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Front Cover: The photograph by Bennett of Worcester c. 1877 shows the wind quintet formed by Elgar. Frank Exton and Frank Elgar (seated); William Leicester, Edward Elgar (holding his French Bassoon) and Hubert Leicester. *Illustration by courtesy of Arthur Reynolds.*

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

Presentation of written text:

Subheadings: longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Events in the Ukraine notwithstanding, much of the news in the UK in the early part of 2022 was concerned with Her Majesty the Queen and the widespread celebrations of her Platinum Jubilee. The Elgar Society London Branch made its own small contribution, promoting a splendid concert at the Queen's Chapel opposite St James's Palace, with the Choir of the Chapel Royal and baritone Roderick Williams. A fuller account of the event can be found in the August *News*. None of us present could have predicted that the celebrations would so quickly turn to mourning, with the much-loved Sovereign's death on 8 September. Her Majesty was, of course, the last surviving dedicatee of an Elgar work, with the *Nursery Suite* of 1930 having been dedicated to 'Their Royal Highnesses, the Duchess of York and the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose', and this prompted some reflections on Elgar's relationship with a previous Queen Regnant, Victoria.

More than half of Elgar's life was lived during Victoria's reign, and at her death in January 1901 Elgar's reputation had only just emerged from that of a gifted provincial musician to an internationally recognised composer. Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1896 had prompted Elgar's publisher Novello & Co. to suggest to him the composition of two works, an *Imperial March* and a short cantata *The Banner of St. George.* The *Imperial March* was published as his Op.32, and received its first performance under August Manns at the Crystal Palace in April 1887. *The Banner of St. George,* Op.33 for mixed chorus and orchestra to a text by Shapcott Wensley (1834-1917) was first performed the following month by the wonderfully named St. Cuthbert's Hall Choral Society and Orchestra. Shapcott Wensley was a part-time poet whose real name was Henry Shapcott Bunce and whose day-job was as a clerk in a soap factory. He was regularly called upon by Novello to write lyrics for songs and cantatas, and in 1909 Elgar set another of his texts, *Lo! Christ the Lord is born,* in a collection of Christmas Carols. Wensley's text for *The Banner* was, it must be conceded, uninspired, and Elgar's response, the final chorus 'It comes from the misty ages*'* aside, was similarly pedestrian.

Two years later, Elgar wrote to Sir Walter Parratt, Master of the Queen's Music, to request permission to dedicate his new work *Caractacus* Op.35 to Her Majesty, and Parratt replied encouragingly 'I will certainly bring the matter before the Queen's notice. I hope you are aware that I use your music constantly (for private State Concerts) and the Queen likes it'.[1] The music reflected a passionate love for the English countryside whilst the text by H. A. Acworth showed an enthusiasm for Empire which some find problematical today, but the heady mixture was ideally suited to meet with approval from the political and musical establishment. Permission was granted, and the work received the dedication to 'Her most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria'. It was a shrewd move, and clearly signalled an important turning point in Elgar's life and career.

The following year saw the Queen's 80th birthday, and Parratt invited Elgar to contribute a madrigal to be included in an album of Choral Songs to honour the occasion. This confirmed Parratt's view of Elgar as a 'coming man', as the list of contributors to the album included established composers such as C.V. Stanford, Arthur Somervell, Frank Bridge, John Stainer and Charles Hartford Lloyd. Elgar was allocated as text a poem entitled *To her, beneath whose steadfast star* by Frederick W.H. Myers (1843-1901), a poet and essayist who in later life turned to psychical research and helped found the Psychical Research Society. At this time Elgar was busy not only busy finishing the *Variations* but also moving house from Forli to Birchwood Lodge, but he somehow

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[1] Jerrold Northrop Moore *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 240.

(for once!) completed the commission on time. On 24 May he was summoned to attend an *Aubade* at Windsor Castle where his madrigal was to be performed by a choir of 250 in the quadrangle beneath the room where The Queen took her breakfast. At the concert's conclusion, The Queen was wheeled forwards in her chair and was heard to say 'I am very pleased with all I have seen and heard, and I thank you all very much'.[2] The death of Victoria ushered in not only a new monarch but a new phase in Elgar's creative life. With the accession of the new sovereign, the dynamic between monarch and composer took on a completely new dimension. King Edward VII proved to be anything but the philistine his playboy demeanour as Prince of Wales might have suggested, and his relationship with Elgar developed into a close friendship. The story is a fascinating one, and is movingly told in Arthur Reynold's essay *The King and the Troubadour*, included in the Elgar Society London Branch publication *A Pilgrim in Cockaigne*. One last tribute to Victoria remained when in 1909 Elgar was again approached by Sir Walter Parratt, this time to compose an anthem for unaccompanied mixed voices to be sung in January at the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore, to commemorate the anniversary of the Queen's death. Cardinal Newman once more provided the text beginning 'They are at Rest'*,* marked *lento e sostenuto*. The first performance took place at the Mausoleum on 22 January 1910.

Our own Queen's Funeral Service at Westminster Abbey was watched by countless millions across the world, and served as a showcase for British music. Before the ceremony began, organist Matthew Jorysz played works by Gibbons, Vaughan Williams, Maxwell Davies and Elgar (his *Elegy*). Further works by Elgar were heard as religious representatives took their places – The *Andante espressivo* third movement from the Organ Sonata, Op.28, and *Sospiri,* Op.70. During the service itself, two fine new works by living British composers were heard, an unaccompanied setting of Psalm 42 *Like as the hart* by the current Master of the King's Music Judith Weir, and an anthem by Sir James MacMillan set to words from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. As the Queen's coffin was carried to the waiting gun carriage outside, Elgar's Organ Sonata could once more be heard resounding from within the Abbey, this time the stirring opening *Allegro maestoso*. Our new King, Charles III is known to be a lover of classical music, being especially fond of the works of Sir Hubert Parry, and we may be confident that his reign will continue the close and fruitful relationship between the monarchy and our native composers.

As usual we have a number of reviews of new releases clamouring for addition to our bookshelves and CD cabinets. Pride of place must, I feel, go to *A Pilgrim in Cockaigne,* a collection of essays based on talks given at the London Branch of our Society and published in commemoration of the Branch's 50th Anniversary. Christopher Morley gives the volume a warm recommendation.

The close of the Vaughan Williams 150th Anniversary year sees the publication of a new book by Nigel Simeone presenting a study of VW's friendship and working relationship with Adrian Boult. Simeone considers both live performances and recordings and provides a wealth of source materials, including diaries and letters. Paul Chennell reviews.

Two new CDs of music by Elgar are well worth your attention. Relf Clark gives a warm welcome to a Naxos release of Elgar's complete music for organ, although as he suggests there are a number of other works in organ arrangements which might justify a future second volume. Tom Winpenny performs at the Willis organ of Hereford Cathedral.

Andrew Keener gives an insightful review of a release from the Barbirolli Society of a live performance of the Second Symphony, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir John in Coventry Cathedral in May 1964. The performance took place just four months after Barbirolli made his celebrated studio recording with the Hallé Orchestra for EMI, and the comparison yields fascinating results. In addition, Howard Arman gives a second review of *The Reeds by Severnside*, the SOMM release of Choral Music by Elgar from The Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital Chelsea under their Director William Vann. The recording received a highly favourable review in the last *Journal* but was felt to be of such importance and interest as to merit a second appreciation.

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[2] Moore, op. cit, 269

The Vaughan Williams 150th Anniversary year saw a number of important and interesting CD releases, and two more are reviewed here. From SOMM, David Morris reviews a disc which includes the world premiere performance of the Ninth Symphony recorded live under Sargent at the RFH in April 1958, in addition to the Sixth Symphony under the same conductor recorded at the Royal Albert Hall six years later. The Albion label has produced a flood of important VW recordings this year, and Ruth Helen welcomes the latest, a disc of music written either for brass band or for military band arranged for brass, including the captivating Tuba Concerto. The famous Tredegar Town Band performs, and three items are under the direction of Martyn Brabbins.

Last but most certainly not least is a landmark recording of two string quartets by W.H. ('Billy') Reed. Reed's name will be familiar to all Elgarians as both a friend and collaborator of Elgar as well as the author of his volume of reminiscences *Elgar as I knew him* and his biographer for the *Master Musicians* series, but his achievements as a composer are far less well known. This enterprising new release from the Cirrus Quartet contains world-premiere recordings of the String Quartets Nos. 4 & 5 and the disc is wholeheartedly recommended by Steven Halls.

Our deadline for contributions to the April issue of the Journal is **Friday 10 February** 2023.

Andrew Dalton
With the editorial team of Kevin Mitchell, David Morris and Andrew Neill

Elgar, the Bassoon and much more…

Andrew Neill

On 27 September 2022 I met Gareth Newman, former Sub-Principal Bassoon of the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO). We examined some of Elgar's scores together, notably the Bassoon Romance - Gareth has played this many times over the years. Elgar composed his Romance for Edwin James, principal bassoonist of the London Symphony Orchestra, and James premiered this in Hereford on 16 February 1911. Gareth is now retired, and we met only a few days after an LPO performance of Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, which we had attended as members of the audience, and a few weeks after the Proms performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. Both works had been conducted by Edward Gardner; this explains our allusions to these performances.

What follows shows this became a discussion about Elgar's use of the bassoon and ranged over composers as diverse as Mozart and Schoenberg, the merits of certain Concert Halls, and much more. Our conversation, as with so many conversations, became discursive and went off on interesting tangents. I have attempted to impose some discipline on what follows without destroying any natural spontaneity. References to page numbers and cue markings are those in the scores published by The Complete Edition. I am grateful to Ruth Hellen for transcribing the recording of the original discussion.

After graduating from Bangor University, Gareth spent four years in the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon, and three seasons with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. He then moved to London where he spent the rest of his career as Principal Bassoon of the BBC Concert Orchestra, the London Mozart Players, and the New Queen's Hall Orchestra (the latter on French Bassoon). He was Professor of Bassoon at the Royal Academy of Music from 1994 - 2013, and from 2008 - 2022 Sub - Principal Bassoon of the LPO, serving as Vice-President 2011 - 2020.

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Many years ago, in a lecture to London Branch, the conductor Norman del Mar expressed the view that, when compared to Elgar, Richard Strauss was the superior orchestrator. Others, such as the musicologist and biographer David Cairns, believes that Gustav Mahler should be awarded that palm. However, I can recall our President, Sir Mark Elder, a fine bassoon player himself, pointing out how his instrument was lost in the (at times) dense orchestration of Richard Strauss's *Symphonia Domestica*. It is worth the reader bearing these points in mind as he or she digests what follows.

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Gareth was familiar with the photograph of Elgar as part of his wind quintet, and we began by talking about the instrument he is seen holding.

G Of course Elgar played the French bassoon, which is a very different beast from the one that is now played in all orchestras in this country.

A Is that the sort of bassoon that Stravinsky had in mind when he began to compose the *Rite of Spring*?

G Yes, almost certainly. Everybody played the French bassoon in this country until the early part of the 20th century and the French bassoon is more or less a direct descendant of the baroque and classical instruments. It has a smaller bore than the German instrument and different keywork. The characteristics of the French instrument are that it has a different range of sounds over the compass of the instrument. In Germany in the early part of the 19th century a small group of people decided that it wasn't sufficiently loud for the orchestra of the time. So, they redesigned the bassoon to be more even across its whole compass and louder, too. This involved deliberately sharpening the 'bottom' of the instrument in order to provide more overtones in the tenor register and therefore more penetration.

The result is that the German instrument is more efficient in that way, and it is more homogenous over the range, but it doesn't have the colours of the French instrument. I know because I played the French bassoon for many years, and the bottom of the instrument is not sharp like the German bassoon, and with the top of the instrument it is much easier to pop out top Es and top Fs, above middle C than it is on the German bassoon. So, pieces like the Ravel G major Piano Concerto for example, which goes up to E and *The Rite of Spring* would have been slightly easier on the French bassoon. Also, interestingly, pieces like the Tchaikovsky *Pathétique* Symphony would have been simpler on the French bassoon because (a) it's not sharp in that register like the German bassoon and (b) it's not as loud, so it's much easier to play the opening of that symphony on the French instrument than it is on the German.

A That is very interesting, but if you go back to three composers who wrote for big orchestras, Mahler, Strauss and Elgar, bearing in mind they would have been composing for narrow bore brass instruments, do you think they would have had the German bassoon in mind and do you think Elgar was composing for the German bassoon?

G As far as I know, Mahler and Strauss would have been writing for the German bassoon, which was well established in Germany and Austria by then. In France, and in Britain until the 1930s, the French instrument held sway, and Elgar, pictured with his French bassoon, would certainly have been writing with this instrument in mind. I think Elgar was composing for the French instrument, because that is the instrument he played. The interesting thing, when I played the French bassoon in orchestras like the New Queen's Hall[1] how revelatory it was to me because the whole orchestral balance was different because of the use particularly of the narrow bore brass instruments. So, for the woodwind and stringed instruments, the whole balance of the orchestra was different. We would play familiar pieces but you heard different things in those performances.

A I remember that came over particularly in a work like *Tod und Verklärung* by Strauss. The brass - Strauss would say ‘never look at the brass, you’ll only encourage them’ – was much better balanced. I think the concert was at the Barbican, which is hardly the most attractive place to play for a large orchestra, but nevertheless this orchestral balance came over.

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[1] The New Queen's Hall Orchestra, formed by John Boyden in 1992, attempted to recreate the performing practice of orchestras at the beginning of the century.

G Yes, the trend in the 20th century is actually for the brass to get louder and louder and use bigger bore instruments and now a professional brass section can easily obliterate the rest of the orchestra which I think is wrong. It distorts the sort of balance that composers would have had in their heads when they wrote these pieces.

A You and I were in the audience for last Saturday’s concert (24 September 2022) which was certainly an experience in many ways, particularly as it was our first *Gürrelieder.* Of course we gazed at this enormous orchestra – nine flutes, eleven double basses and everyone else seemed as if they had to fit in around them. I am not sure if the clarity was obscured by the sheer size of Schoenberg’s orchestra but how did it come over to you?

G Well, I did feel particularly that the excellent tenor in the role of King Waldemar had to struggle at times to be heard. It is very dense orchestration, so it does need a very delicate touch I think and I did get the impression that the orchestra could have been quieter at times.

A I thought David Butt Philip (Waldemar) was excellent although Schoenberg did not help him at times. In this respect, if we consider Mahler’s orchestration – he was certainly a more experienced orchestrator than Schoenberg – I suspect he would have given a greater transparency to a work like *Gürrelieder.* For example, if you take the tenor’s first song in *Das Lied von der Erde* (‘Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde’), it is a challenging role being frequently at the top of a tenor’s range, but you can always hear the voice?

G Yes, definitely. I think Schoenberg’s slight inexperience in orchestration shows up in that piece, impressive though it is.

A The beginning is very transparent, but whether you need nine flutes is another matter!

G Yes, absolutely, but there are many interesting colour combinations in Schoenberg’s orchestration, but I think he could have benefited from using more solo instrumental colours at times rather than these very dense textures.

Elgar: Romance for Bassoon and Orchestra

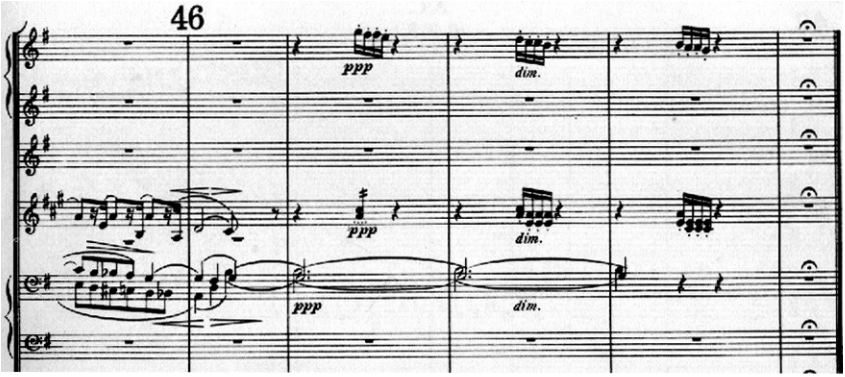
A We are now looking at the score of the *Romance*. If you were to play it this evening would you prefer to use a French bassoon?

G If I were equally practised on both instruments, yes, I think I would, because I just enjoy the different colours that the French instrument has, but of course the orchestra has to be much more subtle. For example, if you played the piece on the French Bassoon you wouldn’t necessarily want two German bassoons in the orchestra. But just looking at the first part for example, it’s fascinating how Elgar does funny little things like putting the first bassoon below the second bassoon in the orchestration, which he does in the *Enigma Variations* as well several times. It almost seems playful on Elgar’s part when one is sitting performing something like that, because so few composers would even dream of doing the same, and I don’t know whether he’s doing it because he thinks the parts demand that sort of movement individually, or whether he's just being interesting.

A Could the second bassoon be less experienced than the first and is it making it easier for the second bassoon, therefore?

G That's a good point – it could well be. Although if you look at the *Enigma Variations* both parts are quite demanding and he certainly gives the second bassoon plenty to do, so I don't think he necessarily makes that assumption. But the end of 'Dorabella', for example, that is just a classic example where suddenly the first bassoon settles on the tonic and the second bassoon moves to the third above. It is a lovely moment to play because you so rarely get that sort of voicing.

'Dorabella' Variation



A Many people comment that Elgar, because he learnt the orchestra from listening rather than going to the Royal Academy and being taught to orchestrate, has this extraordinary ability to make the perhaps less prominent members of the orchestra feel that they always have something to do. Before the recent *Dream of Gerontius* performance in the Albert Hall I was talking to Tania Mazzetti who leads the second violins – she had never played it before (she is Italian) – and she said 'It's wonderful; I feel wanted'. In works like this, do you feel Elgar knew exactly what he was doing for your part as a bassoonist?

G Yes, no doubt – the orchestration is quite subtle and you feel that when you have something to play, it matters. I was looking again at the *Enigma Variations* and it is very interesting to see what he did with the bassoon because he obviously treated the instrument in a much more solo role than many other composers who just use the bassoon as the bass of the wind section with the occasional more important thing to play. Elgar used the bassoon in a more adventurous way giving it some quite virtuosic passages which would normally be for the flute, clarinet or oboe.

A I sometimes go to a concert and the bassoon is playing away and I think if it actually did not play would we notice? That is a criticism of the composer, but with Elgar you almost certainly would notice if you stopped!

G Yes, definitely. And particularly with Elgar, there are times when the entire orchestra stops and the bassoon is suddenly exposed as in 'Dorabella' and the bassoon is given an extraordinary little flourish.

A So let us return to the *Romance*. We will discuss the *Enigma Variations* later. You pointed out that in the *Romance* there is this slightly quirky beginning for the orchestra but not for the soloist.

G It's just a very lyrical, a vocal sort of line that the solo part has until it suddenly starts to get a bit more florid (after cue D). That is the sort of writing I'm talking about which is in the *Enigma Variations*, and the First Symphony too - the beginning of the last movement which makes that particular section really quite challenging.

A Looking at page 380 of the Romance from Cue G onwards it is really a mini-concerto isn't it?

G I'd love to know whether Elgar himself would have been good enough to play this, or perhaps just aspired to do so. It is a lovely piece to play because it's challenging without being out of the question – all the florid writing is very bassoon-like, it fits under the fingers and works well, unlike some composers where you feel they are giving something to the bassoon and they don't really understand what the bassoon's strengths and weaknesses are. You always feel with Elgar that he understood what he was writing, and it works.

A Is there anything else to say about the *Romance* before we look at some of the other scores?

G The great challenge for me in playing this piece is to balance all the subtle markings, for example he writes a lot of pauses in the solo part and some are marked *tenuto* and some are not, and the challenge is to make them sound natural and not artificial, because it can end up being very stilted.

A It's almost just a slight change in the breathing isn't it – you can't really break the line, so that's a challenge is it not? We were looking at page 385.

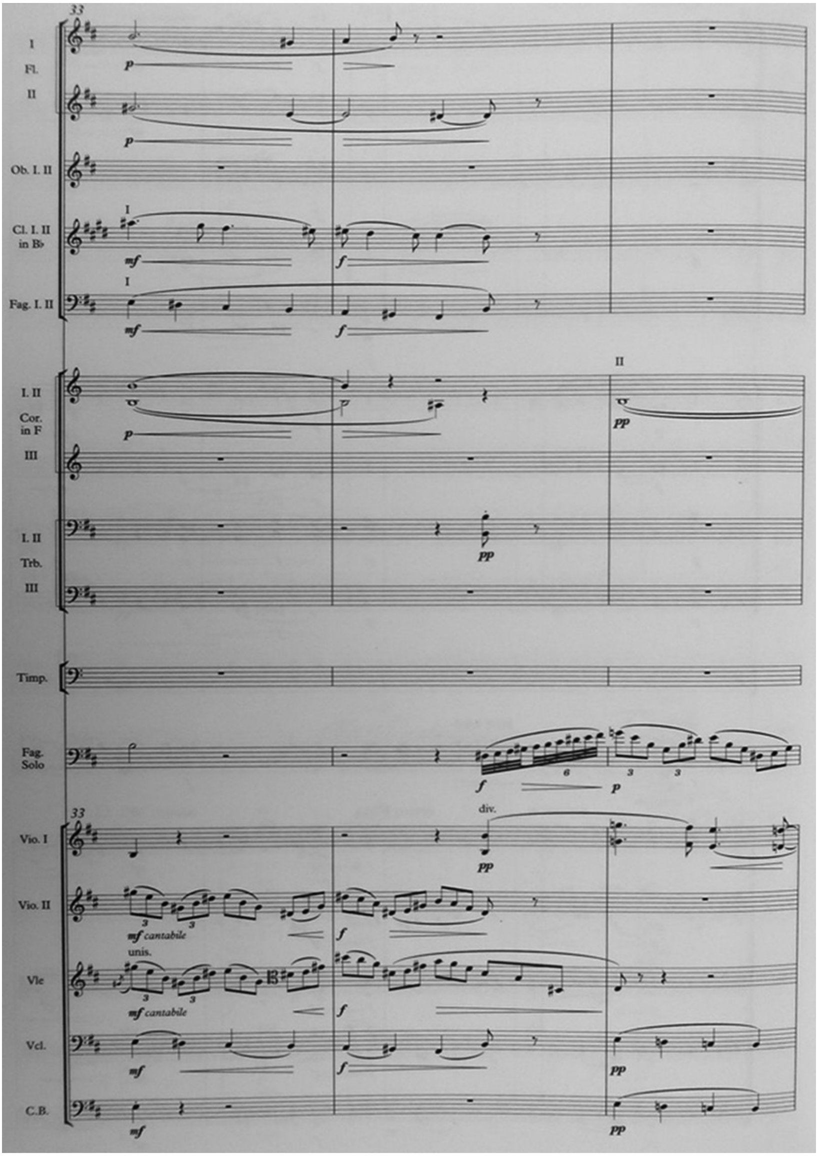
G Yes. For example on the second bar of the page we have a pause over the third semi-quaver of a group of four, and in the next bar there is a dot on the third semi-quaver, so the danger is that they will sound exactly the same so you have got to try and find a way of playing the pause that is different from just the dotted rhythm.

I always think that the danger in playing something like Elgar's music is that you over-romanticise it and you make it sound indulgent. If you think of that period in Edwardian England, the way they dressed and the whole suppression of overt emotion I think translates into playing something like this in a more restrained way, following the markings but not indulging in it too much, which is quite a fine line to tread.

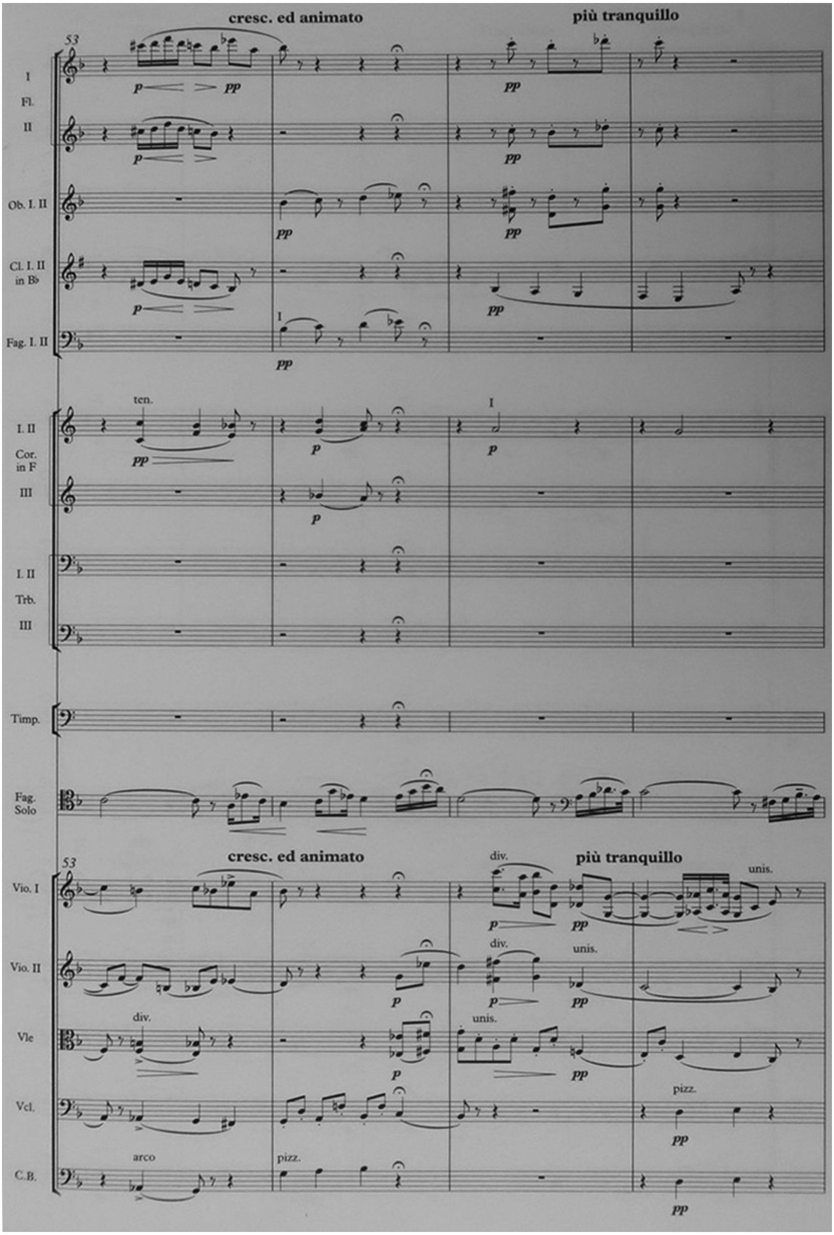
A I think Elgar would agree with you there. If you hear his recordings, nobody was less romantic about his music than him – you get what's on the page.

G Yes, which is very meticulously marked so you certainly don't need to overdo it. So that for me is the biggest challenge in this piece, just to find that balance between following the markings but not doing too much.

Bassoon Romance; Example 1


33
I
Fl.
II
Ob. I. II
Cl. I. II
in B♭
Fag. I. II
I. II
Cor.
in F
III
I. II
Trb.
III
Timp.
Fag.
Solo
Vio. I
Vio. II
Vle
Vcl.
C.B.
p
mf
f
pp
div.
unis.
mf cantabile
6
3

Bassoon Romance; Example 2


53
cresc. ed animato
più tranquillo
I
Fl.
II
Ob. I. II
Cl. I. II in B♭
Fag. I. II
I. II
Cor. in F
III
I. II
Trb.
III
Timp.
Fag. Solo
Vio. I
Vio. II
Vle
Vcl.
C.B.
ten.
div.
unis.
pizz.
arco
p
pp

A It's not a big piece, but it's an important piece because of where it comes, between the Violin Concerto and the Second Symphony.

G Yes, it's a shame in a way that it is as short as it is because that means it is not performed as often as it might be.

A Yes, he should have gone on and written a concerto.

G Yes, which would have been fabulous.

Tchaikovsky

A Are there some pieces when you know you're going to play you think 'oh no'?

G Yes bizarrely, something like the second bassoon part of Tchaikovsky's sixth symphony, the *scherzo*, there is a section there that is almost impossible to play because it is right around the very bottom of the instrument and the left thumb on the bassoon has nine or ten keys to work by itself and in this passage I am thinking of involves the most extraordinary dexterity for the left thumb, which is extremely challenging! I don't think he knew what he was doing there because all that the second bassoon is playing is doubling the first bassoon an octave lower and he would have just written that without really understanding the problems.

A Of course it's a very bassoon-y piece isn't it, it's a sort of chestnut brown symphony – a lot of the bass of the orchestra is used in giving the sound that Tchaikovsky wanted, so I suppose it's not that surprising.

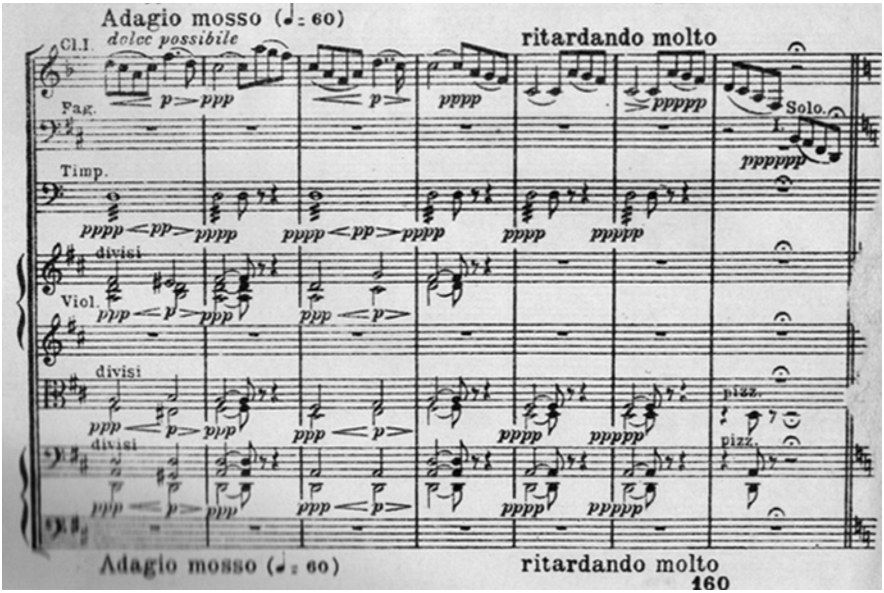
G That's right, and the opening is challenging enough, but halfway through the first movement where the clarinet has the tune and starts descending, and - as Tchaikovsky wrote it - the bassoon takes over and goes right down the bottom. It's almost invariably done on the bass clarinet these days because the bass clarinet colour matches the clarinet, and the bass clarinet can play much more softly than the German bassoon; on the French bassoon it would work much better.

A And that's what Tchaikovsky probably had in mind?

G Yes, because the end of the movement is marked something ridiculous like six *p*s and the clarinet can just play so softly in order to latch on to the end of that, but to go right down the bottom of the bassoon very, very quietly is a big challenge.

Interestingly enough, I had quite a lot of experiences with that piece, one of them not entirely happy, when a particular conductor tried to make me play even more quietly and flatter than I was playing and it was quite a struggle. So, when I had to play it with Vladimir Jurowski (when I first joined the LPO) I was a little apprehensive but he immediately put me at my ease by coming up to me before the rehearsal and saying 'Whenever we play this in Russia, the bassoonists put something down the bell as a mute'. He really likes that because it means that the sound is softer but it is still strong and he liked that combination of power but not volume. I manufactured a little roll of felt that I put down the bell and I also experimented with putting a little extension on the crook to lower the pitch a little, and then I just played it normally and it solved all the problems of that opening completely. We played it together something like 30-odd times in my first seasons in the LPO, so that thankfully banished any bad experiences I had had in the past.

Tchaikovsky – Symphony No 6 ‘Pathétique’; 1st movement



A Well, Jurowski was a true master of that symphony. I recall the last two times I heard him conduct it. The first time he gave us a lecture about how the march is not anything other than a work of tragedy. Naturally we all sat on our hands and did not applaud. The last time he conducted it some idiot behind me shouted ‘*bravo*’ immediately the march ended. I could see and feel Jurowski’s back slump.

G Yes, I know. We played it in the Middle East when we were on tour there and he knew that the audience would applaud at the end of the march and he said at one point ‘Wouldn’t it be nice if they all applauded the end of the third movement and then left, and we could play the fourth movement just for ourselves’.

Enigma Variations

A. Let’s return to the *Enigma Variations* because you really intrigued me earlier.

G Yes, and it is very interesting looking at the bassoon writing because in the third variation (RBT) there is the first bit of very florid writing that starts off doubling the cellos but then the bassoons in unison go off on their own for a couple of bars. (Page 18; bars 22 and 33).

A Which means they will be heard doesn’t it?

G Particularly those two bars, yes, before the strings come in.

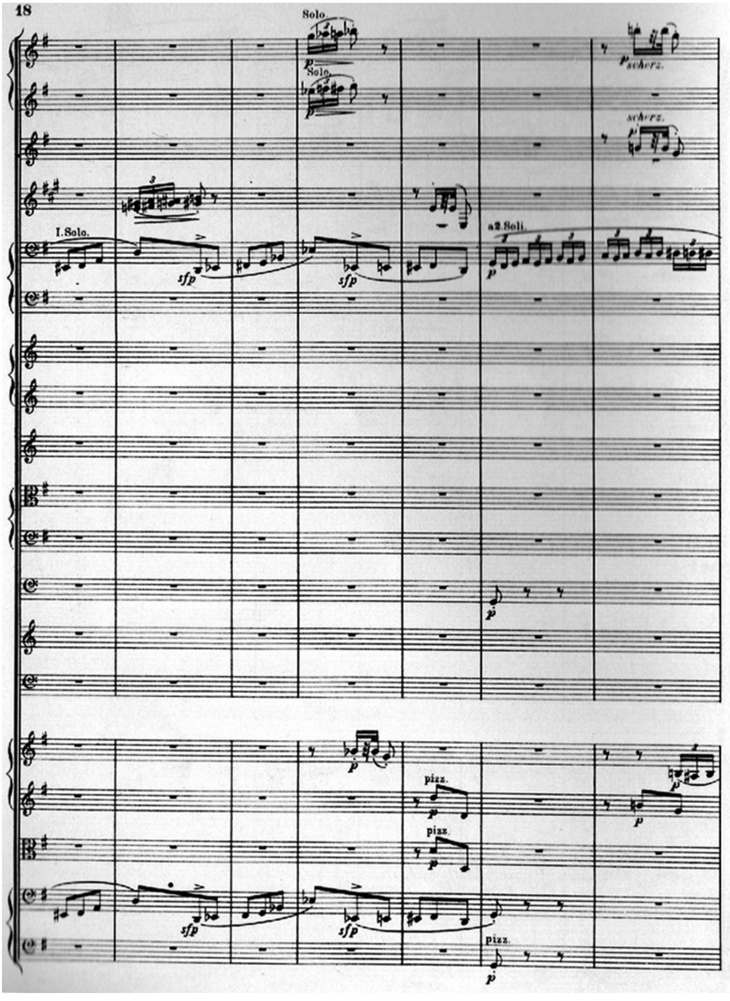
A They all play. The bassoons are *mezzo forte* the upper strings are *mezzo forte* but the violas are *piano,* you are following each but you have the last word!

G Yes, but this is an example of what we were talking about how the rest of the orchestra drops out and suddenly the bassoons are spotlit.

A Which is much more rewarding than doubling the cellos, which I imagine happens frequently?

G Oh yes, very often.

'RBT' Variation


18
Solo.
p
Solo.
p
scherz.
scherz.
I. Solo.
sfp
sfp
a2 Soli.
p
p
p
pizz.
p
pizz.
p
p
sfp
sfp
pizz.
p

And the other famous bit of it is ‘Dorabella’. Again, the rest of the woodwind section are just playing long notes and the bassoons are doubling the cello and bass, playing incredibly fast notes [sings] – it’s almost impossible to get all those in in time but it’s another example of Elgar obviously believing that the bassoon was capable of playing it.

A And of course it adds a different colour to how the strings are playing – and, of course, shows that its nearest string instrument would be the cello.

G Yes. Funnily enough, for my teacher Charles Cracknell who was the first bassoon in the Hallé Orchestra with Barbirolli from the end of the Second World War up until the 70s, this was one of the things he hated playing because it did not lie under the fingers very well.

A And of course with Barbirolli he would have played it many times.

G Indeed! He would have yes. But this section here on page 72, the entire orchestra stops and the bassoon has this extraordinary florid, very soloistic passage, and then the second bassoon joins in, and then this is the bit I was talking about where the first bassoon comes down to the tonic G and the second bassoon rises up above it to the B, which is such an unusual piece of scoring. It is lovely to play and the second bassoon always enjoys that moment because being used to being underneath the first bassoon all the time suddenly comes into prominence.

A You just stop in time for those last phrases on the woodwind and the violins, so everything is then heard isn’t it?

G Yes, I mean it’s beautifully orchestrated and it’s always a great pleasure to play.

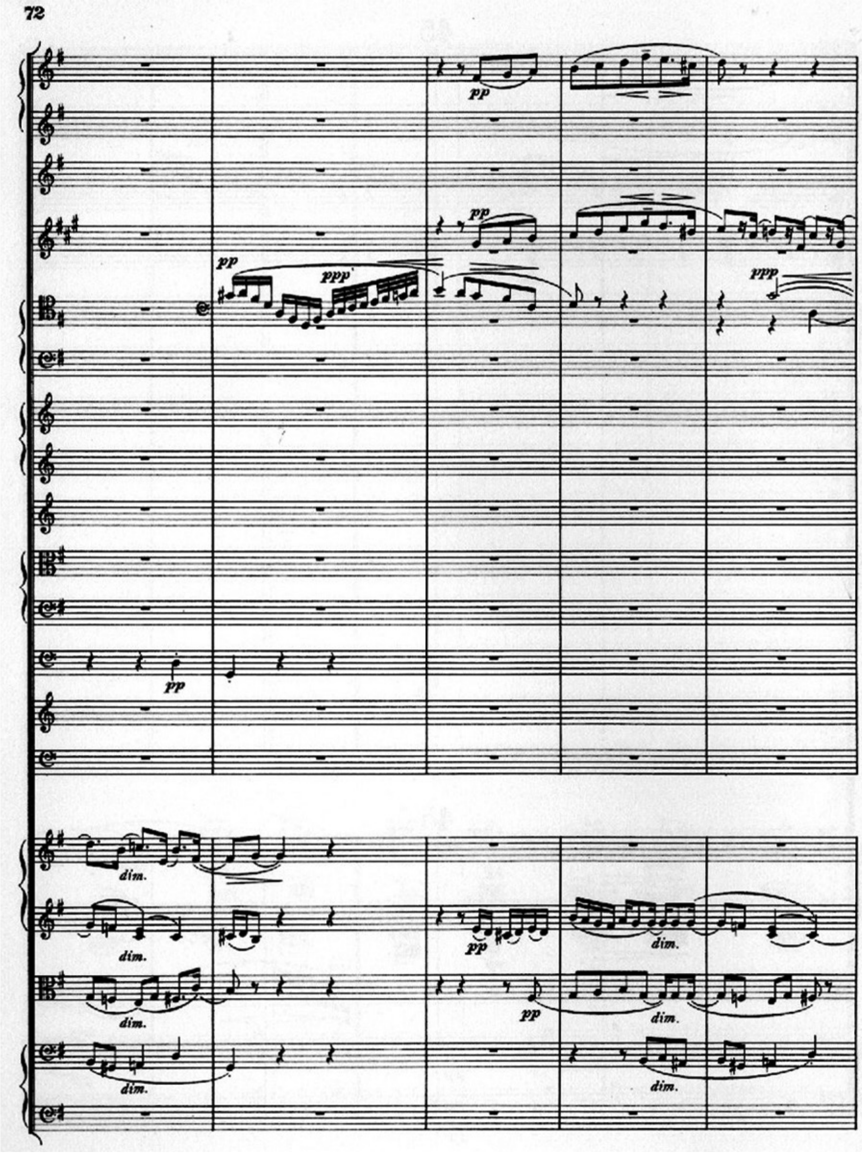
The other piece that springs to mind is the Verdi Requiem, which is one of the all-time great first bassoon parts in the repertoire and you just feel like everything you play is important and is heard, and the *Enigma Variations* is exactly the same – it has just got so much to play but nothing silly, nothing out of the question technically.

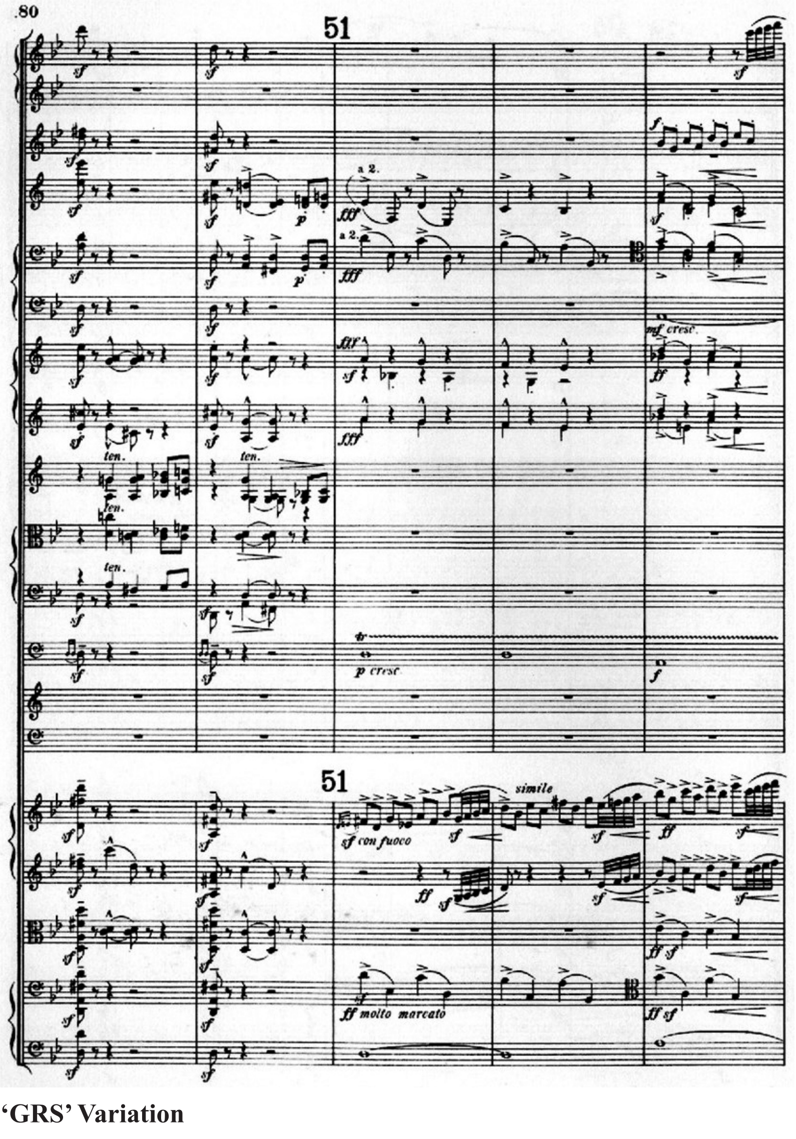
A Are there any other highlights in the *Variations*?

G Looking at Variation 11 (GRS) on page 80, there’s another fine example of interesting scoring, because the bassoons are basically moving down – the music is moving down a fifth each crochet. What is happening is that the first bassoon is going from being the top to being the bottom, and the obvious thing would have been for the first bassoon in the 5th bar to be playing G-C-F-Bb. Elgar is making the first bassoon on top of the second bassoon on the first beat of the bar, but then vice versa on the second – crossing. It is just very curious because very few composers would have thought of doing that.

At the beginning of the finale, the way he just dovetails the two – he treats the two instruments absolutely equally, the first bassoon followed by the second bassoon followed by the first again, just dividing a line that he could have easily put on one bassoon, but he divided it up.

'Dorabella' Variation


72
pp
ppp
dim.


80
51
a 2.
fff
sf
p
mf cresc.
ff
ten.
tr
p cresc.
f
sf con fuoco
simile
molto marcato

‘GRS’ Variation

A	Yes, you don't have to spend hours going over those few bars to make sure you will be heard.

G	Yes, exactly

A	I think also for the sound of Verdi the bassoon immediately comes to mind.

G	Yes, the Requiem is the most extraordinary part because you've got that huge *obbligato* bassoon part in the 'Dies Irae' and the bassoon quartet in the penultimate movement, where again, the whole orchestra stops and you have just four bassoons playing together which is unique in my experience.

A	Are there any other operas where you think 'gosh, that's going to be fun'?

G	Again, Verdi and Mozart. He is, of course, the king. You just feel as though you're a voice, not quite as important as the singers, but very important. Like the operas, the late piano concertos also have the most amazing bassoon parts from about 17 onwards, just fabulous writing and a great pleasure to play at all times. Who else in the opera house?

A	Wagner probably not?

G	No. With Wagner you're just really filling in chords and colours and very rarely have anything exposed or terribly interesting to play, just a matter of stamina more than anything else

A	Strauss?

G	Strauss, oh definitely, yes - *Ariadne auf Naxos*.[2]

A	Of course you've got a small orchestra there so everything is going to be heard isn't it?

G	And *Rake's Progress*, again, is extremely interesting to play. Stravinsky is another composer who really knew exactly what he was doing with the bassoon and used it a lot. You always know that Stravinsky is going to be interesting and challenging and rewarding all at the same time.

A	Now Mahler, a great conductor - did he understand the bassoon?

G	Not in the same way, he doesn't exploit the bassoon in the same way as some composers. There are some moments like, for example at the beginning of the slow movement of Mahler's First Symphony. You are a second instrument to following the double bass (which has stated the principal subject) so Mahler does give the bassoon occasionally something decent and important to do but I don't think he exploits the characteristics and capabilities of the instrument in the same way as some other composers.

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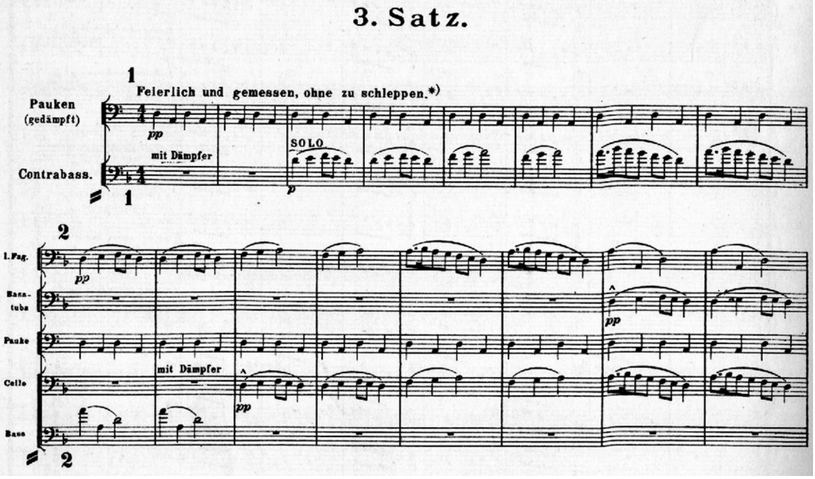
[2] Strauss composed the opera for an orchestra of 40.

Mahler: Symphony No 1.



Beethoven

A Now to Beethoven – he knew what he was doing and gave you much to do.

G Yes, Beethoven always feels to me like you are being used in the same way as all the other instruments – he rarely uses the particular characteristics of the instrument, he treats you as another musical voice, if you see what I mean. There are a couple of exceptions. In his Fourth Symphony, the last movement for example, there is one of the most bizarre bits of orchestration where the entire orchestra stops and the bassoon is left playing the fast semi-quavers. However, very often he will have a succession of woodwind solos – flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and you are playing the same sorts of things: you’re not playing anything that is very different from any of the other wind instruments.

The other thing about Beethoven I always find, is that he can be hard work: a lot is being demanded of you but not a lot is being heard. So, you are either doubling something or you are playing in chordal things where you are almost being treated like a stringed instrument. Your stamina or your ability to keep playing without breathing is not questioned. The ninth symphony is a classic example – a lot of the time you are just chugging along, playing in the middle of things not being heard. However, it is enormously tiring to play, so much so that very often in the orchestra you will get a section asking for an extra player to bump, like the horns will have, in order to be able to take the occasional rest, otherwise you have the bassoon in your mouth the whole time. Wagner can be similar – you are just being used in that way, whereas somebody like Mozart or Elgar or Strauss, they are much more discriminating in their orchestration, so you feel like you are making a very important contribution and then you are being given a rest – they understand how to use the instrument in a different way.

Mozart

A One work I’ve always loved – no one is quite certain that Mozart composed it - is his *Sinfonia Concertante* for those four wind instruments – it is just such a happy piece. The LPO has recorded it, with Vladimir Jurowski directing.

G Yes, Jonathan Davies recorded it with the other principals. It is an enormously satisfying piece to play.

A Do you have a view of who wrote it?

G Most of it feels like Mozart to me.

A That is essentially what I’m getting at – do you feel it is by Mozart?

G Yes, definitely. It feels like it could have been completed by somebody else, but most of the ideas you feel are Mozart. It’s one of those pieces you always enjoy playing because you’re standing up at the front like in a solo concerto, but the focus is not entirely on you – it is shared and so it’s more like chamber music.

A And of course he gave you a Bassoon Concerto

G Which is amazing, yes. It’s a very youthful work, written when he was eighteen I think,

A He was quite old by then, as a composer that is!

G Yes. It is a fascinating piece, because it’s one of the core repertoire pieces that is almost always asked for in auditions and that sort of thing. It’s very difficult to make the piece your own, because if you are playing it in an audition context, where, if you are not careful, and you are trying to please the panel, you do not want to stray too far from a ‘normal performance’. However, on the other hand if you don’t stray from the normal performance at all then you will just sound like everybody else and, naturally, you want to stand out in the audition. What is interesting to me is that if you really examine the score closely there are lots and lots of ways in which you can make your performance personal and slightly different from everybody else, so the thing you have to decide is how far you go along that road of making it your own performance – quite idiosyncratic or you just play safe and play like everybody else plays.

A If you are listening to an audition by a bassoonist for the orchestra, you can presumably look beyond what he or she is doing for you to see if that is really the sort of person who will fit in, or if and why they were going slightly ‘off-piste’ so to speak.

G Yes, obviously you want somebody to be able to play all the notes correctly and in tune and in a musical way, but there are lots of ways in which somebody can use the piece to express their musical personality in a more individual way and that’s what I would be wanting to hear.

Concert Halls

A Despite its idiosyncratic acoustic, did you enjoy playing in the Royal Albert Hall?

G Depending on the repertoire, yes. I actually played a concerto at the Proms there once which was absolutely terrifying in some ways. It was the second night – a Saturday – and the BBC Concert Orchestra arranged a reconstruction of one of the first Proms, which was a very long programme, and included the Weber Bassoon Concerto, which they asked me to play. Walking out to a full house in the Albert Hall was quite challenging; but it was a pleasure to play there because you felt the acoustic was friendly and you could be heard with a reasonably large orchestra playing. I certainly always enjoyed the atmosphere of the Proms because you get such an attentive audience. The way an audience listens affects how you feel in the orchestra. If you feel that the audience is really concentrating and listening well, then you feed off that and it turns into a different concert really.

A However the 'challenging' acoustic remains. Some years ago, I recall speaking in the interval to a player from a German orchestra. It was a hot evening, and he was outside having a smoke. I asked him 'How's it going' and he replied, 'I hate playing in this place – I can't hear what everyone else is doing'.

G Yes, one's home hall can make a huge difference – I remember talking to the Philadelphia Orchestra's first bassoon when they were playing the Royal Festival Hall, and he just said 'How do you play in here?' He hated it. But if you play there a lot then I suppose you just get used to the acoustic.

A I have talked to other members of the orchestra and some like playing at the Festival Hall; I suppose because they're used to it.

G Yes, I think so. But I think it depends what instrument you play too, because one of the problems with the bassoon is that the instrument has no natural resonance. If you pull the bow across a cello, the sound will continue after the bow has left the string, because the instrument is vibrating. When you blow a note on the bassoon, once you stop blowing the sound dies immediately because there is no vibration in the instrument, so ideally you need an acoustic that provides a little bit of echo so the note has a natural decay. The Festival Hall is very challenging for us because it doesn't have any echo, so you have to nurture the end of every phrase, especially if you have a note that's audible – you can't just stop the note, because the note will just die, like falling off a cliff. You have to produce a sort of diminuendo which mirrors the sort of decay you get in the sound of the stringed instruments, so having to do that all the time is quite challenging – you do get used to it to an extent, but then when you go into the Musikverein in Vienna or some hall like that I think 'Oh my goodness, this is so much easier' because the note has a natural decay.

A It would be marvellous to have a concert hall with the right acoustic in London, but I cannot see it being built in my lifetime.

G I'm afraid not. It's such a shame because they had the obvious opportunity to do this when they refurbished the Festival Hall at some vast cost – I think they spent £110 million on it – and they didn't improve it at all. I think 'they' were so obsessed with keeping elements of a listed building that they kept the carpets, the upholstery and all these sorts of things; but they didn't really address the acoustics at all, which is a great shame. It is tragic really, because the site of the Hall is wonderful, right in the centre of London on the river there and the space is very attractive from the audience's point of view. The other thing they did, which is totally baffling to me, is that they actually reduced the size of the backstage, which was already dreadful. The size of the artists' bar, which is supposed to be able to accommodate an orchestra of 90 or 100, is no bigger than your living room – it was just ludicrous.

A Of course 'they' should have pulled it down, which I would have thought would have been the first thing to be done if you really wanted to have a first rate concert hall. You might have kept the façade looking across the Thames but you could have pulled the rest down and built a Symphony Hall Birmingham, for example!

G Yes, it's a great shame that London doesn't really have a first-class concert hall when you have got ones in Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Cardiff.

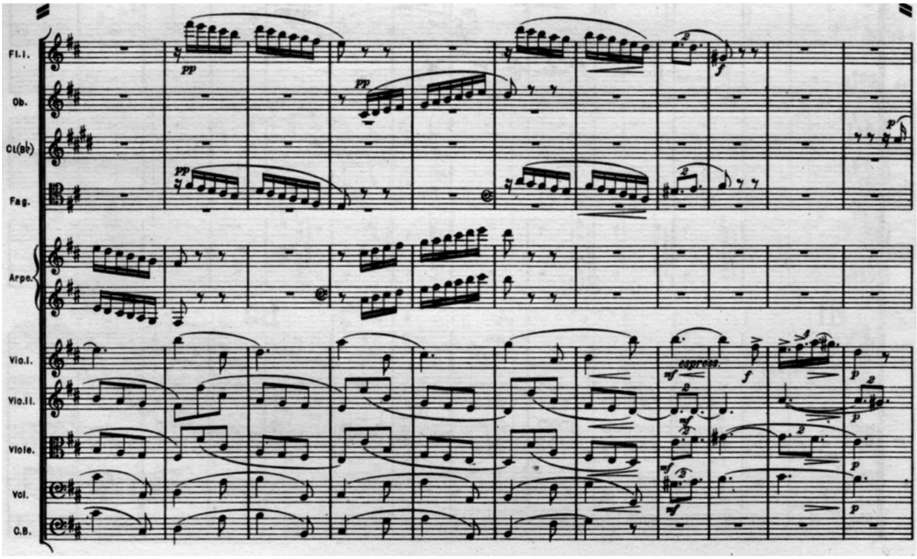
Elgar: Symphony No 2

A It is not just the Festival Hall. I went to hear Rattle's performance of Elgar's Second Symphony the other day – the London Symphony Orchestra another great orchestra – but the sound was horrible. For example, the percussion, it dies instantly – in this Symphony of all Symphonies!

G I agree. It was built as a concert hall / conference centre wasn't it?

A I think it was designed as a conference hall and then 'they' thought 'Oh, we can make it into a concert hall too'!

Symphony No 2



G Yes, it’s too small, you can’t even put on large-scale choral works. The last time I played the second symphony was there with the LSO and Colin Davis.

A Yes, he really understood that symphony didn’t he?

G Oh yes, he knew exactly what he was doing.

A Talking about the Second Symphony, that famous beginning which is so energetic and the instructions change from bar to bar, do you feel you can be heard, or is it just a wash of sound from your perspective?

G I think the latter – there’s obviously a very grand, full sound and the bassoons aren’t really being used in any special way in the opening; in fact, I don’t think any instrument is. It is a very grand opening, but quite soon it becomes more interesting – you have writing for the bassoons which is again very florid and very virtuosic.

A But it means you can be heard.

G Yes. Elgar can border on the bombastic at times, writing pompous sort of music, but it never lasts for long and it always goes on to something else. I am just reminding myself of this because it’s been years since I played it. The second movement has a great deal of subtle writing in the bassoon parts and looking at the *scherzo* page 110 for example, Elgar has the flute and bassoon in quite florid passages as at the beginning of the last movement of the First Symphony.

Elgar: Symphony No 1

G Look at the beginning of the last movement where, the flute and bassoon have this extraordinary little duet. You can see these sorts of things in the flute part but very rarely see it in the bassoon parts and to have the flute and bassoon…

A This is the second bar page 122, but the way it is orchestrated you are going to hear the bassoon.

G Definitely, which makes that particular section really quite challenging.

A Yes, and this is a marvellous passage, the beginning of the movement, because you are getting all these little hints of what’s been and what’s to come.

G Yes, exactly. Very few composers would have written that for the bassoon – it is very good. Again, the same sort of very florid writing.

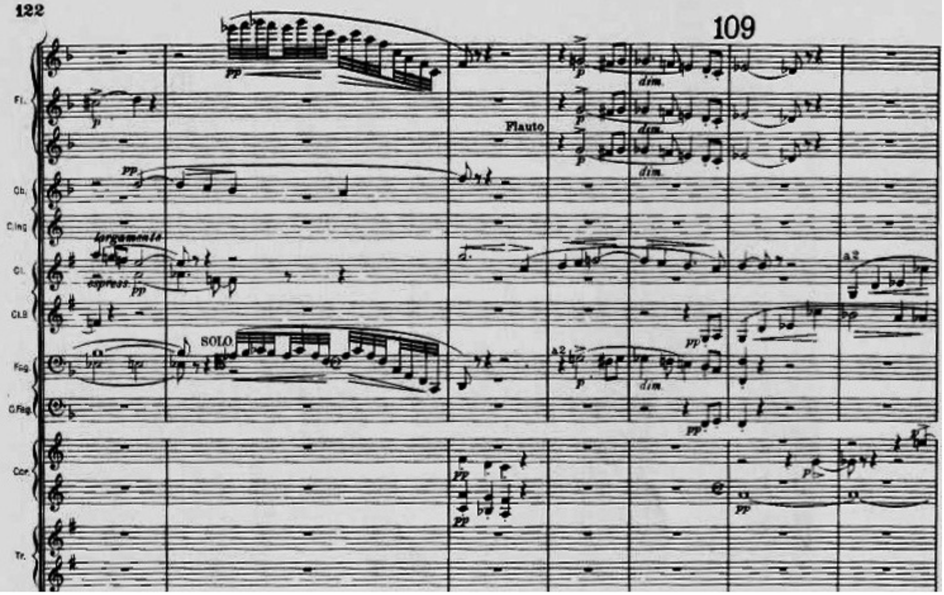
G This is a particularly interesting movement, the second, for the bassoon because again there’s quite a lot of writing, for example on page 106, you have this figuration in the woodwind where the bassoon is joined briefly by the clarinet but the bassoon plays the whole of the line.

A Perhaps not what you’d normally expect?

G No, it would more normally be the other way round, with the clarinet playing all of it and the bassoon doubling a little bit of it, but the same sort of figuration on page 111 as well, completely solo again.

A Did you play in that performance under Gardner in the Snape Maltings a few years ago?

Symphony No 1



G No

A Another Concert Hall! I was just wondering what that was like to play in as a place.

G Oh that is a lovely place in which to play. I am now going back to the beginning of the fourth movement – such an unusual piece of writing.

A Just before we finish, can we go back to the end of the first movement, because there the writing strikes me as so beautifully transparent where Elgar divides the instruments into single parts, particularly the strings. Is there anything particular to say about the bassoon writing there?

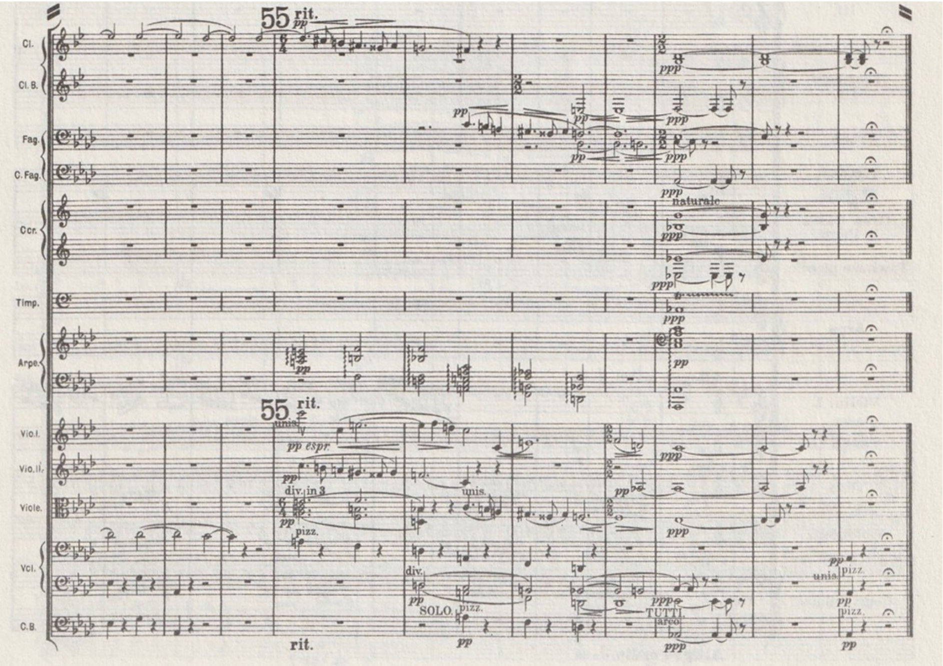
G Again, the whole descending figure in the second violins, violas and the flutes then taken over by the two bassoons and then the rest of the orchestra stops almost entirely and you have only one clarinet playing along and the bassoons, in thirds, descending down there which is so unusual [page 63]. And then in the last half dozen bars or so you get the bassoons playing quite a prominent role, the first bassoon doubling the viola, moving part there, and through to the end

A And at the last you give way to the clarinet and then the pizzicato strings at the bottom. It is beautifully transparent isn't it?

G. Indeed, it is.

I ended our conversation by thanking Gareth for his time before we repaired to the nearby County Arms for luncheon.

Andrew Neill is a Vice-President and former Chairman of the Society.


55 rit.
Cl.
Cl. B.
Fag.
C. Fag.
Cor.
Timp.
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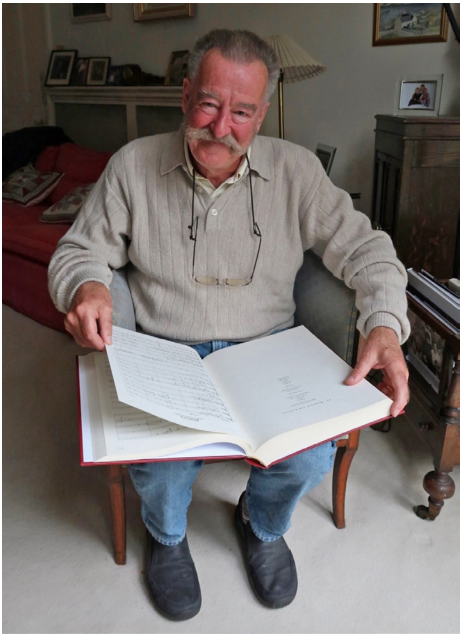

Above: Symphony No 1: First Movement conclusion.

Left: Gareth Newman examining the Score of Elgar's *Romance for Bassoon and Orchestra.*

Frank Schuster: Some Notes

Relf Clark

The role played by Frank Schuster in Elgar's career needs no amplification in the pages of *The Elgar Society Journal*.[1] The following notes, about Schuster himself, and a particular event in the last years of his life, arise from a re-examination of the provisions of his Will.

Elgar spent much time at The Hut, Schuster's country home; it is on the outskirts of Bray, a Thames-side village a few miles from Maidenhead, Berkshire and famous for its restaurants and a chameleon-like former Vicar. By way of a preliminary aside, did Elgar go there whenever he felt like it, or by prior agreement, or by invitation?[2] Whatever the answer, how did he show his gratitude?[3] His letter to Schuster of 28 June 1927, which refers to the seventieth-birthday party, seems to belong to a rare category,[4] but it may be that other expressions of appreciation have not survived, or were not considered worth transcribing, or that thanks were expressed in other ways. When visiting Bray, did Elgar take with him gifts in the form of, say, fine wine and choice comestibles? Similar questions could be asked in relation to Ridgehurst, Spetchley Park, The Elms and later Perryfield (though we can confidently assume that Elgar covered the cost to Pollie Grafton of feeding and generally looking after him). Elgar seems to have spent a remarkable amount of time in other people's homes, whereas one has the impression that he and Alice were not themselves anything like as active as hosts. A comparison of 'host to Elgars' and 'guest of Elgars' under 'Schuster, Frank' in the index to Dr Moore's edition of the Windflower letters illustrates this point very well.[5] Perhaps Elgar's 'visiting' needs the illumination that only a social historian can provide. Clearly, though, Schuster himself was an exceptionally generous host; but the most striking example of his generosity appears to be in relation to his disposal of The Hut.

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[1] See McBrien, David, 'A visit to 'The Hut'', *The Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.15, No.2 (July 2007), 6-18 and Smith, Richard, 'Frank Schuster - Elgar's patron', *The Elgar Society Journal*, Vol.19, No.5 (August 2016), 4-18.

[2] Elgar's letter to Schuster of 13 September 1914 acknowledges an invitation to spend time at The Hut: see Moore, Jerrold Northrop, ed., *Edward Elgar* [:] *letters of a lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 283-4; and in his letter to Elgar of 9 May 1916 Schuster expressly invites him to spend a day at The Hut: Moore, ibid., 297-8. Other such invitations seem elusive.

[3] The gratitude shown by the dedication of *In the South*, Op.50 was in respect of Schuster's role in the Covent Garden Festival (1904). See Fig.2.

[4] Moore, *Letters of a lifetime*, 401.

[5] Moore, J.N., ed., *Edward Elgar* [:] *the Windflower letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 349.

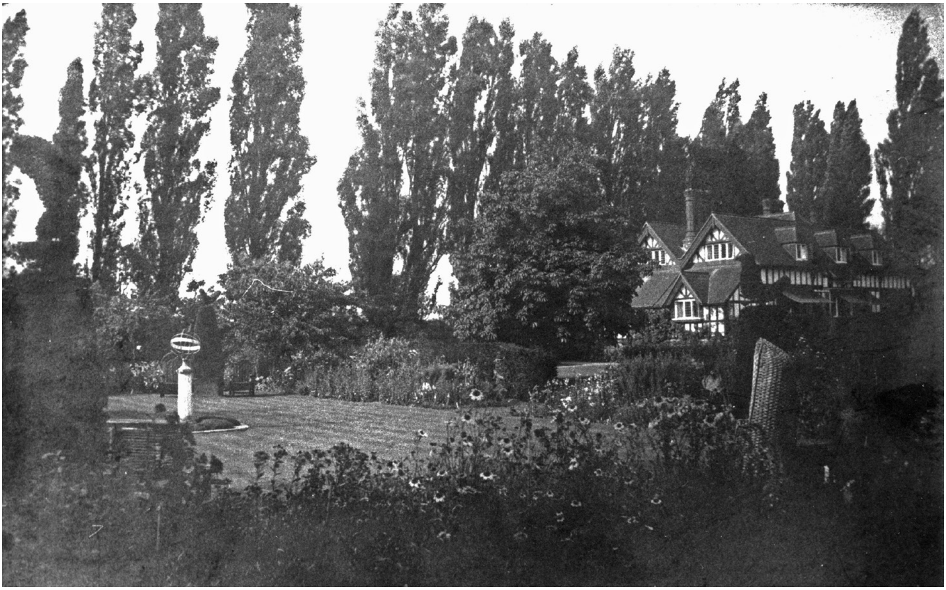

Fig.1: A 1912 view of The Hut. Note the immaculate lawn. (Illustration by courtesy of Arthur Reynolds)

Schuster died at Hove on 26 December 1927.[6] Although nothing turns on it, the exact date of his death seems to have created a certain amount of difficulty (see Appendix I). The death occurred at 19 Lansdowne Place, Hove, Sussex[7] and was registered by 'Leslie Wylde', who described himself to the registrar, inaccurately and almost certainly dishonestly, as Schuster's 'nephew' and who gave 'The Long White Cloud, Bray-on-Thames' as his address. The death certificate thus underlines two facts: first, that at some point prior to Frank Schuster's death Leslie Wylde had become either the owner of The Hut or alternatively its tenant or licensee; secondly, that the property had been re-named, presumably by Wylde (who was a New Zealander). It might be hard or even impossible to prove beyond all doubt that Wylde was completely unrelated to Schuster, but the absence of any genetic relationship is generally assumed;[8] and Elgar's letter to the Windflower on 6 August 1920 certainly strikes a sceptical note:

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[6] Information taken from the death certificate and grant of probate. It appears that the cause of death was shock arising from an operation on a duodenal ulcer. The death certificate gives Schuster's age as 74 (which does not quite accord with his having been born, according to his birth certificate, on 24 September 1852). Copies of wills and grants may be obtained on-line for a fee currently (September 2022) of £1.50.

[7] It seems likely that 19 Lansdowne Place was a nursing home. Richard Smith states that Schuster moved from Bray to 'Hove Lawn, Cromwell Road, Hove' and lived there until his death: Smith, Richard, op. cit., 16. This was certainly his address when he wrote to Elgar on 17 December 1927, little more than a week before his death (see Moore, *Letters of a lifetime*, 403), but Elgar's letter to the Windflower of 27 November 1924 makes it clear that there was prior residence in Brighton: see footnotes 23 and 24. Smith states that the move to Sussex took place in 1926 but appears to give no source, and this again clashes with the letter of 27 November 1924. The choice of a south coast location may have been influenced by the fact that Schuster was born in Brighton (information from birth certificate). The matter is not clarified by Schuster's codicils: see footnote 21.

> … the de Meyers (now Americans) came over [to Ridgehurst] & Frank [Schuster] – *also* some extraordiny [sic] females, friends of the youth [i.e., Wylde] whom F. introduces as his '*Nephew*' – are we all mad?[9]

Note the combination of italics and inverted commas, which suggests that Elgar's knowledge of Schuster and his family was such that he could confidently dismiss 'nephew' as a fiction. Clearly, however, Wylde had arrived at Bray by the summer of 1920.[10] Clearly, too, the apparent fiction was adopted early; and we can surely assume that in those post-Wilde, pre-Wolfenden days it was adopted in order either to create some kind of smokescreen or alternatively to prevent observers from reaching a false and potentially unfortunate conclusion.[11] [12] Wylde evidently had female friends, and on 16 July 1924 he married Edith Wendela Dorothy Boreel at Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Street, London.[13] The marriage certificate shows that Schuster was among the witnesses present at the ceremony; and it gives Wylde's age as 30, which makes Elgar's 1920 description of him as a youth seem perhaps a little odd.[14] At any rate, Wylde gave as his address 'The Hut, Bray on Thames'.

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[8] Adrian Boult described Wylde as Schuster's 'companion and adopted nephew' and as 'one of the many officers he had befriended in the war': see Boult, Sir Adrian, *My Own Trumpet* (London: Hamish Hamilton Limited, 1973), 74-5. David McBrien states that Wylde became Schuster's 'protégé, companion, and, in spite of his disability, his chauffeur': McBrien, D., op. cit., 11. One wonders whether any significance attaches to Boult's use of the word 'officers'. In his letter to the Windflower of 6 January 1928, Elgar referred to Wylde as 'Capt[ai]n Wylde': see Moore, *The Windflower letters*, 319 (note the use of a military title long after the end of hostilities).

[9] HWRO 705:445:7705.

[10] Richard Smith states that Schuster's first meeting with Wylde took place in 1916, at Lady Astor's hospital at Cliveden, which is just a few miles from Bray: Smith, Richard, loc. cit. What was Schuster doing at the hospital? Perhaps he was befriending officers (see footnote 8).

[11] Compare and contrast the smokescreen in the TV comedy series *Dad's Army*, in which Private Pike calls Sergeant Wilson 'Uncle Arthur'. It was not clear whether Pike was Wilson's illegitimate child or whether there was simply a danger that such a conclusion might be drawn, given Wilson's relationship with Pike's mother. The trial of Oscar Wilde took place in May 1895 and was therefore well within living memory in the period embracing Wylde's occupation of The Hut. The Wolfenden report was published in 1957 and led eventually to the passing of the Sexual Offences Act 1967.

[12] Percy Young described Schuster as 'a homosexual dilettante': Young, P.M., *Alice Elgar* [:] *enigma of a Victorian lady* (London: Dobson Books Limited, 1978), 157. By referring to a homosexual 'inclination', Dr Moore expressed the matter more delicately: see *Letters of a lifetime*, 498.

[13] Information taken from the marriage certificate. Boreel was generally referred to as 'Wendela'. That the ceremony was presided over by the Dean of Windsor, The Right Reverend Albert Baillie, suggests that Schuster's social circle embraced St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle (Windsor being only a few miles downriver of Bray). The diaries of Siegfried Sassoon confirm that the Dean was a friend of Schuster's and an occasional visitor to The Hut: see Hart-Davis, Rupert, ed., *Siegfried Sassoon Diaries 1923-1925* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 119. Sassoon at this point in the diaries describes Baillie as 'a light-weight dignitary' and a 'spiritual man of the world'. He evidently disliked him. I am indebted to Kevin Mitchell for the loan of two of the Hart-Davis volumes.

Schuster signed his Will on 10 July 1924, which was less than a week before Wylde's marriage, and together with its five codicils it was admitted to probate on 23 March 1928. As a further aside, it was the fourth codicil that effected the reduction of the legacy to Elgar, which under Clause 3 of the Will was £10,000, subject to death duties: the relevant words from the codicil are set out in Appendix II and confirm not only that Elgar received £7,000 instead of £10,000 but also that the smaller sum, like the larger one, was subject to death duties.[15]

Various commentators have either stated or implied that Wylde acquired The Hut under the terms of Schuster's Will:

> The Hut, his [Schuster's] cars, his Steinway piano and the residue went to Anzy [Wylde] … [16]
>
> Schuster owned 'The Hut' and its estate *until he died* … [my italics][17]

However, the legacy to Wylde created by Clause 8 of the Will was confined to

> all my motor cars and motor accessories wheresoever situate and everything appertaining to the same and also my Steinway grand piano

and The Hut is mentioned in the Will only where Schuster's address is given. Indeed, none of the Will's clauses makes any reference to any particular freehold or leasehold property.[18] By Clause 9, however, the residue of Schuster's estate 'both real [i.e., land] and personal' was given to his trustees upon trust to sell; and out of the proceeds of sale they were to pay Schuster's debts and funeral and testamentary expenses and then deal with his pecuniary legacies. The trustees appointed by the Will were Minnie Adela Schuster,[19] Leslie George Wylde and Kenneth York McCraith,[20] and their obligation after selling the assets and making the various payments was to hold the residuary estate on trust for Wylde absolutely. Whilst it is true (a) that Schuster gave his trustees the usual power to postpone sale, and (b) that it was open to them to agree amongst themselves that The Hut would be transferred to Wylde rather than sold, it is hardly likely, if Schuster wanted to give the property to Wylde, that he would direct his trustees to hold it on trust to sell instead of taking the straightforward and obvious course of making it the subject of a specific legacy (and it may well be that his solicitors had inserted the phrase 'real estate' only to cover a not entirely remote contingency or out of an understandable reluctance to depart from precedent).

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[14] His 'birth printout' shows that Leslie George Wylde was born in Greymouth, New Zealand on 29 September 1893. I am indebted to MG Historical Research of Wellington, New Zealand and David R. Young for their assistance in this connection. The printout shows that Wylde's father, George Rich (sic) Wylde, was born in Kaiapoi, New Zealand and that his mother, Emma Wylde (née Taylor), was born in Liverpool. That his mother was born in the north-west of England creates the tiny possibility that there was some kind of Schuster-Wylde nexus, given the Schuster family's connection with Manchester, Lancaster, etc. (as to which, see 'Another Schuster (intermezzo)' in Clark, R., *Elgar and the romantic loner and other essays* (Oxford: Positif Press, 2017), 29-32).

[15] Clause 2 of the Will is the authority for saying that the legacy in its original amount was also subject to death duties. An idea of the value in those days of a legacy of £7,000 can be had by recalling that in 1921 Severn House was 'bought in' by the auctioneers at £6,500: Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar* [:] *a creative life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 760.

[16] De-la-Noy, Michael, *Elgar the Man* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), 201.

[17] McBrien, D., op. cit., 8.

[18] As to Schuster's London home (22 Old Queen Street, Westminster), see Fuller, Sophie, 'Elgar and the salons: the significance of a private musical world' in Adams, Byron, ed., *Edward Elgar and his world* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 223-247, 240. It appears from a letter to Adrian Boult that Schuster sold the property in September 1921.

[19] Schuster's sister (1850-1940).

[20] The Will describes Wylde and McCraith as 'my friends'.

If the transfer to Wylde was effected by a deed of gift executed before 26 December 1927, and not by an assent executed by his trustees, when did it take place? We have seen that Wylde was married on 16 July 1924. On 28 August 1924, Schuster executed the first of the five codicils: it gives The Hut as his address. The second codicil was executed on 14 April 1925: it gives as Schuster's address 'The Long White Cloud, *formerly The Hut* [my italics]'.[21] It therefore appears that the renaming of The Hut took place between 28 August 1924 and 14 April 1925.[22] On the basis (a) that the renaming must have been an act performed by the New Zealander, and (b) that it would be most unusual for a property to be renamed by someone who was merely its tenant or licensee, the conveyance to him appears to have been executed before the signing of the second codicil and after the signing of the first; and since there appears to have been nothing to prevent Schuster from making The Hut the subject of a specific legacy under his Will (by, say, adding it to the motor cars and Steinway grand piano referred to in Clause 8) it seems possible, perhaps even probable, that the conveyance to Wylde took place at around the time of his marriage and that The Hut may have been a wedding present. The impending marriage would surely have been in Schuster's mind when, some six days before the ceremony, he signed his Will; and it may be possible to go a step further and confine the date of the conveyance to the period from 28 August 1924 to 27 November 1924, for on the second of these dates, in a letter to the Windflower, Elgar wrote that

> … Frank [whom he had met in Eastbourne] … has taken a furnished house at Brighton … I suppose the Hut & all that is therein is annexed by the newcomers [i.e., Wylde and his wife].[23]

This assumes, of course, that the execution of the conveyance and Schuster's vacating of the property took place at the same time, which is not necessarily the case. In his letter to Elgar of 23 December 1924, Schuster gave as his address '24, Lewes Crescent, Brighton', which presumably was the furnished house referred to.[24] Why, for the purposes of the second codicil, and indeed all the subsequent ones, Schuster continued to give the Bray address is something of a mystery. Perhaps it reflected the temporary nature of his new accommodation. Perhaps Schuster was dividing his time between Bray and Brighton: Siegfried Sassoon's diary entries make clear that Schuster was at The Hut

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[21] Every subsequent codicil, including in particular the fifth, which was executed on 18 October 1927, gives The Long White Cloud as Schuster's address, but this is not necessarily conclusive as to his whereabouts. See footnote 7.

[22] David McBrien attributes the renaming to '1925-6' but on what authority it is not clear: McBrien, op. cit., 7.

[23] Moore, *The Windflower letters*, 296-7. The letter was written from Napleton Grange. Elgar makes the point that Schuster by this time had no car.

[24] Moore, *Letters of a lifetime*, 388.

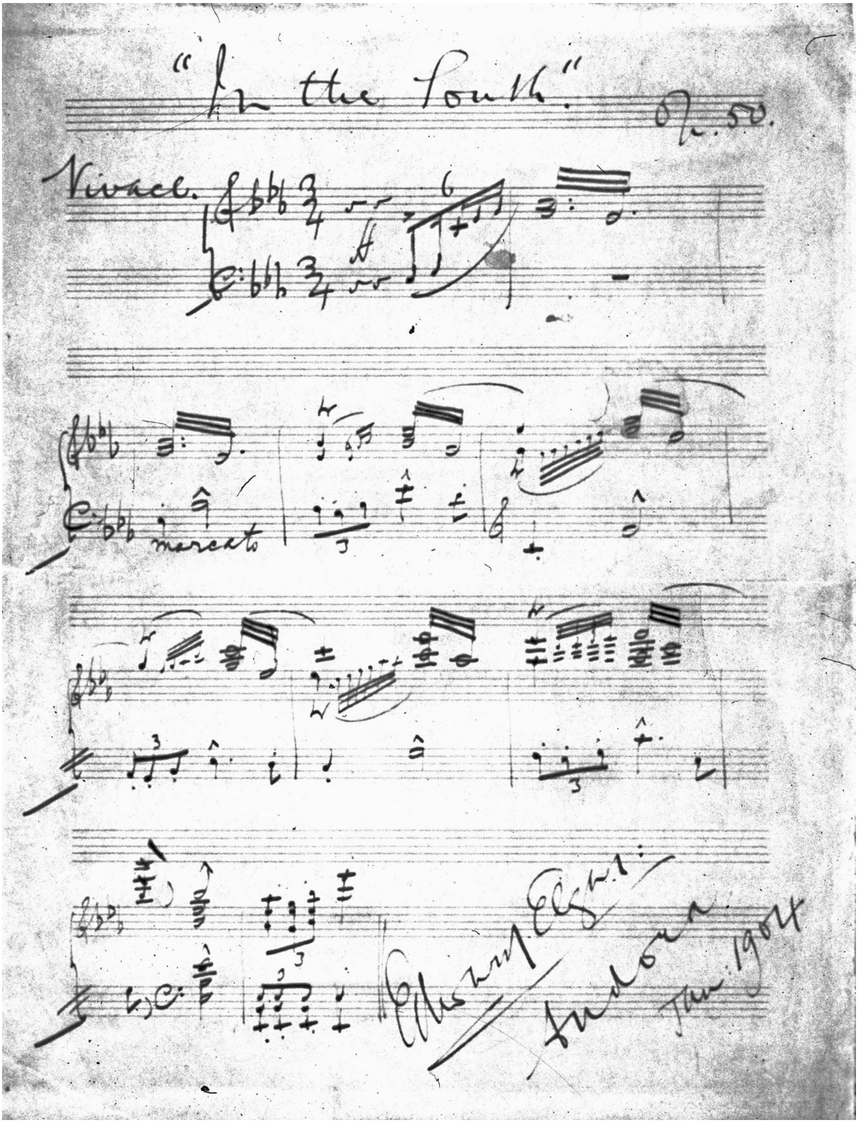
"In the South" Op.50.
Vivace.
marcato
Edward Elgar
Andora
Jan. 1904

Fig.2: An Elgar autograph of the first ten bars of *In the South*, Op.50.
This was given to Frank Schuster by the composer. Were such things the consideration for Schuster's generosity, or part of it? (Illustration by courtesy of Arthur Reynolds)

as late as July 1925, some three months after signing the second codicil.[25] The vacating of the property by Schuster was not an essential step in the transfer of the legal estate, and it is conceivable that for a time he treated the Brighton property as a Schusterian equivalent of Birchwood or Brinkwells.

Whenever exactly it was effected, and however it was effected, the transfer of ownership was an act of quite extraordinary generosity. Elgarians without the experience of visiting Bray and seeing The Long White Cloud may not appreciate the extent to which 'The Hut' was a misleading name: whoever devised it may have been in the same frame of mind as Rossini when giving his setting of the Mass the title *Petite Messe Solenelle*, for The Hut was and remains a substantial riverside property, and properties in Bray, whether having a riverside frontage or not, are not cheap. For example, The Old Vicarage, a riverside property a mile or so from The Long White Cloud, changed hands in June 2021 for the sum of £3,300,000.[26] Why would Schuster give away, to someone to whom he was almost certainly unrelated, his beautiful country home, one probably worth in terms of today's money a seven-figure sum; deny himself the wherewithal to continue to entertain people in idyllic surroundings at Bray; and then move into accommodation on the south coast?[27] If he found himself unable to afford the total of (a) the cost of insuring, maintaining and repairing The Hut, (b) local taxes, and (c) the wages of the staff needed in order to run the property as a kind of guest house for Elgar and his other friends,[28] why did he not sell it? It is one thing to stipulate a legacy of £100 to someone (a soldier, presumably) blinded in the war.[29] Making what on balance appears to have been a lifetime gift of a riverside property at Bray is quite another. A lawyer practising in the Chancery Division of the High Court might well respond to the nature and circumstances of the transfer by reviewing what his books had to say on the subject of undue influence. A lawyer practising in the criminal courts might think in altogether more robust terms, and in particular of s.21(1) of the Theft Act 1968.[30] And how was it that Wylde could afford to run such a property? At the start of their relationship, whatever exactly it was, Wylde acted as Frank Schuster's chauffeur. Some years later, the chauffeur was living in, and apparently the owner of, his master's house, the master himself having at some point retreated to the south coast. In 1927, the master had to borrow The Hut from the chauffeur in order to throw a party for Sir Edward Elgar.[31] On at least one occasion, in 1921, Schuster had been obliged to walk from Bray to the railway station at Maidenhead, Wylde having taken the car.[32] Did Wylde by marrying Wendela marry money? Schuster's humiliations and the reasons for them have of course no or no direct bearing on Elgar and his music; but one is bound to wonder what exactly was going on at The Hut in the early 1920s and what exactly it was that caused his remarkably generous patron to behave in the way he did. Firm answers could probably be brought a little nearer if one could examine the pre-registration deeds and documents relating to The Hut, but these appear to have been destroyed or mislaid.[33]

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[25] Hart-Davis, R., ed., op. cit., 258-264.

[26] Information obtained from the Land Registry (title number BK270919). This was the property in which James Edward Austen-Leigh (1798-1874) wrote his memoir of Jane Austen: see Austen-Leigh, J.E., *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). It is a volume in the Oxford World's Classics series. The work was first published in December 1869.

[27] We can surely dismiss the possibility that the transfer of title was an attempt to put The Hut out of creditors' reach. Schuster must have known (or been advised) that such a transfer could be set aside by the Courts. Moreover, such a transfer did not necessitate Schuster's vacation of the property. That Schuster may have been in financial difficulties in 1924 is suggested by Elgar's letter to the Windflower of 16 April 1924, in which he refers to Schuster's profession of bankruptcy: see Moore, *The Windflower letters*, 290. But perhaps Schuster was using the word loosely rather than in its strict technical sense (compare Elgar's claim to Frances Colvin about starving and going without fires).

[28] According to the 1921 Census, Schuster had a butler, cook, housemaid, hall-boy and kitchen maid. Who cut all that grass? The return states that Wylde was a visitor, which seems like a misrepresentation, and gives as his occupation 'none'.

[29] See Clause 3 of the Will. The blinded soldier (?) was Cecil Langton. Schuster's affectionate regard for those wounded in the Great War is evident also in his reference to Robert Nichols as his 'poet friend': see Moore, *Letters of a lifetime*, 297.

[30] That Wylde was capable of dishonesty is shown by his appearing to have had no qualms about misrepresenting his status when attending to the registration of Schuster's death.

On the subject of Schuster's generosity, it needs to be added that The Long White Cloud as it is today is not the entirety of what Schuster owned at Bray. In the years after Wylde's death, there were sales of part of the estate, and the music room, in which Elgar's three chamber works were performed on Sunday, 26 June 1927, was demolished.[34] If the various parcels originally owned by Schuster were re-united with The Long White Cloud as it is today, the current value of the entire property would almost certainly exceed the £3,300,000 recently paid for The Old Vicarage.

Leslie George Wylde died at Folkestone on 29 May 1935.[35] The death certificate and grant of probate give The Long White Cloud as his address: the former gives his age at death as 39 and the cause of death as a combination of acute delirium, convulsions and acute gastritis, the last of these in particular pointing to an unhealthy and possibly alcoholic mode of existence.[36] Although his Will refers to 'children', it seems that there was only one child, a son, James Paxton de Eglesfield (sic) Wylde, who was born in London on 8 July 1927.[37] Both the death certificate and his son's birth certificate describe Wylde as being of independent means and are therefore uninformative as to what exactly he was doing, if anything, in the period between Schuster's death and his own. The gross value of his estate was £41,205 7s 11d. That the net value was only £14,812 7s 5d hints at a style of living heavily dependent on debt.[38] The figures for Schuster himself were £47,070 12s 4d and £46,624 2s 5d.[39]

The Long White Cloud is now owned by YTL Hotels (Cayman) Limited, a company registered in the Cayman Islands. The purchase was completed on 8 September 2015.[40] In addition, the company owns Monkey Island and its hotel and brasserie. It used to be the case that Elgarians wishing to inspect The Hut needed to apply charm to its owner in order to do so. Nowadays, however, the property in its entirety can be reserved in more or less the same way as a room at the hotel itself. Subject only (or mainly) to the continuous background noise generated by the M4 motorway, today's Elgar devotees can therefore experience something of what it must have been like to visit The Hut in the years in which Elgar himself did so.[41]

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[31] See Moore, *A creative life*, 775.

[32] The episode was reported to the Windflower in Elgar's letter dated 18 May 1921: Moore, *The Windflower letters*, 256. Elgar told her that he found the episode 'too puzzling' and that it made him to want to 'shriek for enlightenment'. Clearly, he thought that something odd was going on at The Hut but could not find, or could not share with the Windflower, a provisional explanation for it. The walk from Monkey Island to Maidenhead railway station takes about an hour (author's experience).

[33] Communication from Mr Matthew Facey, the then hotel manager of the Monkey Island Estate, on 3 February 2022.

[34] McBrien, D., op. cit., 8-9.

[35] Information taken from the death certificate and grant of probate.

[36] We have seen (footnote 5) that Schuster died of duodenal problems, a fact which points in the same direction. Bray continues to be a place in which much alcohol is consumed (author's observation).

[37] Information taken from the birth certificate.

[38] Information taken from the grant of probate.

[39] Information taken from the grant of probate.

[40] Information obtained from the Land Registry (title number BK114608).

Sundial Cottage, the property adjoining The Long White Cloud on the south, is also owned by YTL Hotels (Cayman) Limited.[42] This is the property built for Wylde and his wife and which was originally an annexe to The Hut.[43] It is similarly available to the paying public (see the website of the Monkey Island Estate).

Relf Clark was christened at Bray Church on 4 December 1954. A little over half a century later, and within walking distance of the church, he spoke on the Elgar Society's behalf at the unveiling of the blue plaque recording Elgar's association with The Hut. A solicitor, he practised with a City law firm and retired in 2017. He studied with Sidney Campbell at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle and with Robert Sherlaw Johnson and F.W. Sternfeld as an exhibitioner at Worcester College, Oxford; and his doctorate followed research at the universities of London and Reading. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists and an honorary life member of the Elgar Society and the Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain.

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[41] It is important not to get too sentimental about Bray as it was before the M4. It is clear from Sassoon's diaries that whilst at The Hut he could hear trains crossing the Thames at Maidenhead (by means of I.K. Brunel's magnificent brick spans of 1838).

[42] Information obtained from the Land Registry (title number BK62095). The property was purchased in November 2016, when £1,300,000 was paid for it.

[43] McBrien, D., op. cit., 13.

APPENDIX I

Schuster's date of death

Anderson, R., 1993, 160	27 December 1927
De-la-Noy, M., 1983, 201	'… in December [1927] … [Elgar received the news]'
Grimley and Rushton, 2004, xvi	27 December 1927
Harper-Scott, J.P.E., 2007, 135	27 December 1927
Hart-Davis, R., ed., 1981, 69	1928
Kennedy, M., 1968, 257	26 December 1927
Kennedy, M., 1982, 307	26 December 1927
Kennedy, M., 1987, 307	26 December 1927
Kennedy, M., 2004, 176	'Nine days' after '17 December [1927]'
McVeagh, D., 1955, 73	'… the autumn of 1927 …'
McVeagh, D., 2007, 192	'In December [1927] …'
Moore, J.N., 1984, 776	'Two days after Christmas [1927] …'
Office for National Statistics	26 December 1927
Principal Probate Registry	26 December 1927
Young, P.M., 1973, 232	'… end of 1927'

For the avoidance of doubt, the numbers following the dates of publication are page numbers.

APPENDIX II

An extract from the fourth codicil to Schuster's Will (30 September 1925)

> … Whereas by Clause 3 of my said will [dated 10 July 1924] I have … given … to my friend Sir Edward Elgar OM the sum of ten thousand pounds Now I hereby revoke the said … [legacy] … and in lieu thereof I give … to the said Sir Edward Elgar the sum of seven thousand pounds subject to death duties …[44]

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[44] Michael De-la-Noy gives the date of the fourth codicil as 13 September 1925, which is incorrect: De-la-Noy, M., loc. cit.

BOOK REVIEWS

A Pilgrim in Cockaigne: Elgarian Essays edited by Kevin Mitchell and David Morris

Foreword: Sir Mark Elder, CH, CBE
Introduction—Kevin Mitchell
Elgar, Holst and Delius: 75 Years On—Michael Kennedy
The King and the Troubadour: Edward VII and Edward Elgar—Arthur Reynolds
'The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne': From London to Dublin: Elgar and Irish Identity—Andrew Neill
Perspectives on Elgar from an early 21st century composer's viewpoint—Robert Saxton
'With Proud Thanksgiving'—Teresa Cahill
Our Never-to-be-forgotten friend: Rosa Newmarch—Peter Avis
Elgar and Oxford—Relf Clark
'For the Fallen', Binyon, Elgar and Rootham: an examination in detail of the events 1914-1916—Philip Petchey
Charles Conder, Edward Elgar and *The Sanguine Fan*—Kevin Mitchell
Kipling, Elgar and *The Fringes of the Fleet*—Kevin Mitchell
Lawrence Collingwood—Malcolm Walker
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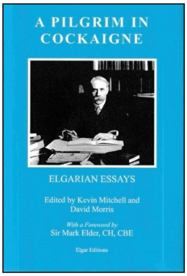
Elgar's Visit to Delius—David Bury
Elgar's Earnings in Context—John Drysdale
Elgar the Man—E. Wulstan Atkins
A Pilgrim in Cockaigne: The Elgar Society's London Branch: Memories of an Elgarian Revolution (1971-2021)—Andrew Neill and Ruth Hellen


A PILGRIM IN COCKAIGNE
ELGARIAN ESSAYS
Edited by Kevin Mitchell and David Morris
With a Foreword by Sir Mark Elder, CH, CBE
Elgar Editions

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ISBN: 978-0-9548553-5-2

520 pages

I mean no disrespect to those whose contributions enrich the hundreds of central pages of this book by declaring that its highlights are in fact its top and tail. This handsomely produced volume, a sequel to the earlier *Cockaigne: Essays on Elgar 'In London Town'*, celebrates the glorious 50 years of the London branch of the Elgar Society, preserving some of the countless (not literally, as they are all listed in a fascinating appendix) talks given to the membership by experts and enthusiasts, both amateur and professional.

Together with David Morris, Kevin Mitchell has done a wonderful job of pulling together all these wonderful exemplar strands of Elgar research, and Mitchell's Introduction is a masterpiece of summarisation, encapsulating every chapter of the offerings which follow and introducing each contributor, from all walks of musical life and none. This would have been worthy of a mini-publication in itself.

At the other end of the volume comes a brilliantly researched history of the London branch, Andrew Neill drawing on his long life of personal experience, brought up to date by Ruth Hellen. This chapter is evocatively illustrated with images of the sleeves of landmark Elgar recordings set down over the past half-century.

What is particularly heartening about Neill's typically self-effacing contribution is his determination to avoid any suggestion of metro-centricity by being careful to mention the mixing and melding with the activities of other branches of the Elgar Society, something which I, as a laggard attendee of the original West Midlands branch of which I have long been a member (more vociferous on email, as the indefatigable Richard Smith would attest), very much applaud.

And so to the content and its authors, bringing a cornucopia of riches, ranging from Michael Kennedy's perceptive overview of the reputations of Elgar, Holst and Delius at the time of their deaths in 1934, through Philip Petchey's sympathetic consideration of the tensions between Elgar and Cyril Rootham over who should have the privilege of setting Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen' (with some astounding asides about Cambridge University's Edward Dent-led prejudice against Elgar – this makes me very proud that Elgar founded the Music Department of Birmingham University, which had become the greatest in the land when I was an undergraduate there in the 1960s); and Kevin Mitchell's own exhausting itinerary of *Fringes of the Fleet* performances as part of the morale-boosting propaganda effort during the Great War.

There are a few niggles which might have been dispensed with: do we really need to know that one of the themes in Brahms' Academic Festival Overture reminds us of Perry Como's 'Catch a Falling Star'? And how can anyone assert categorically that Elgar One and Two are this country's two greatest symphonies, when I would make a very strong case for Walton's First? Arnold's Fifth is pretty estimable, too.

We need, too, a little clarification as to the name of Elgar's beloved 'Windflower'. From 1917 she was indeed Alice Stuart of Wortley, as a result of her husband's elevation to the House of Lords. But before that event she was simply (Lady) Alice Stuart Wortley. I have in my possession a precious India-paper, leather-bound miniature score of Wagner's *Parsifal*, with her own handwritten inscription 'Alice Stuart Wortley, Bayreuth August 13 1908'.

Elgar was conducting in Ostend just one day before…

So many thoughts and impulses are stimulated by this joy of a book, which would make a wonderful Christmas present for any Elgar-lover, keeping them absorbed through all the turkey and tinsel going on around them.

Christopher Morley

[Kevin Mitchell and David Morris thank Chris Morley for his generous review. He is right to draw attention to the change from Alice Stuart Wortley to Alice Stuart of Wortley in 1917, and to highlight that this subtle change would be very easy to miss. Naturally, we wondered whether we had fallen into this error but having checked the book we are relieved to report that the pre- and post-1917 entries for Alice are in fact correct. There is only one case (in a quotation from Alice Elgar's diaries) where she omits the 'of' at a time when it would have been appropriate, but we reproduced Alice's diary entries *verbatim*.]

[Copies can be obtained for £35.00 (£30 to Society members) plus £2.50 P&P to UK addresses by contacting Philip Petchey at Philip.petchey@ftbchambers.co.uk or at 12 Monkhams Drive, Woodford Green, Essex, IG8 0LQ. Payment can be made by bank transfer or by cheque payable to 'Elgar Society London Branch'

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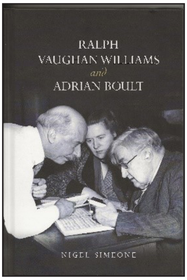
'Ralph Vaughan Williams and Adrian Boult'

Nigel Simeone



The Boydell Press

ISBN;
978 1 78327 729 2

307 pages.

Over sixty years after his death, Vaughan Williams continues to receive public and critical acclaim for his music. This period has seen several books on aspects of the life and music of Vaughan Williams. Of all the books which deal with this composer, this is surely one of the most successful, and stands as a study of his friendship and working relationship with Adrian Boult. Boult first met Vaughan Williams in 1909 and continued to perform and champion the music for the rest of his life.

This book will surely be of interest to the general reader, and to record collectors, who will find helpful comments on the various recordings of Vaughan Williams' music committed to disc by Boult over the years. Additionally, performers and musicologists will find this study to be an important source of information on the friendship of these two men. Nigel Simeone has presented much information from the correspondence between the composer and the conductor, concerning the composition of almost all of the music by Vaughan Williams and its performance history. This book sets out to present a detailed study of the long working relationship between Adrian Boult and Ralph Vaughan Williams. From 1918 onwards, Boult became one of Vaughan Williams' most important interpreters, giving the premieres of the *Pastoral*, Fourth and Sixth Symphonies, as well as performing almost all of his major works. Simeone shows us how Boult and Vaughan Williams worked in close co-operation on major projects. There is an examination of Boult's scores, which include numerous annotations derived from conversations and correspondence with Vaughan Williams: these provide important evidence of the composer's wishes in the presentation of this music. The evidence of these scores is considered alongside the extensive correspondence between Vaughan Williams and Boult, the conductor's private diaries, and other relevant documents including contemporary press reports.

This volume is clearly laid out and this helps to ensure its ease of use. The success of the book is greatly helped because Nigel Simeone sets out its aims and achieves them thoroughly. The focus for each chapter is a specific work or group of works. This ensures that we have a clear view of how Vaughan Williams and Boult discussed a particular piece over a period of time, as well as evaluating Boult's recordings and tracing the history of his performances through his own lists and press reviews.

Ralph Vaughan Williams and Adrian Boult has twelve chapters, which trace the relationship from their first encounters and *A Sea Symphony* to their work much later on *The Pilgrim's Progress*. There are chapters which deal with, amongst other things, the nine Symphonies, and both *Job* and the *Fantasia on a theme by Thomas Tallis.* One chapter deals with the choral and vocal works, and another looks at wartime tensions where Simeone considers the BBC Music Department during the Second World War, in particular Vaughan Williams' two wartime commissions from the BBC and the impact administrative bungling had on both Vaughan Williams and Boult.

There are many interesting illustrations and photographs which help bring to life the people and events. *Ralph Vaughan Williams and Adrian Boult* includes three substantial appendices: a detailed description of Boult's marked scores, a comprehensive list of Boult's Vaughan Williams performances, and a discography including surviving recordings of unpublished broadcasts. There is a good index.

News earlier in the year that this book was in preparation was exciting, and now having read it, I feel it has fully met my expectations and more! This is a worthy addition to the bookshelf. Before concluding this review, I must point out that Simeone includes a section in the third chapter entitled *Boult on Conducting in the 1920s*, where he speaks about Boult's private papers and how they reveal some deeper self-reflection, on how Boult's own conducting could best do justice to the music being performed. We read here a fascinating passage from Boult's diary where he reflects on a performance of Elgar's Second Symphony which he had directed earlier in that year, and which had gone well, though Boult concluded that he needed to know much more about the symphony. This paragraph is a wonderful insight into Boult's approach to his preparation for conducting.

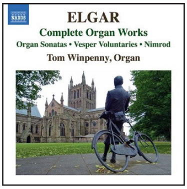
This volume will be indispensable reading for scholars working on the history of British music in the last century with a particular history in the career of Adrian Boult, as well as all those who admire Vaughan Williams, and readers who are interested in the history of recorded music. I hope this review helps readers see that Nigel Simeone's book adds a great deal to our understanding of both Vaughan Williams, Adrian Boult, and their working relationship as well as their legacy. This study gives us a fresh approach to a composer and a conductor both of whom played a major role in the development of British music in the last century. This book is ground-breaking, and I believe destined to be a standard work.

Paul Chennell

CD REVIEWS

Elgar Complete Organ Works

Sonata in G major, Op.28, *Cantique*, Op.3, 'Solemn March' from *The Black Knight*, Op.25, *Vesper Voluntaries*, Op.14, *Loughborough Memorial Chime*, Sonata in B flat major, Op.87A, *Imperial March*, Op.32, arr. G.C. Martin, *Nimrod*, arr. W.H. Harris, *Pomp and Circumstance* march, Op.39, No.4, arr. G.R. Sinclair



Tom Winpenny at the organ of Hereford Cathedral

Naxos
8.574366

The organ at Hereford Cathedral is a legacy of the energetic fund-raising activities of G.R. Sinclair, who was Organist and Master of the Choristers there from 1889 until 1917, the year of his untimely death (and he was of course the subject of one of them, of Variation XI). It was in 1892 that Henry Willis I built the instrument. In 1909 Henry Willis II added some stops to it, in 1933 Henry Willis III rebuilt it, and in 1978 Harrison & Harrison Limited completed a largely conservative programme of restoration (Roy Massey, the incumbent organist at the time, having been unimpressed by the fourth Henry Willis). In 2004, assisted by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the same company completed a further programme of work, but nothing done either at that time or previously took away the essential character of the organ handed over by 'Father' Willis.[1] It is therefore an entirely appropriate medium for the works recorded here, not only because of its tonal properties but also because, unlike the present instruments at Gloucester and Worcester, it is still very substantially the organ that Elgar encountered; and the liner notes tell us that Tom Winpenny has added a belt to the braces by confining himself 'almost exclusively' to the registers of 1892 and 1909. Appropriate also, in this Hereford context, is the inclusion of the march that Elgar dedicated to Sinclair, in the arrangement by G.R.S. himself.

It might be argued that a 'complete' recording should follow the example of Volume 36 of the Elgar Complete Edition by including the Napleton fugue in both its manifestations (the transposition from C minor to B flat minor for the purposes of Op.87A has a few small implications for sonority, given the compasses of an organ). On the other hand, Volume 36 does not include, and does not even mention, the transcription made by Elgar himself of the processional music from *The Black Knight*,[2] which Tom Winpenny rightly includes. It is good to hear this rarity, and good, too, to hear so obscure (and charming) a work as *Loughborough Memorial Chime*, which Volume 36 consigns to an appendix.

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[1] For more information, organ enthusiasts should consult Shaw, W. and Massey, R., *The Organists and Organs of Hereford Cathedral* (Hereford: Hereford Cathedral Organ Committee, 2005), 49-72.

[2] See Moore, J.N., *Elgar and his publishers* [:] *letters of a creative life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 22-3.

The playing is clean, confident and stylish and demonstrates an impressive mastery of a repertoire that does not always lie happily under the fingers and not infrequently creates knotty problems of organ management. That awkward corner at bars 116-7 of the G major Sonata's first movement is negotiated rather mysteriously, the balance between the Swell Organ and the unenclosed departments is not invariably happy, and there are times when the Pedal Organ is either somewhat indistinct or just a trifle too prominent. One wonders whether the console at Hereford is ideally situated for hearing the interaction of the instrument's different departments, and whether the very occasional lack of perfect balance illustrates one of the perils inherent in playing an 'away match', for Tom Winpenny is Assistant Master of the Music at St Albans Cathedral and therefore not in the same fortunate position as the members of the home team.

The excellent liner notes are by Mr Winpenny himself and constitute an almost unimprovable introduction to this repertoire for any purchaser coming to it for the first time. The year of Elgar's appointment as Organist at St George's, Worcester was however 1885, Jaeger was 'August', and it would be interesting to know what exactly was going through the mind of the author of the back-cover blurb when he wrote that a 'liturgical atmosphere' is conveyed by Op.14. On the contrary, and as this recording delightfully illustrates, the voluntaries sound for the most part like something one hears by the river.

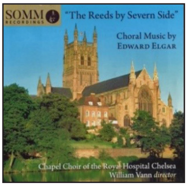
If Tom Winpenny ventures into this field again, he would secure Elgarians' further gratitude by playing the Atkins transcription of the slow movement of the First Symphony (Novello, 1909). It has long been out of print, but the British Library can assist. The same remarks apply to John E. West's arrangement of themes from the first movement of the work (again, Novello, 1909).

Warmly recommended.

Relf Clark

‘The Reeds by Severnside’: Choral Music by Edward Elgar

Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital Chelsea; Joshua Ryan, organ;
William Vann, director
(Supported by The Elgar Society with funds from the Kay Family Trust)


SOMM RECORDINGS
"The Reeds by Severn Side"
Choral Music by
EDWARD ELGAR
Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital Chelsea
William Vann director

SOMM Recordings

SOMMCD 0278

[This review by Howard Arman follows our occasional practice of commissioning two reviews of a book or CD release. London-born Arman studied at Trinity College Cambridge before moving to Germany. Over the years he has held positions including Generalmusikdirektor Altenburg-Gera, Musikdirektor Theater Luzern, Principal Guest Conductor Gärtnerplatztheater in Munich, artistic director Leipzig radio choir, artistic director Bavarian radio choir. He has also published choral and orchestral music with Breitkopf und Härtel, and Ries und Erler and his current project is his performing version of the Mozart Requiem.]

This is a beautifully-assembled collection of Elgar’s liturgical music and partsongs: the largely chronological ordering, which could so easily have become a stricture, results instead in a gloriously varied ‘recorded survey of part of a composer’s art’, as the splendidly detailed programme notes have it. Clearly, the selection has also been made with great attention to the recording as a whole: the pieces are assembled with a love of unity and contrast, both in form and content, and their keys follow often organically one upon the other. Listening to the programme in one sitting is a pleasure, and also an instructive one: the arc of Elgar’s musical development is made audible, from the early re-workings of music by Mozart and Beethoven (touchingly ingenious the fifteen-year old composer’s adaptation of the *allegro* from Mozart’s violin sonata K. 547, made with a minimum of restructuring of the original), over the musical challenges of pieces such as the bitonal *There is sweet music* and the very delicate *Angelus*, leading on to the massive grandeur of *Give unto the Lord*, (one of several highlights here) and, finally, to *Queen Alexandra’s Memorial Ode*: with its valedictory text and bitter-sweet, yearning organ postlude, a telling conclusion to this CD.

There is no mistaking the purpose and commitment which director William Vann communicates to his singers, the Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital Chelsea; their energy is evident in every piece. The choral sound is, not unusually perhaps, open, clear and bright, but tempered by a warmth which makes for variations of colour so vital to Elgar’s music, as does the care given to diction overall. Joshua Ryan is an outstanding accompanist; choir and organ are carefully balanced, reflecting their equal importance.

The range demanded by Elgar’s multifaceted choral writing, from the seemingly simple (the beautifully-sung carol *I sing the birth* would be another of my highlights, had the soloists embraced the printed instruction to sing their passages ‘in a very free manner, without any rigid adherence to tempo’) to the heavily dramatic, is great. Nonetheless, everything here is united by an immediacy which embodies the spirit of live performance as well as of recording.

Howard Arman

SIR JOHN BARBIROLLI
conducts
ELGAR
Symphony No.2
THE BARBIROLLI SOCIETY
BBC Symphony Orchestra
Coventry Cathedral 1964
A BBC recording

Barbirolli Society
SJB 1107

ELGAR: Symphony no. 2 in E flat major, Op. 63
BBC Symphony Orchestra, Sir John Barbirolli
BBC broadcast from Coventry Cathedral, 20 May 1964
First release

Sir John Barbirolli's relationship with this symphony was an intimate one. Few who have seen the young Melvyn Bragg's 1965 film portrait of the conductor's latter Hallé years (among the most inspired of Sir Huw Wheldon's *Monitor* documentaries, easily available online) will forget the footage of a conductor deeply moved as he takes his orchestra through the closing minutes of the work. He could sometimes love it to death. In his masterly biography of the conductor[1], Michael Kennedy reports that 'one best-forgotten performance in London took seventy-one minutes'. There are those who prefer the earlier – and generally swifter - of his two commercial recordings with the Hallé, made in mono for EMI in 1954, but for all their tendency towards expansiveness, that version, this newcomer and the celebrated 1964 stereo account for the same label (sumptuously engineered by Christopher Parker in London's Kingsway Hall) all come in at under the hour.

This Coventry performance took place just four weeks after the 1964 studio recording, and in three out of the four movements tempi are, with exceptions, broadly similar. As often as not, the main differences in these movements derive as much from the spacious cathedral acoustic as from matters of interpretation. The exceptions are, however, striking. At the heart of the first movement development, particularly the three bars of Fig. 32 (9'44"), Barbirolli waits daringly long before the *ppp*, a moment of magic not matched on the 1964 EMI recording where the Hallé's First Clarinet rather spoils things by landing heavily at the end of the phrase. The BBCSO clarinettist discreetly enhances it. Barbirolli in Coventry also lingers more nostalgically than he does for EMI in 1964 during the ten bars of repose at Fig 63 (17'43") near the end of the first movement. A bit pre-emptive, perhaps, of the sunset which ends the *Finale*, but the feeling of the 'live' moment is irresistible. The most obvious concession to the cathedral's long reverberation time comes before the upbeat to the last seven bars of the first movement where, in allowing the echoes to die, Barbirolli gives us a gap of four seconds! It's a little disconcerting when heard in the solitude of one's listening room. Maybe you had to be there.

Nevertheless, plus points abound. Whether or not because of the difference between the halo of a cathedral acoustic and the more contained sonics of Kingsway Hall, or because of the playing itself, the Hallé's brass for EMI in 1964 do sound rather coarse occasionally. I remember a lecture a few years ago by the conductor and Elgar Medal recipient Adrian Brown (far more of a Boult man than a Barbirolli one!) in which he registered deep distaste at the trombone's 'leering' D natural-Db slide in bars 3-4 of the first movement and in the same material at Fig. 42 (12'37"). I see his point.

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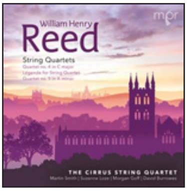
[1] *Barbirolli. Conductor Laureate.* Published by the Barbirolli Society, 2003

But the most striking difference in mood between this Coventry concert and the 1964 EMI studio version lies in the slow movement, which comes in at over a minute longer in Coventry than in Kingsway Hall. Elegiac in the latter case, the live newcomer is deeply tragic. This is great conducting, a dark portrait of national mourning. I suspect that Elgar, grieving at the death of Edward VII, would have approved. There are resonances here of Barbirolli's EMI recording, also with the BBBCSO, of the Funeral March from Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony (Barbirolli Society CDSJB 1008), recorded within a couple of years of the death of Churchill whom Barbirolli revered. The two climaxes of Elgar's slow movement are superbly and swiftly built in Coventry, and if, dear fellow-Elgarians, the *accelerando* approach to Fig. 86 (11'50") with violin *portamenti* in the third and fourth bars of that rehearsal cue (a Barbirolli trademark in all of his extant recorded performances) doesn't tear your heart out, then I fear nothing will. The *Scherzo* is appropriately ill at ease, percussion in the 'horses' hooves' episode getting worryingly ahead of everyone else. The closing bars of the movement verge on the chaotic, unhinged as they should be, while the *Finale* is restless with some extreme contrasts of tempo, Barbirolli hurtling through the bars preceding the peroration more precipitately than any other recorded performance I know. How hard-won the sunset of the closing bars seems in such a context. If applause was permitted in this ecclesiastical setting, it has been excised here, leaving the listener alone with merely the faint closing whirr of the CD player to ruffle the mood.

We hear everything from a fair way back in the cathedral, and it has to be said that a lot of detail becomes smudged either by the acoustic or by some rocky ensemble. This mono off-air recording must have presented a challenge to the mastering engineer Ian Jones (a glitch shortly before Fig 55 of the first movement which causes some notes to go AWOL was evidently uncorrectable). The young Dr Malcolm Sargent used to describe the effort of conducting performances of *Messiah* with massed and distant forces at Crystal Palace as akin to taking a jellyfish for a walk on an elastic lead, and I suspect that a cathedral acoustic presented Barbirolli with something of the same challenge here. We will never know how he conducted this symphony for the first time, having learned the score in 48 hours to stand in for an ailing Sir Thomas Beecham in December 1927 ('don't sign any contracts, see you tomorrow', urged an excited Fred Gaisberg of His Master's Voice Records as Barbirolli came offstage). I suspect that the audience then would have heard something closer to Barbirolli's 1954 EMI Hallé account with its more urgent first movement (Barbirolli Society SJB 1075-76). But here in Coventry in 1964, it's hard not to discern a lifetime's acquaintance with this miraculous score, seen through the eyes of a man for whom Elgar's lament for a vanishing world would have resonated more strongly in this great conductor's mind with each passing decade.

Andrew Keener



Mike Purton Recording Services

MPR114

William Henry Reed
String Quartets
The Cirrus String Quartet:
Martin Smith violin, Suzanne Loze violin,
Morgan Goff viola, David Burrowes violoncello

This is a recording to welcome, irrespective of William Reed's relationship with Elgar. As anyone who wants to understand EE's late-flowering, post Great War Brinkwells music needs to know, 'Billy' Reed (1876-1942) was a splendid musician, also a composer, and he led the London Symphony Orchestra, of which Elgar was the permanent conductor. Reed was a frequent visitor to Brinkwells, the Elgars' rented cottage in Sussex, and was one of the composer's closest musical friends and confidants whose energy, technical knowledge and musicality had helped EE during the gestation of the violin concerto and then kept him working at the cello concerto, violin sonata, piano quintet and string quartet. He was a thoroughly good egg: active on the amateur music scene, sought-after adjudicator, chamber musician, tutor at the Royal College of Music from 1920, early biographer of Elgar, adviser to the Three Choirs Festival and Chairman of the LSO after he relinquished his 23-year leadership of that body (of which he was a founder-member). Piquantly, the excellent notes with the recording point out one of his last pupils was Neville Marriner.

But now we come to Reed as a composer, completely unknown to me, performed by a string quartet I had never heard before, live or in a recording, crowd-funded by fans of British Music (including our own Andrew Dalton) and produced by the enterprising Mike Purton Recording Services (MPR) whose repertoire of recordings, again with unknown (to me) performers, includes Parry's complete string quartets, chamber music by Arnold Cooke and the complete string quartets of Leonard Salzedo. I recommend readers to the website of the British Music Society for further information on this enterprise and many other forays down the byways of British music.

The Cirrus Quartet should be commended for their research in the archives for Reed's compositions for string quartet, and the recording comprises the *Légende* and String Quartets No.4 in C and No.5 in A minor; according to the liner notes all the quartet material currently discovered besides a MS movement of a 1900 Quartet in F hailing from Reed's studies at the RAM. (Actually, the music is also available of another late quartet work from 1940: *Morning on the Karoo and In a Zulu location* - for disc no.2 perhaps?)

Now, enough of this throat-clearing: what do I feel about the music? Obviously, the Cirrus Quartet, indeed any executants wishing to rediscover composers swallowed by the past, can and will make special pleading about a style or a 'voice' of said composer, but their real duty is to play the notes with care, integrity and passion, and this the musicians do. However often I listen to this fine disc with its excellent engineering by Tony Faulkner in The Space of Sevenoaks School, I don't actually think 'there's the essence of Reed' or ‘that has Reed’s fingerprints all over it’ but I do obtain a lot of pleasure from music that is engaged, imaginatively composed, ignores the blandishments of the Second Viennese School and reveals an expert craftsman in a medium which he profoundly understands.

The *Légende* from 1922-23 is an eleven-minute work in two parts, the first being an *Andante con moto* encircling a waltz that is closer in mood to that by Ravel than Johann Strauss. The more vigorous second part is kicked off by the cello and changes character frequently, albeit tunefully, during its four-minute span, a process that inspires Martin Smith in his essay to imaginative and entertaining similes.

Intriguingly, the two other quartets were written in the five years before Elgar turned back to the medium, though I have never seen any comment attributed to EE’s opinion on WHR’s compositions or the latter’s comparing the emerging Brinkwells work with his own. These are two fine works that reward repeated hearing and I urge you to try them. I also give a plug to a private passion of mine and the *raison d’être* of No.5: Walter Willson Cobbett (1847-1937) who made his fortune in transmission belt manufacturing yet in his own words was ‘a very humble devotee’ of the ‘infinitely beautiful art’ of chamber music. He wrote the huge reference work Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music, founded a Free Library of Chamber Music, the Chamber Music Association and, in 1905, the prize for British composers to write a ‘Phantasy’. Any time you see this term in early 20th century British music, it will refer to an entry for this competition and, in 1915, the joint first prize was won by Albert Sammons and Frank Bridge whilst the second prize was claimed by Reed’s Fifth Quartet - I urge you to use Reed’s excellent music as your entry into the marvellous repertoire engendered by this philanthropic competition.

Steven Halls

Vaughan Williams Live Vol. 1
The Wasps Overture^{a}, Symphony No.6 in E minor^{a}, Symphony No.9 in E minor^{b}

Recorded live at Royal Albert Hall, London on September 12, 1957 (Wasps); August 4, 1964 (Symphony No.6); Royal Festival Hall, London April 2, 1958 (Symphony No.9)
BBC Symphony Orchestra^{a} · Royal Philharmonic Orchestra^{b}
Sir Malcolm Sargent

SOMM RECORDINGS
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Live
Vol. 1
RVW 150
ARIADNE
Ninth Symphony Premiere Performance · Newly Re-Mastered
BBC Symphony Orchestra · Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Sir Malcolm Sargent

SOMM

ARIADNE 5016

Should a recording of a premiere performance be regarded as definitive? Would a recording of that apparently rather less-than-perfect Birmingham first performance of *Gerontius* be regarded as authoritative? Clearly not, but it would be interesting to hear it of course, and to be able to judge whether it really was all that bad.

On this CD we do have a recording of a first performance – that of RVW’s

Ninth Symphony. This was given, in the presence of the composer, on 2 April 1958 in the Royal Festival Hall in London, by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent; not perhaps the obvious choice for such an important occasion. Boult, or Barbirolli and his beloved Hallé, would have been the more obvious contenders for this first performance (and RVW had dedicated his Eighth Symphony to 'Glorious John') but perhaps the Royal Philharmonic Society, which commissioned the Ninth, had the last say. The premiere has long been said to have been unsatisfactory; this issue gives us the opportunity to judge for ourselves.

On my initial play-through of the Ninth my notes recorded 'rushed'. After several hearings, my reactions remain very similar. In particular the hectic speeds in parts of the last movement, remove much of the mystery of this great farewell, whether to Tess as she dies on the scaffold in Winchester Prison at the end of Hardy's novel, or RVW's to life – perhaps both.[1] To some extent one can sympathise with Sargent, conducting a new and unfamiliar work quite different in many ways to the immediately preceding symphony, with very limited rehearsal time. Indeed, apart from the rehearsal on the day of the concert there was only one other - RVW himself paid for an additional rehearsal at the large (for the 1950s) cost of £250 – £10 less than I earned in an entire year when I started work five years later! Sargent had considerable discussions with RVW and had perhaps influenced him over some of the speeds, with VW saying in a letter to Michael Kennedy that he had speeded up the last movement and made a cut.[2] The arguably more sympathetic Boult (also after lengthy discussions with the composer) adopted mostly more moderate speeds in his recording for Everest (famously recorded on the day the composer died) and this can also be seen as significant.[3] It must be said that on this recording Sargent does follow RVW's metronome marks, but it is well documented that the composer often changed his mind about these (particularly after hearing a performance) and is said not to have possessed a metronome! Nearly all subsequent recordings have been nearer to the 'Boult speeds', with the exception of Thomson and Bakels.

Whilst I have reservations about Sargent's speeds and the orchestra is, understandably, not at its best after such little rehearsal, the performance is not without its merits. It is good to be able to hear the music in such wondrously restored engineering and as a record of a significant premiere it is well worth a hearing, even if it does not approach the ideal.

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[1] It is well-known that RVW had originally conceived this symphony as at least semi-programmatic and largely influenced by Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

[2] Letter to MK 29 March 1958, reproduced as letter 740 in Hugh Cobbe *Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams 1895-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 632.

[3] Roy Douglas (who 'washed the face' of RVW's scores for many years) said that the real premiere would be when Boult first performed it - Roy Douglas *Working with RVW* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972) 48. It is only fair to add that Douglas appeared generally antipathetic to Sargent. See also Nigel Simeone *Ralph Vaughan Williams and Adrian Boult* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2022) 158, quoting a reported conversation in which Boult made clear that after he told RVW that he thought the end of the symphony rather abrupt and suggested it might be lengthened, RVW had given him authority to play it slower.

The other works on the disc are to my mind much more successful. Sargent conducts a splendid performance of the overture from *The Wasps*, full of life and successful in every way. He is really in his element here. The Sixth Symphony too comes over as better thought through (this was not of course the premiere recording) and it is a blistering performance – Sargent on top form here. He drives the music quite hard in places – although not inappropriately – and the very quiet final movement is well done. The BBCSO plays extremely well in both pieces. These are certainly performances I will want to hear again, and they vindicate Sargent's reputation as both conductor and interpreter of RVW's music.

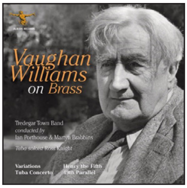
Lani Spahr has once again performed miracles in retrieving these recordings, probably made on acetates from the original radio broadcasts – the previous Pristine issue of the Ninth was I understand dubbed from reel to reel tapes of a subsequent re-broadcast. Of course, the sound is not that of a modern stereo digital recording, but the ears quickly adjust and the detail Lani has unearthed is staggering. The applause and closing announcements are retained. My one reservation is that it was a miscalculation to have so little silence between the works, despite there being more than enough 'headroom' as the CD lasts 72'50": the Sixth Symphony starts just two seconds after the applause at the end of *The Wasps*, and the Ninth Symphony again starts just two seconds after the Sixth's closing announcement finishes – this really does jar. The Chandos recording with Sir Andrew Davis provides a full 30 seconds' silence after the end of *Job* and the beginning of the Ninth – much more appropriate. NB: I have the download and it is possible (but unlikely) that the CD is formatted differently.

Although I have some serious reservations about the Ninth, it should certainly be given a hearing, and in any event this issue is highly recommended for the performances of *The Wasps* and the Sixth Symphony. There are excellent sleeve notes by Simon Heffer.

David Morris

'Vaughan Williams on Brass'

Tredegar Town Band; Ross Knight, tuba;
Ian Porthouse/ Martyn Brabbins



Albion Records

ALBCD052

This CD has already been very well reviewed and has featured on Radio 3. It includes the music Vaughan Williams wrote specifically for brass band as well as a number of arrangements of military band and orchestral pieces. Many of these have been recorded for the first time.

The excellent sleeve notes, by the arrangers Paul Hindmarsh and Phillip Littlemore, tell us that Vaughan Williams was a late convert to brass bands.

There are three pieces written for brass band. The overture *Henry the Fifth* (c.1933) was written before he really appreciated the medium; *Prelude on Three Welsh Hymn Tunes* (1954) was written for the International Staff Band of the Salvation Army, and *Variations for Brass Band* (1957). Pieces originally written for military band are *Flourish for Band, English Folk Songs Suite* and *Sea Songs.* Your response to these arrangements will depend on whether you prefer military or brass bands; for myself, I prefer bands to have the pure brass sound, so I very much enjoyed these tracks.

Vaughan Williams' work on hymn tunes and folk songs is well known. *The Truth from Above* is based on a song he heard sung by Mr W. Jenkins of King's Pyon. Vaughan Williams used the tune in *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* and included it in *The Oxford Book of Carols*. The arrangement on this CD (one of three by Paul Hindmarsh) is based on these two sources and makes effective use of the tuba. *Prelude on Rhosymedre* is more usually heard in the original version for organ – in fact that was played at the beginning of the London Branch Platinum Jubilee concert in the Chapel Royal in May 2022. To my, admittedly biased, ears, this arrangement really brings out the complexity of the counterpoint alongside the beautiful tune.

Vaughan Williams was in his late 60s when he was approached to write his first film score, *49th Parallel*. He felt that this was an opportunity to help the war effort and the film was premièred in 1941. This suite was devised by Paul Hindmarsh and arranged by Phillip Littlemore, who also arranged several of the other tracks, including the *Tuba Concerto*, a staple of the tuba repertoire. The soloist in the concerto is Ross Knight, solo tuba player with L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, who gives an excellent performance. Again, appreciation of the arrangement will depend on personal taste, but I felt that this worked very well and sounded completely natural. The final piece, *Variations for Brass Band,* was written for the 1957 National Brass Band Championships. Parts of the main theme had previously appeared in other works, including the *Sea Symphony* and in the slow movement of Symphony No.9. It is followed by 11 continuous variations. This is a worthy successor to previous test pieces, which included Holst's *A Moorside Suite* and Elgar's *Severn Suite*. The score and parts had suffered from a number of printing errors over the years, so a great deal of editorial work had to be done prior to this recording, with the original manuscript taking precedence. The rarely-heard celesta part is included in this performance.

The Tredegar Town Band was first formed in 1849 and formally constituted in 1876. It has won many titles and is established as one of the world's leading bands. Its playing on this CD is, as you would expect, exemplary. An additional point of interest for Elgarians is that three pieces, including the *Variations*, are conducted by Martyn Brabbins, himself a euphonium and trombone player. I thoroughly recommend this recording to anyone interested in either brass bands or the composer, and Albion Records should be congratulated on this excellent addition to their series of some of the lesser known music of Vaughan Williams.

Ruth Hellen

OTHER SELECTED CD ISSUES

N.B. Inclusion of recordings here does not preclude a full review at a later date.

Sir Adrian Boult: The Decca Legacy Volume 1 – British Music

DECCA
SIR ADRIAN BOULT
THE DECCA LEGACY
VOLUME 1
BRITISH MUSIC
ELOQUENCE

Australian Eloquence

ELQ 4842204
16 discs

Whilst Boult was never a major recording artist for Decca, this set contains much which will be of interest to lovers of British music. There are only three Elgar works, the Violin Concerto with Alfredo Campoli, *Chanson de Matin* and *Chanson de Nuit*. Boult's first complete recorded cycle of Vaughan Williams' Symphonies are included, together with works by Holst, including four pieces never issued before – *Somerset Rhapsody*, *Marching Song, Country Song* and *Scherzo*. The box also contains works by Malcolm Arnold, Bax, Butterworth, Searle and Walton. There are two further box sets, one of Baroque music and the other of 19th and 20th century works.

Maestoso; Organ Music
Callum Alger

Maestoso
Callum Alger plays music by Bairstow and Elgar
Organ of St Matthew's Church, Northampton
Regent

Regent Records

REGCD 572

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LETTER

Ein Weinachtsmysterium

From Tom Cademartrie

Thank you for the splendid article about *Ein Weinachtsmysterium* in the April Journal. At last, we have a very full account of all that transpired surrounding the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society's 1901 performance. The abundant primary source materials you unearthed for the article were a joy to read and imbibe. Thank you for all your time and labour so that yet another moment in Elgar's life has been illumined and enlarged for us.

RECORDING NOTES - 1922 TO JANUARY 1923

At a conference on 10 January 1922, Sir Landon Ronald, in his position as Musical Adviser to 'His Master's Voice', listened to the recordings Elgar made in December 1921. He pronounced favourably on the *Ballad* from *King Olaf* commenting on the way Elgar had arranged the *ballad* for orchestra and 'considered the tone to be full and rich and the playing excellent'. The Bach-Elgar Fugue in C minor fared equally well and was 'an exceptionally fine recording', yet the recordings of the first section of *In the South* were poor and the matrices were destroyed.

1922 was a lean year for Elgar in the recording studio - his first session took place on 10 November. This was devoted to recording three of the *Sea Pictures*, 'In Haven', 'Where Corals Lie' and 'Sea Slumber Song', with Leila Megane who had recently begun to record for HMV.

Megane (1891-1960) born Margaret Jones in Bethesda, Wales, made her first solo appearance at 16. Subsequently she entered the Eisteddfod in Beaumaris, Anglesey, winning first prize in 1910. She went on to study at the Royal Academy of Music and David Lloyd George helped her to travel to France for singing lessons with Jean de Reszke, who in turn encouraged her to change her name to Leila Megane. She sang for injured soldiers in France in the Great War and was then often engaged by Sir Henry Wood to sing at Queen's Hall for about eight seasons in the 1920s. She travelled to Moscow and Milan and in 1923 sang with the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

As a recording artist she recorded selections from French opera, Handel and Welsh songs, making her farewell appearance on 12 November 1945 in Pwllheli Town Hall.

The first recording session with Elgar was devoted to the lighter songs in the cycle, and 'In Haven' and 'Where Corals Lie' were successfully recorded, being fitted together to make one side by omitting the second verse of 'Where Corals Lie'. Unhappily Megane's enunciation in 'Sea Slumber Song' was found to be bad, despite there being three takes, resulting in those discs being rejected. The second session, on 14 November, with a slightly enlarged orchestra – two more horns and two cornets were added – faced similar problems of enunciation and bad notes when attempts were made to record 'Sabbath Moring at Sea' and 'The Swimmer'(there were three takes of each song) and all the discs were referred to Elgar; none of the recordings could be retained, so a third session had to be arranged for early in 1923.

The remaining songs were recorded successfully with the larger orchestra on 8 January 1923; the big songs were not cut but taken at a fast tempo, especially 'The Swimmer' which proved a challenge for Megane, but this produced an exciting conclusion to the cycle.[1] Jerrold Northrop Moore noted that 'Elgar relished the opportunity to drive everybody hard … There are some breathless moments for Leila Megane'.[2]

He also noted that 'the soloist shows herself to respond best when most is demanded of her vocally' and continued: 'It is said that Elgar sometimes drove his vocal soloists in this way if he became entirely engrossed in the music, but this is the only one of his recordings in which the effect can be discerned. Despite all that has been said about Elgar's non-professional conducting, such occurrences were probably rare to judge by the incidence of their appearances on records. And the result in this case was far from disastrous, but quite the reverse'.[3]

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[1] Megane recorded 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' in 4'50" and 'The Swimmer' in 4'39". In 1965 Dame Janet Baker recorded 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' in 6'16" and 'The Swimmer' in 6'04".

[2] Jerrold Northrop Moore, note to the LP *The Elgar Edition*, Volume VI,, on Pearl GEM 115, 1974.

[3] Jerrold Northrop Moore, 'An Elgar Discography', *Recorded Sound*, Volume 2, No.,9, January 1963, 25.

‘In Haven’ and ‘Where Corals Lie’ were recorded for a second time but were not superior to the recordings made of those songs on 10 November. These are particularly important acoustic recordings as Elgar did not record *Sea Pictures* again when electronic recording became possible after 1925.

Leila Megane’s recording of *Sea Pictures* is on disc three – tracks 1 to 5 – of the box set ‘Elgar conducts Elgar: The Complete Recordings 1914-1925’ from Music & Arts CD-1257, restored by Society member Lani Spahr.

Acknowledgement is made to Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore’s Elgar on Record *(Oxford: Oxford University Press,1974) in compiling these notes.*

Kevin Mitchell

Leila Megane

100 YEARS AGO …

In early August Elgar had planned to visit Carice and her husband Samuel in Chilworth, Surrey but Landon Ronald, who was staying at The Beacon Hotel, Crowborough, invited Elgar to join him for a few days so he deferred his visit to his daughter. Before leaving, he lunched on 3 August with Lydia Lopokova, a member of Diaghilev's Company, and found her 'a little lamb!' telling Carice that he intended to write music to which she could dance. At this time, he sent a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* concerning Jonathan Swift's residence in Bury Street, just across the road from his London flat.

On 15 August Elgar drove to Chilworth and visited Carice, gave her a box of oil colour paints for her birthday, visited Guildford and St Martha's Church, near Carice's home, and returned to St. James's Place on 17 August.

Elgar went to Gloucester on 21 August for rehearsals for the Three Choirs Festival. On 22nd he stayed with Atkinses' in Worcester and on 24 August he returned to Gloucester Cathedral for rehearsals of *The Apostles*, *The Kingdom* and 'For the Fallen'. London rehearsals took place the following week, and on 30 August Carice joined him for these at Morley Hall and had lunch and tea with him. He stayed with Herbert Brewer for the festival, where he relished playing light music and tunes from musical comedies with Brewer's two sons, much to the organist's surprise. Carice joined him on 5 September and that day heard a 'Glorious performance of Apostles in evening – record attendance & collections – wonderful singing & atmosphere'. A performance the next day of *The Kingdom* was 'splendid', and afterwards a memorial tablet was unveiled in the Cathedral to Parry, who had died in 1918; there followed a lunch party with Lord Gladstone, Sir Hugh Allen, Sir Charles Stanford and others – Carice recorded they were 'all photographed on Brewer's lawn', where at Brewer's instigation Elgar and Stanford shook hands, but the gesture was largely symbolic.

The festival also included the first performances of the works Elgar had been instrumental in commissioning: Bliss's *A Colour Symphony*, *Sine Nomine* by Howells and *Silence* by Goossens, but so far as is known Elgar was unenthusiastic about these compositions. He thought the Bliss 'disconcertingly modern'.[1] However, Atkins told Elgar after the festival how much Howells was heartened by words of encouragement 'which you spoke to him as he was going on [to conduct his *Sine Nomine*]. They seem to have been a real help to him'. Elgar's orchestral transcription of Bach's *Fantasia and Fugue in C minor* was also played at Gloucester and the consecutive performances of the oratorios made him think about their successor. He was distressed by Scriabin's *Poeme de l'extase*: 'To think that Gloucester Cathedral should echo to such music. It is a wonder that the very gargoyles don't come tumbling down'.

After the festival Elgar spent a few days at Bromsgrove with his sister Pollie, and as Alice Stuart of Wortley was in Stratford-upon-Avon he spent 22 September with her. They lunched together and she drove him back to Bromsgrove and thus met Pollie, to Elgar's delight as her visit gave 'a different feeling to the new place that you have been to it'. On returning to London, he had to vacate his flat for a time due to the installation of an electrical heating system but was able to find refuge at The Hut and at Ridgehurst.

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[1] Yet Elgar and Schuster did go to hear the first London performance of Bliss's symphony on 5 December, played by the student orchestra of the Royal College of Music, conducted by Adrian Boult. The work was dedicated to Boult.

On 8 October Carice and her husband Samuel drove to Brinkwells via Petworth: ‘Went up to cottage, found all shut up, had lunch on lawn looking at view – saw Mr Aylwin – … lovely day’. Elgar wrote to Alice Stuart of Wortley that ‘she saw all the sweet old villagers & said it was lovely, peaceful & sad’. Elgar went to The Hut on 17 October, returning home on 20 October. He tried to write music there, but composition was difficult and he reported to Lady Stuart that ‘we will forget my little delusion about taking up music again: that is over’. Schuster had offered him use of The Hut rent-free for the winter but he was unable to take this up ‘as the eternal servant question floored’ him but, as he informed Carice, a new secretary, Mary Clifford, had been coming to his flat most days and was useful with her shorthand and typewriting. She did ‘a lot of the libretto of Part III of The Apostles – the work will never be written – The music I mean’. He looked over the sketches for Part III and tinkered with them possibly making a few new sketches, but he could not face the effort of moulding them into a musical synthesis.

Carice came to London on 1 November and wrote of her day. After High Mass at Westminster Cathedral, she went ‘On to flat – Mary [Clifford] there - Father & I lunched at Pall Mall & back to flat – to sale room & bought piano - … Back to flat – Father – played some of new music – 3rd pt of Kingdom[,] Piano Concerto’. He went with Schuster to see the play *The Secret Agent* adapted from Conrad’s novel but reported to Carice it was ‘the most dreary simple stupid drivel – Frank & I ran away after the 2nd Act dreadful’, and told Lady Stuart it was ‘the most amateurish, childish, drivelling imbecile futile rubbish you ever saw’.

Elgar’s first recording session of the year at Hayes was on 10 November when he started to record *Sea Pictures* with Leila Megane, followed by a further day there on 14 November.

A general election took place on 15 November and Elgar made his political views clear to Lady Stuart when commenting on the Labour Party candidate for Gloucester, Morgan Phillips Price, who was an ‘appalling scoundrel’. Price was defeated. The Conservative Party secured a majority under Andrew Bonar Law.

Elgar joined Lady Stuart on 20 November for an LSO concert in Queen’s Hall conducted by Albert Coates where they heard Bruckner’s Fourth Symphony and some Wagner.

The Students’ Orchestra of the Guildhall School of Music, conducted by its Principal, Landon Ronald, gave a concert at Queen’s Hall on 28 November, which included the Prelude to *Gerontius,* two movements of the Violin Concerto, *Polonia*, the *Variations*, two songs from *Sea Pictures,* a movement from the *Serenade for Strings* and the first *Pomp and Circumstance* March. Carice wrote in her diary: ‘Delightful concert – Lan conducting – Fr conducted one thing – great enthusiasm. Went to Artists room & Father to supper at Langham’.

Kevin Mitchell

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