The Elgar Society
JOURNAL

MARCH 1999 Vol.11 No.1

ARTHUR TROYTE GRIFFITH 1864 - 1942
Enigma Variation (No VII, 'Troyte') and Malvern character

Catherine Moody

"Yes, Troyte does like his tea", mused Margaret Hamand, when the subject came up in the studio. We were both full time students in Malvern School of Art of which my father had been appointed Head Master. Coming recently from the Royal College of Art, full of the urge to pass on his knowledge of painting, my father, in 1935, was getting the School going. Margaret and I were amongst the first group of students gathered in.

Arthur Troyte Griffith, friend of Edward Elgar, Secretary of Malvern Concert Club, (which was founded by Elgar in 1903), was a professional architect and also a watercolour painter. My parents knew him; he was a Governor of the School and we met others who knew him. Some had commissioned him to design a house. They knew him and understood his approach to design, which was based upon distinct convictions. Others knew him through the Concert Club. In Wartime everyone joined in to keep things going and so Troyte's talk to us on perspective took place and I knew him as a teacher; a role he rarely took on in a formal way but he was always ready to help an interested student. Troyte was quite a "character" - not a figure to go unnoticed. From time to time something about Troyte would come up in conversation.

One day my Mother had invited him to tea. We were but a field's width away from the School of Art. Troyte hesitated and no easy acceptance was forthcoming. "But I can't come, I must have MY TEA". That was his difficulty. Mother explained that it was tea to which she was inviting him and I think another date was arranged. We got the impression that for Troyte there would have been a substantial meal for him at Fairview, his house at Lower Wyche, and he was loath to break in on his routine. Hence the discussion on Troyte's tea with Margaret Hamand.

Margaret's father, Dr Louis Hamand, was organist and choirmaster of Great Malvern Priory. He had succeeded on Elgar's death (or a little later) as Chairman of The Malvern Concert Club. As Troyte had been Secretary from the beginning and continued so, he was, therefore, a frequent visitor to The Dingle, Christchurch Road, the Hamands' home.

Margaret, often present when Troyte was there, knew his manner and habits of life. Even though he "liked his tea", it was but fuel to this spare, energetic figure. Dressed in the Norfolk jacket, knee breeches and stockings, he was always in action, walking or riding his famous bicycle. His conversation was equally spare. He only uttered when it was necessary, never bolstering up a situation with social chitchat. Functional design was the key to his architecture and to his life.

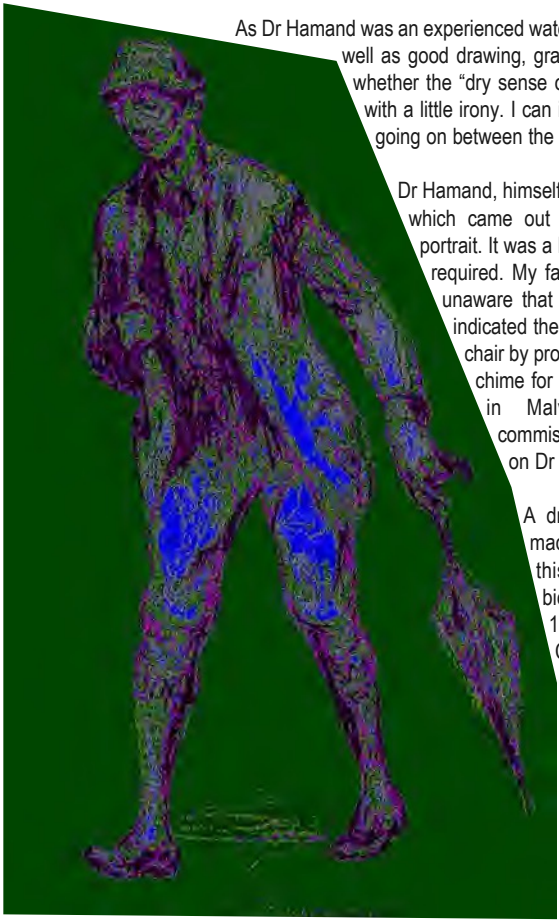
I first encountered his architecture in 1937 when I visited Miss Farmer and Miss Leather who had had him design a garden room to their house Langland in Graham Road. The wooden staircase leading down into the room was of handsome construction and as Miss Leather explained to me, it was of honest and direct craftsmanship having "All the pegs showing" as she described it. She recognised the William Morris tradition.

This was a period when purist principles were rare, many suburban villas having slats of wood tacked on to represent real beams. Such a thing would have been anathema to Troyte Griffith.

Later on Margaret (by then Mrs George Allsop) wrote to me of those days. I quote her letter : “I remember him stomping along, more or less at a trot, in hairy tweed plus fours and cap, and of (his) coming to tea, which at first I found alarming until something amused him, when his whole face crumpled up in spluttering and endearing laughter”.

I wonder if those versed in the music can find this in the Troyte variation? Margaret also spoke of the Malvern Concert Club, again I quote : “Troyte was Secretary and Treasurer throughout until his death. My Pa (that is Dr Hamand) was on the Committee and later Chairman, and he and Troyte got on very happily. Pa talked of him as a very good amateur musician but I don’t know what instrument he played.”

Margaret’s elder sister, Tess, also recalled Troyte. “I seem to remember him as rather aloof, in his office over the Abbey Gateway, but with a dry sense of humour”, she wrote. Another recollection Tess told me of is worth quoting. “I can remember my father telling me once that Troyte had looked over his shoulder when he was sketching, and saying, “That’ s not bad, and you might do quite well if you had a few lessons”, or something similar in a condescending tone of voice”.



A Memory of
A Troyte Griffith, Esq

Pencil Drawing by
Victor Hume Moody ARCA

As Dr Hamand was an experienced watercolour painter and his work had, as well as good drawing, grace and refinement, I wonder myself whether the “dry sense of humour” was not being employed with a little irony. I can imagine a certain amount of ragging going on between the two of them.

Dr Hamand, himself, was not without a sense of humour which came out whilst my father was painting his portrait. It was a large canvas and many sittings were required. My father, absorbed in the painting, was unaware that lunchtime had arrived. Dr Hamand indicated the time for his release from the sitter’s chair by producing the “Ding, Dong” of the Priory chime for one o’clock. The portrait now hangs in Malvern Public Library. It was commissioned by the choristers and friends on Dr Hamand’s retirement.

A drawing of Troyte Griffith my father made shows him striding along. He did this as the frontispiece of a brief biography of Troyte we published in 1979. It was printed on the School’s Columbia Press in a Letter press Printing Course conducted by John

Randle of the Whittington Press.

I had realised that those who knew Troyte Griffith were still to be found in Malvern but likely to become fewer as time went on. I had followed my father as Head of Malvern School of Art, now part of Malvern Hills College, and was Chairman of Malvern Architectural Society, one of the most successful projects developing from the School of Art. The Society brought together architects of note and of great dedication, non-architects who were enthusiasts for building, photographers, travellers and those who could seek out good buildings, sometimes in unexpected places. They formed a rich and diverse membership. There were many projects for celebrating HM the Queen's Jubilee Year and my suggestion of seeking out the work of A Troyte Griffith was taken up with enthusiasm. The identification of very many of Troyte Griffith's buildings was achieved by our architect President, Michael Peach, and the Secretary, William Wilmott, who lived in a house designed by Troyte - Greyroofs. Surviving members of the Griffith family were sought out and corresponded with by another member. Yet another delved into the Public Records Office for documents and also found Troyte's first architectural student A Skepelhorn, living in London.

I was acquainted with Mrs Betty Lucas, the niece of John Nevinson, one of the architectural partnership, Nevinson and Newton, with whom Troyte began his career in Malvern. My letter to the Editor of the *Malvern Gazette* asking if any who recollected Troyte Griffith could give us any information, brought a tremendous response of letters, phone calls and visits.

I have talked with those who knew Troyte and worked with him; some of them were also musical. I have had the Enigma variation sung to me over the telephone, passages being taken to illustrate his way of speaking or moving. One such was C C Judson. As surveyor to Malvern Urban District Council, Judson had working contacts with the architect. Also he was a keen chess player. He recalled to me how, as a young man, he first went to the Chess Club. Waiting to find if he would be invited to play, he was embarrassingly left on his own as all the members already had their opponents. Troyte was Captain of the Chess Club. He came to Judson and asked him if he wanted to play. Judson was ready for action. Troyte cautioned him : "I'm a good player, you know". Judson, not surprisingly, was beaten. Troyte Griffith had played for his College, Oriel and for Oxford University. Thus began the long life of Judson's acquaintance with Troyte and his love of the music of Elgar. He continued reminiscing of how he journeyed to Bristol to a concert in which the *Enigma Variations* were being played. It was the first time a performance had been near enough for him to reach. "And it was just like him," he said; and then came a snatch of the music sung or orchestrated in so far as a voice can do, and a demonstration of Troyte's abrupt and spontaneous movement. As Judson described it, his animation showed something of the burning enthusiasm kindled by the experience remembered so vividly from his early days and re-kindled by my quest.

The direction of our search was towards identifying the buildings Troyte Griffith had designed and very fruitful was our investigation. They were mostly houses; we found Troyte to be masterly in his way of dealing with domestic needs in the early part of this century. In the nineteen twenties and thirties there was not much money about even amongst the retired people who had found, in Malvern, a congenial environment. There was, however, one thing that caused some families to dig into their bank balances. That was the arrival of the motor car. Arguably the earliest four-wheeled petrol-driven car had been made in Malvern by the Brothers Santler about the time when Elgar was composing his Enigmas, and Morgan Motors were beginning their remarkable progress, with the first car being evolved here in 1909. Bicycling had been the fashion but now the wide open Rolls Royce Tourer began to appear. Consequently garages were needed and so Troyte Griffith was brought in to design this new kind of edifice.

Mr O D Claytor was one who provided us with an immense amount of information about Troyte. He knew him well because at fourteen years of age he came in to Troyte's office in the Abbey Gateway and became helper in all sorts of ways, as well as doing his apprenticeship as an architect. There are houses he designed in Malvern and later he took a place in the Council Office. Back in the early days he recalls that on one occasion when Troyte Griffith was ill, the youthful Claytor had to deliver the notices to the members of the Concert Club, a daunting task for him since most of these exalted personages lived in Victorian Gothic houses where the maid answered the door. In the eyes of this fourteen-year-old, Troyte Griffith seemed immensely old and the boy felt that the time was not far ahead when he would have to find another job because of the not-too-distant demise of his employer. On this occasion he also had to deliver the post to Troyte at Fairview. Here Troyte played him some records on his gramophone. "Listen to this", he said, "the finest march ever written : *remember*". It was one of the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches. Mr Claytor guided me to the old Register of Plans in the archives of Malvern Council House. Here we found an entry for a garage for Col Fitton. This musty register seems an unlikely place to find light could be shed on two subjects of Elgar's *Enigma Variations* but so it was, for Col Fitton's daughter was a viola player : her name was Isabel - 'Ysobel' in Elgar's Variation of which she was the subject. The Fitton family had taken to travel by motor car. This garage was to be built in Zetland Road in the garden of the Fitton's house, Fairlea, in Graham Road. It was a very important undertaking; every detail was considered. Three of the leading builders were applied to for estimates - James, Broads, and another, which may have been Wilesmith. My notes from Mr Claytor record that "No pains were spared" and "There was great ceremony", presumably on completion. I have visited this garage and it was sturdy in construction and very seemly in appearance; there was the apartment for the motor car and also a separate room for a workshop for repairs to be done. It was a much more substantial conception of a garage than the millions of "motor sheds" that followed.

Thus did one Variation, Troyte, honour another - Isabel and her father. The date was 18 July 1929. It might seem a long interval between 1899 of the launch of the Enigma and 1929, but when I came to Malvern a consciousness of the presence of the Edwardian spirit came to me; and I found the late Victorian and Edwardian life could be unfolded, preserved like pressed flowers in a forgotten album.

ELGAR: THE ENIGMA VARIATIONS

Leonard Bernstein conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra Rehearsal & Performance (BBC TV Archive: 1982) (DGG)

Robert Mandell

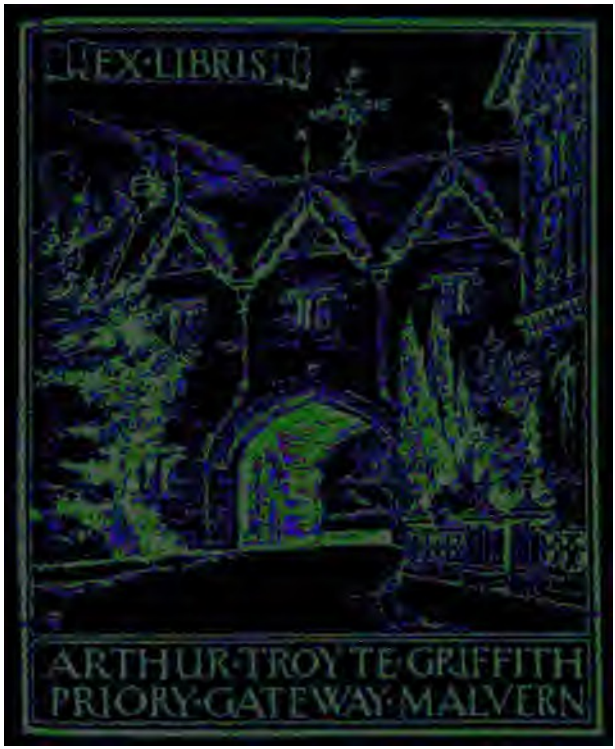
[Robert Mandell is an American conductor who has lived and worked in the UK for 30 years. As a young conductor he was recommended to Serge Koussevitsky by Leonard Bernstein. He worked as Special Music Assistant to Bernstein first for his famous ***Omnibus*** *television lectures and subsequently for the televised Young People's Concerts of the New York Philharmonic.*

The pre-publication article appearing in this issue of the JOURNAL is taken from an extensive memoir of Leonard Bernstein entitled ***Took It A Tempo!****, a famous Koussevitsky malapropism addressed to one of his Tanglewood conducting students. This will be the first publication to deal exclusively with Bernstein, the musician, conductor, composer, teacher and innovative thinker examining and analysing his use of television as both a teaching and recording medium for music in every style for audiences*

of all ages and backgrounds].

One need only place the above listed CD version on a turntable to transform a dull soirée into something resembling one of the more interesting days in the Houses of Parliament, when the discussion at hand has turned to European Monetary Union. Although the rehearsal along with the live concert performance of the event have never been commercially available on video, a studio recording made by Deutsche Grammophon immediately following the concert continues to cause a stir, certainly among Elgar lovers the world over. It is the author's suggestion that a video tape of the preparation and public happening should be made available to every conservatory that offers training for aspiring young conductors. The sequence of events which led up to the concert and the sound recording demonstrate a *Guinness Book of Records'* example of conductor wrong-headedness and monumental stubbornness, plus a lack of humility to face one's own wrong decisions and either, through tacit admission, make corrections without comment or, alternatively, make an open admission of error in judgement and by doing so regain the lost respect and the co-operation of the musicians with whom you are working.

For those not familiar with this legendary crossing of swords between an orchestra and conductor here is the short version. In the Spring of 1982 L[1] had programmed for his debut with the BBC Symphony his



Abbey Gateway South Side
Bookplate by A Troyte Griffith showing the south side
His architectural office was in the left hand side

own *Songfest* and Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. For starters, he arrived late at rehearsal and, instead of a quick apology followed by a downbeat, began to lecture the musicians about his singular love and understanding of "Eddie" Elgar and his music.

A short digression is, perhaps, now in order regarding British musicians and British orchestras. Just prior to my own 1962 debut in the recording studios of London, my good friend from the New York Philharmonic, the noted violist, Raymond Sabinsky, had admonished me to behave myself and to make the most of the renowned polite behaviour of my soon-to-be British colleagues. When I returned to the United States three weeks later after a successful series of sessions which led to seven further years in the UK as a *house* conductor for Readers Digest Records, I reported to my friend that he had been mistaken. What he mistook for British politeness was, in fact, *quiet hostility*!!!

Musicians at the BBC studios in London, about whom I can report from personal experience, come to rehearsals with a perpetual chip on their collective shoulders, firstly against the BBC who treat everyone miserably but especially their orchestras, and then against any new face who comes to conduct. Their highly developed sense of hostility in this instance was released by L's tardy appearance and then aggravated by what they viewed as his lack of respect towards England's most honoured musical father figure, Edward Elgar. "Eddie", indeed! This was compounded from the first downbeat when it became immediately obvious that L had come to re-teach them a work which is *mothers' milk* to every British musician.

Had he truly revealed aspects of the work that gave the players cause to rethink the musical consensus around which virtually all conductors had constructed their concept of this well-known and much performed masterwork since its premiere in 1899, they might have eventually come around to his way of thinking after an initial show of resistance. However, L's ideas did not reveal but only distorted, sometimes to a grotesque degree, portions of the score. That he had chosen excessively slow tempos for many of the variations might have worked if the overall concept had conformed to a golden mean of tempos related to those set down in an excellent performance recorded by the composer, himself a noted conductor. L, however, chose to treat each variation individually without seeming relationship to either the variation previous or the one that followed, thus interfering with the logical flow of the work as a whole. The performance length as a result ended up exceeding the average for this masterwork, as presented by illustrious Elgarians - such as Adrian Boult and John Barbirolli - by ten minutes, three of which stretched the most famous variation, 'Nimrod' (average playing time of 3 minutes 20 seconds) to over six minutes.

Problems with L's concept manifest themselves from the start. Logically the 'Enigma' theme should be presented clearly and simply to instil it unfettered in the mind of the listener. Here L overworks every measure and every phrase. The Theme is thus changed from that of germinating seed of an entire work to a self-contained piece in its own right. L is obliged to straightaway modify this approach in the first variation, where the rhythmic structure is such that it causes the next appearance of the Theme to be presented, at least in part, in its simplest, most direct form. Unfortunately, in the final third of the variation the music allows for latitude to pull it in every direction and L obliges, resulting in another highly mannered performance which adds almost a minute to this musical miniature. The next five variations, although performed at slightly broader tempos than usual, return us to a profile of the Elgar we recognise, their rhythmic structure again being such as to preclude improvisatory internal modification. The seventh

[1] 'L' is the author's shorthand for Maestro Bernstein, addressed and referred to by all as 'Lenny'.

Variation, 'Troyte' [Griffith], depicts a heavy-handed amateur pianist. In rehearsal, Rodney Friend, who was leading the BBC Orchestra, good-humouredly protested the speed at which it was taken, but in this instance L had chosen a tempo that John Barbirolli favoured. It should be further noted that the orchestra's subsequent recorded performance of this Variation, for all their protests, could not be bettered. The Winifred Norbury variation, which follows 'Troyte', is stretched by a minute but to no bad effect. It is what ensues that has created the notoriety that surrounds this performance. The 'Norbury' Variation connects without pause to 'Nimrod'. Nimrod, as is known to Elgar enthusiasts, is a rather convoluted reference to his close friend, A J Jaeger, office manager at Novello, his publisher, Nimrod being an ancient hunter and the German noun for 'hunter' being Jaeger. An accurate description of L's tempo for this most famous of Elgar's *Variations* is moribund. An incredulous Rodney Friend again questioned L at the rehearsal as to whether he was being serious, to which L replied, "You bet your last cent I'm being serious." Later Friend was quoted in conversation with Paul Meyers, the free-lance record producer and syndicated radio music show host, as casually remarking that "If it (Nimrod) had gone any slower it would have gone backwards." It should be added that when later questioned in an interview regarding the Enigma concert, the distinguished orchestra leader, who joined the New York Philharmonic as concertmaster during L's tenure, commented that "whether indulgent or not, whether tasteful or not, it was honestly felt. However much he seemed to be milking the piece, it was genuine."[2]

From 'Nimrod' onward, all the subsequent slow Variations continue to run to almost a minute longer than those in familiar performances which have set the standard for this work. Having stated that, it should also be noted that L's rendition of the 'Dorabella' Variation has enormous charm, the 'B G N' Variation a touch of Victorian sentiment, and the 'Romanza', the only Variation left undedicated except for three asterisks, a tremendous atmosphere and profound sense of sadness. The Finale starts off well but, with the second subject, bogs down. From there on the sheer weight of grandiosity plus the loss of momentum put paid to any possibility of a redeeming conclusion.

Compliments must be paid to the BBC Symphony. Though this performance went against their grain and bad feeling prevailed on both sides, L afterwards declaring that he never wished to conduct them again, and the orchestra going to the management to tell them never to again offer him any future invitations, the playing of the orchestra is simply marvellous and the sound they produce glorious. Neither side may have been best pleased with the other party but one cannot deny that some extraordinary chemistry took place between them. It has been the author's experience during his long association with all divisions of the Arts that anger is as potent an emotion in producing electrifying, committed results as love. L's long time friend and sometime creative partner, Jerome Robbins, can be singled out as one of the Theatre and Dance world's most brilliant talents who throughout his career was feared and disliked by those who worked for him and with him. L was said to be terrified of him, yet in partnership they produced the most astonishing achievements. Early in his career L was quoted as listing 'ambition' as a key ingredient to establishing a meaningful career in the Arts. He could easily have opted instead for 'ruthlessness' which has been the mark of a long parade of great talent and otherwise noted figures in the Arts to include conductors, directors, producers, performers and that most ruthless of all breeds, agents. There is little doubt that L - behaving on this occasion in a manner characteristic of those historical, anachronistic 'tyrants of the baton' - produced by the sheer force of his musical brilliance, huge communicative personality, and iron will, not to be denied, a musical result which was of the highest technical and sound quality, while simultaneously being wrong minded to the point of being perverse.

The BBC televised rehearsal of the event is highly edited with some of the more lethal parries and thrusts left on the cutting room floor, but including a rather inane interview during the interval by the BBC's rather overwhelmed film critic, Barry Norman, during which L, seated at the piano, demonstrates possible solutions to Elgar's Enigma. Both video, if it were available, and recorded performance come under the

category of 'collector's items'. The latter has most certainly obtained a place in many collections for that reason alone. If one is seeking an inspired, representative performance of this work, however, the author's advice is to look elsewhere.

THE GREAT WAR (1914-1919): Elgar and the Creative Challenge

Andrew Neill

They are fallen, those famous ones
Who made this kingdom glorious, they are fallen
About their King; they have yielded up their strength
And beauty and valour.[1]

As a small boy I can vividly remember some of the human consequences of what had just become called The First World War. The images of street corners on which limbless ex-servicemen stood and chatted remain in my mind, as do invitations to tea with seemingly old ladies whose hopes for marriage or children had been destroyed on the soil of France 35 years before. I little realised how much they, like the Elgars and millions of their fellow countrymen and women, had had to adjust to extraordinary changes to their lives and their country 'which had hitherto been shielded by their navy, that war could threaten with death the manhood of a whole nation.[2] *These images are as powerful too as the sight of bombed streets, the coarse feel of ration cards and the smell of concentrated orange juice which were part of the more immediate legacy of Hitler's war. My generation has been protected from the possibility of 'call up', and have watched from the sidelines the war to retake the Falkland Islands and a few other post -imperial scraps. Korea was but a sideshow for extreme youth. However, this does not lessen the need to understand and obtain answers to numerous questions, for which the answers remain elusive. Through the following narrative I ask but one: How did an artist adjust and create in the unnatural environment that is wartime? I hope that, as if through a glass darkly, we may see a few distant answers.*

For this article, I had originally anticipated transcribing a presentation I gave to a number of the Society's branches a few years ago. This was based upon Alice Elgar's diaries and supported by music and other sources of narrative. As I rewrote my original script I realised that what might have succeeded as a presentation required considerable amendment to achieve a natural written narrative. It also seemed appropriate to look more deeply into the artistic and cultural role Elgar performed at the time. Nowadays, any Elgarian research owes a great debt to the scholarship of Elgar's biographer, Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore. His nine books about Elgar and his transcription of Alice Elgar's diaries are, quite simply, fundamental. We all remain greatly in his debt.[3] *Indeed, these remain the foundation of what follows and without the diaries and Dr Moore's dedicated work this would be a much shorter story. The diaries remain invaluable, not only for telling of the activities of the Elgars but for the reaction of Alice to current events, particularly before Elgar's health became a major preoccupation. We can take a distant look behind the doors of British society and its adjustment to a new way of life in addition to following the career of a great composer.*

---

[2] Meyers and Friend quotes from W W Burton : *Conversations About Bernstein* (Oxford Univ Press, 1995)

* * *

Five years ago to the day of the Sarajevo assassinations, the spark that began the slide into war, the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919 marked the official conclusion of the First World War.[4] Officially Britain had been at war for four weeks under five years, and the effect of the conflict on European and British society has been and continues to be an area for continued analysis, discussion and interpretation. Edward Elgar, too old to make a physical contribution to the fighting, was as affected as anyone by the economic and social changes the war brought to Britain.

When Elgar left hospital in the spring of 1918, following his tonsillectomy, he began a difficult convalescence that completed a transformation in his health and attitude to the war that was almost miraculous. It is easy to see these changes as a response to the improving course of the war or that his health had been dramatically improved. Perhaps it could also be seen as part of a great psychological metamorphosis. However what is incontestable is that Elgar began to compose again by writing music from within : 'his insidest inside'. The works, three chamber pieces and a concerto were in a form that was more economic than that represented by the opulence of the E flat symphony of 1911, but anticipated by *Falstaff* of 1913 with its leaner scoring, snatches of melody and occasional tonal uncertainty.

Change was already in the air, and in 1912 the first British performance of *Five Pieces for Orchestra* by Schoenberg and the performances of the Ballets Russes had challenged existing musical perceptions. Other composers were already turning on contemporary forms, and 1912 also saw the composition of Marcel Dupré's *Prelude and Fugue in G minor* (with its terrifying reworking of Bach's musical model). During the war Elgar did not compose in response to the patriotic needs of his countrymen, and it is significant that his most substantial 'war' work, *The Spirit of England* becomes, through *For the Fallen*, a Requiem. In keeping with the mood of the time Elgar also felt unable to compose a celebration of victory in 1918.

Laurence Binyon
c.1895

see following article

The course of the war would have offered little solace to a sensitive artist as the level of slaughter on the Western Front, the length of the campaign and the dreariness of it all sank in. To find a voice that reflected this, and at the same time give voice to the feelings of the man in the street was almost impossible. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that Elgar was happiest in writing escapist music during this time. With the exception of the three recitations[5], *The Spirit of England* was the only work to confront the issues of the war, and here the poet Laurence Binyon gave him a head start. Elgar was not alone in having to come to terms with these confusing circumstances and the need to respond to them. Before looking in greater depth at Elgar's response and the work of some of his contemporaries I felt it would be helpful to document some aspects of the war as it developed, and how these developments affected Elgar, as his health and morale deteriorated through 1916 and 1917.

The assassination of the Austrian Archduke, Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 caused little stir in Britain beyond a week of official court mourning. So the three Elgars : Alice, Edward and Carice travelled imperturbably to Scotland on 19 July for a holiday. They were staying happily in Wester Ross when the crisis, following the German ultimatum to Belgium on 2 August, enveloped Britain. The Elgars were no different to other Europeans in having to come to terms with the inevitability of war only days before its outbreak, as diplomats and politicians struggled to prevent the conflict which interlocking treaties and war plans suddenly seemed to make inevitable. "Britain, which had awoken to the real danger of the crisis only on Saturday 25 July, still hoped on Thursday 30 July that the Russians would tolerate an Austrian punishment of Serbia but were determined not to leave France in the lurch".[6] The cabinet met twice on Sunday, 2 August, and suddenly public opinion swung behind that of going to war. "On Saturday morning, a majority of Britons had been resolved that Britain must not become involved in a Continental war. A wave of indignation rolled over the nation, sweeping up the mass of Britons who, although reluctant to fight for France, sprang to the side of neutral Belgium".[7] The Cabinet met again on the Bank Holiday Monday and sanctioned mobilisation. Before the meeting Lord Beauchamp[8] and Sir John Simon resigned. The next morning, 4 August, the German army crossed into Belgium, and the Prime Minister announced the British ultimatum to the House of Commons at 2 pm following another Cabinet meeting. At 11 pm (midnight in Berlin) Britain was at war with Germany.

The Elgars struggled south as the Highland regiments were mobilised. As the destruction of Belgium became the main news in every newspaper Elgar, on his return to London, undertook his first act for the war effort by joining the police force as a special constable. The speed of the German advance through Belgium took most Britons by surprise, even though the action of the small British Expeditionary Force (BEF) at Mons on 23 August had delayed the advance and caused considerable loss of life in the numerically superior German forces. The inability of the French, under General Lanrezac on the right flank of the BEF to resist the German impetus resulted in the decision by General Joffre, the French Commander-in-Chief, to order a retreat. Although the retreat of the British army after their action at Le Cateau took some time to become obvious to those back home, there was an increasing need to clutch at straws for good news. Alice noted the desecration of Louvain in her diary and recorded the naval clash in the North Sea, the Battle of the Heligoland Bight, when three German cruisers were sunk.

---

[1] Laurence Binyon : *Arthur: A Tragedy*, 1919

[2] John Keegan : *The Face of Battle* (Barrie & Jenkins, 2nd edn., 1988) p 248

[3] Copies of the transcriptions can be seen at the Elgar Birthplace.

29 August. Heard of navy success in the North Sea - so thankful - wonderful pluck and skill, lovely hot days and harvest moon looking down on a death harvest through one nation's depravity.[9]

Here the mixture of emotion, which affected many in Britain at the time, is apparent. The spirit that the war would be over by Christmas 1914 was beginning to fade and there was a realisation that, in putting into effect its military strategy, Germany was introducing a ruthless dimension to war which would come closer to home. It is perhaps partly in the belief that it would be a short-term appointment and partly because it meant that he was doing something for the war, when composing would require a more subtle response, that Elgar became a special constable.

30 August. To see special constables parade. E looked very distinguished and was photographed in front of the body. Times harrowing account of so much of our glorious army.

2 September. E at Police Station. Mrs. Broadbent to see him about a song.

Over the next few days Elgar composed *The Roll Call - A Soldiers Song* which was sung by Clara Butt in the Albert Hall in October. Later he withdrew it. His mood at the time is clear from the well-known letter he wrote to Frank Schuster on 25 August in which he wrote : "Concerning the war I say nothing - the only thing that wrings my heart and soul is the thought of the horses, I walk round and round this room cursing God for allowing dumb brutes to be tortured - let him kill his human beings but - how can he? Oh my horses!"[10]

From 6 to 12 September, the First Battle of the Marne saw the French and British forces halt the German advance on Paris. The Germans now withdrew to positions north of the Aisne River where they dug in, thus beginning the long three-year period of static warfare that would now dominate the western front. The Schlieffen plan, by which the German army would encircle Paris and bring about the rapid defeat of France may have been thwarted, but the war continued viciously to the north.

10 October. Much distressed at fall of Antwerp. To Albert Hall. First part of concert trying. E's splendid "Roll Call" and at the end "Land of Hope & Glory" with Clara Butt. Audience began to applaud as that began and all stood and at 2nd verse many joined in singing, wonderful thrill.

The Belgian army now fell back to the coast, and in an attempt to stop the Germans from reaching the sea first and thereby cutting off the BEF, the latter moved quickly into position, centring itself on Ypres. By the end of November the German advance was halted, but at great cost. The exhausted armies now sank into the trenches that would stretch in a line from the Channel to the Swiss Border and remain virtually unchanged for nearly four years. At the Battle of Coronel on 31 October, off the coast of Chile, a German squadron under Admiral Von Spee destroyed an inferior[11] Royal Naval deployment under the command of Rear Admiral Cradock. The public was first told of this action on 5 November. It was now that Elgar began to take stock, artistically, of what had occurred during the first terrible months of the campaign.

9 November. E thinking of Carillon Music.

The following day Elgar telephoned Tita Brand Cammaerts who, as the wife of the Belgian poet Emil Cammaerts, had translated his poem, *Carillon* into English. Elgar had been commissioned to contribute to the Belgian Fund by publishing a work in the commemorative King Albert's Book. The destruction of

[4] The treaty took effect on 10 January 1920

Belgium's many bell towers was remembered in the poem as is the destruction of Belgium itself. He took Rosa Burley's advice and provided an illustrative prelude and entr'actes as background music for a recitation of the poem.

6 December. To Queen's Hall - Delightful rehearsal of "Carillon" - wonderful sounds and orchestration.

7 December. To concert and gorgeous performance and immense enthusiasm. E would not take the applause and always came on with Cammaerts but at last had to come on by his ducksie souse - a wonderful scene and ovation - large audience.

The Times commented "If this is all that the tragedy of Belgium can bring from a musician it seems a small tribute".[12] However the popularity of *Carillon* continued throughout the war and *The Times* was later to report : "those which secure large audiences listen to Elgar's *Carillon*, and those which secure small ones for other music".[13] A cut version of *Carillon* was recorded with the distinguished actor, Henry Ainley, during Elgar's first visit to the recording studio of 1915 on 29 January, and was to become, in its own terms, a best seller. For those at Severn House, the first Christmas of the war was uneventful, but on Christmas Eve Alice noted the first bomb to be dropped on England.

24 December. German aeroplane threw bomb at Dover, went into garden & did no harm.

At the same time the British dropped bombs on German air sheds near Brussels and news began to come through of the successful annihilation of Von Spee's Fleet on 8 December by Admiral Sturdee in the Falklands Islands action, thus restoring some confidence in the Royal Navy.[14]

31 December. Year ends in great anxieties but with invaluable consciousness that England has a great, holy cause - may God keep her.

Following the success of *Carillon*, 1915 began well for Elgar. On 24 January the Dogger Bank action in the North Sea delighted the British public, although it achieved little. The following day Elgar went to the British Museum to meet the Keeper of Oriental Manuscripts and poet, Laurence Binyon (1869-1943). Binyon had been an assistant to Sir Sidney Colvin who had suggested to Elgar : "Why don't you do a wonderful requiem for the slain - something in the spirit of Binyon's *For the Fallen*?"

The first 'war poem' by Henry Newbolt appeared in *The Times* on 5 August, and from then on there were poems published almost daily for a year.[15] Poets included Bridges (the Poet Laureate), Kipling, Hewlett and Gosse. Binyon's *The Fourth of August* appeared within a week of the declaration of war, and his *For the Fallen*, written after the retreat from Mons, was published on 21 September. All 12 of his poems were published as *The Winnowing Fan* in the December of 1914. Binyon was deeply attached to the Flanders countryside and one of his best friends, who had become a Benedictine monk, was killed in the German attack on Louvain. With the destruction of the ancient city, Germany began to lose the propaganda war; for in addition to the loss of countless lives the Library, Clothworkers Hall and the magnificent Gothic Town Hall were consumed in flames. Paintings by Flemish masters and 230,000 volumes, including 650 medieval manuscripts were also lost. Barbara Tuchman, the American historian

---

[5] *Carillon*, *Une Voix dans le Désert* and *Le Drapeau Belge*

[6] John Keegan : *The First World War* (Hutchinson, 1998) p 74

[7] Robert K Massie : *Dreadnought* (Random House, 1991) p 901

[8] The brother of Lady Mary Lygon

has put the loss into perspective. “The gesture intended by the Germans to frighten the world - to induce submission - instead convinced large numbers of people that here was an enemy with whom there could be no settlement and no compromise”.[16]

The Winnowing Fan contains an impassioned eulogy on the destruction of the University City as well as an imaginary appeal to Goethe. Later in the war, Binyon was to serve in France as a Red Cross volunteer. As Jerrold Northrop Moore has pointed out “[the poems] were an early attempt to reckon up the psychological cost of the war”.[17] It is *For the Fallen* that made the biggest impact at the time, and there are few that do not know its famous fourth verse today.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

Rudyard Kipling was sent the lines, shortly after the death of his son in 1915. He later told Binyon that he had thought the lines “were old, - something classic, -and then I realised they were just it”.[18] Even Siegfried Sassoon wrote to Binyon “that For the Fallen remains as the finest expression of a certain aspect of the war”.[19] The poem also made an enormous impression on Elgar who took the poems very seriously. On 7 February Binyon joined the Elgars and other guests at Severn House.

At the beginning of March Elgar began an exhausting conducting tour of Scotland and the north of England. Before leaving home he resigned from the Special Constabulary. Late night calls, the cold weather and his age contributed to the decision, as no doubt did the realisation that the war would not be easily won. The initial fun of joining in a new adventure had also gone, and he needed time to think over Binyon’s poems.

10 March. E returned from Leeds all well, very slight cold. So thankful to see him safes. Very happy evening.

Elgar was well enough to go to Stoke on 24th, but hanging over him was a decision that would be controversial whichever direction he took. Novello had advised Elgar that Cyril Rootham (1875-1938), a Cambridge composer and pupil of Stanford, was also setting *For the Fallen*.

26 March. Heard from E that he had written to give up For the Fallen. “Rootham’s disappointed face comes between me and my work” Vesy vesy beautiful of E - sad loss to the world.

Elgar met with Rootham and then wrote to Binyon : “I have battled with the feeling for nearly a week, but the sight of the other man comes between me and my music. I know you will be disappointed, but your disappointment is not as great as mine for I love your poem and love and honour you for having conceived it.
“I am going to the country & will see if I can make the other settings acceptable, without the great climax”.

So he was to continue with his composition of the two other poems he had agreed to set, *The Fourth of*

---

[9] All diary quotations are from Alice Elgar’s diaries unless otherwise stated.

[10] Jerrold Northrop Moore : *Edward Elgar - A Creative Life* (Oxford, 1984) p 670

August 1914 : The Hampstead Special Constabulary with Elgar, Staff Inspector, at the left of the front row

August and *To Women*. Binyon replied to Elgar the following day: "Your words about my poem touch me deeply. My disappointment matters nothing, keen as it is : but think of England, of the English speaking peoples in whom the common blood stirs now as it never did before; think of the awful casualty lists that are coming, and the losses in more & more homes; think of the thousands who will be craving to have their grief glorified and lifted up and transformed by an art like yours - and though I have little understanding of music as you know, I understand that craving when words alone seem all too insufficient and inexpressive - think of what you are withholding from your countrymen and women. Surely it would be wrong to let them lose this help and consolation".[20]

Elgar considered his response, replying on the 31st : "Very many thanks for your most kind and sympathetic letter : I quite feel all you say and would give anything that the publication might proceed; but under all the circumstances this is not conceivable." But Elgar's friends were not so easily dissuaded. Richard Streatfeild was a colleague and close friend of Laurence Binyon at the British Museum as well as music critic of the *Daily Graphic*. He took it upon himself to further Binyon's cause and therefore Elgar's too, and found Elgar still sympathetic to the idea of some form of 'war service', which had the advantage of distancing him from composition.

5 April. Mr. Streatfeild to tea - induced Elgar to join Hampstead Volunteer Reserve - Mr. S so distressed that E had given up Binyon's poems - because he had so generously retired in favour of Rootham but quite angry too - (quite right).
11 April (Sunday). Spanish Place. Very nice morning - London is so quiet at that hour - Sir Sidney Colvin to tea - Sidney overwhelming in his attack on E to go on with L Binyon poems - E a little moved I thought.
12 April. E to tea with the Colvins - Hope more influence for the great music.
13 April. Mlynarski[21] came to see E. Longed for him to write something for Poland as he did for Belgium.

So Elgar turned back to *For the Fallen* as Alice noted the following day :

14 April. E turned to his beautiful music again, loved it himself. So there is hope.

The second battle of Ypres now began, which saw the introduction of gas by the Germans. By the end of the battle, Ypres had ceased to exist, the mediaeval buildings and famous Cloth Hall destroyed.

25 April. M & Mde Cammaerts in afternoon then Mr. & Mrs. Streatfeild and Laurence Binyon & Mrs B - E turned to his music again and played it to them. All so pleased.

That day the landings on the straits of the Dardanelles began. The following morning Alice and Edward travelled to Stratford, where over five days they saw six plays! Whilst there Elgar ordered his reserve uniform and on 28 May undertook some rifle practice. Back at Severn House Elgar continued with his Binyon settings.

2 May. E turning to his music - played his music to Landon Ronald who was entranced with it.
3 May. E busy with his Binyon music - J Coates came over & sang through it - most impressed &

---

[11] " ... in speed, armour, armament, gunnery and all round efficiency" : from Arthur J Marder : *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* Vol II (Oxford, 1965) p 105

[12] 8 December 1914

[13] 15 May 1915

thought it would be one of his greatest things.
7 May. Horror struck - sinking of the Lusitania - truly German deed.

For Britain, the war news was on two fronts with the battle for the Dardanelles and at Ypres continuing as Elgar worked on *Polonia*[22], the work which had developed from his meeting with Mlynarski. However his military duties also continued to divert him.

23 May. E out for March etc. Came in very hot. M. de Groote to tea & E played his Polonia to him & then the Binyon Poem Music with which he was enthralled. Italy declared war.

The next day Elgar finished *Polonia* and Alice took the score to the publishers, Elkin. Six weeks later on 5 July the first rehearsal took place in the Queen's Hall, and the next evening Alice Stuart Wortley joined the Elgars for the concert.

6 July. Such a wonderful sound, drums like guns. Small audience - badly advertised & managed.

Elgar immediately declared himself unwell, but he was able to respond to Cammaerts who wanted him to begin work on another recitation, this time incorporating a song for mezzo-soprano.

17 July. E took his darling score of Une Voix dans le Desert to be copied at Goodwin & Tabb - new arrangement of Pomp & Circumstance there. E looked at it and said he did not know it. "Not know it?" Indignant surprise. "But there is Land of Hope & Glory" - pointing out where it came. Still E saying he did not know it, more indignation till E said "I wrote it but do not know this arrangement." Horror and surprise of the poor man.

During the first two weeks of August Elgar conducted *Carillon* twice a day at the Coliseum. He tried a run through of *Une Voix dans le Désert* with Agnes Nicholls and Carlo Liten, the Belgian actor. At the beginning of October two performances of *Polonia* took place before large and appreciative audiences, but the advent of winter began and the news of the heavy losses in France began to be felt.

22 October. E vesy bad cold, hard tiresome cough. At last said A might go with him to Bournemouth. Started by 6.15 train.

Alice Stuart Wortley should have been at the concert but was unable to get there. On 24 October Elgar wrote to her : "The concert went off very well - Rain - Sammons played very beautifully and you were desired - missed but scarcely expected - it seemed too difficult. The train journey was horrid - crowded and very hot train down which made me ill. Today I have been nursing and cannot go out tomorrow unless the weather is quite fine and warmer, which seems impossible. I feel dreary and not well but my

---

[14] "The Falklands battle had been fought out in the old style, the last such action between surface ships by gunfire alone... Thereafter, torpedoes, mines, submarines and ...aircraft introduced complications unknown to Sturdee and Spee" Marder, *op cit*, p 123

[15] The publishing of poetry was not confined to Britain. In Germany "several million war poems appeared in newspapers or popular anthologies". See Robert Chickering : *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1998) p 17

[16] Barbara Tuchman : *August 1914* (Macmillan, 1980) p 314

cough is better - I had to take so many jujubes etc etc that my head aches from the sheer force of numbers and remedies. We returned home in the rain and the dark last night and I am desolate".[23]

27 October. E & A went to lunch with W & Sybil Baker at Claridges - very pleasant time - Willie most cheerful and laughed his old delightful laugh at E's sayings.

Elgar returned home to the Binyon settings - his requiem for a lost generation. The contrast with the memories that must have been stirred by his luncheon with W M B, the fourth of the *Enigma Variations* a work of great optimism, would have been obvious.

29 October. E's cold very badsley - Asked Sir Maurice Abbot Anderson to come - He was very nice & kind and said E would be muss better soon.

October ended with the news that steel helmets were being introduced to the British Army. The beginning of November heralded three months of feverish activity for Elgar, banishing ill-health and introspection. On 9th he received a letter from the critic, Robin Legge proposing that he write the music for a Christmas play which was being adapted from Algernon Blackwood's novel, *A Prisoner in Fairyland*. The adaptation, to be called *The Starlight Express*, would be produced at the Kingsway Theatre by the actress Lena Ashwell.[24] Blackwood and Elgar became instant friends, and within a month he had completed 300 pages of score containing over an hour's music. His enthusiasm was uninhibited and Alice's diary shows how *The Starlight Express* became the most important thing in their lives. A brief diversion occurred when another "Variation", a reminder of another time, reappeared.

21 November. Stuart Powell[25] to tea & T Beecham came earlier & had long talk with E in library & came into tea & ate cakes and drank water.

Alice and Edward dined with the Stuart Wortleys at their home in Cheyne Walk on 23rd where Lord Montagu, a cousin of Charles Stuart Wortley, was also a guest.

24 November. E vesy hard at work - to Kingsway Theatre with rehearsal.
25 November. Mr. Blackwood here very early to go through Play with E.
3 December. E to rehearsal at Albert Hall - Kept waiting for Tita Brand so took up a violin and played in orchestra - much delight at this incident.

Later that day Elgar met the soprano Clytie Hine who, with the baritone Charles Mott were the soloists in the play. Alice noted "very delightful singing".

27 December. Accident to A - brought back from Chelsea by kind ladies - A remembers nothing about it - but is told she spoke most politely & behaved with much dignity.

Suddenly the last days of 1915, which had begun with so much promise, turned sour with the accident to Alice and news of the death of Elgar's nephew, William Henry, from pulmonary tuberculosis on 21 December. The nightmare of *The Starlight* production continued unabated :

29 December. First performance of "The Starlight Express" – E. wd not conduct as the mise en scene

---

[17] Moore, *A Creative Life*, p 674

[18] John Hatcher : *Laurence Binyon : Poet, Scholar of East and West* (Clarendon Press, 1995) p 211

[19] *Op cit*, p 198

was so repulsive - & was not even present – Music Wonderful.

To compound his distress over Alice's accident, which kept her in bed for ten days, and the failure of the "Starlight" production, news reached Elgar on 31 December of the loss of the P&O liner, SS Persia, with Lord Montagu on board. On 2 January 1916 he wrote to Alice Stuart Wortley :

What an awful year: I had hoped and now the crowning horror of the P&O. All else seems nothing - our invalid is going on all well but more fidgety at which we are not surprised - the tedium must be very great. I am very sad and nothing goes right. We have had people here - but I was not here - I am somewhere else and am not happy.[26]

Happily Lord Montagu was rescued, and Elgar forgot the poor quality of the "Starlight" production by absorbing himself in the music.

1 January. "Starlight Express" every day - E very often. A in bed.

Laurence Binyon with wounded French soldier, France 1915

The Starlight Express could not survive, as most critics perceived. That from the *Observer* summed up the problem : "Where it would be just humbly telling the audience a story, it is preachy and pretentious. It pretends to be meant for children, but it is canvassing all the while for grown-up sentiment". But *The Times* could not forget the music : "Apart from the charming tunes and the gleams of orchestral colour which one carries away in mind, a great deal which one does not carry away - which one hardly distinguishes - plays its part very subtly and yet very simply. Whosoever is 'wumbled', let him listen to Sir Edward Elgar".[27]

30 January. E felt the ceasing of "The Starlight" very much - so did Mr. Blackwood - indeed all the nice people concerned.

All was not lost, however, even though Elkin felt unable to publish the music. On 25 January The Gramophone Company had proposed to Elgar that he sign a new contract, and as an enticement offered to record four songs sung by Charles Mott, from *The Starlight Express*. But Elgar wanted eight sides, a large undertaking in 1916. On 14 February the Company met his demands. Although he was working flat out on his Binyon settings, he found the time to modify his music for recording purposes, and the records were duly made at Hayes on 18 February.[28] Three days later the Germans began their assault on Verdun, which would continue for the next eighteen months.

---

[20] Moore, *A Creative Life*, p 674

[21] Emil Mlynarski (1870-1935) the Polish conductor who, with Sir Thomas Beecham, was planning a concert for Polish relief.

26 February. Anxious about Verdun and glorious heroic French. E wrote all day finishing his orchestration of his wonderful Binyon music.
29 February. Very busy finishing my work for E's wonderful score - took it to Novello & Starlight parts to Elkin. E to Manchester.

Elgar took the London Symphony Orchestra on a successful tour of the north of England, and on his return went to see some Charlie Chaplin films with Alice.

13 March. Mr. Blackwood came to stay - Starlight Express records came - very exciting hearing them.
26 March. Muriel Foster came & was delighted with Handel Song E arranged for her. Afternoon Mr. & Mrs Charles Mott and Child.
27 March. Nice evening. Just A. Blackwood & souses Mr. Streatfeild came. So kind like a champion wanting to write to that wretched Rootham - so indignant for E.

Streatfeild was indeed a champion, taking it upon himself the role of cushion between the two composers. He was not successful in achieving reconciliation, and Rootham never forgave the senior composer his eventual completion of *For the Fallen*. The consequence of the emotional stress was not long in coming.

8 April. E ready to start for Stoke. Said he felt giddy and was not sure he would go. A in bed and afraid of the cold house - no coke for him, so did not persuade him to give it up - hoping change would do good. A dismayed to hear by telephone from Captain Dill that E was ill in the train and Captain D took him to Oxford & motored him to Acland Nursing home - A told Sir Maurice who gave directions. A telephoned C and she went off to Oxford & sent comforting account. A so mizz.

Weak from being in bed for several days, Elgar conducted the first performance of *To Women* and *For the Fallen* in Leeds on 4 May. *To Women* and *For the Fallen* were overwhelmingly successful when they were performed in London during the first half of May. £2,700 was presented to the Red Cross from the proceeds of the series of concerts.
At last the public could hear Elgar's reaction to his changing world. His response is both angry and sad for the waste, horror and carnage which would destroy the life he knew. Although for England, these pieces are for any country and its dead, and in particular for the countries of the Empire which unquestioningly fell in behind the mother country in 1914. Unfortunately the title of all three settings in *The Spirit of England*, has an implied chauvinism which has inevitably restricted the appeal of the work.

19 May. This afternoon - enormous audience. King & Queen present. King seemed fidgety and unking like in demeanor - they had to catch a train at 4.45 and I could feel E hurrying and feeling the constraint of their want of interest. The King was said to be much affected by For the Fallen but Gerontius was evidently too long for him. They seemed to have no music etc. So different from King Edward.[29]

May gave way to the terrible months of June and July. On the night of 31 May the German High Seas Fleet clashed with The Grand Fleet off Jutland where the superiority of German armour and gunnery was proved in the sinking of three capital ships of the Royal Navy. However it was an inconclusive engagement, with the German fleet turning for home. Alice, staying at Broadway, whilst Elgar was at Stoke, reacted perceptively to the news.

3 June. Terrible shock hearing of naval battle & loss of English ships - but it seemed as if numbers of

[22] An article on this work by Joseph Herter is due to appear in the next issue of the JOURNAL.

Germans had been sunk and they had fled - but still.
4 June. As news came it seemed we had a great Naval Victory - so thankful and might have been spared the first horrid shock.
6 June. In evening the dreadful shock of hearing Kitchener and his staff were lost in the Hampshire. Expect some horrid treason and German murder.

On 8 June compulsion replaced voluntary conscription in Britain. The battle for Verdun continued, and later in the month the Canadians retook lost positions at Ypres and the British Government introduced daylight saving. On 24 June the artillery assault on the German positions to the east of the Somme River began, ceasing at dawn on 1 July after the firing of 1,500,000 shells. The barrage was largely ineffective, and the Germans were able to defend their positions effectively as the French and British launched their great offensive along a front of 25 miles. On the first day British casualties were 60,000. Elgar returned to London at the end of June and then moved down to Ridgehurst, the home of Sir Edward Speyer, before spending a few days at The Hut in early July. By the end of the month he was back at Stoke, from where he sought accommodation for Alice and himself. His restlessness was partially stilled by their holiday together.

1 August. A to Bridgnorth & met E at Arley - both had real excited joy in meeting. He had a garland of clematis and threw it over A's head.

From Arley they travelled to the Lake District and returned home on 21 August:

E hated coming to town but was not well to go out without seeing doctors.
25 August. Sir Maurice found throat wanted doctoring - ordered painting etc.
29 August. To Sir Maurice. Found throat better but needed electric cautery. E bore it so splendidly.

Elgar and Alice went to stay with their old friends, the Berkeleys at Spetchley Park near Worcester, and his health began to improve as autumn approached. Politically, the Government was under increasing pressure as military stalemate continued.

4 December. We are longing for Asquith to go.
12 December. A in bed with a bad cold - all this time immensely excited over new Government. DG Asquith gone and Lloyd George Prime Minister.

Charles Stuart Wortley was ennobled in the New Year's honours list, which was published earlier in those days.[30] On 20 December Elgar wrote to the new peer's wife :

I am out of bed for the first time since Saturday and I use the first minute to send you love and congratulations on the event. I gave you a coronet long ago - the best I had, but you may have forgotten it - now you will have a real one, bless you!... Everything pleasant and promising in my life is dead - I have the happiness of my friends to console me as I had fifty years ago. I feel that life has gone back so far [to] when I was alone and there was no one to stand between me and disaster - health or finance. Now that has come back and I feel more alone and the prey of circumstances than ever before![31]

---

[23] Jerrold Northrop Moore : *The Windflower Letters* (Oxford, 1989) p 155

[24] The complexities of the production and Elgar's substantial contribution to it are covered at length by K E L Simmons in his 'Elgar and the Wonderful Stranger : music for *The Starlight Express*' in Raymond Monk (ed) : *Elgar Studies* (Scolar Press, 1990)

Christmas was quiet, but on Boxing Day Alice and Edward lunched with the Stuart Wortleys at Cheyne Walk before going to the theatre.

26 December. To "Charley's Aunt" - very poor & silly. We had to wait quite fifteen minutes for train in the fog & cold - of course it gave E bad cold.

So 1916 came to an end.

The prospects for 1917 were hardly good as Elgar's poor health began to become the main preoccupation, no matter what diversion Alice organised for him. News of Hans Richter's death on 5 December came through, a reminder of how much he owed to the many Germans or those of German stock who had befriended him such as August Jaeger, Marie Joshua, Hans Richter, Frank Schuster, the Speyers and their daughter Lalla Vandervelde.[32] Jaeger's widow, now calling herself Mrs. Hunter, had visited the Elgars after Christmas and they had given her children presents. Sir Thomas Beecham, in answer to the question "Where have all Elgar's friends gone?" answered, "They are all interned". It was an unkind remark, but it has a bitter truth, and indeed Elgar wrote to Richter's son in law, Sydney Loeb, referring to "my dear old friend."[33]

Although militarily there was stalemate on the Western Front, the success of Germany's most effective assault on Britain - the U-boat campaign against merchant shipping - was reaching crisis point.

3 January. A to lunch with Mrs. Joshua - most kind and pleasant. Mourning really mourning for Richter. Drove A back and insisted on sending fruit and chocolate to E.
23 January. Mr. Embleton came to tea & had talk over May projected week of performances & urged E to have 3rd part of Apostles ready for him for March year & 3rd part of Spirit of England for this March - wish he might.

But Elgar was lost :

26 January: E & A at M. de Navarro's Savoy Hotel - E played some Bach music to her & his lovely fragment of piano concerto over and over again.

On 31 January Germany declared to all neutral countries unrestricted naval warfare within the war zone.

2 February. Diplomatic relations between America & Germany broken off at last.
7 February. Ina Lowther came to lay the Chelsea Ballet idea before E.

Instantly Elgar's imagination was stimulated by the idea of a ballet based on a 'Fan in Sanguine' by the Australian artist Charles Conder (1868-1909) who was once a member of Binyon's circle. But first there was news of the death of another 'variation' to accept, a link with a happier past.

9 February. Shocked to read in paper Dr. Sinclair died suddenly - so glad E has his new music to occupy his thoughts. Ina Lowther here to talk over Ballet.
12 February. Thinking much of our friend George Sinclair. The funeral this day - E keeps G's last letter in front of him on writing table & thinks much of him.

---

[25] H D S-P, subject of Variation II of the *Enigma Variations*

[26] Moore, Windflower Letters, p 159

On 19th Elgar began to orchestrate *The Sanguine Fan* Ballet on which task he was engaged when he heard of the death of his Uncle Henry a week later. His next preoccupation was with the setting of four poems by Rudyard Kipling, which had been published as part of a collection entitled *The Fringes of the Fleet* in early 1915. Potentially the Elgar Kipling combination was a heady one, but matters did not run as they might have done a few years earlier. The poet's son Jack had been had reported missing at the Battle of Loos in October 1915, and Kipling was reluctant for poems, which no longer matched his mood, to be set to music. His world had changed even more than Elgar's had as he turned his pen on those he felt were partially responsible for his loss and to 'hating condemnation of the enemy'[34] :

My Son was killed laughing at some jest
I would I knew
What it was, and it might serve me in a time when
jests are few.

And

If any question why we died
Tell them, because our fathers lied.

It was in his *The Irish Guards in Wartime* and the poem *Have you any news of my boy Jack?* that Kipling attempted to come to terms with his loss. He was therefore happy to allow Edward German to make a setting of *My Boy Jack* for Clara Butt who first performed it at a 1917 Royal Philharmonic Concert. The first rehearsal of the *Sanguine Fan* took place on 12 March and two days later Alice and Edward travelled to Worcester for a concert in the Cathedral at which he was to conduct *For the Fallen*.[35] As they travelled home the next day, momentous news greeted them:

13 March. E & A left at 9 train - startling news on opening paper at station: Revolution in Russia & Czar deposed.

Alice then added, somewhat surprisingly :

May it have all success.

Back in London *The Sanguine Fan* took over their lives in advance of the performance on 20 March. As spring became a reality, British air superiority on the Western Front was unable to contribute to the hoped for breakthrough. The disastrous offensive by the French under General Nivelle against the Chemin des Dames ridge above the River Aisne resulted in a large-scale mutiny in the French army. At one stage there were barely any combat troops in the front line. General Ludendorff, now responsible for German strategy in the west, only heard of his opportunity after General Pétain had replaced Nivelle and restored order. Ludendorff, after success on the eastern front against Russia, assisted the process of revolution there by helping Lenin's return to Russia in April 1917. He was able to transfer troops from the eastern to the western fronts, gambling on victory before the full effect of American intervention could be decisive.

On 2 April President Wilson asked Congress to declare a state of war with Germany, and four days later

---

[27] Moore, A Creative Life, p 694

[28] Full details of these sessions and other wartime recordings are covered by Jerrold Northrop Moore in his *Elgar on Record* (Oxford, 1974)

the declaration was made. Conscription was introduced immediately, and America went to war with that enthusiasm with which it embraces anything new. At home the U-boat campaign had imposed further restrictions on food, and Elgar could now see his enemy clearly :

11 March. E turning towards "The Spirit of England"
11 May. E finished orchestrating "Spirit of England"
14 May. A to Novello with precious score of "4th August"

Elgar had found the missing key in the Demon's Chorus from *The Dream of Gerontius* and he was able to complete *The Fourth of August*, as the words had their music at last :

She fights the fraud that feeds desire on
lies, in a lust to enslave or kill,
The barren creed of blood and iron,
Vampire of Europe's wasted will.

The final and least satisfactory Cammaerts setting, *Le Drapeau Belge* was performed at the Queen's Hall on 14 April, but more importantly Kipling had given his reluctant approval to the setting of his poems, and Elgar now turned to their orchestration. He still found time to visit Stoke, whilst in another direction Alice had found what she had been seeking for some time :

2 May. A & C to Fittleworth to see a cottage - lovely place, set in a lovely wood & heard a nightingale, turtle doves - saw lizards and heard cuckoo. Lovely hot day. A much perplexed as cottage is so very cottagy but large studio & lovely view & woods - dear place finally took it for June.

The Fringes of the Fleet were signed for a run of performances at the Coliseum as part of a wartime variety. Charles Mott again agreed to sing for Elgar and to take the lead in the production. The songs were to be sung outside a pub in an imaginary fishing village "in", as Elgar wrote, "a broad salt-water style".

Elgar took to the Sussex cottage, Brinkwells, immediately where the weather was glorious. With Alice they spent the time gardening, sightseeing and walking. Their tranquillity was only spoilt by the possibility of Charles Mott's imminent call up, which would prevent him from performing at the Coliseum, and their need to commute regularly to London.

5 June. Rehearsing at Enoch's - crowd in street begins to hum and whistle the tunes.
7 June. E away all day - going to Harwich for kit from ships for performance.

There were two weeks of matinees and evening performances. Alice basked in the first night atmosphere :

3 July. E had a tremendous ovation at Coliseum at night. Applause would not stop, he and the others had left after many appearances, but they had to return and stand on the next turn's stage.

The success of the *Fringes* ensured that performances were extended into the summer. Elgar was able to enjoy their popularity despite the unlikely figure he cut as a music hall artist. On 4 July four gramophone records were made of the songs under Elgar's direction, and on 27th the four singers travelled to Hayes alone to record the part-song setting of Gilbert Parker's *Inside the Bar*, which had been added to the show. George Parker replaced Charles Mott for a provincial tour, but before it

[29] Clara Butt, Maurice D'Oisley and Charles Mott were the soloists in *The Dream of Gerontius*.

commenced Alice recorded a touching ceremony on the stage of the Coliseum, following a tea party given by Alice Stuart of Wortley.

27 July. E & A walked around after [the] tea party & found a little silver ship for E to give Mott - at 5.40, tea party to[sic] E on stage. Very nicely arranged, Ladies Orch. gave it & a silver inkstand to E. A head lady spoke charmingly - pure hero worship. The lady said: "If Lady Elgar does not mind my saying so we all love him".

As the summer continued the demands of touring began to impose on Elgar as the year drew to a close and the war news grew worse. At the end of September they travelled to Chatham.

24 September. Wretched station - E walked - A drove with luggage. E rehearsed then lunch. E to theatre almost immediately lights went out, a raid - A sat in hall & watched for E feared he would be quite exhausted & at last was able to send him some sandwiches - no performance could take place. Fearful noise more or less all night.

There was a raid the next night, but the next day all was quiet for two performances. They returned to London and another air raid and escaped to Stoke for a few days. On their return to Hampstead Elgar would have found the following letter awaiting him from a serving officer in Flanders : "Although unknown to you, I feel I must write to you tonight. We possess a fairly good gramophone in our mess, and I have bought your record 'Starlight Express' : 'Hearts must be soft-shiny dressed'. It is being played for the twelfth time over. The Gramophone was anathema to me before this war because it was abused so much.

"But all is changed now, and it is the only means of bringing back to us the days that are gone, and helping on through the Ivory gate that leads to fairy-land or heaven whatever one likes to call it. Music is all that we have to help us carry on".[36]

Further performance of the *Fringes* followed before Alice and Edward travelled to Leeds to hear *The Fourth of August* for the first time on 31 October, with Agnes Nicholls as soloist. On 8 November the Bolsheviks deposed Kerenski in Petrograd and immediately sued for peace with the Germans, who would now be able to concentrate the bulk of their resources on the Western Front. Elgar was not well when he attended concerts at the Albert Hall later in the month.

23 November. E raser better. Had to wait while Stanford did his common songs & a dreadful new one.[37] Then the great music began - E looked like the high priest of art - The Spirit of England is great, wonderful music.

24 November. To Albert Hall at 3. Large audience who seemed held - A Nicholls gave a beautiful rendering of For the Fallen.

Agnes Nicholls was the soloist for *The Fourth of August* and *For the Fallen* and Gervase Elwes for *To Women*[38]. Three days later Elgar wrote to Alice Stuart of Wortley :

I am not well alas. It was lovely to see you on Sunday. Are you coming to the Fringes - The funeral this week. so sad.[39]

---

[30] He was a Privy Councillor and Member of Parliament for Sheffield.

[31] Moore, *Windflower Letters*, p 172

[32] Lalla Vandervelde was also the wife of the Belgian Socialist Emile Vandervelde who was a member of the Belgian Government throughout the war. She took part in a number of recitations of *Carillon*.

Kipling had withdrawn his consent for the *Fringes of the Fleet* and their "funeral" was to be held at the Coliseum for one last week. Elgar went there feeling more and more wretched as the week progressed.

1 December (Saturday). E & A to Coliseum in car. E still very unwell - short walk - last of these long evenings till nearly 10.30 but E got through DG.

News of the successful advance at Cambrai during early December failed to revive his spirits and Alice records little now except for the news that Elgar was unwell most days and that Sir Maurice Abbott Anderson visited frequently. From the 12 to 21 December there are no diary entries at all, and when Alice took up her pen again it was much of the same.

29 December. Sir Maurice brought Dr Hale White to see E. They decided, such a merciful relief, that [there] was no organic trouble - urged smoking, golf, change &c&c.

That day Elgar added a postscript to a letter his Alice wrote to Alice Stuart of Wortley : "The doctors say nothing the matter : but I am not well".[40]

31 December. Deep thankfulness for much of this year. Still spared to one another. Success of "Fringes" – can only pray E be better soon and that a victorious peace may come.

1918, as General Ludendorff realised, would be crucial in achieving a German victory in the west, by diverting troops from the east, now that Russia was out of the war. It was essential to achieve a quick victory, before the fresh American troops were deployed effectively. Ludendorff's strategy was to drive a wedge between the British and French armies. For Alice and Edward the New Year was no better, and on 29 January Elgar was fitted with a belt for a dropped stomach which had been diagnosed earlier in the month. In February Alice attempted the stimulus of theatre trips and visits by musicians with little effect. Occasional flashes of Elgarian humour did appear though :

7 March. E to Caledonian Market with Lalla – saw wounded officer and E gave him his arm to Devonshire Place, he nearly fell flat when E told him who he was!

Four days later, following a consultation with Sir Maurice Abbot Anderson, Elgar agreed to have an operation.

14 March. To nursing Home in Dorset Square for operation next day.
15 March. Showed A the worst tonsil all over abscess matter & a black stone, pea size, in it... E in great pain not knowing how to bear it.
16 March. Doctors satisfied – Dreadful pain.
19 March. E a little easier. AS of W to see him – E very depressed and annihilating things.
27 March. Preparing to leave Dorset Square – car was late E was very worried waiting. He was peased to be home & loved everything – very anxious time. Battle impending.

As the German Army smashed into the British right flank south of Arras, Elgar relaxed at home and, for the first time since he completed *The Fringes of the Fleet* the previous June, wrote some music. This was the first subject of what would become part of the first movement of the Cello Concerto.

---

[33] Christopher Fifield : *True Artist and True Friend : a biography of Hans Richter* (Clarendon Press, 1993) p 456

[34] Angus Wilson : *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling* (Pimlico, 1977) p 305

By 5 April Ludendorff had achieved an advance of 40 miles, the greatest on the western Front since November 1914. However he had extended his supply lines to breaking point, which gave the hardened British third army time to regroup. Ludendorff broke off the attack and moved north to Flanders where, on 9 April he launched the Lys offensive against the First and Second British Armies, the assault lasting until the end of the month. Field Marshall Haig with no reserves issued his famous order : "There must be no retirement. With our back to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each one must fight on to the end".

The German advance was halted after 10 miles, with substantial losses being suffered on both sides, in particular to the cream of the German Army. However, as the British Army was fighting for its existence the country was transfixed by the notorious 'Billing Case'. The dancer Maud Allen, following her private performance of *Salomé* in Wilde's play, sued Noel Pemberton Billing, the independent MP, for libellous comments in his magazine *The Vigilante*[41]. At times of crisis, sex and scandalous suggestions of treachery in high places have never failed to divert the public, and diverted they were. Elgar was probably too unwell to take much interest, but gradually the good days began to outnumber the bad. As his health improved a stay at the Hut, the home of Frank Schuster, was recommended; provided the authorities would allow sufficient petrol for the journey to Bray.

11 April. E slightly better. A busy with preparations. To Petrol Control everybody very polite & had full permission for Sir Maurice to drive E.
12 April. Lovely day - warm & sunny - Sir Maurice sent his car for E. early & they had a nice drive & E. showed Sir M. The Hut & the garden wh. pleased him very much - A. by 2.20, slow oh! slow train - but country so lovely White blossoms, fresh green, lambs &c - Met E. who came to look for A. near Hut - Strolled & strolled in lovely evening thought spring had come.

Elgar began an occasional diary, where his factual notes contrast with the more elaborate entries of Alice :

12 April. Beautiful day. Sir Maurice motored me to the Hut. Alice arrived by train.

Elgar stayed at The Hut until 25 April before being driven home, but whilst there was not immune from war news, as his diary records.

17 April. River very high. Bad news Bailleul etc. Cheque £42 from Gramophone.

There was very heavy fighting on the Bailleul-Wulverghem line, where continued German attacks put the British and American front line under intense pressure. The Allies responded to Ludendorff's success by appointing General Foch C in C Allied forces in France: the need for effective co-ordination had never been more vital. For Alice, the prospect of taking her husband away at last became a reality as she prepared to spend the summer at Brinkwells. Carice recalled the time vividly :

Mother was meanwhile arranging for the move to Brinkwells for recuperation. She had to think what would be wanted in the country, as there was a scarcity of furniture and comforts there, and also the business of shutting up Severn House safely. Father's only contribution to all this was choosing tools which he would need for the woodwork he did and the repairs and small improvements made.[42]

---

[35] For a vivid description of this concert see E Wulstan Atkins : *The Elgar- Atkins Friendship* (David & Charles, 1984) p 282

24 April. Frightfully anxious for our dear Army - wonderful day - hot as summer - E's throat muss better.

He really was better :

25 April. E began delightful Quartet. A remote lovely 1st subject - may he soon finish it.

Elgar's diary entries record the move to Sussex :

1 May. Bought map of Brinkwells - prepared for journey tomorrow.
2 May. Alice drove from Fittleworth station to cottage. Carice & I walked. Navy Boots a great joy for wet woods.

They were there for much of the remainder of the war, where a southerly wind brought the occasional sound of guns from the Western Front. Occasional visits to London and a visit to the Hut were the exception, as Brinkwells became the cradle for the last great creative spell of Elgar's life. It was to see the composition of the three chamber works and his final work for the war, *Big Steamers*, a setting of a poem by Kipling. "Anything for the cause" was Elgar's reply when Alice commented on his generosity of spirit in making another Kipling setting.

20 August. Wrote some music.

It was another glorious day, and the Elgars had been joined by Sir Sidney and Frances Colvin. Elgar's curt diary entry records the beginning of the Violin Sonata which even the sensitive Alice failed to note. Four days later though, she wrote :

24 August. E writing wonderful new music, different from anything else of his. A calls it wood magic. So elusive and delicate.

6 September. The sonata was vibrating through his very being - He wrote and offered dedication to Mrs. Joshua.

With that dedication to a German by birth, perhaps Elgar was sub-consciously declaring his feelings on the four years of carnage and destruction that had achieved nothing. Marie Joshua had befriended the Elgars after Hans Richter had introduced her to them. Elgar had written to her earlier in June : "I think over all the great days with Richter while I am working with the hoe or plane and little of the actual manual labour, and I regret that such hours can never come again; your letters tell me that you live on the past glorious art life sometimes; but happily for you, you have so many interests in the present".[43]

At Brinkwells the same could be said for the composer. He was able to turn his back on the war now, and a country summer could be enjoyed to the full, and music once more flowed from his pen. The Germans had successfully advanced to the Marne again, as the May offensive swept aside the British and French armies, but cracks were beginning to appear in their forces, and German deserters gave sufficient information to enable the Allies to be ready for Ludendorff's fourth offensive at Noyen-Mondidier in June. In mid July, at the second Battle of the Marne, Ludendorff admitted defeat as allied aircraft and artillery destroyed his supply lines. On 8 August Haig launched the Amiens offensive on a 14-mile front, which resulted in a German withdrawal. Ludendorff called it the black day of the German Army, and he now knew there was no hope of victory. Soon the German collapse was rapid, and the final rout of the Imperial Army became a magnificent testimony to the British and Empire soldiers who held together and saved France. Marshall Foch paid this tribute : "Never at any time in history has the British Army achieved greater results in attack than in this unbroken offensive lasting 116 days from 18 July to

11 November".

Although mainly at Brinkwells for the remainder of 1918, Alice and Edward had to return to London on 11 October for an operation to remove a cyst from Alice's forehead. Elgar was therefore able to attend the funeral of Sir Hubert Parry on 16th and was still in London for the final tense days of the war and at Severn House for the morning of 11 November. Despite the excitement, Elgar could not wait to return to the country, where the essentials of life continued, as his diary records :

11 November. Armistice – ran up Flag. Car to Victoria. A & E to Fittleworth 1.36. Flags. Lalla at Victoria. Threshing barley at Brinkwells.

Alice was more expansive :

11 November. E & A heard Armistice was signed, Muriel telephoned. E put up our Flag, it looked gorgeous – Crowds out & all rejoicing. D.G. for preservation & Victory. E & A to Brinkwells – Lalla came to train at Victoria - C. tried too but just missed & went to Coliseum where 'Land of Hope & Glory' was sung twice the 2nd time the words of refrain were thrown on the screen & people stood & joined in – Very exciting & moving -

Life began to take on its usual pattern again, but Alice remained aware of the political changes occurring in Europe and her husband's mood for composing.

12 November. Very bright & cold – E. beginning to work – A. unpacking &c. Very exciting paper. New republics – Gn rejoicing in London, much Hope & Glory being sung.
12 November. Tidying up, unpacking at Brinkwells. Lovely day – Threshing machine ploughed up lawn. Put up Flag.

* * *

In his final diary entry of the war Elgar does not mention his work, but the next day he concentrated on his quartet. He could look forward once again. At last the war was history, and some sort of stock could be taken. Elgar's apparently undemonstrative approach to the fighting is countered in music such as *Carillon*, *Une Voix dans le Désert* and *The Spirit of England*. However with the exception of *The Starlight Express* only a little music of lasting value came out of the four years of conflict and some of this became controversial or is relatively slight. At the beginning of the war, when it mattered, Elgar wrote some pertinent music, but as the war changed so the demand for something profound changed too. He did not write 'war music'; he wrote music of the war, such as the three recitations and *The Fringes of the Fleet*. Elgar's inability to see a way to complete *The Fourth of August* until 1917 says much about his feelings. Furthermore the time he took to complete *For the Fallen* cannot just be laid at the feet of Cyril Rootham, although Elgar's sensitivity (and natural courtesy) meant that he was not able to brush aside the interest

[36] Moore, *A Creative Life*, p 694

[37] *Songs of the Fleet* and *A Carol of Bells*.

[38] Charles A Hooey : 'Spirit Insights' in *Elgar Society Journal*, Vol 9 no 6

of Rootham, as Verdi was able to do in similar circumstances.[45] Matters would have been further complicated if Ivor Gurney had completed his setting of *For the Fallen* which he began whilst serving at the front in 1917.[46]

In addition to the millions slaughtered, it became obvious the war had been a great disappointment militarily in its failure to produce a clear victory. Sir Julian Corbett (joint author of the official Naval Operations) felt that the two really successful operations in the whole war were the Falklands action and Allenby's campaign in Palestine.[47] To these might be added the five months stand and counter attack of the British Army in 1918. All the same the fighting staggered to a conclusion, and Armistice Day therefore challenged the artist to express the emotion of the hour. Relief and joy that the war had ended were the main sentiments and Elgar, like many others, felt unable to write something for the peace. Laurence Binyon sent Elgar a draft of his 'Peace' Ode, to which Elgar replied : "I do not feel drawn to write peace music somehow - I thought long months ago that I could feel that way & if anything could draw me your poem would, but the whole atmosphere is too full of complexities for me to feel music to it."[48]

It is also perhaps a relief that he did not attempt a celebration of victory, for we only have to remind ourselves of equivalent contributions (Haydn's *Nelson Mass* excepted) to appreciate that such works only have a short currency as their place in the repertoire quickly becomes anachronistic or even embarrassing.[49] If there were few musical masterpieces composed from a British perspective, the First World War nurtured the creation of some fine poetry, literature and paintings which have stood the test of time, but it is also the photographs and film, with their colourless skies, that add to our understanding. America's tragic civil conflict fifty years before had pointed the way, and at last we can perceive, through photographs, the nature of war in death, in humour, in survival and occasionally in its grandeur. But this medium only served to bring the conflict nearer: into the home, revealing it to be bigger than any anticipated experience. Elgar had to cope, like his contemporaries, with the difficulties of living during an unnatural time.

But there was more to it than that. Elgar had also to come to terms with the sudden abnormalities of the war, which produced inevitable anti-German propaganda from the start of the war when attempts were made to ban German music and musicians of German origin. As an artist he would have tried to put his creative gift above the conflict. Early on in the war, the writing was on the wall with the cancellation of Strauss' *Don Juan* which was to be part of a promenade concert on 15 August. Elgar may well have found ridiculous the efforts of the composer Joseph Holbrooke, who was at the forefront of The All-English concerts and the No-German concerts in the spring of 1915, and he could also have been aware of the suppression of D H Lawrence's *The Rainbow*. Officially, this was because of its denunciation of war, although ostensibly the action was brought on the grounds of obscenity.[50] The thinking of many at the time was demonstrated by writers such as J C Squire in the *New Statesman*, who suggested that Lawrence might be "under the spell of German psychologists". Lawrence's German wife hardly did his case much good either. Elgar's recorded comments on the war and the course of the war are few, his letter to Frank Schuster of August 1914 being the most obvious. Perhaps his only overtly 'anti-German' statement is the 'Gerontius' excerpt in *The Fourth of August*. It is equally possible to take a more objective view, as Elgar surely did when shortly after the end of the war he was to make friendly overtures to Richard Strauss.[51] Perhaps this is as it should be, Elgar the creative artist reaching out over conflict and political barriers.

We can see that it is Elgar's operation in early 1918 that seems to have been the catharsis which enabled

[39] Moore, *Windflower Letters*, p 195

[40] Moore, *op cit*, p 196

his creative impulse to be stimulated anew. Then the war news was hardly conducive to good health or as a stimulant to artistic endeavour, for the German assault in the west was then going Germany's way. At the time, as throughout the war, Elgar does not seem to have seen himself as the vehicle for expressing patriotism at a time when several 'Land of Hope and Glories' might have been expected. The completed *The Spirit of England* took too long to complete to have the sort of impact which Binyon's poems had made originally. By the time the work was at last performed complete in late 1917 the opportunity for its acceptance as a centrepiece for war concerts had been lessened. Demands for frequent performance, as with *Carillon*, were neither made nor could then be justified, even though Elgar's instinctive reaction to Binyon's poems was sound. *For the Fallen* became the finest example of their mutual "heroic melancholy" emphasised by Binyon's coincidental echo of a line from the great lament from *Caractacus*, "O my warriors" in a verse in *For the Fallen*. "And the God shall give you heeding/ And across the heav'nly plain…" and "As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust/ Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain".

Although *For the Fallen* (through its one oft quoted fourth verse) remained in the mind of the public, Binyon's other poems and Elgar's music slowly faded from view, as the war became a memory, until a rekindling of interest took place 50 or more years later. The audience for both had changed, and the 'heroic melancholy' of both Binyon and Elgar became out of place in the post war years in such works as *Arthur*, for which Elgar wrote the incidental music, but which only served to emphasise the unsympathetic climate of opinion.[52] A gulf had opened up between those who could not go to war and those who could. Neither Binyon nor Elgar were combatants so could not express their feelings about the war in general and the horror of the Western Front from first hand experience. In 1914 Binyon possessed the ability to perceive the heroism, self-sacrifice and loyalty of the individual fighting for his country in a way that was ahead of his time. However he had to come to terms with an unprecedented change in warfare and the fact that the consequences of this war were to be felt in every home in the country. How could he have represented the war after Loos, the Somme, and Passchendaele and how could Elgar, another non-combatant, set the same sentiments to music? Binyon's service in France provided the inspiration for his fine poem *Fetching the wounded*, but there is a detachment about it that only emphasises Binyon's difficulty.

It took more than 40 years for the voice of the Western Front to find its comprehending partner in a work with a pacifist message, Britten's *War Requiem*. Britten, born in 1913 and therefore a generation younger than those who fought, could at last see how to combine the words of Wilfred Owen in a musical context. W B Yeats, in his introduction to the 1936 edition of *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, wrote that he was not including any poems by Owen because "passive suffering is not a theme for poetry". The achievement of Binyon and Elgar in finding a voice in *The Spirit of England* in a changing and rapidly darkening world is shown to be all the more remarkable in comparison.

The Fringes of the Fleet, another work born and sustained in controversy, is patriotic in a quiet domestic way, reflecting the heroism of the little man 'doing his bit' for the war. The poem *Submarines* is the exception, but it is neither heroic nor optimistic. Despite Elgar's obvious affection for the poems, he may well have had some sympathy with Kipling's reluctance to allow them to be paraded as part of a revue, for he would have known of the poet's grief. He may have found it difficult to accept Kipling's strong and continuous anti-German rhetoric, but he was later happy to nominate him for membership of The Beefsteak Club.

Elgar's substantial music 'for the cause' remains the three Belgian recitations and two works which

[41] Maud Allen was the influence behind the dancing style of Ina Lowther.

became controversial : *The Spirit of England* and *The Fringes of the Fleet*. This is hardly the result which might have been expected from the country's composer laureate in 1914. *Polonia* (brilliantly orchestrated) is largely the reworking of other material and was composed for a country on the Eastern Front, at a time when eyes at home were concentrated on the front in France. It was in a score which had nothing to do with the war, *The Starlight Express*, that Elgar became most absorbed. Here was an enormous score (his largest since the Second Symphony) which absorbed him completely; everything else was brushed aside to meet deadlines and the opening night. Even this music was controversial, for the composer Clive Carey had originally been asked to write the music, and before going to the front had produced versions of the Organ Grinder's songs. Carey was deeply offended at being ignored, but it is unlikely that Elgar knew of his interest.[53]

With the exception of *The Spirit of England*, Elgar composed and completed most of his scores during the war quickly and happily. He may have been happy working, but the initial idea for composition was rarely his, and inspiration only came when others showed him the way. With inspiration from within frustrated it is possible to see his moves to involve himself in the Special Constabulary and Hampstead Volunteer Reserve as an attempt to do something for the war other than compose. He was not alone, as Samuel Hynes has shown: "…it is striking how few of the great Edwardians had found an adequate wartime voice". He goes on to point out how Bridges, Kipling, Galsworthy, Conrad, James, Masefield[54] and Hardy "lapsed into virtual silence" particularly during the pivotal year of 1916.[55] They, like Elgar, had to come to terms with the way war had changed and to face the impossibility of reflecting the sentiment and reality shown by Philip Gibbs in the excerpt quoted earlier[56]. Hynes refers to "the voluble" Shaw in the same context, although Shaw's "virtual silence" is more a creative than a literal position. Shaw, who was to become Elgar's great friend, took advantage of his renown to put across his views. It is worth looking at how he did this, bearing in mind the difficulty the introspective Elgar had in finding his voice. From the beginning of hostilities Shaw spoke out against the war, condemning both sides for their failure to resolve their differences. In a letter to his German translator, he wrote: "I believe that the mass of the nation feels about the war very much as you and I do, that is, they feel it to be a frightful failure of civilization that there should be a war at all between civilized western powers".[57]

Shaw set out his views in his pamphlet, *Common Sense about the War* and used his eminence to get away with much including exhorting soldiers on both sides to "Shoot their officers and go home".[58] Excoriated early on, his philosophy that "one thing is to set to work immediately to draft the inevitable Treaty of Peace which we must all sign when we have had our bellyful of murder and destruction"[59] began to be tolerated as the years went by. The Elgars, like any of their fellow countrymen, would have been shocked by the unprecedented loss of life, firstly in the first few months of the war, then at Loos in the autumn of 1915. But the losses on the Somme exceeded these campaigns the following summer, and Shaw and his message no longer seemed anachronistic.

However Shaw had changed too, and his energies began to be utilised more effectively. Shrewdly the authorities invited him to visit the front line, which inevitably made a deep impression upon him. Lytton Strachey gives us a memorable picture of Shaw in full flight, dominating his audience as he dominated the stage. "…And a large audience eager for a pacifist oration and all that's most advanced - and poor dear Mr Shaw talking about 'England' with trembling lips and gleaming eyes and declaring that his one wish that we should first beat the Germans, and then fight them again and then beat them again and again, and again! He was more like a nice old-fashioned admiral on a quarterdeck than anything else".[60] Nevertheless with all this concentrated energy and campaigning Shaw's time for writing was compromised, with the result that *Heartbreak House* was the only play he wrote during the war.[61]

---

[42] Moore, *A Creative Life*, p 718

The challenge was great, if not impossible. It became apparent that only those who had seen and experienced the war would be able to 'tell'. Blunden, Gurney, Paul Nash, Owen, Rosenberg, Sassoon, and Vaughan Williams: they 'knew' what Elgar could never know, but may have instinctively felt. To tell of the *Fringes of the Fleet* was not difficult; to tell of the unimaginable slaughter of the Somme was unrealisable. After the war those of Elgar's generation, those to old to fight, had to face the resentment of those that had fought. T E Lawrence expressed this clearly : "The old men came out again and took our victory to remake in the likeness of the former world they knew. Youth could win, but had not learned to keep : and was pitiably weak against age. We stammered that we had worked for a new heaven and a new earth, and they thanked us kindly and made their peace".[62]

Some, like Sir Edwin Lutyens, managed to bestride the pre- and post-war climates with success, which was achieved to some extent by official patronage, as architect to the Imperial War Graves Commission for which he designed military cemeteries and the cenotaph in Whitehall.[63] Lutyens also stayed in touch with the world that had nurtured his genius, and his feeling for the needs of a small community is demonstrated in the war memorial he designed for Mells in Somerset, which is illustrated opposite.

As the war dragged on, Elgar's ill health increasingly dominated his life and it seems he could only be cured by an operation that would demonstrate that no malignancy existed. A benefit of this personal crisis was that few commitments then existed in the future. There were no conducting demands or commissions to fulfill with the need to interpret what had become impossible and unimaginable. Perhaps it was inevitable that Elgar was restored to his true legacy and began to write abstract music again. Well, and at peace with himself, the creative flame burned vigorously and exceptionally.

Paradoxically Elgar was now writing in a way that might have been attractive to post-war society. His fate was not that his music did not fit or was even out of date, but that he was seen as a part of that society which was partially responsible for the war. As such, Elgar's music came to be rejected by a generation that would soon want to hear Walton's *Façade*[64], or other works that did not look backwards to a pre-war artistic climate. Post-war society did not want a concerto from those they saw had allowed the war to happen, but did not participate in the suffering or carnage. We can see that Elgar's unease during this time would have counted for nothing. Time alone would bridge the gap and turn the avant-garde of one generation into the establishment of the next. We have come to see the death of Alice Elgar in April 1920 as the temporary blanking out of Elgar's creative process, but that is only part of the story.

To meet the hour was impossible, but in his own way he did provide a mixture in his music which went some way to satisfying the wide demands of an equally uncertain and confused public. More widely his music had the power to inspire, sustain and heal as it does today. Frank Schuster realised this when he wrote about the A flat Symphony to Elgar, following the loss of a friend :

As long as I have it I can bear my losses, although I thought when I went into the hall today that I couldn't. I felt then as I never have but as you, I fear, sometimes do – that life was not worth living & I would not be sorry to lose it. Then came your symphony – and in a moment I knew I was wrong. In it is all love – and love makes life possible. I wonder if you realise when you feel despondent & embittered what your music means to me – and therefore to countless others…surely it must be *something* to you to know you are giving happiness & hope & consolation to your fellow creatures?[65]

[43] Moore, *op cit*, p 719

"If any man were to draw the picture of these things or to tell them more nakedly than I have told them . . . no man or woman would dare to speak again of war's 'glory', or of 'the splendour of war', or any of those old lying phrases which hide the dreadful truth".[44]

[44] Philip Gibbs : *The Battles of the Somme* (London, 1917)

[45] In 1844 the composer Francesco Cannetti begged Verdi to refrain from continuing the composition of *I due Foscari* which he was also composing. Verdi, physically and mentally tough, had overcome the death of his first wife and their two children by the age of 30, and was not a character to be diverted from a determined, and contracted, course. See Mary Jane Phillips-Matz : *Verdi* (Oxford, 1993) p 169

[46] Hatcher, *op cit*, p 197

[47] Quoted in Marder, *op cit*, Vol II, p 124

[48] Quoted in Hatcher, *op cit*, who also says that "'Peace' falls far short of 'For the Fallen', lacking its tragic dimension [and] the elegiac lyricism Binyon shared with Elgar" (p 211). The letter to Binyon can also be found in Moore, *Letters of a Lifetime*, p 320

[49] The *Triumphlied* composed by Brahms after the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, and *Song of Thanksgiving* of 1945 by Vaughan Williams are but two illustrations, although the *Stalin Cantata* by Khachaturian with the words "Great leader for all eternity... you bring happiness to the world", must be the work with the shortest currency!

[50] Although see (below) the attitude to the more powerful figure of G B Shaw

[51] In August 1920 Elgar wrote to Sir Adrian Boult who was on a conducting tour of Austria and Germany asking him to "give my warm greetings to Strauss... you can assure him of my continued admiration &, if he will, friendship" (from *Music & Friends : Letters to Sir Adrian Boult*, edited by Jerrold Northrop Moore (Hamish Hamilton, 1979) p 45

[52] Binyon considered the "glorious" opening night of *Arthur* at the Old Vic, with Elgar in the pit, "as one of the highpoints of his career". It ran for ten nights, but was not revived. Hatcher comments on the elegiac mood and "a language bleakly beyond emotion" even when Arthur confronts the adulterous Guinevere (*op cit*, p 224)

[53] Simmons, *op cit,* p 156

[54] Masefield (1878-1967), like Vaughan Williams volunteered as a medical orderly and was sent to France in early 1915. He spent much of the war campaigning to create a mobile hospital and was asked to write an account of the Somme campaign.

[55] Samuel Hynes : *A War Imagined* (Bodley Head, 1990) p 103

[56] This problem was not confined to Britain. Chickering (p 138) makes the point that in Germany "composers produced few remarkable pieces, with the exception of the Variations for Orchestra by Max Reger, Richard Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and Heinz Pfitzner's *Palestrina*" In fact Strauss spent much of the war hidden away in Garmisch working on *Die Frau...*, the substantial revision of *Ariadne auf Naxos* and completing the *Alpensinfonie* in early 1915.

[57] Michael Holroyd : *Bernard Shaw*, Vol II (Chatto & Windus,1989) p351

[58] *Op cit*, p 358

[59] *Op cit*, p 347

[60] Michael Holroyd : *Lytton Strachey* (Penguin, 1971) p 612

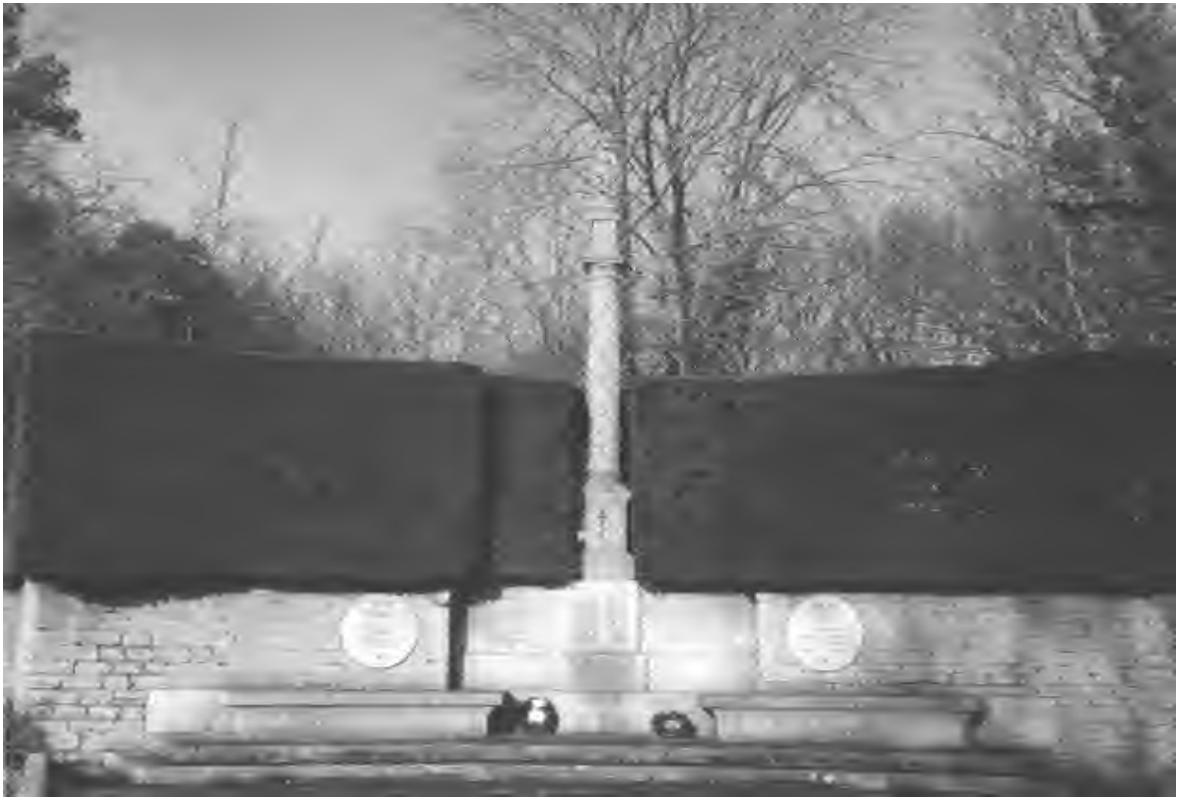
[61] Shaw advised Elgar that *Heartbreak House* was "by far the most musical work" he had written. It is about the war but the war is never mentioned, although a Zeppelin raid occurs at the end. Shaw based the eccentric character of Captain Shotover on Commander Pocock the father of Lena Ashwell, the producer of *The Starlight Express*. See Michael Holroyd : *Bernard Shaw*, Vol III (Chatto & Windus, 1991) Chapter 1.

[62] From the suppressed introductory chapter to *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

[63] Elgar's reworking of *For the Fallen* as *With Proud Thanksgiving* was specifically for the unveiling of Lutyens' Cenotaph on 11 November 1920. It was not performed at the ceremony and had to wait until 7 May 1921 for its first performance. See Foreword to Elgar Complete Edition Volume 10 (Novello, 1986), which also gives details of the various versions of *With Proud Thanksgiving*.

[64] First performed in 1922

[65] Quoted in Michael Kennedy : *Portrait of Elgar* (Oxford, 1968) p 228



War memorial designed by Sir Edward Lutyens, Mells, Somerset

MEMORIES OF ELGAR AND REED

Hugh Seal

The event called 'An Elgar Experience' that was held at the Rectory in Morecambe last May was of special significance to me for more than one reason. I was the Rector of that parish from 1963 to 1978, but my links with Edward Elgar go back much further than that.

I was at the Royal College of Music from 1931 - 33 and among other things I studied the violin with W H Reed, "Billy Reed" as he was affectionately known throughout the profession. There is no need here to tell the story of the close association between him and Elgar. His high regard for Elgar bordered on veneration, and some of this rubbed off on some of us who studied with him.

In November 1931 I had the privilege of playing in the orchestra, which was partly the Croydon Symphony Orchestra of which I was a member and partly the LSO, led by Billy Reed, in a performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* given in the Baths Hall, Croydon (is it still there, I wonder?) The conductor was the composer himself and this made it a memorable occasion for a young would-be musician. E.E. was by then a frail figure but his command was absolute and, I believe, the performance met with his approval. I wonder if I am the last remaining violinist who played under Elgar's baton?

And then it was one day in November 1933 that I was due to have a violin lesson with Reed at the RCM. He arrived late and apologised, saying he had just arrived back from EE's bedside in a nursing home in Worcester. Distressed, he said he had been told by the doctor that there was no hope. Poor Billy. He said he couldn't face up to giving me a lesson. Even so he didn't dismiss me but asked me what music I had brought with me. I said I had the Sonata. "Good", he said. "Let's play the second movement", which we did - he was a talented pianist as well as a distinguished violinist. It was very moving. He thanked me. I quietly put my violin in its case and left him to his grief. Elgar, as we all know, died a couple of months later.

When, many years later, I became Rector of Morecambe - a remarkable coincidence indeed - I realised that I was a successor (several times removed) to Canon Gorton who sixty years before had entertained Elgar at the Rectory. The Morecambe Musical Festival was in those days a notable institution, due largely to Gorton's enthusiastic support, but it became famous as a result of Elgar's association with it as an adjudicator and conductor. For several years I was chairman of the Festival, following in the footsteps of my illustrious predecessor, and it was a particular pleasure to me to meet one of Canon Gorton's grandsons at the 'Elgar Experience' last May. Little wonder that it was for me a special occasion.

'BRAMO ASSAI' : A POSTSCRIPT

The following afterthought occurred to me a little too late for inclusion in the article 'A Minor Elgarian Enigma Solved' (November 1998 issue of this JOURNAL), which was written against the clock. It should form the penultimate paragraph. At the same time, I take this opportunity to correct line 11 of the third paragraph on p 301, which may have puzzled readers. The three Italian verbs should have had only their last letters italicised, thus : 'brama', 'spera', and 'chiede'.

"Whatever personal application Elgar may have seen in the motto, the manner in which he recorded it is doubly characteristic of him. On the one hand, it is an early example of his desire to shine by demonstrating his knowledge of remote byways of literary history, the delight in 'dabbling' (his own word) that surfaced later on in his various letters to *The Times Literary Supplement*. Here he has made a genuine discovery in a very roundabout way (though he cannot have known that Mrs Browning's eye must also have lit upon Gervase Markham), and dressed it up, with his *'sic*' and square brackets, in the elaborate trappings of editorial scholarship. On the other hand, he has not expressed it directly, but has encoded it in the form of a puzzle for some future literary detective to solve. He did not make his challenge public by including it in the printed full score; but it is certainly a typical Elgarian enigma, though a minor one. In this case Geoffrey Hodgkins and I have for once been able to arrive at an unequivocal solution - but it has taken ninety-nine years. This particular mystery, of course, was intended to be solved, since he was proud of his little discovery : his other and greater enigmas were not, and their enduring mysteriousness imparts a unique and essential quality to the masterpieces that enshrine them".

Brian Trowell

STILL MORE ON ELGAR/PAYNE 3

Inevitably after the initial response to a new work - particularly one having the background of Elgar/Payne 3 - there will in time be a measure of reassessment, as its fame spreads, new conductors take it up, and more people have the chance to hear it in live performance. It has now been played in most of the major cities of this country, and this month sees first performances in New York and Washington DC (the American première in Philadelphia in November is reviewed in the current NEWS). Michael Kennedy, who welcomed the symphony's appearance and reviewed the score and records in the JOURNAL a year ago, returned to the work in the *Sunday Telegraph* in November. He wrote:

"Several colleagues have hailed the symphony as a masterpiece comparable with the First and Second Symphonies and here I cannot agree. It is a fine work and one rejoices to have it, but the quality of the invention seems to me very variable and this shows when it is stretched out to 55 minutes or more. Part of the greatness of the 1919 Cello Concerto is its conciseness : Elgar transformed plainish material into gold by the mastery of his compositional technique.

"By 1932 this had almost deserted him. He said he wanted the symphony to be big, but even though spurred by passion for his last muse, Vera Hockman, and by the BBC commission, he could not finish it even as far as Mahler completed his Tenth. He admitted he was waiting for the spark from heaven to fall on the slow movement and that he did not know how to end the work (thereby setting Mr Payne his knottiest problem). There was nothing particularly significant in his raiding of earlier and discarded scores - he had always done that - but there was something frantic about the way he did so in this case. W H

Reed described how 'restless and ill at ease' Elgar became whenever the ending of the work was discussed.

"Thus, although Mr Payne has miraculously assembled the pieces of a jigsaw into a picture, there are vital gaps, pieces missing. No one will ever find these pieces because they do not exist. They died with Elgar and when he asked that no one should 'tinker' with the sketches, he was admitting that he himself was unsure how he would tinker and how the work would 'go', as he was fond of saying. Mr Payne's real achievement is to show us the full tragic import and scope of Elgar's creative block. That in itself was well worth doing and is unique in musicology".

As mentioned above, Elgar/Payne no 3 has now been performed in the USA, and is generating considerable interest. Reviews from *Fanfare* were included in the last JOURNAL, and in September Society member Roger Hecht's review appeared in the *American Record Guide*. He was clearly impressed with both Elgar and Payne : "Elgar may have lacked energy and discipline in his old age, but he was not out of ideas... I do not know Payne's own music, but unless he is Elgar reincarnated, the way he preserved Elgar's sound without leaving too many of his own fingerprints is a marvel". He calls the symphony "...a departure for Elgar. The harmony is more adventurous, with signs of Mahler, Scriabin and Walton along with premonitions of Bernard Herrmann. It is interesting that we hear some of Walton's style, since his movie scores - the works most reflected in the Third Symphony - were written after Elgar died. (Walton and Herrmann could have seen Elgar's sketches in Reed's book...) Payne had a hand in this, but many of these chords are in the sketches, so we know the harmonic advancement was essentially Elgar's. Structurally the work is atypical, and that is Elgar's doing as well... Elgar's treatment of melody was also new. Instead of the long line, we have more motifs. Near the end of his life, Elgar's evolution of style was paralleling Jean Sibelius's transition between his own Second and Third Symphonies.

"Listening to Elgar's hour-long Third Symphony is a fascinating journey, one I feel compelled to repeat many times. Each trip reveals more of its world. It's not so much melody that stays with me (though melody does linger) but the sense of having been somewhere mysterious and unexplored. It combines old material with fresh ideas to break new ground for the composer. I cannot say whether the reconstruction is on the level of the first two symphonies. I don't hear *quite* their consistent inspiration or the inevitability of uninterrupted genius. Nor do I sense a final pulling together that stamps a work as perfect and immutable. But this is quibbling, given what I do hear : a new masterpiece from a composer whose work we thought we knew in its entirety".

* * *

I suspect that the impossibility of discovering how close the sketches come to Elgar's final thoughts will mean that arguments regarding the validity of the work in the Elgar canon will run and run. Though Payne's work is clearly an 'elaboration', does it give an indication of the way Elgar's mind was working and the direction in which his music was going? Society member Peter Taylor sent me his thoughts on the work almost a year ago, but lack of space prevented their appearance until now.

ON REPEATED HEARINGS OF THE ELGAR/PAYNE THIRD SYMPHONY

Peter Taylor

I am not a practising musician; I get my musical experiences from concerts and recordings and can barely

read a score. But while I cannot claim universal coverage, I have been immersed in Elgar's music for nearly sixty years; his First Symphony was the first I ever knew; and perhaps, even as a mere amateur, my comments on this latest development may be of interest to others. Because I feel to have detected things about it that I do not think have appeared in print, at least not yet.

We are all familiar with Elgar's musical development. After the early, mostly salon music there came the great orchestral arch from *Froissart*[1] to *Falstaff*; then the subdued quartet of chamber works (I count the Cello Concerto as one in essence) with which, but for a few trivia, he ended. Somewhat at a tangent lie the three oratorios, distinguished by their mystical quality from his remaining choral and vocal output. And now comes this Symphony, to change in subtle ways, I believe, what we thought we knew concerning how this corpus hangs together and where Elgar himself was heading.

We tend to think of Elgar, in all his variety, as distinguished from his contemporaries in part through the *imperial* quality of his writing. But there is no trace of this in the Third. Of course we cannot know what final form it would have taken, but the internal evidence as I shall hope to show is very consistent, and points to something it would have been difficult to anticipate. Rather, it seems to derive its inspiration from the beginning and end of this orchestral arch, leaving out most of what lies in between, and drawing some extra inspiration from the oratorios. The result, for me, is the rawest, most personal, most harrowing music he ever wrote.

Superficial resemblances to past works help to make my point for me. This comes out particularly in the Adagio solenne. Formally it opens much as the Larghetto of the Second Symphony, but on close inspection, this resemblence fades. The official-sounding passage on the trombones with which the Larghetto opens is followed at once by a noble melody that seems to express Elgar's private grief at public events; later the music soars to a series of climaxes that are among the most eloquent he ever wrote. But the rather similar opening of the Adagio solenne is not followed up in any remotely similar way. Instead we have a preview of 'the unresolved estinto of the viola solo' (much clearer on the night than on the CD) and, while the D major / E flat major melody [32] and [34][2] that eventually appears may seem at first sight to provide some kind of equivalence to the Larghetto's eloquence, in fact this is not so.[3] Michael Kennedy in his record review[4] is well aware of this and comments as follows: "...this is the movement where, for all Mr Payne's skill, I feel most keenly the loss of Elgar's genius - he would, surely, have done something special here which would have lifted the movement to the skies." With the greatest respect to Mr Kennedy, I do not think that was Elgar's intention. Just before this melody, on each appearance, comes what Anthony Payne describes as a 'continuation fragment' [31] which he rightly describes as "one of the most searing ideas that even Elgar created." (Of course, we cannot be certain it was intended just here, but it was certainly meant for *somewhere* in this movement). Following that, the melody itself starts hesitantly and takes some time to develop fully before collapsing in a way that the corresponding Larghetto climax never does, in a passage of utter pathos. For however consolatory this melody the Adagio as a whole is not consolatory, nor do I believe was it meant to be. The despairing viola solo with which we know absolutely for certain that Elgar intended it to end is the clearest possible indication of this. In fact, this Adagio is among the darkest movements I know. In music known to Elgar I can think of scarcely a precedent; oddly enough, the closest analogies I can suggest are to be found among the desolate central Adagios of the three-movement symphonies that Havergal Brian was to write 30-odd years later, outstandingly perhaps the 19th, 20th and 25th (the last two now available on CD). Elgar like Brian then was an old man by now, suddenly and unexpectedly vouchsafed a new lease of life, and even before receiving the death sentence that brought composition to a stop, he must have known that he had to act quickly or not at all. In this

[1] Sub-title : "When Chivalry lifted up her lance on high"

intensely personal Adagio solenne, I believe that Elgar was facing his own death ("Billy, this is the end...").

Fred Gaisberg called this symphony "youthful and fresh,"[5] a strange description for a work so often despairing (my preferred term for the " resigned weariness" Michael Kennedy[6] finds in it). I think what Gaisberg picked up was a sense of urgency like nothing else in Elgar's output. Bax once accused Elgar of over-reliance on the techniques of sequence and rosalia, claiming this as a defect in his style. In this symphony they are used almost to distraction, yet the result is not a weakness but a strength. I think this is the *technical* device that contributes most strongly to the raw urgency that propels both outer movements and lies behind the tensions of the Adagio solenne. And while this urgency pervades the opening Allegro molto maestoso, it comes most strongly to the surface in the Finale. In order to put this urgency into perspective I think we need to delve further into the character of this symphony; to try to discover what it is about.

The bare fifths with which the symphony starts, and the unprecedented (for Elgar) repeat of the first movement's exposition, suggest straight away a deliberate archaism. I think it is of the greatest significance that, along with the abandoned sketches and fragments Elgar pressed into service, he should have chosen to re-adapt material from a work already complete : the incidental music to *Arthur*. Elgar had always been interested in British prehistory, and in returning to it for inspiration, Elgar the hater of pomp and ceremony in his later life[7] may well have felt it, after the slaughter of the First World War, to be a cleaner world. The "world of chivalric action and drama" as Anthony Payne[8] describes it is unmistakably there in the Finale. But I do not think it is quite as simple as that. Both outer movements carry clear echoes of *Falstaff*, a knight but scarcely a hero. The march of the scarecrow army is echoed by the first [13] of Anthony Payne's B flat minor fragments from the opening Allegro, while the rhythm and sometimes the actual moulding of the whole second subject group of the Finale, especially [43], brings irresistibly to mind the magical transformation of that march into a pastoral idyll. Exactly what was Elgar intending to convey?

Listening to the Finale over and over again, the overwhelming impression I get is that of a slow but inexorable transformation of *processional* into *recessional*. Leaving aside Anthony Payne's brilliantly contrived ending, and sticking with that of which we can be certain, then as the second subject group progresses, this initially exuberant music seems to recede steadily Into the distance. Technically, this is accomplished by the more and more dominant 'dying fall' particularly associated with its final section [46]. If the opening fanfare is Arthur unfurling his banner, then by the end of the exposition he and his little band of followers are, like Falstaff's, lost in the darkening landscape, on their way to... what? Not to victory, I think. Perhaps to betrayal and death, as Falstaff too was betrayed;[9] perhaps, as Payne's brilliant ending so poignantly suggests, to step outside history altogether. If the Finale's opening should have been marked *nobilmente*,[10] that is very far from being its ultimate mood. Elgar's finales rarely let him

---

[2] As an aid to identifying the passage in question I shall frequently find it useful to refer to the appropriate band of the commentary CD (NMC D053) issued by Anthony Payne.

[3] Stephen Johnson also notes the contrast between these movements in his programme note for the first performance, 15 February 1998.

[4] Elgar Society JOURNAL, Vol 10, no 4, March 1998 p 185

[5] Quoted by Anthony Payne on BBC CD MM 138.

down; more than with most composers they generally seem to round out and resolve all that has gone before, and in that respect at least, this one seems to me to rank with the greatest of them. No wonder that Elgar, in the full flush of writing this symphony, thought it "the strongest thing I've put on paper."[11]

In adding the *Arthur* music of the second and fourth movements to the sketches for *The Last Judgement* used in the first and third, Elgar seems to me to have aimed to encompass the whole of his preceding orchestral output except for the imperial. Anthony Payne[12] notes that this symphony is "different in its sheer breadth of emotion from any of his other symphonic works." The Scherzo seems intended as a tribute to his early music, though more polished and subtle than any of it; Stephen Johnson[13] notes that there is "something elusive" here. We have recently been reminded[14] how much Elgar valued not only his own popular music, but that of other people. But that aside, I see this symphony as a *pilgrimage*, his use of the abandoned oratorio a powerful pointer to its mystical and quasi-religious undertones. As such, it fulfils the function for Elgar that *Parsifal* did for Wagner and that Mahler's posthumous Tenth has done for that composer: if not quite the greatest of his works, then still without question their crowning glory. While in no way diminished by this unexpected development, the 'wood music' of 1918 was not his last word after all. The hero who battles through the opening movement, who contemplates his own death as at a vigil in the Adagio solenne, who marches away to death or apotheosis in the finale: is it Arthur? Or is it Elgar himself? We shall never know. All we can say is that, miraculously rescued from oblivion, we have now what Michael Kennedy[15] has so rightly described as "a work... I can't imagine being without." I for one am profoundly thankful that I have lived to hear it.

MUSIC REVIEW

Ten Pieces for violin and piano (in two volumes).

Thames Publishing, £7-95 each.

A useful collection of ten pieces for the violin gathered from the sixteen he wrote (apart from the Sonata and Concerto) into two equally divided volumes under the expert guidance of Barry Collett, produced by Thames Publishing and distributed by William Elkin Music Services. They are copies of the diverse publications originally brought out by such firms as Novello, Schott and Chappell so the typefaces differ. The titles belie the technical problems of the violin part and provide a pertinent reminder that the composer was no mean violinist himself. Take for example the *Mazurka* (1899) or the *Gavotte* (1885), this latter so reminiscent of Kreisler, or of Bruch in the double stops found in the *Scottish Fantasy* written six years earlier. The descending chromatic demi-semiquavers played with 'thrown bow' at bar 64 of the *Gavotte* and some of the cross-string leaps to high harmonics in the same piece make formidable demands. Similarly *Bizarrerie* rounds off the second book in Spanish style with much to commend it as an encore piece of rhythmic *bravura*.

On the other hand the three pieces Op 4 of 1883 (in Book 2) present little technical difficulty to the amateur player (a strong selling point of the day), *Une Idylle* and *Pastourelle* being very straightforward, whilst *Virelai* is currently an Associated Board prescribed work at Grade 4, halfway along the road of the

---

[6] Kennedy, *loc cit.*

[7] See Ian Lace, 'Elgar and Empire', *Elgar Society JOURNAL*, Vol 10, no 3, November 1997, p 128

[8] Anthony Payne, 'Sound from Silence', article in the programme of the first performance.

eight grades, so the degree of difficulty in these works varies considerably. A couple of curiosities worth noting, the first piece in Book 1 is Elgar's Op 1, the E minor *Romance*, written in 1878 and published seven years later by Schott, with its wide-ranging mood of melancholy and florid display in its cadenza figurations before the reprise. Also in Book 1 *Reminiscences*, dedicated to Oswin Grainger 'by his friend Edward Wm Elgar 16.3.1877', is the only piece of the ten never before published, and has plenty of incriminating fingerprints all over it to identify its composer. The accompanying pianist too has Chopinesque hurdles to overcome, such as in the *Allegretto on GEDGE*, whose five musical notes spell the name of the Misses Gedge, seven sisters in Worcester and some of them Elgar's pupils. The piece abounds in charm but is also rife with syncopations and canons. Highly recommended; there is lovely music, all of it satisfying and rewarding to play; in short, something here for violinists of all standards.

Christopher Fifield

BOOK REVIEWS

Elgar: 'Enigma' Variations, by Julian Rushton
Cambridge Music Handbooks, C.U.P., l999. £24-95 hardback.

Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations : a centenary celebration, by Patrick Turner
Thames Publishing. 1999. £12-5O (£10 to Elgar Society members)

Cambridge gave Elgar his first doctorate, but certainly had little time for him during my six post-war years there. So it is refreshing that the University Press has discovered Op 36 in the year of its centenary, and that Elgar can now follow Gershwin and the Beatles among subjects for scholarly study in this series of handbooks. Perhaps even more refreshing, because more quirky, is Patrick Turner's contribution to the 'Enigma' literature. Yet it is only February, and I wonder how many centenary studies will face me before the year is out. My only comfort is that I shall be among the Angelicals, in Nick's chorus, or a particle of agnostic dust before too many such commemorations are launched.

To tackle enigmatics first, Rushton is as agnostic as I am, dismissing most solutions out of hand. Turner,

---

[9] That at least we know was Elgar's view of Falstaff's rejection by the newly-crowned King Henry; precisely why Prince Hal's theme is not labelled *nobilmente*. Perhaps that goes too for the opening fanfare of this movement?

[10] Johnson, *loc cit.*

[11] Payne, MM 138.

[12] 'Sound without Silence'

[13] Johnson, *loc cit.*

[14] Philip Scowcroft, Elgar Society JOURNAL, Vol 10, no 4, March 1998, p 176

[15] Kennedy, *loc cit.*

however, while dismissing others, has a solution of his own as well as an engaging firstborn for the 'Enigma' theme itself. His arguments are both entertaining and closely reasoned. What currency 'Twinkle twinkle, little star' in G minor will eventually gain is not for me to say. 'How I wonder what you are' is certainly mystical enough to have enticed Elgar. I have enjoyed playing the relevant six bars on the piano, grimacing slightly at the clashes, but thinking feelingly about Elgar at The Mount on 21 October 1898 maybe suffering as many child violinists on that particular nursery tune as conscientious Suzuki mothers must endure today. Turner argues for it as the 'larger theme' too. Enigma's offspring is Jerome Kern's '0l' Man River' from *Show Boat*, which indeed Elgar saw. Whether he instantly recognised its parenthood is another matter.

Whatever scholarly rigour I may possess is owed to my school and university. It saddens me that Cambridge should underwrite the too many misquotations in Rushton's book. The errors are often slight, maybe wrong punctuation or a misplaced capital. Burley, Dorabella, Newman, Richter, Tovey and others all emerge more significantly wronged, not to mention Elgar himself. One can laugh at a metronome mark of dotted minim 572 consigning 'W.M.B.' to millennia yet unthought or galaxies beyond discovery. Less amusing is a *Music Makers* error that ascribes to O'Shaughnessy the heart-rending line, 'But one man's soul it hath broken', omitting the vital 'on'. This commits poor Jaeger to unutterable despair over the 'Enigma' quote. Neither author uses the most recent (4th edition) *Memories of a Variation* by 'Dorabella', so that page references are outdated, and Turner has managed to unearth a 'Canto pop*u*lare' and 'R.B.Townsend'.

Now for the books' virtues. Rushton has both professorial persistence and critical acumen. The Elgar literature is woefully lacking in detailed musical analyses, though rumour has Peter Evans thus engaged, and I know of at least one young scholar who wants to make it his research project. Elgar deserves no less, and one must welcome Rushton's thoughtful pages devoted to Elgar's first masterpiece. Turner has the sleuth's mentality. He is right to suggest that discussion of the 1900 Birmingham commission probably put Elgar's name near the front of Richter's mind long before the Variations cropped up. Turner has taken the trouble to check that no minutes of the relevant meetings survive. He has ascertained also through the Meteorological Office that it was a vile night on 12 January 1899 when Jaeger (and Elgar too ? hence a subsequent snuffle) may have called on Parry with a keyboard draft of Op 36.

What neither author has addressed is the actual text of the Variations full score. This was hardly in Turner's brief, but Rushton states categorically that 'All scores of Variations are based photographically on the full score published by Novello's in 1900'. Let pass that Op 36's publication just scraped into 1899. Far more important are the divergences in the Complete Edition from subsequent scores. ECE vol 27 is indeed photographically reproduced from Rushton's score; others derive from a different score, of which I could not trace the origin when editing the work. There was no evidence in Elgar's correspondence, in the Novello archive, or in the meticulously kept Novello publication data of when the revised score came out. The changes may have been made in Elgar's lifetime and with his authority (at recording sessions or concert rehearsals, for instance), or after his death. My decision to use the original score was based

initially on the 'Edoo' call at the start of 'C.A.E.'. I felt the first bar marking of ***mf*** to ***pp*** was too characteristic to lose. Whether I was right (and an authority I respect is convinced I was wrong) may eventually be revealed among the Angelicals or by Nick.

Robert Anderson

Herbert Howells by Paul Spicer.

Seren Books, 1998. 205 pp. £14-95 hb, £7-95 pb.

Paul Spicer's new book on Herbert Howells is the first to deal with the composer's life in detail. And how much detail there is - from Howells' humble origins as the eighth child of a small-town builder in the Forest of Dean, through to his fame in the second half of our century as England's greatest contemporary composer of music for the Anglican church.

In some ways, it is the details of the early years - of life a hundred years ago - that remain in the mind : the piano lessons with Brewer paid for by the squire's sister; the treatment he received from local society after his father went bankrupt; and his eventual position as Articled Pupil to Brewer in the company of Ivor Gurney and Ivor Novello at Gloucester Cathedral. It was here at the 1910 Three Choirs' performance of *Gerontius* conducted by Elgar that Howells came face to face with his musical destiny; the concert had begun with a new work conducted by its composer - Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*. The impact of this on Howells was overwhelming.
In 1912 a scholarship to the Royal College of Music brought him to the metropolis, and into contact with fellow-students like Arthur Bliss and Arthur Benjamin, as well as the teaching of Parry and Stanford. The latter conducted Howells' First Piano Concerto with Benjamin as soloist at a Queens Hall concert the following year - an indication of the ease with which Howells was progressing as a composer.

Thereafter it was external events which made their presence felt : the onset of Graves' Disease in 1915, when he was given only six months to live; his treatment as one of the first patients to be given radium (twice a week for two years, the bills paid by Parry); his appointment as assistant to Alcock at Salisbury in 1917 (a post he had to relinquish after three months because of his health); and finally his appointment to the Royal College of Music in 1920, where he taught composition for the next fifty years.

Added to these are the events which made an even greater impact on the rest of his life : the failure in 1925 of his Second Piano Concerto (killed by a demonstration at the premiere); the death of his son Michael in 1935 (which haunted Howells to the end of his days); and his appointment as Acting Organist at St John's College Cambridge during the Second World War. The first made Howells unduly sensitive towards the reception of his music; he would put works away for years before being tempted to allow a performance. Such was the fate of *Hymnus Paradisi*, his choral masterpiece written to assuage the grief over his son, and which only received its premiere at Gloucester in 1950. But it was the Cambridge appointment which led to the outpouring of church music after the War, and which finally brought Howells his enduring fame.

The amount of music Howells wrote in his long life is amazing, as is its diversity: songs, keyboard music, organ works, chamber music, orchestral pieces, two concertos and an abandoned third, large choral works with orchestra, and of course the church music. CDs are at last allowing us to hear some of these works, and what treasures there are still to be discovered.

Spicer deals with all this in a very readable manner, and I enjoyed the book a lot. Interspersed with the

life, he gives descriptions of the music as it came to be written. But it is a shame that a few mistakes have crept into the text. On p 16 Howells goes to elementary school before he was born, by means of a wrong date, and two typographical errors on p 50 make the letter to Harold Darke difficult to fathom. Moreover Sir Ernest Bullock was not Organist of Westminster Abbey in 1952 at the time of his appointment to direct the Royal College of Music; he had resigned from Westminster in 1940.

John Buttrey

Composing Mortals : 20th-century British classical composers, by Terry Hiscock
Thames Publishing, 1998. 292 pp. £14-95, paperback.

The aim of the book is "to satisfy curiosity about mainstream British classical composers working in the first 75 years of the 20th century." It does this by a series of potted biographies of 93 composers, aimed, according to the introduction, at the casual listener rather than the "fanatic", and at Classic FM rather than Radio 3. As such it will not teach a great deal to those already enthusiastic and knowledgeable about British music, yet it is well-written and certainly I am unaware of any book of a similar size which deals with the subject. It is also refreshingly up-to-date, chronicling the deaths last year of Geoffrey Bush, George Lloyd, and Sir Michael Tippett. It is enhanced too by some telling caricatures by John Minnion, with just enough exaggeration to avoid being grotesque. Few will quarrel with the biographical information; the entry on Elgar has one or two minor factual errors and a couple of 'typos' - *Sevillana* is misspelt and the Elgars' wedding is dated 1899.

What is more controversial is the decision to divide the book into "main entries" (43 of them) and "shorter entries" (50). This subjective approach is surely unnecessary; the composers could have been dealt with alphabetically, with greater coverage given to the most prominent names. As it is, we have composers such as Alwyn, Goossens, Julius Harrison, Hurlstone, George Lloyd, Lutyens, Maconchy, Simpson and Tavener in the "second division", and Alan Bush, Dyson, Harty and Reizenstein in the "first". Maxwell Davies, Birtwistle, Turnage and others are omitted because the book "does not attempt to tackle 'contemporary' music"; so on what basis are Musgrave, Goehr, Tavener and Maw included? Other composers missing but which one might have expected to appear include McCunn, Wallace, Charles Wood, Tovey, Bainton, Foulds, Baines, Sorabji, Poston, and others. However, I accept that the line must be drawn somewhere.

An excellent tool for someone just beginning to explore British music.

The Editor

Music and Nationalism in 20th Century Great Britain and Finland, edited by Tomi Mäkelä.
Von Bockel Verlag, Hamburg. 243pp. ISBN 3-928770-99-3

The book comprises nineteen essays based on papers given at a symposium at the Finnish Institute in London in December 1992, many of the authors highly eminent in their field such as Arnold Whittall, Peter Dickinson, Lewis Foreman, Raymond Monelle, Jeremy Dibble and Malcolm Macdonald to say nothing of the Finns, the more cosmopolitan of whom intrepidly deal with UK topics whereas the Brits take a wide berth of matters Finnish. Sibelius (who was deliberately not a topic for discussion in his own right) is obviously a key figure in these comparative studies as his influence upon many British composers (such as Vaughan Williams) cannot be underestimated.
For members it is obviously pertinent to see if and how Elgar features in any of the essays. Without an index it became somewhat of a chore to trawl through the 243 pages and only about half a dozen

references were found - frankly as far as English composers go Vaughan Williams gets more attention, and, from Scotland, so does Mackenzie. Despite Elgar's death in 1934 he is evidently considered to be a 19th century composer and really does not fit into the scheme of the book. According to Peter Dickinson's highly readable essay 'Nationalism is not enough' the delegates formed a consensus that, from Finland and Great Britain, Sibelius and Elgar had assured international stature whereas no general agreement could be found on these two composers' successors (including Britten who, taken in a European context, was surprisingly described as overrated). The composer Kalevi Aho is rather dismissive about Elgar in his article 'Music, Nationality and Society', "Elgar, whom the English apparently listen to with great enthusiasm, produces almost no reaction at all in Germany", a concept put forward by Theodor Adorno ("those musical languages that took national shape in the latter half of the 19th century can scarcely be understood beyond their own borders") but which cuts little ice with this reviewer/conductor, Dvorák being one such composer whose music defies such a description.

Highly recommended is 'National musical character: intrinsic or acquired?' an essay by the ubiquitous Lewis Foreman, who picks up Jeremy Crump's argument that the institutionalisation of Elgar is a result of decades of exposure to his music and that his music "became a focus for the development of notions of Englishness in music, but those meanings have not been historically constant".

With such daunting titles as 'The allure of distant strains: Musical receptiveness of the Anglo-Saxon', or 'Nationalism in Leevi Madetoja's operatic works' this collection of essays is a tough, though interesting, read and leaves one curious to know more, at least of Finnish music of the 20th century.

Christopher Fifield

What Hyperion and Chandos are to British music in the realm of recordings, Ashgate and Thames are in literature. Three of the recent publications from the latter have come my way (two as Christmas presents!) and are worthy of mention. *Lonely Waters* (157 pp, paperback edn. 1997, £9-95) by Lionel Hill is subtitled "the diary of a friendship with E J Moeran". Hill, whose father-in-law was Albert Sammons, wrote to the composer after hearing *Lonely Waters* on the radio in 1943, and thus began a correspondence and a friendship which ended with Moeran's death in 1950. The few references to Elgar make clear that Moeran, despite belonging to the younger generation of British composers, had a deep admiration for the older man's music.

Dealing with another figure on the fringe of the Elgar story, *Thomas Dunhill : Maker of Music*, is a biography by the composer's son, David Dunhill (119 pp, paperback, 1997, £12-50). Dunhill's music has never made a big impression, although Lewis Foreman in an introductory essay makes a compelling case for some of it to have a wider hearing, particularly the chamber music. Dunhill was always grateful for the encouragement he received from Elgar, which dates from 1905 when one of the younger man's songs was given at the Worcester Festival (Dunhill describes this in his 1938 book on Elgar). A book full of interesting information on yet another neglected composer. Incidentally, Dunhill's first wife, whom he married in 1914, was Mary Penrose Arnold, niece of the fifth of Elgar's Variations.

Composers by the grace of God : a study of religion and music by Inglis Gundry (276 pp, paperback,

1998, £12-50) touches on a subject which has always fascinated me. Inglis Gundry is a name unknown even to many who are interested in British music. Happily still with us, aged 93, he was a pupil of Vaughan Williams and at one stage was in the front rank of rising composers. Possibly his decision to write within traditional forms was unfashionable in the post-war world, but his music has style and appeal, like that of his friend and fellow-Cornishman, George Lloyd. (I must declare a personal interest, as for some years I took part in the medieval music dramas Inglis arranged from ancient manuscripts for his Sacred Music-Drama Society, and which he conducted. I also taught his younger daughter; and no, I am not Methuselah - Inglis did not marry until his late '50s!). Perhaps inevitably a subject such as this, dealing with more than twenty named composers as well as passing references to many more, is too large to be adequately covered in one volume; particularly as the first seven chapters set music in its scriptural and ecclesiastical context before turning to look at individuals. There is a feeling too that the book might have benefited from the insights of recent scholarship. That is certainly the case with Elgar, for although the chapter on him is well-reasoned and thorough as far as it goes, the most recent book quoted is Dr Young's *Elgar OM*, written almost fifty years ago, and since then we have learnt much from Dr Moore in particular. Nevertheless, a fascinating book, and essential reading for all those for whom music is a key element in their spirituality.

The Editor

RECORD REVIEWS

In the South, Op 50. Enigma Variations, Op 36. Pomp & Circumstance March, Op 39, no 5. Chanson de Nuit; Chanson de Matin, Op 15. The Starlight Express, Op 78: 'My Old Tunes'; 'To the Children'.
Henry Cummings (baritone), National Symphony Orchestra and Boyd Neel String Orchestra conducted by Boyd Neel, Malcolm Sargent and Charles Groves

Dutton Laboratories CDK 1203

It is surely a cliché to say "this long-awaited recording", but a wait of 53 years must surely constitute a record in every sense of that word. Boyd Neel's recording of *In the South* has been something of a mystery to Elgarians and record collectors. We knew it had been recorded on five sides in 1945, catalogue numbers allocated, and it even appears in WERM, the standard work on recordings of the electrical period. True they got the numbers wrong, and it was never actually issued. Raymond Monk told me that he recalled being sent a set of test pressings at the time by Boyd Neel, but of course had returned them. The year after Neel's death in Toronto I visited that city, and called at the University who had inherited much of Neel's archive. Discussing Neel's test pressings and private recordings I asked about *In the South*. They looked puzzled and said that in going through all such items they could not recall seeing a set! The mystery deepened... Now, all these years later Michael Dutton has been able to track down a set of tests in private hands and has brilliantly recaptured Decca's FFRR sound, recorded in Wembley Town Hall in October 1945. The orchestra was the National Symphony Orchestra, a wartime creation then at the peak of its performance and personnel. Dennis Brain, for instance, led the horn section and can be heard clearly in this performance.

Boyd Neel had a considerable reputation as conductor of his String Orchestra, and his performance of Handel's *Concerti Grossi* became standard versions. But he had not previously been recorded with a full symphony orchestra. What would he make of Elgar's complex score, which makes such demands on conductors and players alike? On the evidence of this recording we need not have worried. Neel controls the orchestra superbly, the many changes of tempo, of emphasis, the attention to detail - all are truly Elgarian. The resonant acoustic of the Wembley Town Hall is just right for the work, and Decca's

recording engineers did a fine job, for the recording does not seem to date at all. So... why was it never issued? Five sides would have needed a 'fill-up' of course, but that should not have been difficult. My feeling is that Decca got cold feet at the thought of issuing a three-record set of a work which *then* was unfamiliar to most people. Elgar's own recording had been deleted early in the war, and that had only had a limited sale. Remember that in 1945 only the *Enigma Variations*, and two of the *Pomp & Circumstance* marches, were played regularly. Most of Elgar's music, unlike today, was totally unfamiliar to a younger audience, and sales were unlikely to be large. Even the Elgar Society founding was six years away in the future.

The rest of the CD is well worth your attention. A sparkling and vigorous performance of the *Variations*, better I think than Sargent's later versions, again with the National Symphony Orchestra in excellent form, coupled with what I can only describe as a frisky performance of the fifth *Pomp & Circumstance* March, also recorded in 1945. The two *Chansons* are sensitively played; and Henry Cummings sings the two baritone songs from *The Starlight Express*, with commendable diction, and good accompaniment from the NSO, again, with Charles Groves conducting on this occasion. These date from 1945 and 1946.

The standard of transfer is extremely high, as we have come to expect from Dutton Laboratories, and how good it is to have that *In the South* at last. Finally a nice touch on the record sleeve, which is printed in the Decca red, so familiar to collectors of 78s over many years.

Ronald Taylor

Falstaff, Op 68. Elegy, Op 58. The Sanguine Fan, Op 81.
English Northern Philharmonia conducted by David Lloyd-Jones
Naxos 8.553879

Falstaff, Op 68. Romance for Bassoon & Orchestra, Op 62. Grania & Diarmid (Incidental Music and Funeral March), Op 42. Froissart, Op 19.
BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Andrew Davis
Teldec 4509 98436-2

Falstaff was first performed in Leeds and so it is entirely fitting that the city's resident opera orchestra should now make a recording of it. Since Elgar wrote a detailed synopsis of the dramatic events portrayed by the music, one can presume that the story telling aspects of the score were important to him. It is precisely this that Lloyd-Jones does so well. From the outset, there is a real swagger to the music, an exuberance that is enjoying a rip roaring tune that is illustrating a rip roaring yarn. There is too a sense that comedy is always lurking even when the events are supposedly serious. This is a young Prince Hal! The music moves forward in a very positive manner with the furtive goings-on in the woods particularly vivid. So too is Falstaff's drunken boasting and the challenges and interruptions of the rest of the cast in response.

The first Dream Interlude goes well but in view of what has gone before, the Battle scene after it is just a touch disappointing. I expected a little more physical excitement. However, the passage following the second Dream Interlude is really good. There is a wonderful exuberance with a real sense of anticipation as Falstaff looks forward to meeting the new king. Sometimes the pages following the rebuff of Falstaff can seem to be a bit of an anticlimax but not here. Lloyd-Jones keeps the music going. Falstaff is down but not out! There is still plenty of life in the old dog even if he is drawing on memories from the past. The final bars have a cool simplicity. One may miss the tear-jerking direction of Barbirolli but it is all of a piece with the interpretation as a whole. A very valuable addition to the catalogue.

Beside Lloyd-Jones's, Davis's *Falstaff* seems rather earthbound. From the outset one notes a richer, fatter sound which is only partly a technical matter. Somehow Prince Hal is old before his years. I should have written about this CD for the last issue of the JOURNAL but my reaction seemed so at odds with the enthusiastic plaudits awarded by other writers that I thought it safer to put it on one side for some weeks. Absence didn't make this heart grow fonder! The whole thing sounds eminently worthy but ultimately rather bland and sadly did not hold my attention. To give just one example, Davis's bassoon's portrayal of the boasting drunken Falstaff is undercharacterised and the supposedly derisive laughter from Sir John's colleagues incredibly tame. It could be argued that Davis is at pains to present the work as a *Symphonic* Study but I miss the vivid story-telling quality of the Leeds performance. Paradoxically, it is Teldec who allot 29 tracks to the work so that the story can be followed whereas Naxos utilising just 6, mark out the four sections that Elgar identified and the two Dream Interludes.

Davis's well-filled disc includes a fine performance of the still underrated Bassoon Romance and a rich account of the *Grania and Diarmid* pieces. *Froissart* completes the disc but this too sounds rather too safe and earthbound with none of the panache that still comes over so vividly from Elgar's own records.

Lloyd-Jones gives a wonderfully rich reading of the Elegy but what a pity that it follows on so quickly from the end of *Falstaff*. It was some time since I had listened to *The Sanguine Fan* and I was totally captivated afresh by it. The performance is delightfully pointed and articulated, making this super-bargain disc a very desirable purchase.

John Knowles

The Music Makers, Op 69. The Dream of Gerontius, Op 38.
Janet Baker (mezzo-soprano), Helen Watts (contralto), Nicolai Gedda (tenor), Robert Lloyd (bass), John Alldis Choir, London Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra, New Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult
EMI CMS 566540-2 (two discs)

I well remember the sense of elation and anticipation in the London Philharmonic Choir when it was announced early in 1975 that Sir Adrian Boult was to record *The Dream of Gerontius*. I also remember my (mixed) feelings when I discovered that I would miss the final choral session, scheduled for the morning after my wedding!

Sir Adrian had made successful recordings of *The Kingdom* (1969) and *The Apostles* (1974), and it seemed an obvious thing to 'complete the set'. Yet it was widely reported that he was not totally behind the project, as he often quoted a remark made by Schuster, who compared the *Dream* unfavourably with *The Kingdom*. So it is useful to have an article in the booklet by Christopher Bishop, who produced sixty recordings for Boult between 1966 and 1978. He writes : "There is no doubt that Sir Adrian badly wanted to record his interpretation". Nevertheless, Boult worried about recording *Gerontius* (*vide* his letters to Michael Kennedy on the subject in the latter's biography of the conductor). John Alldis (then chorus master of the London Philharmonic Choir) once told me that Boult rang him in the small hours of the morning : "Mr Alldis, do you think we have the right tempo for 'Dispossessed'?"

Another subject for debate was the choice of a non-English singer in the title role. Bishop suggested Nicolai Gedda, and Boult agreed. Gedda knew the work, according to Bishop, "and had always wanted to sing it". Yet despite his wonderful voice and intensely musical performance - and his English was

nowhere near so bad as some critics made out at the time - the role of Gerontius demanded greater depth and knowledge than Gedda was able to give it. He does not "get under the skin of the role", as Gareth Lewis (another member of the choir at the time) put it (JOURNAL January 1987). I remember Kenneth Bowen (one of the finest and most underrated tenors of recent years) saying to me : "Every time you sing it, it's like climbing Everest". Yet overall this is one of the strongest teams of soloists. Helen Watts, despite choosing the lower options at "that sight of the Most Fair", and at the "Alleluia" after fig 117, sings with great warmth and intelligence, culminating in an Angel's Farewell to rival Baker. Robert Lloyd, though possibly a trifle aggressive in 'Proficiscere', is in fine voice and some of his tender expressiveness - at "who bled for thee", and "where they shall ever gaze on thee", for instance - melts the heart.

Boult's reading of the work seems to reflect the apprehension mentioned earlier. As his letters to Michael Kennedy show, he was preoccupied with the metronome markings in places, and one suspects that the results would have been better had he given his musical instincts their head. The tempo is pulled about in the chorus "Be merciful" in a most un-Boult-like way. His choice of steady (not to say slow) tempi works wonderfully in some cases, notably the end of each part; but in the "great blaze" not enough is made of the *Allegro molto* at fig 75, or the *Animato* at fig 89. Gedda appears to be hurrying things along at "may rise and go above" in 'Take me away'. All in all, a recording to treasure, but sadly not quite up to the standard of Sir Adrian's other Elgar oratorio recordings.

The disc begins with Boult's 1966 recording of *The Music Makers*, at the time only the second Elgar choral work to be recorded in its entirety. Though recorded since by others, this is for me still the finest version, Sir Adrian judging the mood of disillusion and melancholy to perfection. He is aided by Janet Baker in superb form; her account of "They had no vision amazing" is surely one of the high spots of Elgar on record. The London Philharmonic Choir were not the force they were nine years later, yet they give their all, and this recording can be unreservedly and unhesitatingly recommended.

The Editor

Enigma Variations, Op 36. With : Brahms' First Symphony.
Czech Philharmonic and London Symphony Orchestras
conducted by Leopold Stokowski
Cala CACD 0524

In 1972 Stokowski celebrated both his ninetieth birthday and a 60-year association with the London Symphony Orchestra. This event was marked by a famous Royal Festival Hall concert in which he replicated the very first programme he'd conducted with the LSO at the Queen's Hall in 1912. The concert was repeated the following evening at the Royal Albert Hall, and a 2-LP Decca 'Phase 4' set was made. This 'live' recording was such a success that it was decided to repeat the experiment later that year in Prague. For a pair of concerts held in the House of Artists in September 1972 the programme's first half contained six of Stokowski's celebrated Bach Transcriptions, and after the interval came the *Enigma Variations*, Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy* and a couple of encores.

Stokowski's first documented performance of any of Elgar's music dates from 1904, whilst he was still Organist at St James' Piccadilly, when he conducted *Salut d'Amour* and other short pieces during a theatre production of Jerome K Jerome's *Woodbarrow Farm*. His appointment to the Cincinnati Orchestra in 1909 saw him give the American premiere of Elgar's Second Symphony in November 1911. He performed the *Enigma Variations* for the first time the following year, and then moved to Philadelphia,

introducing Elgar's First Symphony to his new audiences in November 1912. In 1918 following the Armistice, Stokowski programmed an all-Elgar first half to a Philadelphia concert that featured the Prelude and Angel's Farewell from *Gerontius*, plus *Carillon* and *Le Drapeau Belge*. In 1922 Stokowski gave one of the first American performances of the Elgar Cello Concerto (the Belgian cellist Jean Gerardy was the soloist) and three years later he conducted *The Dream of Gerontius* whilst on tour with the Philadelphia Orchestra in Toronto.

However, it was the *Enigma Variations* which remained steadily in Stokowski's repertoire over the years, so it was strange that he had to wait until he was 90 before recording the work commercially and perhaps even more surprising that the orchestra chosen was the Czech Philharmonic. Even in 1972, non-British recordings of the *Enigma Variations* were few and far between, and as it happened this great orchestra had not played the work since before the First World War! Indeed, the English-speaking lady organist told the present writer (who went to Prague especially for the rehearsals and concerts) that she had never even heard the piece. (Incidentally, during a break in one of the rehearsals, I asked Stokowski what he thought the 'Enigma' was. He replied : "Cherchez la femme!")

It can often happen that unfamiliarity with great musical masterpieces allows new light to be shed in a fascinating way. However, there was to be a tinge of tragedy in Stokowski's Czech Philharmonic performances, brought about by an unfortunate accident. The great maestro fell and injured himself whilst travelling to Prague and was obliged to miss the first rehearsal. This caused some alarm among the management, since not only was the Elgar completely new to the players but so also were the Bach transcriptions. Nevertheless, Stokowski stubbornly wished to proceed, so with the aid of crutches he went ahead with the two concerts. Although for obvious reasons neither of these was immaculate, the 'Phase 4 producers were still able to edit together an *Enigma* fully worthy of release, and in his *Gramophone* review, Elgar scholar Jerrold Northrop Moore wrote : "Against the foreign accents must be set all sorts of novel subtleties which justify themselves immediately in my ears as intensely musical insights... the entire performance has an astonishing personality of its own... it does something vital for the *Variations* which no other interpretation I know has done... So if it is not a 'standard' for everyone, it is very much a performance for Elgarians as well as for Stokowskians".

Equally sumptuous is the Brahms First Symphony, also hailed by the critics; and this bringing together of what might be called a 'dream coupling' of two live performances has been made possible by the generosity of The Rt Hon David Mellor PC QC. For many years a great admirer of Stokowski, he has long wanted to see the Czech Philharmonic *Variations* appear on CD. When Decca announced that they were discontinuing their own 'Phase 4' reissues they were approached by the Leopold Stokowski Society and Cala Records to see if a licensing agreement could be entered into; and we are all grateful to David Mellor for his sponsorship of this project.

Edward Johnson

(*Cala Records are offering this CD to Elgar Society members at a special price of £8-50, plus 95p postage + packing. Cheques should be made payable to Cala Records, and all major credit cards are accepted. Cala Records, 17 Shakespeare Gardens, London N2 9LJ. Tel: 0181 883 7306)*

'Hilary and Jackie' : music for the film by Barrington Pheloung, plus a complete performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto, Op 85.

Jacqueline du Pré, Philadelphia Orchestra

conducted by Daniel Barenboim
SONY SK 60394.

Readers might recall my recent review in the JOURNAL of the controversial book, *A Genius in the Family* by Hilary and Piers du Pré, which covered the life of Jacqueline du Pré in harrowing detail. Now a film has been made based on the book starring Emily Watson, an Academy Award nominee for her performance in *Breaking Waves*, as Jackie; and Rachel Griffiths (*Muriel's Wedding*) as Hilary. Apparently, according to the CD booklet notes, the du Prés have seen the film and have registered their approval of it. (This approval of the film has not been shared by everybody; scathing attacks have been made by such people as Julian Lloyd Webber and Hugh Canning. At the time of writing, I have not yet seen the film but I would certainly agree with Canning if, in being "...a mirror image of the Australian film *Shine* - which elevated a real life mediocrity to superstar status - it besmirches the reputation of an artist of genius who can no longer defend herself").

All this controversy aside, however, Hilary du Pré, writing in the CD booklet, considers Pheloung's score to be "masterly... his music slips skilfully amongst the intense emotions portrayed in the film. Whether it is humour, anger, pain, joy, despair, or hope, the music always enhances the emotional and visual impact... Apart from the Elgar, the cello voice on the soundtrack is of Caroline Dale. She has achieved an extraordinary degree of 'cello acting' in catching the spirit and sound of Jackie."

Barrington Pheloung is of course famous for his music for such TV and film productions as *Inspector Morse*, and *Truly, Madly, Deeply*. His music for the film takes up a little less than 15 minutes. It is entirely sympathetic and sensitive to the screenplay and besides cellist Caroline Dale it features Sally Heath (piano) with the London Metropolitan Orchestra (probably a contract orchestra) conducted by Pheloung.

The soundtrack also features excerpts from du Pré's own 1970 recording of a live performance of the Elgar Cello Concerto with Daniel Barenboim conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. This historic performance is included complete on this CD. I personally rate it quite highly even if it cannot match the incomparable du Pré/Barbirolli recording. Despite the interminable audience coughing, the complete empathy between du Pré and Barenboim renders a poignantly moving and poetic musical experience. This performance, of course, is available separately on Sony SK 76529 coupled with Barenboim's account of the *Enigma Variations*.

Ian Lace

LETTERS

From : David Bury

It has been fascinating to read Lewis Foreman's detailed survey of the early performances of Gerontius (Journals Vol 10, nos 5 & 6).

I was - given my article of January 1981 - particularly interested to read what was written about Ludwig Wüllner. Lewis Foreman quotes the very favourable review printed in The Musical Times *of Wüllner's first English Gerontius performance of 24 March 1903. The* Manchester Guardian, Liverpool Courier, *and* Liverpool Mercury *were considerably more censorious; while the conductor of that performance, Frederic Cowen, wrote to Elgar of the "really excellent performance", but added that "the only thing was that Wüllner's English was rather unsatisfactory" - a criticism much repeated with regard to the later (6 June) Westminster Cathedral performance. I am sure Lewis Foreman is right when he suggests the Liverpool*

performance was Wüllner's "first outing with the English text". Although he had performed in Austria and Switzerland in 1899/1900, the visit to England in the spring and early summer of 1903 was Wüllner's first venture to a non-German-speaking land.

I cannot resist observing, too, that I was vastly intrigued by Lewis's footnote 38 on p 258 which observed that he had examined a copy of Ludwig's biography of Wüllner - Ludwig Wüllner - sein leben and seine kunst - *in the Library of Congress. Does this mean that it is very rare? Certainly I could not lay hands on a copy when first interested in Wüllner. However, I chanced upon a lovely copy about four years ago in a somewhat run-down bookshop in Quedlinburg (Sachsen-Anhalt) going for the proverbial song. I snapped it up at once!*

From: Walter Hurst

The association of Sir Edward Elgar with Wirral and Liverpool is well documented - the concerts at New Brighton organised by Sir Granville Bantock and those at the Liverpool Philharmonic by A E Rodewald.

What is not so well known is the sterling work of the much maligned Sir Malcolm Sargent supported by the choral conductor Caleb Jarvis, choirmaster of the Liverpool Welsh Choral Union for many years in the '30s, '40s, and '50s. Every year, especially in the forties, performances were given of all the major choral works of Elgar, all to capacity audiences. Thus, when it would be many years before audiences became familiar with such works, we in this part of the country came to know and love them well.

Many of us will never forget The Dream of Gerontius *with Nash (surely the greatest Gerontius ever), Ripley and Walker; and superb performances of* The Apostles *(one with Kathleen Ferrier as Mary Magdalene) and* The Kingdom *all under the brilliant direction of Sargent, a choral conductor without peer even today. His last appearance in Liverpool before his death was to conduct* The Kingdom. *We were also fortunate to hear* For the Fallen *on a date near to Remembrance Sunday.*

Thus the Elgar tradition which had faltered almost everywhere else (except the Three Choirs Festival) was nurtured and flourished in this area. I have a bound copy of The Apostles *given to me by my former choirmaster W A Lees, inscribed "16th July 1905". He used it when he sang in the first Liverpool performance of the work at the old Philharmonic Hall.*

I have been a member of the Society for some years now and wish to express my gratitude for all that has been achieved through the work of the Society.

From : Ronald Taylor

Lewis Foreman's articles on early performances of Gerontius *have been fascinating, and we are greatly in his debt for all the research involved. However, may I briefly try to rescue the reputation of Ellison van Hoose, the first American Gerontius, who is dismissed as "not remembered by us today".*

He lived from 1868 to 1936, and was born in Tennessee. His career was distinguished. After early lessons in New York he went to Europe, where he studied with Jean de Reske in Paris, and with Antonio Cotogni in Rome. His early career was operatic - his debut in Philadelphia was as Tannhäuser. He came to England and studied with Sir Henry Wood, working on the concert platform and in oratorio. He

returned to the USA and there appeared in the Damrosch première of The Dream of Gerontius. *In the following four years he toured the USA with Melba, and then with Marcella Sembrich. Following that he went to Germany as a concert singer, and gave many performances, including several conducted by the great Artur Nikisch. Reverting to opera, his first love, he sang with the Mainz Opera, before returning to America for two seasons with the Chicago Opera. After further concert tours, he retired to become a successful teacher in New York. He made only a handful of records, all pre-1912, and all rare. Having heard two of them in recent times, I can report that the voice comes over as a strong and well-trained tenor, as so many American singers of that period. How accurately they represent his presence on stage is, of course, another matter.*

So, quite a career, and he surely deserves to be remembered a little!

From: Carl Newton

In view of the presumption made in certain works on Elgar to the effect that he was the author of the letter to The Times *of 28 April 1923, entitled 'Vernal Anemones' and the theories that have been built thereon, it should be pointed out that the contribution is, in fact, by one A Grove. It is not known who this person was, but he may be Alfred Grove, who was lecturer in Zoology at Sheffield from 1919 to 1929. His* Who's Who *entry gives gardening as one of his interests.*

From : Rev Stephen Williams

Further to your article, "My love dwelt..." (NEWS July 1998), you may be interested to know there are several roads in Hereford making reference to the great man, albeit obliquely. Grouped all together, the housing estate lies near the River Wye, opposite Litley Court, and immediately off Hampton Park Road, along which of course Elgar used to walk and cycle on his way from Plâs Gwyn to Mordiford Bridge, and where he fished, drew inspiration and wrote.

I have a little anecdote linked thereto. As a curate at St Paul's, one of the 'city-centre' churches in Bedford, Bedfordshire, I mentioned in a sermon, by way of illustration, Elgar's method of enshrining character in the Enigma Variations*. The subject was, as I remember it, the attributes or nature of God, but I grew garrulous. "Why!" I exclaimed, "in Hereford where I come from, a whole estate of houses is named after the Variations !" This was quite irrelevant to my point, but I compounded my excess : "There is an Alice Close, Nevinson and Norbury Places, Sinclair Road and even a Nimrod Drive. Not however, yet, a Three Asterisks Close." Looking at my watch after the service I kicked myself for introducing material hardly germane to the main thrust of the service. So much for praying that God would guide my lips! ! A new young couple came shyly out into the porch and shook my hand. "We used to live in Nimrod Drive," they said. A few weeks and a holiday later I shook the same couple's hands again and made the curate's worst mistake. "I don't think we've met before," says I. "Oh yes we have," they shot back, "We're the couple at whose very first service in this church you named in your sermon the actual road we had moved from - Nimrod Drive, Hereford. We were so surprised, we took it to be a word from the Almighty himself that our movements were known, and that he wanted us to settle with you and not try all the other churches in the area." They remained worshipping there for sixteen years, even after I had moved on!*

From : Charles A Hooey

A postscript to my article on The Spirit of England (*JOURNAL November 1996*). *While Elgar was writing music for two of Binyon's poems - 'To Women' and 'For the Fallen' - the English poet/composer Ivor Gurney was in France about to see front-line action. On Good Friday 1916 he was wounded, and then six months later gassed at Passchendaele. Throughout, Gurney's brilliant mind never strayed for long from his beloved poetry and music. On 21 June 1916 Gurney wrote to Herbert Howells : "By the way, have you heard or seen anything of Elgar's setting of Binyon's 'to the Fallen', that noble poem? How has he done it? Don't forget to reply to this. I envy any man who can set that properly.*

'They went with songs to the battle, they were young'
'As the Stars, as the Stars they remain'
'Age shall not weary them, nor Time condemn'
'We will remember them'

"These little scraps stick to my mind and thrill me. It is a great poem".

On 5 July 1916, Gurney wrote to his friend Marion Scott : "...But have you heard Elgar's setting of 'to the Fallen'? Is it any way worthy of the poem? I would *like to set that! One of the best things I know 'in memoriam'"*

On 29 September 1916, Gurney wrote again to Marion Scott : "Would you mind sending a copy of Binyon's To the Fallen? I might have a shot at that, though not easy to make a song of. However I might try".

On 25 October 1916, Gurney to Scott : "The Binyon poem is too long, too big, I fear, for any setting I could give it, but perhaps, perhaps..."

On 3 February 1917, Gurney to Scott :
"Please don't expect anything of mine of 'To the Fallen' until after the war - and after that... "

Gurney's version of For the Fallen *never materialised.*

From : Robert Thompson

In answer to Mr Knowles' letter in the last issue, my memory of the 1953 Prom is that what was played was not Elgar's version of Jerusalem*; and the 1969 Prom prospectus lists the Elgar arrangement among the 'First performances at the Proms'.*

From : Michael Plant

Jerusalem *on HMV C 3017 ('live' from Empire Day, 1938) is definitely 'Parry, orch. Elgar', though a very muddy recording and the band hardly audible. Parry's* England *on the other side is why I keep it.*

100 YEARS AGO...

Towards the end of 1898 Elgar had accepted a commission to write a choral work for the 1900 Birmingham Festival, and the Worcester authorities had "unofficially" asked for a Symphony for the Three Choirs. His (uncommissioned) Orchestral Variations was progressing, yet on 17 December he wrote to Jaeger : "For the last six weeks (about) I have been very sick at heart over music - the whole

The small hamlet of Knightwick, by Elgar's beloved River Teme, with Ankerdine Hill in the background. The composer is said to have cycled here frequently from Birchwood for inspiration during the composition of The Dream of Gerontius (see Andy Maginnis' article, 'Looking after Elgar's Beloved Country' in the JOURNAL March 1998 pp 182-4). (Photo © Hereford & Worcester County Council)
Just before his death, Elgar wrote to Florence Norbury, sister of 'W.N.': "I lie here hour after hour, thinking of our beloved Teme - surely the most beautiful river that ever was ... I love it more than any other."

future seems so hopeless... the only suggestion made [by Novello] is that the Henry VIII dances [of Edward German] are the thing - now I can't write that sort of thing & my own heartfelt ideas are not wanted". This depressed mood seems to be linked to the financial uncertainty resulting from his publishers' indifference. In a gloomy letter of 6 January he told Nicholas Kilburn that he had decided to go back to teaching.

The new year began inauspiciously. The Elgars' cook contracted scarlet fever and the house had to be fumigated. On 7 January Edward conducted the Worcester Philharmonic Society in a programme of mainly short works, including his own arrangement of *The Holly and the Ivy*. Two days later he went to London where he saw Alberto Randegger, the conductor of the Norwich Festival, to talk about the possibility of yet another new work for that year's festival - a cycle of songs. The conductor was enthusiastic, provided they were to be sung by a young 26-year-old contralto with a growing reputation, Clara Butt. Elgar called on her at her home on 14 January, and the commission was agreed. Whilst in London he and Alice went to art exhibitions, and called on the newly-married Jaeger; the critic Alfred Kalisch; his old chamber music colleagues, Nevinson and Steuart-Powell; the singer Andrew Black and his wife; and Sir Alexander Mackenzie. Jaeger encouraged Elgar to complete the Variations, and on returning to Malvern on 17 January he got down to work with enthusiasm. A week later he orchestrated some short early works as the *Three Characteristic Pieces* (dedicated to Lady Mary Lygon). This may have been his response to the request for something like the Henry VIII dances. He also revised his earlier 'Lute Song' as no 2 in the new song cycle for Clara Butt. But it was the Variations which was consuming him ("E very busy Variations", wrote Alice on 27 January), and after finishing writing it, he began the orchestration on 5 February, completing it on 19th.

By that time the Elgars had decided to move, after nearly eight years at 'Forli', to a larger house which they had found on the other side of Malvern, on the Wells Road. They decided to rename it 'Craeg Lea', being an anagram of the family's surname and their Christian name initials. The move took place on 20-21 March, by which time Elgar had written a short part-song commissioned by the Master of the Queen's Musick, Sir Walter Parratt, as one of a number to mark Queen Victoria's eightieth birthday in May. The words by the poet Frederic Myers are uninspiring and resulted in one of Elgar's poorer efforts, as he acknowledged (in banter) to F G Edwards of *The Musical Times* on 1 March : "I've just finished a *Partrigal* (SATB) to ORDER & feel weak". 'Partrigal', he explained in a postscript, stands for "a *Madrigalian* Part song".

The Variations had been shown to the concert agent N Vert, who acted for Hans Richter, and possibly because of encouragement shown by Jaeger and Parry, the great German conductor agreed to include the work in one of his forthcoming London concerts.

The Elgar Society Journal

107 MONKHAMS AVENUE, WOODFORD GREEN, ESSEX IG8 0ER
Tel: 0181 - 506 0912
Fax: 0181 - 924 4154
e-mail: *hodgkins @ compuserve. com*

CONTENTS

Vol.11, No.1
March 1999

Articles

Front cover : Elgar, Carice and Troyte Griffith on the Wells Road, Malvern, about 1900.

****

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

EI.GAR SOCIETY JOURNAL ISSN 0143 - 1269