. This is nothing to do with the way in which Mr Briggs plays and everything, or at any rate a great deal, to do with the organ and the lively acoustics of Truro Cathedral. The Willis at Truro is rightly revered, for although rebuilt in 1963 by Henry Willis III, it still has the stop-list of 1887 and therefore remains, in terms of its speaking components, the organ that G.R. Sinclair played in the years immediately preceding his move to Hereford. But what was wanted here was surely a later and rather more sophisticated example of the organ-builder's craft: listening to this recording, one acquires a better understanding of those who advocated the borrowing of manual doubles in order to provide expressive Pedal basses, for the Pedal part is frequently just too prominent for comfort. A twentieth-century organ, by, say, Harrison & Harrison, or Henry Willis III, with an enclosed Solo Organ, some orchestral string tone, and a more comprehensive and subtler Pedal Organ, would almost certainly have been more suitable; and in a drier and less obviously ecclesiastical acoustic than the one at Truro such an instrument might have had a better chance of providing the delicacy sometimes wanting here and elsewhere on this disc.

The Lark Ascending, the second track, is something of an odd-man-out in this particular context, for Vaughan Williams himself provided a version of the work for violin and piano and could hardly have objected to the substitution of a keyboard instrument with an infinitely greater ability than the piano to sustain the long-held chords that are such a prominent feature of the score. Indeed, it was in this version that the work received its first performance (on which occasion the sometime Elgar pupil Marie Hall, to whom the work is dedicated, was the soloist). The playing of Rupert Marshall-Luck is exquisite, and David Briggs draws from the organ some beautiful quasi-orchestral sonorities, but when in the passage beginning one bar before letter U the chorus reeds are drawn,[4] it is as if the accompanist is trying to put down the soloist from his seat (rather than the mighty from theirs):[5] it is surely important in this delicate, pantheistic landscape to ensure that the organ does not sound too redolent of the Church of England in its pomp.

With the possible exception of the Ninth, the Fifth Symphony of Vaughan Williams is perhaps the one most suitable for organ transcription, given

2 Clutton, C. and Niland, A., *The British Organ* (London: B. T. Batsford Limited, 1963), 43.

3 It was one of his 'eight' when in about 2001 he appeared on *Desert Island Discs*.

4 Eulenburg miniature score, page 20.

5 Luke 1:52.

the long-held pedal notes in its first movement, the fact that the finale is a passacaglia, and the sustained character of so much of the music. Whether this transcription 'works' is inevitably a matter on which opinion will be divided. There can be no doubt as to the immensely exacting nature of the task undertaken here by David Briggs, or as to the astonishingly brilliant technique he displays; but is the Fifth Symphony 'elucidated' by this performance? Some years ago, the point was made that

> [if] one's early years are devoted to organ-playing, one carries into the rest of one's life an approach to music heavily influenced by the experience of creating harmony and counterpoint by applying one's fingers and feet to the keys and pedals of a large wind instrument … *A London Symphony*, *A Pastoral Symphony*, the Fifth Symphony, and one of the shorter works, *The Lark Ascending*, all have long-sustained string chords that might be a legacy, ultimately, of the experience of improvising on the organ: the slow, meditative music that lies at the heart of Vaughan Williams is not … unconnected with … [the time the composer spent, as an undergraduate, in] … the organ-loft at Trinity College, Cambridge … [6]

Whether or not this transcription grants new insights into this particular work, Mr Briggs may perhaps have underlined a general point about the nature and sources of the composer's creativity.

The fact that the liner notes run to eighteen pages testifies to the high seriousness of this project. Each of the three works has a different author assigned to it, and there are four colour photographs, one of them showing Mr Briggs with Adrian and Joanna Lucas, who together produced the CD under the auspices of Acclaim Productions Limited. In the note on the Fifth Symphony, there is rather too much of Hubert Foss (completely lost on his own aërial rings) and too little hard currency; and one can only be grateful to the proof-readers for the light relief provided by letting 'Father' Henry Willis remain 'one of the greatest organ British builders'.

Mr Briggs has recorded the organ music of Vaughan Williams on ALBCD021-022. Perhaps one day he will return to Truro and record the Elgar Sonata in G major and, say, Franck's *Grand Pièce Symphonique*, Op.17; and perhaps Mr Marshall-Luck could join him, in one of those rarely heard works for organ and violin by Karg-Elert.

Relf Clark

6 Clark, R., 'Vaughan Williams and the organ: an anniversary review', *Organists' Review* XCIV (August 2008), 7-15, 14.

Twentieth Century Violin Sonatas by Elgar, Walton, Delius, Mihalovici, Ravel and Busoni

Max Rostal (violin) with Colin Horsley, Monique Haas, Noel Mewton-Wood (piano)

Decca Eloquence

ELQ4829059 (2 CDs)

The violinist Max Rostal (1905-1991) was known as a fine teacher and chamber music player with a pedigree stemming from his studies with Arnold Rose in Vienna and Carl Flesch in Berlin. He came to this country in 1934 and eventually took British nationality, taking a great interest in British music, giving first performances of works by Lennox Berkeley, Britten, Alan Bush and Matyas Seiber[1] amongst many others. He was also a major interpreter of Bartók's second concerto. The present recordings were made between 1952 and 1958 and as well as superb violin playing they offer equally fine piano playing from artists well-known at the time.

This is an excellent performance of the Elgar Sonata (1918) by both players (the New Zealand pianist Colin Horsley is Rostal's partner here). Clearly this is a well-attuned duo who played and performed together for many years. Their understanding of Elgar's idiom is well-nigh faultless, especially in the mysterious and enigmatic second movement Romance which is given an impassioned reading, the improvisatory nature of much of the violin part contrasting strikingly with the lyrical writing in the big tune at the centre of the movement. The first movement doesn't have quite the sweep of such as Albert Sammons in his premiere recording of the work but the last movement with the composer's markings acutely observed, comes off superbly and builds to a fine climax. One small observation, two bars before figure 43 in the last movement, the pianist has reached the end of his descending pianissimo arpeggios but the two players are not together on the first beat, Rostal entering a beat late producing an unexpected bar of 5/4 in what has hitherto been 4/4! The repeat of the same passage later is correct. The sound is, one might say, very 'period', the instruments closely miked, the acoustic rather dry as a consequence and which may take a while to get used to but does not detract from the excellent performance. The same is true of the Walton, Delius and Busoni, all recorded in the same studio.

Again, this is a very fine performance of the Walton Sonata, an under-rated and seldom-performed work written in 1947/48. The commission came about in 1948 through Yehudi Menuhin offering a fee of 2000 francs[2] for a piece for him and his brother-in-law, Louis Kentner, to play after Walton needed urgent funds for the medical treatment of Alice Wimborne, his then ailing long-term companion. There are many dark moments in this superb work indicating the grief that the composer must have felt after the eventual death of Alice in 1948 which affected him for several years afterwards.

Following a first performance in Zurich by Menuhin and Kentner (a

1 Seiber was born in Hungary and studied there, settling in the UK when he was 30. He took British citizenship after the second world war.

2 Possibly Swiss francs but this is unclear.

Scherzetto as a brief second movement was produced too late to include it in the performance, this becoming instead one of *Two Short Pieces for violin and piano*) revisions were made. As a result, the first performance of the revised version (in two substantial movements) was given, by the same performers, in 1950 at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London (!) and subsequently recorded. In the present performance, probably the work's second recording, Rostal and Horsley give the piece a fine and sensitive rendering and show that even though there are familiar Walton fingerprints (those listeners familiar with the Violin Concerto will recognise certain melodic and rhythmic characteristics) there are new sounds being created through a very adventurous harmonic vocabulary, though tonal throughout. A particularly noticeable moment occurs in the coda of the first movement with the piano's texture and the muted violin together creating a very disturbing atmosphere. The second of its two movements is a theme and seven variations, the performers making the most of the considerable contrasts in each inventive variation, bringing the Sonata to a lively conclusion. The playing throughout is flawless.

Delius' 2nd Sonata (1923) is a short (under 15 minutes) one-movement work (the three sections being clearly shown) entirely characteristic of its composer and although the piano writing is less virtuosic and colourful than in the Elgar and Walton Sonatas, it is very effective in supporting the violin's flights of lyricism especially in the *Lento* section.

The players find exactly the improvisatory nature of the composer's elusive idiom. An interesting comparison with the recording by Tasmin Little and Piers Lane finds a more full-blooded approach to the faster sections, not found or perhaps even intended in the Rostal/Horsley performance. These three works were all recorded in 1954 for the Argo label (of blessed memory).

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The remaining works on this 2-disc set are by Ravel, Busoni and a composer new to me, Marcel Mihalovici (Romanian born but whose training with Vincent D'Indy and subsequent career was in France) and Busoni. As the Mihalovici second sonata, dating from 1941, is accompanied by the composer's wife (distinguished French pianist, Monique Haas), one must assume a definitive interpretation by both players of what seems to me to be a very fine work, deserving of more exposure. The three movements are well-contrasted with a dramatic opening movement, *Allegro molto appassionato*, followed by a *Larghetto cantabile* and a *Molto vivace* finale. Both players display superb technical address and musicality in a work of dramatic contrasts that perhaps reflect the events in France at the time the work was written.

The Ravel Sonata, also superbly accompanied by Haas, has a first movement that is very cool in style, the Blues second movement reflecting Ravel's interest in jazz following a visit to America (the work was written between 1923 and 1927) whilst the *Perpetuum mobile* third movement stretches the player's technique and stamina. Ravel's intention to allow maximum independence for two instruments that are, in his view, fundamentally incompatible, allows

the players to concentrate on Ravel's clarity of textures, a wide variety of colour ensuring that their lines complement and contrast with each other in a well-balanced and musically sensitive performance. The sound here is more spacious than on the other works as these recordings were made for Deutsche Grammophon (in October 1958).

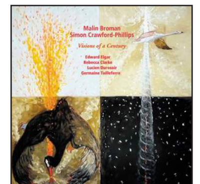
The 40-minute second Sonata in E minor Op.36a of Feruccio Busoni, hitherto unknown to me, is again given an authoritative performance. This is a powerful work, the structure of which is apparently based on Beethoven's Op 109 Piano Sonata, a first movement of alternating slow and faster tempi (one section rather march-like) is followed by a short *Scherzo* (*tarantella*-like) and, much the longest, a third movement Theme and Variations, (in this instance the theme is from a Bach chorale) bringing the work to a powerful climax in a fugue and eventually to a quiet conclusion. The playing in this huge work, as in the other repertoire, is superb, the players being completely inside the idiom. I was unexpectedly moved by the music and the performance. The (again) Argo recording dates from October 1952. The British pianist in this work, Noel Mewton-Wood, was a fine player who played Busoni's gargantuan Piano Concerto with Beecham and whose death by suicide at the end of 1953 was a great loss to British music.

This set is a fine tribute to Max Rostal. For both violin and piano enthusiasts, this is a very recommendable and valuable historic set. Tully Potter's extensive booklet note is particularly illuminating about the violinist and interesting light is shed on the Busoni regarding a private performance given before an ailing composer by Adolf Busch and Rudolf Serkin in 1921.

(Note: Delius, Elgar & Walton sonatas recorded 1952, the Mihalovici and Ravel 1954 and Busoni 1952.)

Stephen Dickinson

Visions of a Century
Works for Violin and Piano by Elgar, Germaine Taillefere, Rebecca Clarke and Lucien Durosoir.
Malin Broman (violin), Simon Crawford-Phillips(piano)



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All the works on this recently (2021) recorded CD were written at the end of, and in the years following, the First World War. Though Elgar's great Sonata has been recorded many times and will be much the most familiar work here to most of us as it is also performed live very regularly, the other works cannot be said to have the same performance and recording history. It is therefore most illuminating to hear Elgar's work in the context of music contemporary with his, music of a very different style and idiom.

The Swedish violinist Malin Broman (a name new to me) brings flair and fine musicianship to her recital programme. Her considerable performing experience (as noted in the booklet) in a variety of orchestral, solo work and chamber music finds her approach to each composer technically adept,

idiomatic and convincing in interpretation. British pianist Simon Crawford-Phillips is a fine collaborator throughout.

The Elgar is given an excellent performance, with much variety of colour and sensitivity in the lyrical moments, the climaxes are well-judged and there is evident rapport between the players especially in the slow movement. A comparison with Albert Sammons in his premiere recording is instructive particularly regarding the first movement where the sweep and urgency of the older player is so distinctive, but is not so evident in this new performance where the tendency to relax the tempo too much when the music quietens down is not quite what the score often tells us.

As someone with a great interest in French music of this period, Germaine Tailleferre's First Violin Sonata is a great discovery. The only female member of the French group of composers known as 'Les Six', she is nowhere near as well-known as, say, Poulenc from the same group. She died (at the age of 91) as recently as 1983 and it is a shame that her music is not heard as often as it might be, though recordings of some of her other music are becoming available. This four-movement Sonata is in a characteristic French 1920s style, rhythmically vital, with clear textures throughout and elegant, lyrical writing of distinction. The only concession to German musical form is a *fugato* in the last movement! She clearly displays her own compositional voice even though she apparently had lessons with Ravel. More players should take up this fine work, certainly on the evidence of this, again, excellent performance.

The name and music of French composer Lucien Durosoir (1878-1955) were quite unknown to me until the arrival of this disc. As a player, he was a pupil of Joachim and premiered Concertos by Niels Gade and Richard Strauss as well as the wonderful First Violin Sonata by Faure. Though surviving the First World War, his performing career was curtailed by an accident (just before he was to take up the position of concert master of the Boston Symphony Orchestra) and having already started composing, he did this for the remainder of his life, leaving several unpublished works that were eventually published after his death through the efforts of his son and daughter-in-law. These Aquarelles (Water-colours), written like the Tailleferre in 1920, are attractive and varied character pieces, well worth hearing in these sensitive performances.

For the two pieces by Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979), Malin Broman puts her violin aside for the viola. Clarke was a fine viola player and among much other chamber music, wrote a superb sonata for the instrument. Written in the same year as Elgar's Sonata but very different in style, displaying the influence of Debussy, Morpheus was premiered under a male pseudonym, 'Anthony Trent' and praised by critics in this incarnation. Ironically, other works in the programme under Clarke's real name were not received so enthusiastically. The second piece by Clarke, *Chinese Puzzle*, is based on a Chinese tune learnt from a Chinese friend of the family and is in the nature of a brief, lively encore to a very rewarding disc. Excellent balance and sound quality make this unusual and interesting programme a very worthwhile experience.

Stephen Dickinson

LETTERS

Professor Dibble's Delius

From Geoff Cowley

I am sure I am not alone in thinking it rather strange that Paul Chennell's otherwise excellent review of Professor Jeremy Dibble's recent book on Delius (*Journal*, December 2021) should conclude with a paragraph warning prospective readers to beware of 'language which today would be regarded by most readers as unacceptable', or 'which will certainly offend a modern readership'.

I have not come across the expression 'African-American melodies' before, and am wondering if the 'outmoded expression' Mr. Chennell is referring to may be that of the music genre 'Negro Spiritual', or something similar.

Surely people with well-adjusted personalities will only take offence when offence is clearly intended, and I am quite sure Professor Dibble didn't intend any offence if he used such an expression in his book. Moreover, I would think it quite likely that Mr. Chennell himself may possibly have used such phrases in the past without embarrassing himself or others, and if so he might like to ask himself what or who has changed his mind about using them in 2021.

Parry's Letters

From Kevin Allen

Some time ago I made an appeal in this *Journal* for volunteers to help transcribe the Diary (1864 -1918) of Sir Hubert Parry, as part of a combined project between Durham University and the Royal College of Music. Some four years and one million, four hundred and one thousand, seven hundred and seventy words later, the transcription now stands complete. My sincere and grateful thanks to Rob Barnett, John Dressler, Ray Philpotts, Richard Hall, Martin Bird, Ian Morgan, Jane Mallinson, Mack Lindsay and John Weir for their help in this task. Thanks also to the staff of the Library of the Royal College of Music who digitised the diary, and to Ian Russell for his repeated treks to South Kensington with the precious volumes. Needless to say, Martin Bird's contribution was significantly above the call of duty, and together with Ray Phillpotts and Jane Mallinson, he provided useful supplementary background and editorial research. The foundations have now been laid for an application for a Leverhulme Trust grant towards a full scholarly edition of a unique document of English cultural and musical life with its revelatory self-portrait of a remarkable and complex man.

Britten and Elgar

From Andrew Keener

Andrew Neill's article on Elgar and Britten (December *Journal*) is as thoughtful - and as thought-provoking - as we've come to expect of him, and having read his tantalising reference to Britten's markings in his score of *Gerontius*, my curiosity will now not be satisfied until I can persuade those at the Red House to let me peruse it! Only then, perhaps, will one of my frustrations with Britten's remarkable recording of the work be defused, namely the bass drum rolls which fill in the brief pauses at 1 and 9 bars before Fig. 10 of the Prelude to Part 1. I seem to remember reading that this grew from Britten's wish to 'replicate' cathedral acoustics which would of course fill these gaps with rolling sound. I doubt that Elgar did the same when he conducted *Gerontius* in the cathedrals of Worcester, Hereford and Gloucester, but he doesn't in his 1927 recorded concert performance in the rather less reverberant Royal Albert Hall. Even as I write, I sense the outraged beating of wings in the heavens above Snape, but in the still less spacious acoustics of the Maltings in which Britten's 1971 sessions for Decca took place, this embellishment continues to strike me as misguided, an inappropriately 'painted on' affectation.

From Dr Geoffrey Woodcock

Andrew Neill's article BB and EE: From loathing to respect: Britten and the music of Elgar was both informative and entertaining. His reference to Michael Kennedy's article in *The Spectator* where he wrote of Britten as a great hater (p26) reminded me of the series of Liverpool University Saturday day courses on composers on which Michael lectured. Of the various composers he presented, Britten stands out. In his lecture I recall Michael saying how BB was overheard telephoning the printers who had recently received the proofs of a String Quartet which had been dedicated to a friend and critic who then had the temerity to return and annotate the score, much to BB's annoyance. He was heard to request that the dedicatee's name 'be printed in the smallest possible type!'

100 YEARS AGO …

On 1 November 1921 Carice went to Novello and saw Jack Littleton '& arranged with him about taking M.S.S. scores & sketches – so kind & nice'. Carice continued to arrange for the removal of items to her future home with Samuel Blake in Chilworth, Surrey, and further possessions that Elgar needed in his London flat. Algernon Blackwood called to see Elgar on 1 November, as did Malcolm Sargent on 4 November. That evening Elgar saw Shaw's *Heartbreak House* with Lalla Vandervelde. Carice and Samuel Blake came to dinner on 6 November. On 7 November Maples collected the round composing table which was to be cared for (temporarily) by Lady Stuart of Wortley, and Carice hired a car to carry scores and sketches to Novello where she 'saw them into the safe'. She continued to Queen's Hall and heard the Bach Fugue orchestration under Coates – 'not so good as Goossens. Met Father … & walked back to flat with him'. Elgar thought that 'the conductor sat a little heavily on it – no champagne'. Severn House was offered at auction on 8 November but failed to attract a fair bid: clearing continued, with furniture either being placed in store, taken to Chilworth, or to be sold. Elgar lunched with Shaw and Lalla Vandervelde on 11 November and then went on to the Private View of the exhibition of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, at Burlington House. On 16 November 'Father presented Albert Sammons with his own old presentation violin bow – so nice but S. not very thrilled – curious', and that evening she went to hear Sammons play the Violin Concerto at Queen's Hall: 'very beautiful saw Father there'. The Severn House carpets were taken up on 17 November and there was further packing of 'china & glass & books' the following day. Carice returned for the last time on 19 November and 'Finally left Severn House in Landsdowne car at 3.20' and went to stay with Vera Raikes in Norwood.

Frederick Holding, who had visited Severn House on 5 May 1921, played the Violin Concerto with Boult on 13 November. Elgar wrote to Boult: ' … the orchestra was fine & flawless. Mr. Holding did well but hid an artistic nervousness which made him hurry sometimes in the 'passages' – but it was good & will you thank him from me for his playing?' Goossens repeated the Bach Fugue on 23 November: whilst Elgar was unable to attend the concert he heard the rehearsal the previous day, reporting to the Windflower 'he really makes it go'. Elgar saw Albert Coates on 24 November to go through *Falstaff*, which was then rehearsed on 27 November prior to the LSO concert the following evening. There was a performance of *King Olaf* at Queen's Hall on 30 November. On the afternoon of 6 December Kreisler played the Violin Concerto under Landon Ronald in a crowded Queen's Hall. Alice Stuart of Wortley (the 'Windflower') attended with her daughter Clare, and Bice (Lord Stuart's elder daughter). Elgar had to request a chair for Carice be placed in the gangway next to his own; he was called on to the platform to share the applause before taking tea at the Langham Hotel across the road.

On 5 December he attended the Literary Society dinner and afterwards wrote his well-known letter to Sidney Colvin stating that he was 'still at heart the dreamy child who used to be found in the reeds by Severnside with a sheet of paper trying to fix the sounds' but surprisingly continued that 'as a child & as a young man & as a mature man, no single person was ever kind to me'. He contrasted this with Shaw's kindness to young people, which he applauded. Elgar and Carice were in Hayes on 7 December to record the Bach Fugue in C Minor, 'A Little Bird in the Air' from *King Olaf* and the first part of *In the South.* The last was unsuccessful and a further recording date had to be arranged.

In December he took Arthur Bliss and Eugene Goossens to lunch (along with others) and invited them to compose works for the 1922 Gloucester Three Choirs Festival. Bliss later recalled the lunch as follows:

> In December 1920 [sic] he [Elgar] had asked several musicians to have lunch with him at the Royal Societies Club. I had no idea who else might have been invited or the reason for this

kindness. When I arrived I found Adrian Boult, Anthony Bernard, Eugene Goossens, John Ireland, and W.H. Reed, who was the Leader of the London Symphony Orchestra at that time. The luncheon went a bit awkwardly with Elgar at his most nervous; then, when the coffee came he suddenly told us the reason of [sic] our being gathered there. He wanted Howells, who was not present, Goossens and myself each to write a new work for the Gloucester Festival of 1922: no limitations on the form of the new works were proposed. Howells complied with *Sine Nomine*, written for soprano and tenor soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra; Goossens with a work called *Silence* for chorus and orchestra, and I wrote a symphony later to be called the *Colour Symphony*.[1]

On 18 December Elgar attended another of Boult's concerts at the People's Palace in the East End of London.

Elgar had hoped that he might spend Christmas with his sister Pollie Grafton but her recent illness made that impossible, so Elgar had lunch on Christmas Day with the Stuart of Wortleys at their home in Cheyne Walk, and lunched there again the following day before going to a matinee. On that day he wrote from the Athenaeum to Sir Ivor Atkins about the programme for the 1922 Gloucester Three Choirs Festival and he hoped 'to have the Prelude or rather Fantasia to the [Bach] Fugue finished but Novellos may not like it'. On 30 December Carice and Elgar returned to Hayes so he could record further sections of *In the South*.

On 13 January Elgar and Carice travelled by train to Chilworth to spend the afternoon with Blake. Carice was married to Samuel Blake on 16 January 1922 at St. James's Church, Spanish Place, London, where Alice had frequently worshipped. 'The wedding was a very quiet one, at which Father J.P. Valentin, of St. Mary's Hampstead, officiated. The bride, given away by her father, wore a dark blue coat and skirt, and a brown satin hat, draped with a veil of wide-meshed net …There were neither bridesmaids nor pages… After the ceremony Mr and Mrs S.H. Blake left for Cornwall'.[2]

A few days earlier Richard Strauss arrived in Plymouth from New York to pay his first post-war visit to England and Elgar wrote 'a warm word of welcome & an assurance that your return to our country gives the greatest pleasure to myself & to very many of my musical countrymen'.

On 17 January he dined with the Stuart of Wortleys, before they all went to a Richard Strauss concert in the Albert Hall with the LSO, which included *Don Juan, Till Eulenspiegel, Tod und Verklarung* and songs sung by Ethel Frank.

A week later, on 23 January, he hosted a lunch for Strauss and his wife, to introduce him to younger British musicians. Thus, Strauss met Bax, Bliss, Boughton, Boult, Goossens, Ireland and Norman O'Neill while Shaw kept up the conversation at the other end of the table. Victor Beigel and the violinist Max Mossel helped with translating. Elgar and Strauss discussed the orchestration of Bach's organ works, and Elgar suggested that Strauss should orchestrate the introductory *Fantasia* to Elgar's (already existing) orchestration of the C minor Fugue, even though he had previously indicated to Atkins that he planned to orchestrate it himself. But Strauss fought shy of this, leaving Elgar free to do so.

In January 1922 Elgar was elected to Brooks's; Elgar loved its eighteenth-century atmosphere with its memories of the Whig statesman Charles James Fox. He found it 'a haven of rest & quiet … The house is interesting dates from 1764 & is about the best club in London'. He found he knew more people there than he expected. In February Elgar set in motion Atkins's membership of the Athenaeum, which he was proud to accept.

On 6 February Carice returned from her honeymoon in Cornwall. Elgar saw Edith Evans at the Apollo Theatre in James Fagan's *The Wheel* which he thought 'rotten' and in which Edith Evans had little to do. On 11 February Elgar and the Windflower dined with the hostess Sibyl Colefax, wife of the lawyer Sir Arthur Colefax, writing afterwards to the Windflower that 'The dear good lady is very amiable … You looked lovely …'. He and the Windflower lunched with Mina Beresford on 19 February and then went onto another concert at the People's Palace, where Boult conducted the *Variations* and Schumann's First Symphony.

At the end of February Elgar travelled to the Free Trade Hall, Manchester to conduct the Hallé (whose permanent conductor was Hamilton Harty) on 25th in *Cockaigne*, *In the South*, the Bach Fugue, *Sea Pictures* with Phyllis Lett, and the Cello Concerto with Beatrice Harrison. Samuel Langford noted on 27 February, there was a large audience that displayed quiet enthusiasm, which seemed a better way of acknowledging musical enjoyment than noisy applause.

In March Elgar conducted six concerts in northern cities, sharing the tour with Landon Ronald who was unable to conduct all the concerts and, on his return, he reported to the Windflower on 19 March that 'my adventures in the north have not been very exciting but I have been interested & loved conducting the Liszt [*Hungarian Fantasia*] with Katherine Goodson'. After the first concert, on 3 March in Hanley, he wrote to Carice: 'I am very well the Boys (orch) say it was the best 5th Sym Beethoven they ever heard'. From Newcastle-on-Tyne he wrote to Atkins that: 'I rise at 5.30 & pursue trains & conduct concerts – all of which is unseemly in my old age'. After his last concert, in Middlesbrough, he wrote to Carice on 12 March: 'I left the tour yesterday with great & loudly expressed sorrow on the part of the band & soloists'.

On 21 March he and Schuster went to the first night of Arnold Bennett's play *The Love Match*, which Elgar concluded was 'rubbish', and on 24 March he saw the play *The Yellow Jacket* by Joseph Benrimo and George Hazleton, which was much more to his liking.

Henry Embleton made further efforts to persuade Elgar to complete the trilogy of his Biblical oratorios and sponsored three performances of *The Apostles*. The first took place in Leeds Town Hall on 29 March, with Agnes Nicholls, Phyllis Lett, John Coates, Charles Knowles, Herbert Heyner, Norman Allin, and the Hallé Orchestra. Elgar later wrote to the Windflower that his host was too busy looking after others to assist him after the performance. His taxi was taken by another, so Elgar had to find his way back to his hotel on foot, on his own through dark streets: 'What an odd world it is. I rather like the complete isolation, but it seems odd'.

On the following day he went to his sister Pollie's new home, Perryfield in Bromsgrove.

Kevin Mitchell

1 Sir Arthur Bliss, *As I Remember* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1970), 71. The lunch took place in December 1921 not as Bliss recalled, in December 1920.

2 Martin Bird, (ed.,) *Darling Chuck: The Carice Letters* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2014), 270.

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