



The
Elgar
Society

JOURNAL



April 2023 Vol.23, No. 4



The Elgar Society

President

Sir Mark Elder, CH, CBE

Vice-President & Past President

Julian Lloyd Webber, OBE

Vice-Presidents

Diana McVeagh

Dame Janet Baker, CH, DBE

Leonard Slatkin

Sir Andrew Davis, CBE

Christopher Robinson, CVO, CBE

Andrew Neill

Martyn Brabbins

Tasmin Little, OBE

Chairman

Stuart Freed

Vice-Chairman

Martyn Marsh

Treasurer

Peter Smith

Secretary

George Smart

The Elgar Society Journal

37 Mapledene, Kemnal Road, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 6LX
Email: journal@elgarsociety.org

April 2023, Vol. 23, No. 4

Editorial	3
‘A little music’: Elgar’s music for Laurence Binyon’s verse play <i>Andrew Neill</i>	5
‘Pictured Within’ - Richard Penrose Arnold Part One: A Prodigal Son <i>Kevin Allen</i>	20
Elgar and Parry <i>Relf Clark</i>	37
Elgar, Barrie and the ‘Cinema Supper’ <i>Kevin Mitchell</i>	55
Music Reviews <i>Julian Rushton, Jonathan Hope</i>	70
Book Reviews <i>Michael Trott, Relf Clark, David Morris</i>	79
CD Reviews <i>Steven Halls, Andrew Neill, Stephen Dickinson, David Morris</i>	84
100 Years Ago... <i>Kevin Mitchell</i>	92

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

*Front Cover: La mort d’Arthur 1860, William Archer (1823-1904)
(courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery)*

Notes for Contributors. Please adhere to these as far as possible if you deliver writing (as is much preferred) in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format.

Copyright: it is the contributor's responsibility to be reasonably sure that copyright permissions, if required, are obtained.

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

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

Presentation of written text:

Subheadings: longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

https://www.elgarsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Notes-for-Contributors_longer-version_February-2017.pdf

Editorial

In 1923 Elgar composed his first original and substantial work since completing the Cello Concerto in 1919. Alice's death in April 1920 had left him devastated, and he retreated into himself, losing the will to compose. During the years 1921 and 1922 he had only made a transcription of Bach's *Fantasia and Fugue in C minor* and added orchestration to Parry's *Jerusalem*. But following Laurence Binyon's request to write incidental music for his play *Arthur* in late 1922, Elgar managed to complete his score in time for the premiere on 12 March 1923. To mark this centenary Andrew Neill has written a detailed account of the work's genesis and the critical reaction to it. Even though Elgar did not give an opus number to his score, he thought highly of it and used parts of the music in the sketches he made ten years later for the Third Symphony.

Continuing his series of articles about some of the subjects of the *Variations*, Kevin Allen has now turned his attention to Matthew Arnold's son Richard, whose grandfather was Thomas Arnold. Despite being a son of an illustrious dynasty, Richard failed to shine academically at Harrow or at Balliol College, Oxford which he left without taking a degree. Time in a bank in Australia also proved unrewarding and on returning to England he managed, through his father's influence, to become a Factory Inspector. Music was however important to him and in the first of a two-part article Kevin Allen traces Arnold's early life.

Ralph Vaughan Williams revered Hubert Parry and in recalling him after his death in 1918 he quoted Walt Whitman: "Why are there men and women that while they are nigh me, sunlight expands my blood?" Parry was one of these'. Elgar also recognised Parry's importance, calling him 'the head of our art in this country'. Parry achieved fame early, particularly with the performance in 1880 of *Prometheus Unbound* and thereby created a path that Elgar was to follow. Elgar's relationship to Parry is explored in an article by Dr Relf Clark. He shows that there was a distinct social gap between the two composers, and even though Parry was an important composer and teacher, Elgar eventually surpassed him, particularly with his symphonies and concertos.

On 3 July 1914 Elgar and Alice attended a supper party and theatrical event at the Savoy Theatre, masterminded by J.M. Barrie in conjunction with Granville Barker whose revolutionary productions of Shakespeare at the Savoy Theatre since 1912 had shaken up the theatrical world. Many in London Society attended the supper and the article examines the evening, lists the Barrie plays that the Elgars attended and sets out the importance of childhood in the work of both men.

On 16 July 2022, early in the Proms season, John Wilson and the Sinfonia of London performed the *Variations* at the Royal Albert Hall. The performance was notable for the fact that Wilson used a score edited by Christopher Hogwood in 2007 and published by Bärenreiter. It appeared that many Elgarians were unaware of this newly edited score and wished to know to what extent this varied – if at all – from the score long published by Novello. Julian Rushton, who wrote the study of the *Variations* in the Cambridge Music Handbook series (1999), has carried out a forensic examination of Elgar's autograph score, the orchestral parts, the Novello score published in 1899, the subsequent one published in 1904, The Elgar Complete Edition score of 1986 and the Hogwood edition. We are most grateful to Professor Rushton for undertaking this detailed but fascinating study of this important score.

The Elgar Complete Edition continues its excellent work, and the latest volume is devoted to the early cantatas *The Black Knight* and *The Banner of Saint George*. Jonathan Hope, Assistant

Music Director at Gloucester Cathedral, has reviewed both scores.

The Society's recent publication of essays, *A Pilgrim in Cockaigne*, is given a second review by Michael Trott. The book prints sixteen lectures given to the London Branch and concludes with a detailed history of the Branch covering its 50 years since 1971. There are lectures by Michael Kennedy, Robert Saxton, Teresa Cahill, and Wulstan Atkins, as well as twelve others by Society members, and there is much new and fascinating detail to be discovered within its 500 pages. Members can purchase it at a discount; details are on the Society website and ordering details are also given at the end of the review.

Relf Clark reviews a new publication by Edward Dusinberre, *Distant Melodies: music in search of home*, which contains two chapters dealing with Elgarian landscapes, the Wye Valley and the Malvern Hills, followed by the landscape in and around Fittleworth, West Sussex.

The 150th anniversary of Vaughan Williams' birth has given an additional impetus to his already high reputation and readers will welcome a splendid new biography by Eric Saylor in the Master Musicians series: this replaces the previous volume by James Day, which enjoyed several editions and did sterling service since 1961. Saylor's biography incorporates recent research into RVW and is reviewed by David Morris, who also considers a magnificent two-CD set from SOMM of *A London Symphony*, two recordings of the Fifth Symphony (including the premiere) and *Dona Nobis Pacem*, all conducted by the composer. Both the book and CDs are not to be missed.

A few new CDs of Elgar's music have appeared in recent months. Steven Halls reviews the Lionel Tertis arrangement for viola of the Cello Concerto played by Timothy Ridout with Martyn Brabbins and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He concludes that the viola fully expresses the grief contained in the Concerto and highly recommends the disc.

Stephen Dickinson has listened to two CDs from EM Records. Rupert Marshall-Luck and the pianist Duncan Honeybourne play Elgar's Sonata for Violin and Piano, coupled with the little-known sonata for the same forces by Ivor Gurney – this is a most desirable disc. Marshall-Luck is the soloist in the second disc, comprising unaccompanied violin music by Tovey, Sammons and Elgar – his *Etudes Caracteristiques pour violon seul*, op. 24.

The Chandos recordings made thus far by John Wilson and the Sinfonia of London have been met with general acclaim and his latest recording, of string music by Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Howells and Delius, continues the high standard that has been evident in all their previous discs. Andrew Neill warmly welcomes this CD.

We recently received a letter from a member who commented on the lack of articles by women in this *Journal*. Whilst we were able to respond that there have been a number of contributions by women over the years, it is undoubtedly true that such have been in the minority. However, and as we were able to reassure our correspondent, this is not due to any discriminatory policy on our part, but simply because we are not offered suitable articles for consideration – we do not commission pieces for the *Journal*. We would welcome contributions from all members, whatever their gender, so if any of our readers would like to submit an article for consideration we would warmly encourage them to do so. In this connection, intending contributors are invited to have an early discussion with the Editors about their proposed article, to ensure that it will be acceptable for publication. For example, it may not be possible to publish articles on similar subjects, especially within close proximity to each other, although there may be exceptions.

The deadline for contributions for the August issue is 5 June 2023.

Kevin Mitchell

With the Editorial team, Andrew Dalton, David Morris and Andrew Neill

‘A little music’:

Elgar’s music for Laurence Binyon’s verse play

Arthur – A Tragedy

First performed at the Old Vic, London, 12 March 1923

Andrew Neill

The late Martin Bird, as assiduous a researcher as anyone, shortly before his death undertook some work in the British Library on Elgar’s Arthur. The fruits of this work have been generously passed to me by Chris Bennett who stresses that Martin had not checked and, if necessary, revised this material. The British Library reference numbers are shown as footnotes. The deadline for this article prevented me from checking the material myself. However, should any of this prove to be incorrect I will, naturally, publish a later correction. Having said that, what Martin copied displays no obvious inaccuracies. I am also grateful to Robert Kay for his advice during the preparation of this article. A synopsis of the play is available on the Society’s web-site.

Elgar’s music for Binyon’s *Arthur*, the play having had just one production, is one of the last pieces of substantial music composed by Elgar. *Arthur* is a significant point in Elgar’s creative life because the music is evidence that, with the right stimulus, his composing days were not yet over. Furthermore, the music for *Arthur* is of sufficient quality to justify this reconsideration.

In the December 2014 edition of this *Journal* (Vol. 18 No. 6) I contributed an article entitled: “‘As if it was England singing’”: Edward Elgar & Laurence Binyon in war and peace’. This covered all Elgar’s collaborations with Binyon including the version of *Carillon* that he wrote in 1942. It was also an expanded version of the notes I wrote for the SOMM release of ‘The Binyon Settings’ (SOMMCD 256) which included the complete incidental music for *Arthur* in its original orchestration for the Old Vic theatre. What follows is an amended version of the 2014 article. The music for *Arthur* does not have to share space with the other Binyon settings. It can now take its place in the sun.

The story of King Arthur, as told by Sir Thomas Malory in his *Le Morte d’Arthur* 600 years ago has, at its heart, characters who reflect the best and worst of the human condition. Much of what is good is turned to dust as flawed heroes, and a villain in Mordred, circle around the King and either die or are banished. Binyon draws on Malory’s tales (largely the final two parts) and paints an austere, subtly shaded world drained of colour: the consequences of passions sated. Guinevere and Lancelot may embrace but they seem barely to touch; their physical relationship is in the

past even though it is their adultery that destroys Arthur and his kingdom. ‘The mood throughout is solemn, tender, wistful. Even so well-worn a theme is given fresh inspiration (not without an echo here and there of Tennyson) by the new pen’.¹ Malory juggles time, distance and place and Binyon in his adaptation does so too, replacing the stylized rituals of the Court with his version of the story. In so doing he creates a pervading atmosphere of sadness that is only alleviated twice: first by the coarse attempt of Mordred to expose Guinevere and Launcelot and then through the battle before Launcelot’s stronghold of Joyous Gard. This is reflected in Elgar’s music which is more melancholic than heroic and echoes the words of Guinevere in her last speech, mourning the King and the passing of his world:

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

The play was to be produced at The Old Vic theatre near Waterloo station and Binyon arranged for a direct line of communication between Elgar and Lilian Baylis the proprietor of the theatre.² On 24 January from his office in the British Museum, Binyon wrote to Elgar

My dear Elgar

Just a line to say that I have seen Miss Baylis tonight. I told her you wanted to know what resources she could provide & she offered to write to you. I think she would do all she could to meet your wishes, as she realises what a distinction it would be for the Old Vic. No other music would be played. They don’t want much in the way of quantity.

I do hope it may be arranged but everything must be as you wish or it is no use.

I am infinitely grateful to you, whatever happens.

Yours ever

L.B.³

Lilian Baylis wasted no time and wrote to Elgar the same day from the Old Vic.

Dear Sir Edward Elgar,

Laurence Binyon has just been in and told us of the wonderful news that you are willing to “write a little music” for “Arthur” which we are producing here on March 12th. We are all so thrilled by your kindness, and I cannot attempt to thank you adequately.

I enclose a list of instruments* which comprise our regular orchestra, and my conductor, Charles Corri⁴, would be happy to call on you at any time to discuss further details, should you wish it.

1 Maurice Willson Disher, *The Last Romantic, The Authorised biography of Sir John Martin-Harvey* (London, Hutchinson & Co, 1948), 237.

2 Lilian Baylis (1874-1937), an accomplished musician, was manager of the Old Vic from 1912 until her death.

3 British Library Letter 6314. Transcribed by Martin Bird as are all BL numbered documents.

4 Charles Montague Corri (1861-1941). Musical director of the Old Vic Theatre and later at Sadler’s Wells Opera. He conducted most of the *Arthur* performances.

Robert Atkins⁵, who will produce the play, has promised to let me know the scenes for which he would suggest music, in addition to the overture and the entr'acte for the long interval, and I will forward this to you as soon as I can. I do not quite understand from Mr. Binyon whether you are willing to write all the music that is to be used, or not?

I do not know whether our production of Henry VI would interest you, because I need hardly say that I should esteem it an honour to place a box at your disposal for this and any other play.

Yours sincerely

Lilian Baylis⁶

*See under 'The Orchestra', below.

It is now clear that Elgar was moving well beyond becoming intrigued and he wrote to his daughter, Carice, on 28 January which suggests he was about to cross his own 'Rubicon'. Carice and her husband Samuel Blake were living on his farm near Chilworth in Surrey. Subsequent letters show that matters developed quickly.

I have half-promised (you will understand) to write some incidental music for Binyon's play to be produced in March: I see the stage manager tomorrow (Monday) and will decide for or against. I've seen Binyon dear little man, today but the theatre (Old Vic) may make difficulties etc.

NOW

this is the point: if I do it can I come to you for (say) a week & work on the piano score in your drawing room every morning. I cant [sic] do it at the flat – I should not be much trouble & shd be (D.V.) writing sketches which I can complete here or anywhere. It might be a bore to Henry (& dogs) & you may be having people etc. etc. but again it might not 'urt' you. ??

If you wd. rather not have me (& I shall quite understand if you do not) I shall go to Perryfield if they can have me.

Will you send me a wire as soon as you can on receipt of this just saying "Yes dearest father" – "No, you drivelly old blighter" – which is more of this age & what I expect. I shd. bring a mike: I think & might want to arrive on Wedy. There is no time to write the stuff unless I begin 'to onct'⁷

31/01/23

My dear Binyon:

I have seen Mr. Atkins & compared notes - there is not much difference betn. your views & his - the scenes (save perhaps in one case) must be 'linked' with music-two minutes sort of thing but no 'formal' break.

Now: the position, or rather my position is this: I want to do it but since my dear wife's death I have done nothing & fear my music has vanished. I am going to my daughter's tomorrow & shall be quiet & things arranged for me as of old: my wife loved your things & it may be that I can furnish (quite inadequate) music for 'Arthur' - Can you give me three days more to 'try'?

5 Robert Atkins (1886-1972) actor, founder of the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, producer and director was, among many of his accomplishments, Director of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford upon Avon. He was also Director of Productions for Lilian Baylis at the Old Vic Theatre (1922-1925).

6 BL 6312.

7 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Letters of a Lifetime* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2012), 414.

I have not written to Miss Baylis or Mr. Atkins because I want you to know how the matter stands in my mind.

Anyhow I am delighted with your work & wish to do my small elucidating part.

My address will be
at Lockner
Chilworth
Surrey
Yours ever
Edward Elgar⁸

02/02/23

My dear Elgar,

I simply can't thank you enough. Even should you find that the spirit does not move you, I shall always prize the recollection of your wish to do this music for my play. But I can't help hoping.

ever gratefully yours
Laurence Binyon⁹

09/02/23

My dear Elgar,

Thanks so much – Your note was good to get. I am very glad you like the play, & I am sure your 'touches' will give it just the right atmosphere needed. I expect to see Atkins tomorrow & will tell him what you say.

Hoping to see you soon,
Yours ever
L.B.¹⁰

19/02/23

My dear Elgar,

I have just heard from Miss Baylis that Mr. Corri and, if he can get away, Mr. Atkins are going to meet you on Wednesday, as you suggested. Thank you so much for asking me – I must certainly get off somehow. Miss Baylis mentions 11 as the time. I will try to be at Old Queen St then – but don't wait for me – and shall be happy to lunch with you & Mr. Schuster.

I can never thank you enough for this great honour of giving your music to my play.

Yours ever
L.B.¹¹

8 Moore, 415.

9 Moore. 415.

10 6318

11 6317

19/02/23

Dear Sir Edward,

Many thanks for your letter of the 16th.

I have arranged with Mr. Corri that he shall be at the address you mention at 11 on Wednesday next, and I have spoken to Mr. Atkins, who will also do his best to be there. It is, unfortunately, a very heavy week for him, with dress rehearsals of *Everyman* and *Richard III*, the first performance of the former, and the strain of rehearsing one part, (he is playing *Richard*.) and playing another, so that I know that you will understand if he is unable to keep the appointment.

I hear from Mr. Corri that you mentioned the inclusion of a harp to Mr. Atkins. I fear that the least this instrument would cost for rehearsals and the 9 performances would be £20; we did make it clear to you in our letter of January 24th when it was first suggested that you might very kindly arrange the music for “*Arthur*” which instruments were in our orchestra, so that I hope that you will not feel that this additional expense is essential. We sincerely trust that Laurence Binyon’s play, with the great attraction of your music, will attract a large enough audience to cover the expenses. We have lost heavily on the production of the *Histories*, and had it not been for the Mozart Operas last week which always draw splendid houses, we should have been at a really serious loss. Your great kindness in writing this music proves that you know that the Vic is not like a commercial theatre, and that financial considerations are a serious proposition.

Yours most gratefully,

Lilian Baylis¹²

21/02/23 (To Carice)

I have seen the Old Vic people today (at F. Schusters) & been thro’ the music – its good – bravo Lockner! old-fashioned o’course. It’s all about Astolob which, after I left you, I find is Guildford so K. Arthur has Knights & their Megs – I mean dogs!¹³ – must have wandered down your valleyable valley very often.¹⁴

22/02/23

Dear Sir Edward,

Mr. Corri is already at work on the music you sent over this morning; thank you so much for being so prompt.

We are all looking forward with the keenest pleasure to the 12th. March. I am hoping that the unique combination of your music and Mr. Binyon’s verse will result in the play appealing to both our Shakespeare and Opera audiences, and that we shall have a repetition of the success of *Peer Gynt*, which was solely owing to this double attraction. Everything good in this theatre has come from music, and if our opera audiences had not supported the drama in the early days, when to produce Shakespeare was said to spell disaster, we should not occupy our present position as the nearest approach to a national theatre in the country. I feel that many of our less musical friends overlook this aspect of our case, and I always feel glad when I can to testify [sic] to what the Vic owes to music.

I hardly dare to suggest that we increase our debt of gratitude to music by saying that if our little orchestra gives you the satisfaction you hope for, it would be a fitting climax to your kindness if

12 6311

13 Meg was the name of Carice’s Aberdeen terrier.

14 240

you could conduct at the opening performance? I know that I have no right to suggest this, but our audience would be so pleased by the honour that I make bold to do so.

I hope you will be here on the 12th in any case, and if you would let me know whether you would prefer stalls or a box, I would be pleased to reserve whichever you choose.

Mr. Corri will be writing to you on the rehearsals.

Yours most gratefully
Lilian Baylis¹⁵

A letter dated 13 February to Madge Grafton confirmed that Elgar had signed a lease on Napleton Grange at Kempsey and that he was ‘overwhelmed with the Arthur Music – I am writing entr’actes but have now done the heavy work & taken the first lucid moment to write to my niece’.¹⁶ However the full score was complete by the 26 February and delivered to Lilian Baylis.

Dear Sir Edward,

Thank you for the remainder of the music which came this morning, and also for considering the suggestion that you should conduct at the performance on the 12th. I very much hope that you will be able to do so; but I know it would be an honour for which we can hardly hope.

I have great pleasure in enclosing a ticket for a box on that night.

Yours gratefully,
Lilian Baylis¹⁷

01/03/23 *The Old Vic Magazine*

Many compliments have been paid to the work at the Vic by great men, but nobody has done it more honour than Sir Edward Elgar, now that he has consented to write the incidental music for Laurence Binyon’s ‘Arthur’. Monday, March 12th is going to be a proud night for the theatre, especially now it learns it is not too much to hope that Sir Edward may conduct his own work in person.¹⁸

01/03/23

My dear Elgar,

Atkins has not quite decided yet what scenes to rehearse on what day, but he hopes to see you tomorrow at your rehearsal, by which time he will probably have it planned out. He wants to meet your wishes. I gave him your proofs to study & he will give them back to you. Everybody is working very hard. We did the banqueting scene this afternoon. Tomorrow evening they will do the nunnery scenes, I believe, & if I remember rightly, also scenes 1 & 3. The Elaine is charming.¹⁹

Yours ever
L.B.

15 6309

16 Moore, *Letters of a Lifetime*

17 6310

18 6322

19 6316

The first rehearsal of the Arthur music took place on the evening of 2 March, witnessed by Hannen Swaffer²⁰ of *The Sunday Times*:

It is seldom you see Sir Edward Elgar in the theatre, but last Friday's scene at the Old Vic, with only two lights lessening the darkness, would have fascinated Degas. Sir Edward sat at Charles Corri's conductor's seat, had spent hours in teaching the music he had specially written for Laurence Binyon's "Arthur" which is to be staged there next week. Fancy the greatest composer in England conducting ten musicians in the Waterloo Road! This is the sort of enthusiasm that no other theatre in England ever awakens. Within twenty-four hours last week, Elgar, Ethel Smyth, and Nicholas Gatty²¹ all conducted the Old Vic. Orchestra.²²

The conductor Lawrance Collingwood (1887-1982) was also there and met Elgar for the first time. He commented that 'E became rather fiery and excited when he could not get the players to "go quick enough"'.²³ Having performed under the formidable Dame Ethel, the members of the Old Vic orchestra may have found rehearsing with Elgar less stressful even as he insisted on the finest results. On 6 March Carice and Alice Stuart of Wortley (*The Windflower*) came to a rehearsal which the latter 'liked' and the Sunday Times wrote further on the production on 11 March:

Sir Edward Elgar's patience all through the long and trying rehearsals of 'Arthur', the poetic drama by Laurence Binyon, was monumental. He composed the music to please his friend the author, and he sat about for hours at the Old Vic, last Friday, smoking his pipe, just as Barrie does during rehearsal. Dégas missed a wonderful picture as England's greatest composer, his face half-lit by the light in his pipe, waited at the conductor's desk while the stage hands struggled with the scanty properties, and Lilian Baylis sat in the box admiring him.

Elgar passed a minute of the time by paying a compliment to Jane Bacon, who will play Elaine. "Had I seen you in that dress before," he said, looking at the white robe she wears in her death scene, "I should have written more beautiful music. I think I'll take it away and re-write it."²⁴

Arthur duly opened on 12 March (the first of nine performances: 12, 14, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23 & 31st – matinee and evening), with the music conducted by Elgar. Subsequent performances were conducted by Charles Corri although Elgar paid for the extra five players he required and conducted the last two performances during what would have been a very long day.

The cast included Wilfred Walter as Arthur, Douglas Burbridge as Launcelot (really the principal character), Rupert Harvey as Mordred, and the Old Vic's leading lady, Florence Buckton as Guinevere. Others taking the smaller parts included John Laurie (the future Private Fraser in BBC TV's *Dad's Army*).

Binyon sealed his gratitude by dedicating *Arthur* to Sir John Martin-Harvey and presenting a signed copy of the play which he gave to Elgar on the opening night. This was attended by the Stuart Wortleys who took a box and, afterwards, hosted supper in the Savoy. They were joined by

20 Frederick Hannen Swaffer (1879-1962), drama critic.

21 Nicholas Comyn Gatty (1874 –1946) composer and music critic. Ethel Smyth had conducted a performance of her opera, *The Boatswain's Mate*.

22 *Sunday Times* (04/03/23)

23 From the papers of Malcolm Walker whose recent death prevented further checking of this anecdote.

24 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984),

“ARTHUR”

By LAURENCE BINYON, in collaboration with Sir JOHN MARTIN HARVEY, and with Incidental Music kindly written for the occasion by Sir EDWARD ELGAR, O.M.

Produced by ROBERT ATKINS and played by the “VIC” SHAKESPEARE COMPANY.

Scene 1: Sir Bernard’s castle at Astolat

Scene 2: The Palace at London

Scene 3: Sir Bernard’s castle at Astolat

Scene 4: Westminster, the banqueting hall

Interval

Scene 5: The Queen’s tower

Scene 6: The King’s tower

Scene 7: The King’s camp before Joyous Gard

Scene 8: The nunnery at Amesbury

Scene 9: As Scene Eight¹

The Orchestra will play under the direction of Charles Corri

Elgar, Binyon, Frank Schuster and General Sir George and Lady Arthur. The first reviews appeared the following day.

13/03/23 *The Times*

The production of a play in verse by a living poet is an event so rare that it is secure of its welcome. The play of Mr. Binyon’s is a direct telling of the story of Launcelot, Guinevere and Elaine. There can be no complaint on the ground that it is slow or disorderly in its action or that it is work for the library rather than the stage. It had none of these faults so common in poets who write for the theatre - the fault which springs from having forgotten both player and audience in the course of a subtle and personal intellectual adventure. Yet Arthur falls short of success. Perhaps it is because Mr. Binyon, with Sir John Martin Harvey at his elbow, has allowed his thought to be too often and too sharply interrupted by fear of the errors into which other men have fallen; perhaps because, in a laudable determination to pursue simplicity, he has stripped the Arthurian legend of the imagining with which he might otherwise have given it life.

1 Elgar’s music is headed ‘VIII’ and it is probable that the two scenes were run together in production. In Binyon’s play, Scene 9 is where the death of Arthur is mentioned.

Whatever the reason, the result is bare, nor is it the bareness of austerity. There is romance enough, high colour, phrasing that is always rich and sometimes beautiful, yet always a sense that, though he felt the glamour of the story, Mr. Binyon's intellect found it a little tedious before it was done.

The acting is good, though nowhere of particular distinction. Mr. Douglas Burbridge, Mr. Walter and Miss Florence were handicapped by having been given so few of the mind's subtleties to interpret, and Miss Jane Bacon is a beautiful, though sometimes too tremulous, Elaine.

14/03/23 *The Times*

Binyon had not ... taken the opportunity which the theme presents of making Arthur alive in the council chamber, so that he may, by contrast, appear the more vividly in his personal life. Launcelot is flat virtue, Elaine flat pathos, and Guinevere crude in her contrasts. It is, perhaps, a literal fulfilment of the legend, but has all its crises and swift movement; it lacks interest because the thought with which it is woven is spun so thin.

Before this, Lilian Baylis wrote to Elgar on 13 March.

Dear Sir Edward,

It would be impossible to thank you adequately for your kindness to us with regard to the "Arthur" music. I can only hope that you will realise that it is the amount of my gratitude which makes me dumb.

It was very kind of you to provide the extra musicians yourself, and had you spoken to me about it before-hand I would gladly have arranged for them to be there myself, as the booking for last night was good.

If, as Mr. Corri has told me, you really would be good enough to conduct at another performance, and could manage to arrange to take either, or both, of the performances on Saturday, March 31st. when the booking is good, I will arrange for the extra musicians to be here at my own expense.

Yours sincerely
Lilian Baylis

On 16 March Elgar took W H Reed to the Old Vic,

... they sat as unobtrusively as possible in the back row of the upper circle, as he did not wish to be seen, but wanted me to see how the music fitted in with the various situations, which indeed it did perfectly, Elgar having always had a strong sense of the theatre and of stagecraft, so much so that many of his friends thought he would yet write an opera'.²⁵

18/03/23

Dear Sir Edward,
re new members.

I can quite see when to finish and also at end, but wanted to hear it, & it is quite good – will follow your instructions re music &c.

Will you please forward amount for the five extras, opening night, (£5-5-0)

25 W. H. Reed *Elgar* (London: J. M. Dent, 1938), 134.

Thanking you for kindly words
Faithfully yours
Charles Corri

We have two shows of “Arthur” Sat 31st. Miss Baylis & myself would like you to conduct one or **both** & would defray the cost of extras, but you must quite **understand** I cannot promise to have the **same** gentlemen - but would do my best. The others are quite conversant with the music & you should have an easy time.
CC.²⁶

On the 18th an additional trumpet call for Launcelot’s music was duly added to the play and, following Charles Corri’s request, Elgar agreed to conduct the final two performances with the five extra performers whom he paid personally.



Charles Corri

24/03/23 Edgell Rickword,²⁷
The New Statesman

It is this aftermath of passion which falls in best with Mr. Binyon’s rather faintly-coloured verse, this and the despair of Arthur, when he knows himself betrayed by his friend and champion knight. In the language of actual passion he is a little formal, but never vulgar and never prosaic. Perhaps this meticulousness cost too dear, but at least it has given us a noble and dignified study of the conflict between love and duty. The character of Arthur is invested with a lofty idealism which breaks at last in the humility that knows itself incompetent to pardon or condemn. But every writer yet (except Malory), by imagining Arthur first and foremost as a lover, has placed him in the position of the cuckold, which to our barbaric instincts is still ridiculous. Perhaps for this reason Arthur has so far failed to touch the popular heart.²⁸

At last a critic noticed the music:

01/04/23 Ferruccio Bonavia²⁹, *The Musical Times*

In the tender phrases which characterise the unfortunate Elaine, as in the musing phrases which prepare us for the clash of arms, the Elgarian idiom is evident even though there is not the faintest likeness between this and any other music of his. Here is yet another proof of the manifold quality of Elgar’s genius, which can adapt itself to the most varied situations without ever losing its typical accent.³⁰

In addition to the performances of *Arthur*, the week developed into something of a social event. The *Windflower* attended three times and Carice at least twice. Meanwhile, Elgar wrote to Binyon on 18 March in which his abilities as ‘a good and at times a severe critic’ were displayed.

26 6321

27 John Edgell Rickword, MC (1898 –1982) poet, critic and journalist.

28 Robert Anderson, *Elgar and Chivalry* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2002), 385.

29 Ferruccio Bonavia (1877-1950), Italian born violinist, composer and sympathetic music critic.

30 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 764.

18/03/23

My dear Binyon:

Very many thanks for the copy of 'Arthur' & your inscription which includes more than I deserve. It was the greatest pleasure to be associated with you in the manner of production & I hope you are pleased with the reception of your work. This is not the day I fear for big things but there are some still left amongst theatre people who can see & feel great stuff.

The end of a play which depends upon two persons or one only is always risky: for theatrical purposes I shd have liked Arthur & all his train to march mistily past, seen through a window on the stage R - however you know best.

My love to you

Yrs. ever

Edward Elgar³¹

19/03/23

Dear Mrs Blake,

Thank you so much for writing. Your letter gave me great pleasure. I simply can't express what I feel about your father's generosity & the honour he has done me. I feel quite overwhelmed. And he has been so absolutely charming about it all through, I hope & think he got some enjoyment out of it. The music is enormously appreciated. I have a letter from a stranger - very nice - ending 'And Elgar's music, how divine!' He is one of many enthusiasts. I wish you would have been there at the first night: it was glorious.

My wife sends her kindest remembrances. Do look us up if you have time when in town.

And thank you warmly for writing.

Sincerely yours

Laurence Binyon³²

27/03/23

Tuesday

My dear W.

I am still in town but overwhelmed with 'packing' up a few books & things to send on to Napleton Grange Kempsey nr. Worcester.

I am not sure about conducting at the Old Vic: on Saty but I may do both performances if they can get the extra instrumentalists. Carice is coming

What heavenly weather

EE³³

Saturday, 31st March, 1923

Lunched with E.E., Mr. Reed, Carice [sic], Pall Mall [Restaurant] - & afterwards to King Arthur, Old Vic³⁴

31 Moore, 417.

32 10348

33 7840

34 From a note by Clare Stuart Wortley.

Robert Atkins wrote this account of the production:³⁵

In March 1923 we staged *Arthur*, a tragedy, a play out of Malory's pages as the author Laurence Binyon described it. It was in verse and written for Sir John and Lady Harvey³⁶, but they never produced it. This did not surprise me for with a speaking cast of twenty-nine plus a host of supernumeraries, a demanding scenic display, including barges for Elaine floating down-river to Westminster, and for the sorrowing Queen conveying Arthur to Avalon, it would have taxed the then financial position of the great manager, and I wished Miss Baylis to postpone until the autumn, but for what reason I never knew, it had to be in the spring of 1923.

A feature of the occasion was the incidental music composed by Sir Edward Elgar. Unfortunately, the score was never published, and at the end of the run the orchestral parts disappeared. This was my first meeting with Sir Edward and the association ripened into a friendship that lasted to his death. He was an ardent theatre-goer and attended many rehearsals, disclosing himself as a good and at times a severe critic.

He helped me by persuading Binyon to allow my cutting, for the play, containing many moments of great beauty, was overlong and overwritten, and realism had to be sacrificed to allow word images to register. His verse was not very actable, and a long battle scene with much dialogue offered difficulties which I overcame by presenting a series of static figures in combat, silhouetted against the sky, with only the faces of the actors illuminated by a torch concealed in their costume. The trick worked, much to the admiration of many onlookers and the press. I borrowed the idea from Tree's silent tableaux for *King John*, but without scenery, for I presented *Arthur* in curtains.³⁷

I suffered many a qualm during rehearsals for the augmentation of the acting company was not easy, as the pay was poor and the run for two weeks only, and the costume hire went far beyond the average weekly outlay, but fortunately the regulars liked the offering and the names of Binyon and Elgar attracted newcomers from the world of literature and music.

Yes we hit the target with a firm knock as when a vexed Sir Edward broke a baton on the bald head of an instrumentalist during an orchestral rehearsal.

Atkins shows that the production was 'minimal' to say the least and that tensions ran high at times, if Elgar's breaking of his baton is anything to go by. Of course, it could all have been in fun which, from what we know of him, may well have been the case.

It was Sir John Martin-Harvey who had suggested, in 1912, the idea of *Arthur* and proposed Binyon as its author. Although cautious about tackling such a well-worn subject Binyon worked on the play 'intermittently during the war'³⁸ eventually offering the play to Martin-Harvey whom, it was expected, would 'be the star part, but at the reading of the MS, Martin Harvey says, "my wife much preferred my expression of the King, and, with Binyon's concurrence, it was decided that I should play Arthur"³⁹. This led to Binyon re-writing some of the play to emphasise the role of Arthur. A lavish production at Covent Garden was envisaged with sets and costumes designed by

35 Robert Atkins, (ed. George Rowell), *An Unfinished Biography* (London, The Society for Theatrical Research, 1994), 110.

36 Sir John Martin-Harvey (1863-1944). Angelita Helena Margarita, Lady Martin-Harvey (c.1865-1949).

37 Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1853-1917).

38 John Hatcher, *Laurence Binyon Poet, Scholar of East and West* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995), 221.

39 Disher, 237.



**Robert Atkins with Lilian Baylis,
Old Vic 1920-1925**



Sir John Martin-Harvey

Anning Bell.⁴⁰ ‘Martin-Harvey spent £1,600 on costumes alone. Robert Loraine (1876-1935) was engaged to play Launcelot (which remains the ‘star part’), thus bringing together two of the most charismatic actors of their generation. Loraine had also distinguished himself as an air ace during the war, however, and this proved the production’s undoing. At the last moment his war-weakened health broke down, his doctor insisted he take a long sea voyage to recuperate, and Arthur was hastily replaced by a revival of Martin-Harvey’s famous Hamlet’.⁴¹

So, a lavish production gave way to one ‘with curtains’ but with the music of Edward Elgar who inadvertently disguised its quality for some time. For example, he insisted that Basil Maine made no mention of *Arthur* in his biography of the composer who intended, as we now know, to use music from *Arthur*, notably that from the Banquet scene, in his Third Symphony. Atkins and Binyon ended with rather more music than they had anticipated, with Elgar expanding some of the scenes beyond the request for ‘an overture and music between each of the nine scenes to introduce the main character in the next section’.⁴²

Arthur did not survive the lukewarm criticisms and soon the play and its music were forgotten. Binyon valued his relationship with Elgar and expressed the hope of a future collaboration; but it was not to be.

40 Robert Anning Bell, R.A. (1863-1933).

41 Hatcher, 222.

42 Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), 271.

11 April 1923

My dear Elgar,

Thank you so much for sending me the cutting, which I return herewith. I have just come back from a week in a remote corner of Cornwall. It rained nearly all the time, but was a refreshment. I am so very glad you enjoyed the play & inspiriting it with music, which I hope will herald more - I enjoyed it all enormously, & not least your co-operation. I hope I might write a better - a really good play - some day.

Hoping to see you soon,

ever yours

Laurence Binyon⁴³

The Orchestra

Below is the list of instruments attached to the letter from Lilian Baylis to Elgar of 24 January 1923.

Two first violins
One second violin
One viola
One double bass
Flute
Clarinet
Cornet (or trumpet)
Piano

To this list, Elgar added: ‘?Harp ?Cello ?Trombone 2 Cornets?’. Later timpani and a bell in E were also included at his expense.

When Elgar conducted it is believed that the Old Vic orchestra consisted of thirteen or fourteen players: Flute (doubling piccolo), Clarinet in B flat, two Cornets in B flat (doubling Trumpet in B flat), Trombone, Percussion (Elgar wrote: ‘Drums etc’: Timpani, Triangle, Side Drum, Cymbal, Bass Drum, Tambourine, Gong, Bell in E), Harp, Two First Violins, and one each Second Violin, Viola, Bello, Bass and Piano. Conductor Ben Palmer who edited the score for the SOMM recording advised that ‘the piano part is never independent and may well have been used to ‘cue in’ instruments missing from certain performances. Robert Kay (well-known to readers of this *Journal*) makes the point that ‘in addition to filling in absent parts (if a player was not present for some reason) the piano part gives valuable depth and sonority to an orchestral line-up which, given the paucity of players, would have otherwise sounded thin and bass-deficient’.⁴⁴ From the markings Elgar added to the manuscript (he conducted the performances from this score), it looks likely that not all the musicians were present for all the performances of the music for eight of the nine scenes.

43 6319

44 From an email to the author, February 2023. Other undated quotations from Mr Kay derive from the same exchange of emails.

The Music

Although apparently lost, the score for *Arthur* ‘was acquired by the conductor Joseph Lewis and later given to [the conductor] Alan Barlow’.⁴⁵ Robert Kay then edited and arranged the music for full orchestra, the result of his labours being published by Acuta Music in 2010. Mr Kay commented that ‘in re-orchestrating Elgar’s original theatre-band score for full symphony orchestra, the scoring for strings, harp and percussion has been left virtually unaltered (with some additions to the percussion parts) the remaining material has been distributed among the woodwind and brass instruments (the theatre piano omitted)’.

That, in effect, was that. His next Symphony would, Elgar anticipated, absorb some of the music for *Arthur* but otherwise it was forgotten until the 1973 release of the Polydor/Chandos recording of the music, then edited for orchestra by Alan Barlow. Somehow the word ‘King’ had crept into the title (thereby offering a clear explanation about the music) and in the recording, conducted by George Hurst, it was called the *King Arthur Suite*. Fifty years previously, Elgar moved on quickly and became intrigued by a proposal which would combine his interest in mechanics and music: the *Loughborough Carillon*. This was performed for the first time by the distinguished Belgian carillonneur Josef Denyn on 22 July 2023.

Arthur represented the last of Elgar’s music which he completed for the theatre, and demonstrated his apparent happiness to fit in with the modest resources available. The SOMM recording of the complete music gives the listener a vivid idea of what those attending the theatre might have heard. Mostly this would have worked, but I recall conductor Ben Palmer’s comment that the music for the battle scene sounded more as if it was from *Monty Python* than anything else! However, I agree with Robert Kay’s view, bearing in mind the sound in the theatre, that the music ‘is extremely tightly argued musically, contains references to virtually all the main musical motifs, and is (in its two minutes’ span) almost unprecedentedly violent (for Elgar). In other words, extremely effective’.

After 50 years it seems strange that the 1973 recording remains the only extant version of the full orchestrated suite. I leave the last words to Robert Kay who has done as much as anyone to promote this intriguing music: ‘The Chandos recording basically uses the original pit orchestra, with all its faults as regards sonority, but the engineers did a good job. A more serious problem is that the movements tend to end in mid-air as did the original stage ‘fade outs’ rather than having definitive endings as is more appropriate to an orchestral suite’. Robert Kay’s *King Arthur Suite* meets this problem and, with its full-orchestral colouring, gives this music a new lease of life. It deserves it.

Andrew Neill is a former Chairman of the Elgar Society.

45 R. H. Kay, *King Arthur Suite*, (Ledbury: Acuta Music, 2010), Foreword to the orchestral score.

‘Pictured Within’ - Richard Penrose Arnold

Part One: A Prodigal Son

Kevin Allen contributes another in a series of occasional articles investigating the lives of some of the characters of *Elgar's Variations Op. 36*, and their spouses.

Parentage is a very important profession; but no test of fitness for it is ever imposed in the interest of the children.

George Bernard Shaw

Dicky has just come in, in *trousers*; it breaks one's heart to think of his changing the dress that one knows him so by.

Matthew Arnold

... not only the kindest & most indulgent of fathers, but the dearest & most intimate of friends as well.

Richard Penrose Arnold

The *Variations* began in a spirit of humour, wrote Elgar, and continued in deep seriousness. Perhaps no single movement expresses those contrasts more than the fifth, ‘RPA’, with its complete oppositions of mood and style. The music begins solemnly, even forebodingly, in C minor, with the special intensity of unison violins *sul g* counterpointing the ‘enigma’ theme *sostenuto* in the bass.¹ But after six bars the mood alters completely as staccato woodwind, now in the major, present a new tripping figure irresistibly suggestive of laughter. The contrasting patterns repeat, before the movement concludes with the violin figure, now set on a firm bed of trombone tone, gradually subsiding and leading *attacca* into the unclouded serenity of ‘Ysobel’. In explaining his friend's contrasting moods, so suggestive of the duality of the man, his public and his private self, as it were, Elgar was careful to acknowledge the nature of his musicality.

1 This variation had special connotations for Vaughan Williams, who wrote, ‘When I hear [it] I feel the same sense of familiarity, the same sense of the something peculiarly belonging to me as an Englishman which I also felt when I first heard “Bushes and Briars” or “Lazarus”’. Ralph Vaughan Williams, ‘The Evolution of the Folk Song’ in *National Music*, OUP, 1934.

Richard P. Arnold, son of Matthew Arnold. A great lover of music which he played (on the pianoforte) in a self-taught manner, evading difficulties but suggesting in a mysterious way the real feeling. His serious conversation was continually broken up by whimsical and witty remarks. The theme is given by the basses with solemnity and in the ensuing major portion there is much light-hearted badinage among the wind instruments.²

Family Background

Of all Elgar's friendships, inside or outside of the 'enigma' circle, that with Richard Penrose Arnold stands out as being unique in its cultural associations. His grandfather was Thomas Arnold, the charismatic, reforming Headmaster of Rugby of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* fame, the creator of the modern public school system, and the founder of a dynasty of conscientious liberal-humanists who represent some significant ideas of Victorian life and thought. Of his nine surviving children, Thomas was active as a scholar and journalist, and became an Inspector of Schools in New Zealand, subsequently holding academic posts at Oxford and Dublin. William Delafield became a soldier serving abroad in India, and was the writer of an autobiographical novel; as Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab, with characteristic Arnoldian conscientiousness, he forbade the imposition of Bible teaching as unfair to the Indians. Edward was a Fellow of All Souls and an Inspector of Schools, whose son, another Edward, founded the familiar publishing house; and Jane Martha, the eldest child, married the wealthy businessman William Edward Forster, the 'Broad Church' Liberal Member for Bradford who was responsible for the Education Act of 1870 which established a national system of elementary education.

Of the next generation, William Delafield's son Hugh Arnold-Forster, barrister and campaigning journalist on military and naval affairs, rose to become Minister for War. Journalism also featured in the lives of William and Ethel, two of Thomas's three children; but it was his eldest daughter, Mary Augusta, best known as Mrs Humphrey Ward, who secured more permanent fame. Brought up partly at Oxford, where she encountered many of the leading intellectuals of the day, she married Humphrey Ward, a Brasenose don, and subsequently moved to London, where her husband had secured a post as Art critic and occasional leader-writer on *The Times*. Journalist and literary hostess, she was encouraged by Henry James to embark on a career as a novelist, and her landmark novel of religious doubt, *Robert Elsmere*, became a best-seller. Educationist and philanthropist as well as writer, Mrs Ward helped set up the Lectures for Women Committee at Oxford, which led to the creation of Somerville College; and she devoted part of her substantial royalties towards the creation of a 'settlement' in East London. She was awarded the CBE and became one of the first women magistrates. Her daughter Julia married Leonard Huxley, and thus Mrs Ward became grandmother to Julian Huxley the naturalist and Aldous Huxley the novelist.

But it is of course Richard's father, the poet and critic Matthew Arnold, who remains pre-eminent among the family. As a poet he ranks high among the best of the Victorians, and his most familiar lines are to be found in many an anthology and dictionary of quotations – 'the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea', the 'strange disease of modern life', Oxford 'that sweet City with her dreaming spires'. Matthew's early poetic gift withered through his thirty-five years of hard grind as an Inspector of Elementary Schools, but the experience developed him into a passionate advocate of universal state education and a trenchant and stimulating literary and social critic, many of whose phrases have also passed into the language. In protest against the materialism

2 Edward Elgar, *My Friends Pictured Within*, Novello, 1949.

and parochialism of his age, for example, he wrote of the necessity of ‘Culture, the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world’, and famously, of the pursuit of perfection being ‘the pursuit of sweetness and light’. He could boast of having met Wordsworth, Charlotte Brontë and George Sand, and his writings continued to bring him into contact with many leading literary, clerical and political figures throughout his career. His dislike of the shallowness of English taste and his openness to European influences suggest interesting parallels with Elgar’s musical outlook.³ Often controversial, Arnold nevertheless came to be a widely respected Victorian national treasure, achieving recognition through his appointment as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, the award of a Civil List Pension, and, in due time, a bust in Poets’ Corner. Privately, despite a somewhat austere public image, he was a man deeply devoted to his wife and six children, enjoying a warm and close family life. The antithesis of the stern Victorian *paterfamilias*, ‘he was a generous, indulgent, doting father,’ according to his biographer Park Honan, ‘whose main fault was that he could never say no to a child’.⁴

*

Amid such an array of intellectual aristocracy, Richard Penrose may be thought to cut a poor figure. His Harrow and Oxford careers, surprisingly perhaps for a member of a family of scholars and educationists, were failures, and his subsequent professional life rested originally at least, on the *cachet* of his name and his father’s active support. It is likely that he was seen as something of a ‘black sheep’ in some quarters of the wider Arnold family, and one wonders at the comparative paucity of material in that well-documented clan from which to reconstruct his life. Richard’s widow directed that all their letters to each other should be destroyed on her death, hinting at private difficulties, and he has never been memorialised in any formal way. Matthew Arnold’s biographers mention Richard, certainly, but very much in passing and in none too kindly a fashion. Dr Joan Harding writes of his ‘indolence’⁵; Meriel Trevor thought that he was ‘not a hard worker’ and described him as ‘a liability’⁶; William Eller, who took the celebrated photograph of Elgar completing the score of *Gerontius*, wrote of him pityingly as ‘my poor friend’,⁷ while Park Honan wrote of him as ‘headstrong’ and ‘terribly pampered’.⁸ *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* dismissed him as ‘feckless’.⁹ Most bluntly, and most unkindly of all, the waspish A L Rowse described him as a ‘fool’ and ‘a feeble specimen who achieved nothing in his short life’.¹⁰

3 Elgar sketched a setting of Arnold’s dramatic poem *Empedocles on Etna* in 1905, but it was never completed. Vaughan Williams’ *An Oxford Elegy* is a setting for speaker and wordless chorus of sections of two of Arnold’s best-known poems, *The Scholar Gypsy* and *Thyrsis*.

4 Park Honan, *Matthew Arnold, A Life*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981, 288.

5 Joan Harding, *From Fox How to Fairy Hill, Matthew Arnold’s Celtic Connections*, D. Brown and Sons, 1986.

6 Meriel Trevor, *The Arnolds*, The Bodley Head, 1973.

7 *The Music Student*, August 1916.

8 Op. Cit.

9 Sixth Edition, 2000, ed. Drabble.

10 A.L. Rowse, *Matthew Arnold, Poet and Prophet*, Thames & Hudson, 1976.

Thankfully more recent scholarship, in the form of a first full edition of Matthew Arnold's letters enables us to understand Richard in a more nuanced and less judgemental way.¹¹

Golden Hair in the Waves

Matthew Arnold was appointed Inspector of Schools in 1851, a position which enabled him to marry Frances Lucy Wightman (Fanny Lucy or Flu to the family) a Judge's daughter. Richard was born in November 1855, the Arnolds' third child, named after Bishop Richard Whately, a friend of his father; Penrose was his paternal grandmother's family name. He joined his older brothers Thomas and William Trevenen, known in the family as 'Budge'. 'My three darling birdies,' Matthew called them. There would be another boy, Basil, and two girls, Eleanor and Lucy. Thomas's health gave his parents much anxiety; he was 'thin, asthmatic, gasping' and 'a sensitive boy with a cardiac complaint',¹² while Budge was noticeably short and overweight. Richard's health and development were therefore matters of prime concern, duly reported in Matthew's regular letters to his mother. In fact, he would prove the fittest of the brothers, and seems to have easily weathered the usual childhood illnesses, colds and toothaches, although experiencing occasional worrying 'convulsions'. 'The weaning goes on well, on the whole,' Matthew reported, 'Diddy gets very pretty, but he is fretful'. He was evidently a lively two-year old, quickly becoming the proverbial 'apple of the eye'. 'Diddy is a dear little pretty soul, but a Turk,' thought Matthew, who may have sowed the seeds of future inclinations by buying him a 'musical cart' in the Lowther Arcade. The fond father noted Richard's 'splendid spirits', his 'pretty voice', and thought him 'a greater beauty than ever' and 'a perfect picture'. No doubt his grandmother was delighted to hear how on one occasion a lady got out of her carriage while Diddy was being taken for a walk, and demanded to know who he was. Matthew extolled his son's looks with a poet's eye, writing during a Dover holiday, 'You should have seen that lovely little figure of Dick's laid down flat in the bright shingle with his sweet face upwards and his golden hair all floating about him waiting for the wave to come up and wash over him'. As a four-year old Richard enjoyed several Christmas treats, including a visit to Regent's Park Zoo, where 'he shouted and danced for pleasure' at the animals; and a party where he was 'a sight to look at,' dressed 'in a black velvet coat, white waistcoat, silk tartan shirt of red and black, and *white gloves*'. He looked 'such a duck that it was hard to take one's eyes off him'.

Matthew was a companionable father as well as an adoring one and as Richard grew he came to share favourite activities such as swimming, fishing, boating and skating, donkey rides and outings to pantomimes and theatres, while his good looks and early-developing charm secured him many

The young Dick Arnold

(Illustration courtesy of the Benson Collection, Swansea University Library)



11 *The Letters of Mathew Arnold*, ed. Cecil Y Lang, 6 vols., University of Virginia Press, 1996-2001. I have freely used incidental information from this source, and all quotations not otherwise identified have been taken from it. In the Introduction to the first volume, Lang emphasises the extent to which Arnold's widow and sisters censored letters; given Richard's likely reputation as something of a family embarrassment, this may be another reason for the apparent dearth of material.

12 Honan, *Op. cit.*, 231.

invitations to parties and dances. In a society which idealised childhood, and in a family given to nicknames and endearments, Richard was variously ‘Master Dids’, ‘Diddy’, ‘Dicky’, even ‘King’; and always ‘dear’, ‘dearest’, or ‘darling’. Matthew might seem reluctant to let that childhood go, complaining of his eleven-year-old son having to go into long trousers. Whether he was spoilt to death, or given every possible loving care and attention by a devoted, enlightened father, is a matter of opinion, but Richard’s upbringing endowed him with an easy-going temperament that would prove at once an asset and a disadvantage in later life. Matthew noted how Tom and Budge would quarrel, like all children; but Richard was different. ‘Children with Dick’s disposition are I am sure the exception,’ he wrote. Whatever view one takes of Matthew Arnold as a father, his was surely a monumental, unconditional love, of a piece with his search for sweetness and light, a love that was only intensified by the family tragedies that were to come.

Richard’s formal education began at a certain Mrs Querini’s, an elementary ‘dame school’ type of establishment close to the family home in London’s Chester Square, supplemented by occasional tutoring by both his parents. At nine he was sent to a ‘prep’ school not too far away at Blackheath where he remained some five years, with some private tutoring in the holidays. He seems to have prospered, and his scholarly father was pleased, although characteristically aware that academic success was not necessarily the most important thing. ‘Dick gets a prize,’ he wrote to Mrs Arnold senior in August 1868, when Richard was fourteen, ‘and heads the examination in his form, beside getting what is better, darling child, an excellent character for willingness to work and unassumingness’.

The news of Dick’s prize must have brought some cheer amid the loss of not one, but two of his brothers that year. In January Basil Francis, the most recent addition to the family, died, an infant of sixteen months, after a fortnight’s illness. Matthew watched through the night with him, and ‘stroked his poor twitching hand & kissed his soft warm cheek’, while marking examination papers. Richard was ‘dreadfully upset, & can hardly be got away from kissing and kissing his poor little brother when he is in the room with him’. And in November the eldest boy, Thomas, died at the age of sixteen, of heart failure and congestion of the lungs. He had lived as something of an invalid, too delicate to be sent away to school except for one term, and had mostly lived at home under his mother’s care. ‘The separation from him seems to change our lives more than I can well say’ wrote Matthew, as for the second time that year Richard and Budge attended a brother’s funeral.

Harrow - Football and Music

That year the family moved to Harrow, so that Richard and Budge could attend the famous school economically as day boys; another indication of a desire to keep them close, while the reforming Headmaster, Montagu Butler, could be expected to maintain Arnoldian principles of character-based education. The Arnold boys would have experienced a curriculum largely based on the rote-learning of the Classical languages, although Butler had introduced a parallel ‘Modern’ side offering Mathematics, Modern Languages, History and Science.¹³ The study of Latin and Greek was intended to promote mental discipline and Richard and his fellow-pupils would have read, translated, parsed sentences and attempted to write Latin verse in a world of weekly examinations and constant jockeying for form positions and promotions - ‘removes’. Richard began well enough, and Matthew was able to tell his mother that, having gone in second from bottom, he was placed

13 Harrow’s first Science master had been appointed in 1869; he was George Griffith, father of Troyte.

fifth. ‘Dick is placed full high for his powers, considering that he was not well grounded when young,’ he added carefully, ‘and I do not wish him to get his remove this term’. One week he came out top of his class, and Matthew was able to claim that ‘the dear boy is doing well – except that he sometimes gets sent to the bottom for talking’. At the beginning of their second year, the brothers discovered football; Richard would be picked for the Homeboarder School Eleven. Matthew appreciated the value of an activity ‘which saves boys from the dangers of quite unoccupied hours’, but admitted that neither Dick nor Budge did much in their form from the moment that they had any other interest.

One imagines that another of Richard’s extra-curricular activities is likely to have been music, for his time at Harrow coincided with the reign of the celebrated John Farmer, composer of the school songs which have become part of the Harrow culture and tradition. A Wagner devotee, Farmer had studied and worked abroad, and subsequently led something of an uncertain career on his return, but his appointment to the school against a degree of opposition proved another of Butler’s enlightened moves. Even though music was not acceptable as a form subject, Farmer was a charismatic, unconventional and much-loved figure who raised the musical standard of the Chapel services and instituted the ‘house singing’ of light-hearted glees and songs suitable for massed unison voices. An Obituary¹⁴ wrote of his concern that music was not to be the privilege of the few, and of how he could surprise the boys into success, and rouse their singing until ears tingled with the tone. And he would rejoice ‘when he caught the School’s ear with a chorale of Bach or a slow movement by Beethoven’. Farmer was keen to introduce the classics and invited musicians such as Clara Schumann and Joachim to give recitals.

Under a non-academic figure like Farmer, Richard and his contemporaries might find a musical awakening and hearty outlet for adolescent energies, and his musical interests were clearly developing since the time of that musical toy from the Lowther Arcade. Such interests derived, so Matthew thought, from his wife – he admitted to having no ‘ear’ himself¹⁵. During his second year at Harrow, Richard and his mother went to a production of *Fidelio* at Covent Garden. ‘Dick was very anxious to go . . . Flu likes being escorted about by Dick and seeing his great pleasure and understanding in music’, Matthew reported, adding that now the holidays had started, his son and sister Lucy ‘will be the whole afternoon at the piano making out things of Schubert’s, just as other children might occupy themselves with drawing or painting. It is a great thing for them’. And excellent ear-training, he might have added. Matthew’s wide range of acquaintance furthered Dick’s musical opportunities, as when the pair stayed the weekend with Lady de Rothschild at Aston Clinton in December 1871; Richard would have been just sixteen. Norman Neruda was one of the guests, and played for the company. ‘The violin of Mme Norman Neruda was something wonderful and the whole thing was like fairy land to Dick,’ who was made ‘perfectly happy’ by ‘the possession for any number of hours of a grand piano by Erard’. In the same letter Matthew praised his son as ‘a charming companion’, ‘always gay and occupied; when he is not out with Rover or at the piano he is with his sisters illuminating their last fancy. He is never hanging about Harrow with the other home-boarders, not a very eligible lot’.

Dick’s form places continued erratic throughout his Harrow career, and Matthew remained concerned about his preoccupation with football, but nothing could shake their parent-child bond, neither then or later. Richard would kiss his father in front of guests; Matthew dubbed him ‘a great

14 *The Harrovian*, 1901.

15 Music being ‘caught and not taught,’ according to the familiar saying. The eldest son, Thomas, was said to have been musically talented, and composed and wrote down a melody before his premature death.

baby', and wrote that his 'natural gaiety I find the greatest refreshment I have'. He wanted both Dick and Budge to do better, but thought it important that they should start life with a healthy physique, 'entirely unharmed by brain pressure'. 'The best thing is when the exercise of his faculties in some direction is natural and enjoyable to a boy just as the exercise of his physical powers is', he told his mother, and went on to relate several instances of boys being kept inside and away from exercise for long periods while working for scholarships, and subsequently suffering breakdowns. This absence of heavy parental pressure was unlikely to cause the boys to complain. 'You know how wonderfully Budge and Dick co-operate with these predispositions of mine against brain forcing', wrote Matthew. The boys' masters, treading carefully, offered positive reports. Budge, now seventeen, was said to have greatly improved, and Dick, two years younger, was predicted to do 'really well'. Matthew began to make plans for their futures. Budge, clearly unacademic, would be sent to learn farming, while 'Dick I do really hope to keep here till he gets to the top of the school and then to send him to Oxford'. He predicted an appointment in the Education Office, 'if he got a second class, and still more if he got a first'.

But his plans for Budge were to be dashed when the unhealthily overweight boy came home very breathless one day after taking part in a mile run on the sports field. Two days later he took to his bed with a 'bilious cold' and became lightheaded. He fell into a coma and died, the third of Arnold's sons to fail to reach adulthood. Yet another cruel loss, yet another family funeral. The blow must have been devastating, yet Matthew stoically continued his school work, as he would his increasingly influential critical writings. But it was a long time before he could bring himself to so much as write Budge's name, and, undertaking an examination of pupil-teachers, he was found 'keeping order and doing his duty until he was relieved' with his eyes full of tears.¹⁶ Inevitably now, more than ever, Dick was a focus of parental hope and attention, as Matthew continued to plan for the boy's future as his academically unspectacular time at Harrow drew to a close. Long before the 'child-centred' approach became a mantra of comprehensive education, he thought Dick would make better progress 'under better and more specially adapted teaching', and aimed to take him away from the school and send him to a tutor (a 'Crammer' as they were called) to prepare for Oxford. Meanwhile he arranged for a private tutor in mathematics. And so Dick left Harrow, that cradle of Bishops, Generals, Headmasters, Professors and Prime Ministers, leaving hardly a trace in the school records apart from his dates of attendance and his membership of the Day Boarders Football XI.

Oxford, and a Lost Cause

Matthew was very keen that his son would follow his own footsteps to his beloved Oxford, and to his old College, Balliol, where the celebrated Benjamin Jowett had been his tutor. He prepared the ground carefully, making use of his connections and going to the top, as he so often would. He sought advice from Jowett, now Master, and George Bradley, a former Rugby pupil, Master of University College. Matthew knew his son. In writing to Bradley, he was frank. While 'tall, gay and good at exercises, with an interest in things, particularly things of history and geography', Dick had 'no literary turn, no turn for scholarship though with no incapacity for it like some boys, and disposed to be idle in his schoolwork'. But he thought it worthwhile to add, 'he has a real talent for music'. Dick was duly sent to a tutorial establishment at Eastbourne for a time, to prepare for the entrance examination, although his father still seemed unwilling to let him outside the family

16 Honan, *Op. cit.*, p. 359.

circle. 'He depends a good deal upon those he is with,' he confided, ominously. But the 'cramming' worked (and no doubt the Arnold name proved no barrier) and Dick passed the Balliol examination, even perhaps to his father's surprise. 'I shall not allow myself to be grievously vexed if he does not', he had written to his sister Frances, touching wood.

Naturally Matthew was delighted with the success, and went down with 'dear old Dick' 'to install him in his rooms' in the October of 1874; in the custom of the day, he would have had a bedroom and a sitting-room, with the services of a 'Scout' to provide hot water to wash in, fetch breakfast, and make the bed. Dick would read Modern History, only recently separated from its link with Jurisprudence – not entirely to Matthew's approval. But at any rate it might allow the complexities of Greek and Latin to be passed by. The next month Matthew was writing to Lady de Rothschild of his hopes that Dick would turn Oxford to some good account, adding with typical indulgence, and a touch of anxiety, 'though at present, as is perhaps natural, we hear a great deal of football, the river, and breakfast parties, and hardly a word about reading'. Matthew was tolerant, for he himself had been known in his Oxford days as something of a dandy who mixed with the 'fast set' more than might have been good for him. And given his upbringing Dick might not find it easy to adapt to the regulated life of cap and gown, of dining in Hall and attending Chapel, of gates being shut at nine, and bans on entering public houses and indulging in games of chance. Otherwise, College life might not be too demanding, with an undergraduate's day generally falling into a pattern of morning work, afternoon sport, and evening socialising through the various clubs and dining societies.

Very soon Dick would be faced with the 'Little Go,' the first examination of the three necessary for an honours degree; Moderations and Finals would follow. Matthew would not fail to make use of family connections in trying to keep his son up to the mark, for at this time his brother Thomas was undertaking tutorial work while living in Oxford, where his daughter Mary Augusta had married Humphrey Ward. 'I hope you sometimes see Dick – Exhort him to work for his little go', Matthew asked.

In the event, Dick passed the first examination; it was, after all, said to be comparatively simple. But it became evident early next term that he was not only failing to work, but provoking his tutor, Frances de Paravicini, through indifference and 'attitude'. 'I cannot help fearing that Dick, who is a great baby, may have said things to him or to some of the other tutors which appeared "cheeky"', Matthew confessed. Matters deteriorated to the point where it was suggested that there was no point in Dick's attending lectures, and that he take a term out and return to the Eastbourne tutor. While admitting his son's weaknesses, Matthew saw that the failure was partly the College's as well. 'It seems rather ridiculous his being at a college where the tutors themselves say it is of no use his attending the lectures', he wrote to Ward in asking his advice. 'If



Matthew Arnold and his Niece, Mary Augusta Ward

(Cartoon by Max Beerbohm)

it is inadvisable for him to return to Oxford next term, it would surely be better to take him away from Oxford altogether. I incline to try him a little longer - what do you think?' Ward seems to have agreed, and it was settled with the College that a hopefully re-charged Dick would remain, and attempt a pass in Moderations at the end of his first year. Meanwhile Matthew asked Jowett for a change of tutor.

But within a couple of months it became clear that there was no prospect of Dick succeeding in the examination, and he was told that that there was no point in his continuing at Oxford until he could. Jowett was direct, writing to Matthew 'that he would do anything for Dick's good, but that, if he might venture to say so, I was not strict enough with the boy, that he had notice he was to go in for his Moderations this term and plenty of time to prepare if he had really worked'. So, Matthew again thought of the Eastbourne tutor. Unwilling to give up after having come so far, he wanted Dick to persevere at Oxford, at least until he got through Moderations. 'After that, we will see what is best to be done', he told Ward. In fact, the College Register of Residence shows that although Dick seems to have been allowed to remain at Balliol until the end of his first year, he was absent for the whole of the following autumn term. Incidental references in Matthew's letters become less frequent at this time. Not until December do we hear of him again. 'Dear old Dick . . . it is delightful to have him at home', he wrote to his sister at Christmas time, adding some thoughts on the Oxford Modern History curriculum, which was largely based on Constitutional History with a focus on the Middle Ages. 'Nothing but read, read, read', histories in English, he thought, many of them second-rate; there was nothing in them to form and exercise the mind as would the study of a language, or mathematics or science. Even an ordinary Classics degree was a better discipline than a History one, especially as Roman Law was no longer part of it. 'The fact is, it is at Oxford as it is in our schools. The regulation of studies is all-important, and there is no one to regulate them, and people think that anyone can regulate them'. Even allowing that he was writing to a family member in part-exoneration of Dick, Matthew Arnold, a Schools Inspector for some twenty-five years by now, knew whereof he wrote, none better. However, the New Year of 1876 found Dick back at Oxford, surely sustained there more by the family name than any prospect of academic success. 'I do hope he is working,' wrote Matthew, eternally optimistic, 'three or four hours a day would quite satisfy me, and with that I am sure he might do well'.

That year there was a sign that, somewhat belatedly perhaps, Dick's musical interests and abilities were being nurtured. There never seems to have been any thought of a musical training or career for him, presumably for all the familiar reasons, although whether he would have had the self-discipline for the necessary sustained effort may be doubted. What cannot be questioned is his genuine musicality, although it would be some time before concrete evidence of this emerged. Dick evidently asked for piano lessons, and we may assume that Matthew, although self-confessedly quite un-musical, would have been happy to allow his son to develop a talent, and find positive occupation not only during the Long Vac but afterwards, for once again Dick would not go up for the Michaelmas term.¹⁷ In seeking a teacher Matthew, presumably after taking advice, approached the progressive German-born Edward Dannreuther, a virtuoso pianist and scholar who had given the first English performances of concertos by Liszt, Tchaikovsky and Grieg, contributed various articles to Grove's Dictionary, and mentored Parry's early career. He was an active advocate of contemporary music, which he performed at a series of semi-public chamber concerts at his London home, and an enthusiastic Wagnerian; Dick's lessons that summer were interrupted by his teacher's

17 His lengthy absences do not appear to have been for disciplinary reasons. There is no mention of his name in the Minutes of the Balliol College Meetings, where fines, gatings and rustications were recorded.

departure for Bayreuth and the first performances of the Ring cycle. Nevertheless, Matthew was able to report that Dannreuther was 'very encouraging' about Dick's progress, although a single course of lessons could hardly have led to any consistent development, and it cannot be surprising that the only other report we have of Dick's piano playing is Elgar's reference to his 'self-taught manner'. Later in the autumn Arnold wrote to the musician to ask him to continue and finish the six lessons that had been arranged. 'My son is not returning to Oxford at present, because before he goes back there we want him to be thoroughly recovered of a hurt he got at football in the spring . . .'. Dick's hurt was a genuine one; Matthew sent him to Brighton for a time to recover, and arranged a consultation with Prescott Hewett, surgeon extraordinary to the Queen and the Prince of Wales, no less.

Time at home might have allowed Dick to continue pursue his musical interests through London's active concert world, for if he had been looking forward to full musical life at Oxford, he would have been disappointed. During his time there, such bodies as the Oxford Choral Society and the Oxford Philharmonic came to life just once a year with performances of choral works by Handel and Mozart, to which a symphony or concerto might be added; a performance of Schumann's *Paradise and the Peri* marked a single adventure into the moderns. Such figures as Emile Pauer and Madame Titiens made occasional recital visits, and there were innumerable amateur fund-raising concerts, some of them with the support of members of the College choirs. Balliol did not boast a Musical Society until 1885, although many Colleges did, providing annual concerts of the miscellaneous vocal and instrumental 'pot-pourri' variety.¹⁸

Dick began 1877, his third year at Oxford, having missed two whole terms up to that point; he would leave without taking a degree, despite further private 'cramming'. 'I had hoped Dick might scramble into a fourth but his course has been so fruitful in anxiety and disappointment to me hitherto that I was foolish, perhaps, to expect anything pleasant', Matthew told Humphrey Ward. And so Dick left Balliol, as he had left Harrow, a conspicuous failure, leaving hardly so much a record of his name apart from the College Register.¹⁹

A New Start in a New World

The question of the future now pressed heavily. Matthew was fully prepared to pull every string that he could to find Dick a place, however humble, in a Government office, and a Factory Inspectorship was mentioned (although 'they are poor things', thought Matthew) but even so the entrance examination might be an obstacle. Unwilling to give up entirely, Matthew even now arranged that Dick should continue at a tutorial establishment, this time at Hastings, but by the middle of the next year it must have become evident to all concerned that there was no point, and a suggestion was made by one of Matthew's colleagues that the well-tried path of 'making good' somewhere in the Colonies might offer a solution. 'I might have crammed him into some third-rate

18 The Exeter College Musical Society boasted Hubert Parry and Hew David Steuart Powell as regular piano duettists in the late 1860s; a little later Basil Nevinson, whose undergraduate career partly overlapped with Arnold's, became a member. In 1871 a University Musical Club was established with the avowed aim of providing weekly chamber concerts, but its activities do not seem to have been reported in the local press.

19 It might almost be said that his name appears more frequently in the *Oxford Times*, for he was listed among the guests at a Masonic Ball in the Corn Exchange, and at the University Commemoration Ball, in the issues of 12 June 1874 and 24 June 1875, respectively. Social ease was one quality Dick never lacked.

department, perhaps,' Matthew wrote to his brother Thomas,

. . . but he had the sense to prefer Australia to this. It is his own wish to go - I had never thought of it till Childers suggested it, and then I laid it before Dick as a matter on which he must decide for himself. It is bad for him to be staying on at home doing nothing, but he is, and always has been, so perfectly amiable a boy, and we are all so fond of him, that I don't think we should soon have been tired of keeping him. However he wishes to do something for himself, and he is right; and he thinks he has a better chance of doing well for himself in Australia than here – and he is right in that too. All the great men of business that I know say that he is doing the right thing in going, and that if he is steady and active, - being well recommended as he is, - he is sure to get on, and will at 40 or 50 be in a position far better than he could have hoped to reach in England.

Like so many of Arnold's letters about Dick, it put a face-saving gloss on the facts, while showing once again a degree of reluctance to part with him, the only survivor of four sons. Meanwhile a place was being found in the Union Bank, Melbourne, and a passage booked on the *Lusitania* for November, 1878.²⁰ Matthew was not the only one building castles in the air. Dick was 'full of eagerness to try it and says that he shall first repay me all I have had to spend on him, and shall then enable me to retire!'



The Union Bank, Collins St. West, Melbourne

(Illustration courtesy of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne)

The parting was a protracted one. On the day, the Arnolds first left home *en famille* to embark Dick at Gravesend, and then travelled to Plymouth, where they had themselves taken out to the ship to make a final farewell on board. They were with him for an hour and a half.

Hearing all he had to tell and seeing all he had to show – and he was cheerful too. As your tug left the vessel Dick stood with many others at the ship's side; he had taken off his cap, and the dear 'yellow mop' was all visible. He looked grave and fixed, but not upset as he had been at leaving Cobham and again when we left him at Gravesend. The ship began to move just as we did; she wore round very slowly, and gradually her weaving round took him out of her sight . . . The *Lusitania* dropped down

20 An earlier incarnation of the vessel that was notoriously sunk in the First World War.

very slowly along the break-water towards Mt Edgecumbe, and through the passage to the open sea . . . we had to land in little boats, and made our way straight to the Citadel to get a last look at the ship – but she was gone – hidden behind the Headland of Mount Edgecumbe. But the sea was calm and beautiful and the new moon was visible in the sky . . . I shall go on as usual, but I shall never have a really happy day until I see him again.

The family shared his sadness. Matthew turned down a dinner invitation in order not to leave his wife and daughters ‘from giving themselves over to despair more than I can help’. And anxiety over the long voyage summoned a revival of his long-neglected poetry, in *S.S. ‘Lusitania’*, inspired by an uncomfortable reading of Dante’s account of Ulysses beset by a storm. But all would be well with Dick’s voyage, as the concluding stanza explains.

I dropped the book, and of my child I thought
In his long black ship speeding night and day
O’er those same seas; dark Teneriffe rose, fraught
With omen; ‘Oh! Were that mount passed,’ I say.
Then the door opens and this card is brought:
‘Reached Cape Verde Islands, “Lusitania”.’²¹

The next port of call was the Cape, where Dick was the guest of the Governor, Sir Henry Bartle Frere, the celebrated colonial administrator, at Government House, spending Christmas with them.²² He arrived at Melbourne in the early months of 1879, and promptly took up his clerkship. His letters home, of which there must have been many, do not appear to have been preserved and Dick’s Australian life may be traced only through incidental references in Matthew’s letters. All seems to have started well, as he wrote guardedly to his publisher, George Smith, that April.

I hope you got Dick’s message. His letters are capital, and he seems promisingly started. Bowen, the governor, wrote me word that he liked Dick very much himself, and that every one spoke of him as likely to get on. Still it is early days yet to be throwing up one’s hat and huzzaing, I know.

We hear nothing for eight months, until early next year, when Matthew wrote to a family friend.

We have just had a letter from Dick; [Matthew’s sister] Fan will have told you the good report of him which reached us a day or two ago. If anything could console us for the dear, dear boy’s absence, it would be the knowledge that it is doing him good to be where he is.

But two months later there was a first ominous mention of a problem that was to weigh heavily on both father and son for some time. Matthew wrote to Thomas Humphrey Ward seeking to verify a quotation, explaining, ‘I want it for a selection from my prose writings which Smith & Elder propose, and which may possibly, I think, succeed, and may help me to pay Dick’s debts’. There would be no further mention of this problem for some time. A letter to ‘my darling boy’ that Christmas contained sad news of the death of his favourite pet, a dachshund, Geist, an event which summoned *Geists’ Grave*, another late poem from Matthew, touched perhaps as much on Dick’s behalf as his own.

21 *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Allott, 2nd Edition, Longmans, 1979

22 Matthew must have ‘networked’ assiduously. ‘He will have a good many letters [of introduction] but he cannot have too many,’ he told his brother.

Nor to us only art thou dear
Who mourn thee in thine English home;
Thou hast thine absent master's tear,
Dropped by the far Australian foam.²³

By the beginning of 1881, Dick's third year in Melbourne, it was becoming evident that the success of which he had dreamed was not materialising. In January Matthew wrote that 'his letters have shown him lately a little depressed at his slow progress and absence of encouraging prospects; this is a stage which I suppose every one in his position has to go through, but it is not the less trying while it lasts'. By midsummer, Dick had evidently decided not to stay the course, leaving Matthew anxious and undecided. In July he wrote to Robert Adams, an Australian critic and reviewer.

I have a son, my only son, at this moment in Australia. He is in the Union Bank at Melbourne. He was idle at Oxford, and I sent him to Melbourne that he might learn what regular work was. I have excellent reports of him from the authorities of his Bank, and he is very popular in Melbourne Society too, but he wants to come home and says that a clerk in a Bank has no future in Australia any more than in England. It is not likely that he will be at Sydney, but if ever you are at Melbourne, I wish you would go and see him. I am uncertain what to do about bringing him home.

Dick was now approaching twenty-seven, with a string of failures behind him, and little apparent prospect of a settled, purposeful future. Almost in desperation, one feels, Matthew had written to William Harcourt, the Home Secretary, early in 1881, saying he was bringing 'my boy' home, reminding him of his 'kind intentions' towards Dick and reviving the earlier suggestion of a Factory Inspectorship for him. There was a sympathetic response, and Matthew was almost pathetically grateful.

I really cannot enough thank you for your very kind letter, which I have just received here. I never before asked for anything, either for myself or one of my belongings; I should not have ventured upon applying to you if a Factory Inspector, as I told you, himself suggested it; and though I knew your good nature, I wrote with an overwhelming sense of the disappointments and rebuffs to which the makers of such applications are by common report said to be liable. I am all the more grateful to you for proving that the rule of disappointment is not without its signal exceptions.

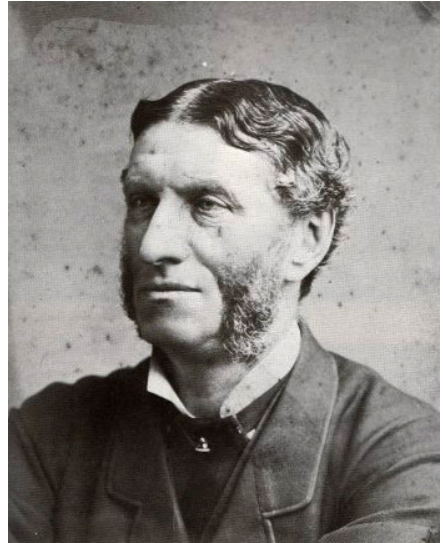
H.M. Inspector Arnold

Dick returned from Australia at Eastertime 1882, needing to face certain formalities notwithstanding the Home Secretary's goodwill. He had to appear before the Civil Service Commissioners in order to be nominated for a post, and then take an examination - 'qualifying only, not competitive', as Matthew pointed out, which he passed. Matthew sent a letter of heartfelt thanks to William Harcourt - 'he is the only boy we have left, and we owe it to you that we are able to keep him with us in England' - and in June Dick duly took up a Factory Inspectorship at Ashton-under-Lyne, in the heavily industrial Manchester area, ultimately becoming responsible for the districts of Dukinfield, Staleybridge, Mossle, Hadfield and Glossop, at a salary rising to a comfortable £350, with travelling expenses. Presumably the position was a probationary one initially. 'The appointment is a small thing at first,' Matthew told his brother Thomas, 'but it will get better, and

23 Allott, ed., Op. cit.

it gives him work, and important work'. And he went on to explain a hitherto known motive for Dick's change of course and adoption of a career. There was a young lady in the case. 'There is no chance of his marrying on his present income,' continued Matthew, 'and perhaps this is not a bad thing for him. But his Miss Ford must be a girl with fine qualities, and she has done him great good'. Ella Ford was the daughter of a doctor at Melbourne, and evidently committed enough to Dick to remain there and wait out the separation while he showed that he could 'settle down'.

Matthew's support for his son was never-ending. Visiting Dick in his Manchester lodgings during a school inspection tour, he was invited to dine, as he often was, with various local worthies. 'The dinner was not good,' he reported, 'but the people were pleasant, and I hope I did some good to Dick by my politeness to Mr Williams, the manager of the chief bank in Manchester, who Dick thinks can help him'. But Matthew's efforts on behalf of his son now extended much further



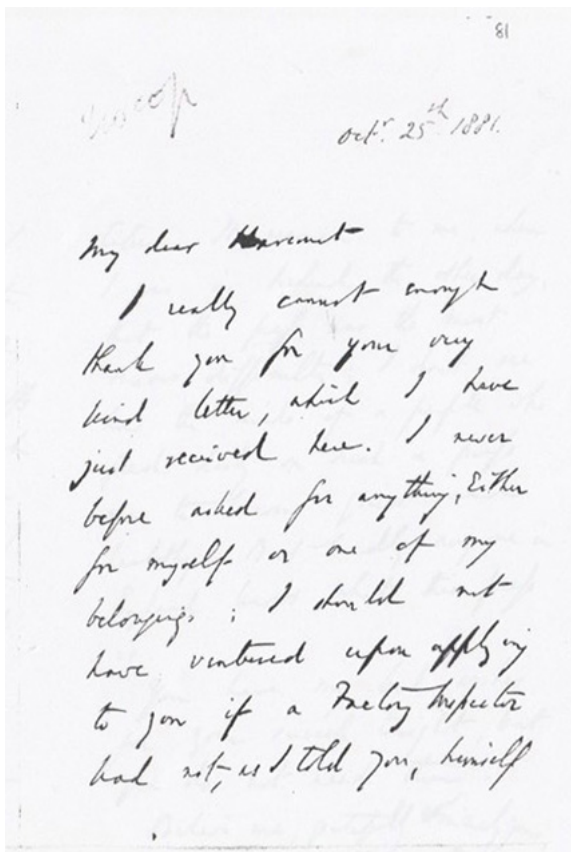
Matthew Arnold. Portrait Photograph

than correspondence with the good and great, and dinner-table diplomacy, for there remained a huge problem to be dealt with – debt. While at Oxford, Dick had been not merely idle, but profligate, and had run up huge sums through his drinking and gambling. Matthew, never a wealthy man, had had to borrow a thousand pounds (the equivalent of some hundreds of thousands today) to get him out of the grips of the moneylenders and finance his Australian venture. Seeing Dick apparently more settled, Matthew began to look forward to retirement after his thirty-five years of school inspecting, but the enormous debt stood in the way. Friends suggested a well-tried remedy, an American lecture tour, and after a meeting with Andrew Carnegie, Mathew duly set off in October 1883, committed to some 70 speaking engagements. He would not return until the following March, and the venture proved something of an ordeal for a man in his sixties experiencing a degree of 'culture shock' and increasingly frequent attacks of the angina which would eventually kill him. The Press was often ready to pounce and audiences found him inaudible and complained; recourse to a voice coach became necessary. But the tour was a success financially and on the strength of his father's efforts, Dick's debts were paid and he was able to marry his Ella. She came over to England with her father, and the wedding took place at St Mary Abbot's, Kensington, in June. Ella brought no family money with her, and Matthew, anxious for their domestic comfort, and Dick's financial management, again appealed directly, and this time unavailingly, to the Home Secretary for a better paid post for Dick as a Poor Law Inspector.

The marriage proved to be a success, and although Ella sadly remains something of a shadowy figure, there is every likelihood that she was a steadying influence on her husband, and that a shared love of music was an important part of the bond between them. Matthew came to appreciate her more and more. She was 'an exceedingly nice person,' he wrote, 'and I am getting very fond of her: she is looking so nicely too'. A year after the wedding, the couple came to stay at the family



**Pains Hill Cottage,
Cobham, Surrey, the
Arnolds' home from 1873**
*(Illustration courtesy of Pains
Hill Park Trust)*



**Letter to the Home Secretary:
'I have never before asked for
anything ...'**

*(Illustration courtesy of Special
Collections and Western Manuscripts,
Bodleian Library)*

home, Pains Hill Cottage at Cobham in Surrey.²⁴ It is evident that even after Dick's debts had been largely settled, continuing subsidy was necessary, and that Ella was to be relied on to handle the money. 'The pleasure of the dear Dicks in their week with us you may imagine', wrote Matthew, 'I have been able . . . to relieve them of some of their bills; Ella has managed so well for him, that I was particularly glad to be able to give this help'.²⁵ There would be continuing anxieties for all concerned, as Dick went through a bad patch while his father was away on a second visit to America during the summer months of 1886. He became slack in his work, and failing to improve when spoken to, was passed over for a promotion. Matthew took matters up on his return, once again writing to the Home Secretary to establish that, while Dick had not in the past been as diligent as he ought to have been, an inspection of his superiors' reports would show that he had improved since. Matthew went so far as to meet Dick's immediate superior in Manchester, who told him that 'Dick was now working well, and quite fit to take a district'.

If that was to be Matthew's last intervention on Dick's behalf, it seems to have proved effective, and the hoped-for promotion took place. The Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1887 showed HM Inspector Arnold to have been active in pursuing contraventions of the Factory Acts, bringing various owners of cotton mills, printing firms and breweries before the Magistrates for offences such as failing to report accidents, neglecting to register overtime, failing to observe meal hours, and employing young persons without a certificate of fitness. And the following year's Report contained extensive extracts from an investigation Dick conducted into the provision of special guards intended to prevent shuttles flying off the looms, causing injury and even death. He visited every weaving shed in his district, tabulated the results, finding that less than 10% of the looms were equipped with guards, and added a well-informed and well-written summary of all aspects of the problem.

Manchester and its Free Trade Hall were but a short train journey from Audenshaw, enabling the music-loving Richard to enjoy the concerts of the Hallé Orchestra in his leisure hours. During the 1880s the celebrated eponymous conductor mounted a series of programmes ranging from Bach and Handel through Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert to the then moderns such as Berlioz, Schumann, Liszt, Dvořák and Tchaikovsky. Early appearances of the music of Brahms featured strongly, the orchestra giving the first Manchester performances of the Third and Fourth Symphonies, and the second English performance of the Bb Piano Concerto, with Hallé himself as the soloist. And the visits of Hans Richter added his special authority to performances of such works as the *Parsifal* and *Meistersinger* Preludes, the *Siegfried Idyll* and the *Walkürenritt*. It was a musical education in itself.

*

Matthew Arnold died suddenly in April, 1888, of a heart attack. Robert Browning, Henry James and Benjamin Jowett were among those attending the funeral, marking the loss to the world of thought and letters. Richard well knew the loss to himself. In a letter to Professor William Knight, an American literary scholar and strong admirer of Matthew, he wrote

24 In fact a substantial vine-covered, eight-bedroomed property, originally the bailiff's house, set in the magnificent wooded grounds of the Pains Hill estate.

25 Matthew made monthly payments of £8, 'which he often sent to Ella, since Dick gambled'. Honan, Op. cit.

You will I know forgive my not having answered yr. most kind letter of sympathy before, but I have had *all* to do & have not really had time . . . My dear father, I can scarcely yet realize what I have lost and that I shall never hear his voice, or have his advice or help again: to his children he was not only the kindest & most indulgent of fathers, but the dearest & most intimate of friends as well.²⁶

Dick lost his father's support and influence, and we now lose the close view of him offered by the family letters. It is clear that he never became a totally reformed character, able to shake off his various weaknesses once and for all. But he continued working as a Factory Inspector for many years, and he and Ella remained firm in the family's affections. A glimpse of an orderly enough life is contained in a letter of July 1891 from Fanny Lucy, beguiling her widowhood with family visits. 'I have been at Fox How, and now am here with the dear Dickes,' she wrote from their Audenshaw home. 'I am going today to London and Nelly and thence to Cobham at the end of the week . . . I am very sorry to leave Dick and Ella, I see much too little of them. They have a nice pretty little house well out of Manchester though not out of sight of tall chimneys, and some smoke, however I cannot say since I have been here the smoke has been the least noticeable and the flowers are bright and flourishing in the tiny bit of front garden. The distance they are from Cobham is what tries me!'²⁷

That distance would be lessened when shortly after, Dick took up a new District, and a new life, in the musical City of Worcester.

(To be continued)

Kevin Allen is a founding member and former Secretary of the Southern Branch of the Elgar Society. His publications include August Jaeger: Portrait of Nimrod, Elgar in Love: Vera Hockman and the Third Symphony, and Hugh Blair, Worcester's Forgotten Organist. Together with the late Martin Bird and other Society members, he contributed to the recently completed transcription of the Diary of Sir Hubert Parry, extending from 1864 to 1918.

26 The Morgan Library and Museum, New York, Reference MA 8220.1.

27 *The Arnoldian*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Summer, 1988.

Elgar and Parry

Relf Clark

A paper given at Eton College, to its Parry Society, on 22 February 2023

I The age gap

There is a tendency to think that Parry was much older than Elgar, that the two composers belonged to different generations. For example, according to one writer Parry was ‘the senior English composer of the generation who came to prominence before Elgar’.¹ Yet Parry was born in 1848² and Elgar in 1857,³ so they were only some nine years apart; and 1848 was the year in which Elgar’s wife was born, and no one thinks of Lady Elgar as a member of a generation different from Elgar’s.⁴ Perhaps the apparent misconception has something to do with portraiture. In the well-known photographs taken at the 1910 Bournemouth Festival, Parry - who by then was 62 - looks decidedly older than Elgar,⁵ and most of the photographs of Parry seem to show him at around the same time - white-haired, nearly bald, possibly somewhat overweight.⁶ It is of course true that there are photographs of Elgar when he himself was in his 60s, but they are more or less balanced by those taken at other times in his life, and our mental picture of him tends to be of the Elgar we see at Bournemouth in 1910, the Elgar of the Hereford years. Photographs exist of Parry dressed for Eton; in his days at Oxford; and at other times in the early part of his career, but nowadays one has to go to Jeremy Dibble’s book in order to see them.⁷ Perhaps the misconception is also to do with Parry’s having established himself so much earlier than Elgar and that general histories of English music tend as a consequence to reach Parry well before Elgar. For example, in his *The English Musical Renaissance*, Frank Howes begins his consideration of Parry at page 129; he reaches

1 Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar* [:] *letters of a lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 496.

2 Parry’s birth certificate gives his date of birth as 27 February 1848.

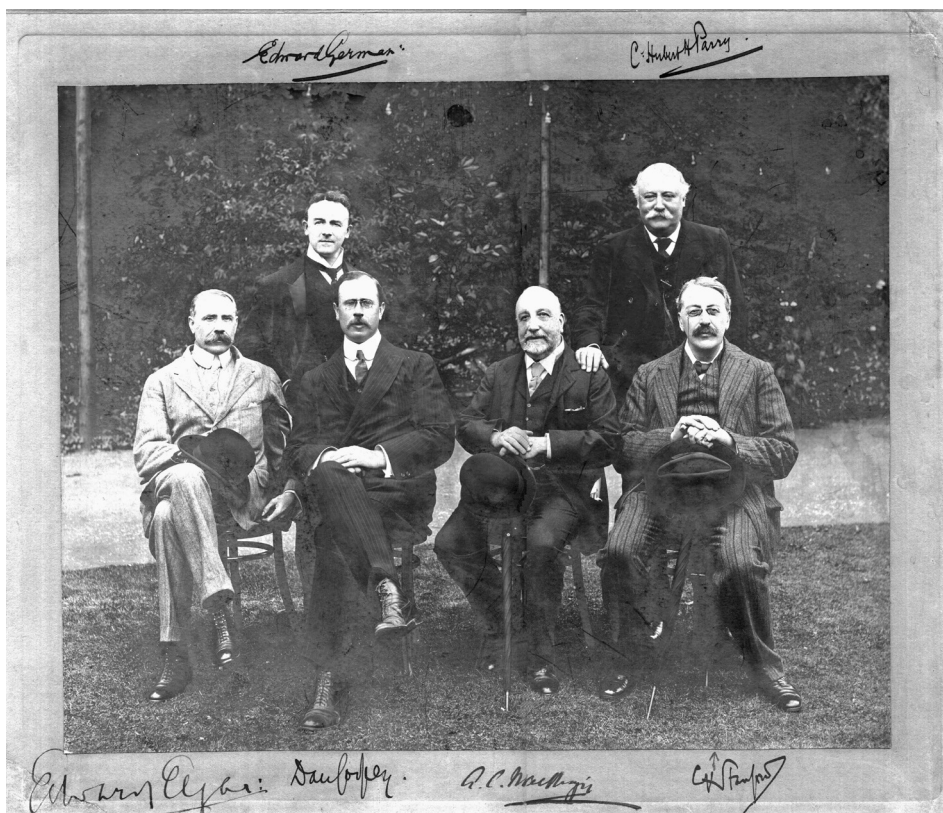
3 Elgar’s birth certificate confirms that his date of birth was 2 June 1857.

4 A register of baptisms compiled at Kutch, India shows that Alice was born on 9 October 1848 and baptised on 10 November that year.

5 See, for example, Plate 10 in Anderson, Robert, *Elgar* (London: J.M. Dent, 1993).

6 This is true of other representations of him, such as the Rothenstein sketch used by Novello & Co. to adorn the front cover of one of their editions of the chorale preludes for organ.

7 Dibble, J., *C. Hubert H. Parry* [:] *his life and music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). See also, if you can find a copy, Graves, Charles L., *Hubert Parry* (London, 1926).



A photograph taken on 8 July at the 1910 Bournemouth Festival and showing (L-R) Elgar, Edward German (standing), Dan Godfrey, Alexander Mackenzie, Parry (standing) and Stanford, all of whom have signed it. In accordance with a former convention of photographic portraiture, no one is smiling, but Parry manages to convey geniality. He modestly adopts a position in the second row and demonstrates his kindness by allowing others to sit. He dresses unostentatiously, which can hardly be said of Elgar (whose collar is spectacular). Note the distance between Elgar and Stanford. (Illustration courtesy of Arthur Reynolds)

Stanford at page 149; and his chapter on Elgar begins at page 163.⁸ Those coming to these matters for the first time and who merely skim Howes's book, or others like it, can hardly be criticised for thinking of Parry as Elgar's senior by a substantial margin; and one can hardly criticise Howes, for Parry certainly 'came to prominence' before Elgar. But the main reasons for that earlier prominence were Parry's remarkably rapid progress at an early age and Elgar's failure to make substantial progress until his fourth decade. Parry established himself in the 1880s. To the Gloucester Festival

8 Howes, Frank, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, 1966).

of 1880 belongs the first performance of *Prometheus Unbound*.⁹ Three years later came not only an honorary doctorate from Cambridge but also the post of Professor of Music History at the recently founded Royal College of Music. In 1887 came the first performance of *Blest Pair of Sirens*. In the following year, at the Birmingham Festival, *Judith*, his first oratorio, received its premiere. And it was in the 1880s that Parry wrote four of his five symphonies. But it took Elgar until around the turn of the century to become firmly established. One thinks of the *Variations on an original theme*, Op.36, first performed in 1899, of *The Dream of Gerontius*, Op.38, first performed in 1900, and so on. In the 1880s Elgar was still hardly known outside the Midlands. One of the aims of what follows is to underline the point that in a sense Elgar and Parry were for approximately twenty years working side by side.



The building in Kensington Gore occupied by the RCM from its founding until the move to its much larger current premises in Prince Consort Road. For most of the twentieth century it was the home of the Royal College of Organists.

II The social gap

There can be no argument about the existence of a social gap. The Parry family belonged to the squirearchy and to the Church of England. Elgar's was Roman Catholic and belonged to the lower middle class. Parry's father is described on Parry's birth certificate as 'Gentleman'. On his death certificate, Thomas Gambier Parry (1816-1888) is described as 'Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant for the County of Gloucester'.¹⁰ On Elgar's birth certificate, his father, William Henry Elgar (1821-1906), is described simply as 'Pianoforte tuner'. On his death certificate, W.H. Elgar is described as 'Pianoforte and Music Dealer'.¹¹ The Elgars earned their living by selling goods and services, a matter the acutely status-conscious Elgar found troubling (or, as we might say nowadays, 'problematic').

Parry's family were freeholders, Parry's father having purchased the Highnam Estate in 1838. The family home was Highnam Court, a mansion some two miles west of Gloucester and now Grade I listed. Its oldest parts date from the Commonwealth period; and we get an idea of its size from the 1851 census return, which gives details of the staff required to run it (see Appendix I).

The Elgars were leaseholders. After the move from Broadheath, where Elgar was born, they occupied the premises above William Elgar's shop in Worcester High Street, and it was not until late in 1911 that Elgar acquired a freehold property,¹² doing so with purchase money obtained mainly, or perhaps entirely, from his wife's side of the family.¹³ Moreover, the property proved a

9 Robert Quinney, in the preface to his edition of Parry's *Songs of Farewell*, ascribes the work's premiere to 1879, but this is surely wrong: see Dibble, op. cit., 511.

10 T.G. Parry died on 28 September 1888.

11 W.H. Elgar died on 30 April 1906.

12 Severn House, Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead.

13 It is possible, moreover, that the conveyance was to Lady Elgar.



Highnam Court, some two miles west of Gloucester. It is thought that it was built in the Commonwealth period; alterations were effected and additions made in the 1850s and in 1869.

financial millstone, and in 1921 Elgar instructed auctioneers to dispose of it.¹⁴ Not until 1929 did he again become a freeholder,¹⁵ and we can assume that in that case the whole, or substantially the whole, of the purchase money was provided by a legacy from his friend and patron Frank Schuster, an Old Etonian who for most of the time that Elgar knew him lived at Bray, not many miles from here.¹⁶

Education played a large part in creating the social gap. Parry was educated at a prep school in Twyford, Hampshire; at Eton College (like his father);¹⁷ and at Exeter College, Oxford, where he read Law and History. During his years at Eton, he studied with George Elvey (1816-1893) at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle,¹⁸ and such was his natural ability (and, no doubt, Elvey's skill as tutor) that Parry obtained the Oxford degree of Bachelor of Music before leaving school. In 1867, he went to Stuttgart and studied with Henry Hugo Pierson (1815-1873). In short, Parry was highly educated. On the other hand, Elgar's general education took place in Worcester, and he left school in 1872, the year in which he celebrated his fifteenth birthday. As a musician, he was largely self-educated. He wanted to study in Leipzig but could not afford to do so, and the fact that there was no question of his going to a university caused him to bear a grudge against those who did: towards the end of his life, in the preface to Hubert Leicester's *Forgotten Worcester*, he referred to 'unbrilliant

14 Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar [:] a creative life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 760. The property failed to attract a satisfactory bidder. Dr Moore states that the property was 'bought in' by the auctioneers (which presumably means that they exchanged contracts with Elgar and then began the quest for a sub-purchaser); he gives a figure of £6,500.

15 This is a reference to Marl Bank, Rainbow Hill, Worcester, where Elgar spent the rest of his life.

16 Schuster died on 26 (not 27) December 1927.

17 Dibble, *op. cit.*, 4.

18 See Shaw, H. Watkins, *The Succession of Organists of the Chapel Royal and the Cathedrals of England and Wales from c.1538* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 349-350. Elvey held the post from 1835 to 1882.

university men' and asked why there were so many of them.¹⁹ As we shall see, however, he was happy to accept honorary degrees, and did so on a number of occasions.²⁰

Perhaps one can best convey the gulf between the two families by looking at the way in which Thomas Gambier Parry responded to the death of his first wife. Isabella Parry died on 11 March 1848, thirteen days after giving birth to Hubert Parry.²¹ She was only 31²² and between 1843 and 1846 had given birth to three sons all of whom had died in infancy.²³ Where others might have been content with an elaborate gravestone, Parry's father commissioned a memorial to his wife in the form of a new church. The result, designed by Henry Woodyer and completed in 1851, was the church of the Holy Innocents at Highnam, its dedication a reference to the three dead children. The relevant volume in the Pevsner series describes the church as 'a very notable monument of the Oxford Movement' and continues as follows:

A very large church for a country park, it has a magnificent W tower and spire, a very tall nave, with N and S aisles and chapels, and a chancel which completes an *immensely impressive ensemble* [my emphasis].²⁴

It was clearly a case of money being no obstacle (and like Highnam Court, the church is Grade I listed). It is impossible to imagine Elgar's father responding to his wife's death in anything remotely like the same manner.²⁵ The Elgar and Parry families inhabited different worlds.

19 Leicester, Hubert A., *Forgotten Worcester* (Worcester: Ebenezer Baylis, The Trinity Press, 1930), 15. For a discussion of Elgar's education see Clark, R., *Elgar's consecutive fifths and other essays* (Oxford: Positif Press, 2008), 8-16.

20 Elgar had honorary degrees from Cambridge (1900), Durham (1904), Leeds (1904), Oxford (1905), Yale (1905), Aberdeen (1906), Pennsylvania (1906) and Birmingham (1907). All but the last were doctorates, Birmingham having given him an MA.

21 Commentators who state that the period was twelve days overlook the fact that 1848 was a leap year.

22 Information obtained from her death certificate. The causes of death were given as puerperal fever and typhus.

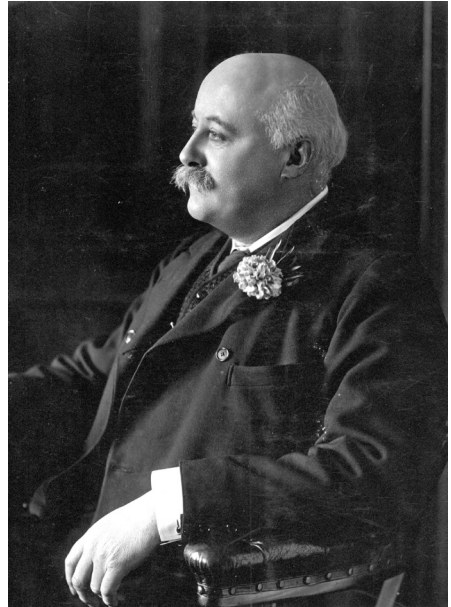
23 Jeremy Dibble states that Francis Gambier Parry died in June 1843, aged three months, and that Henry Parry died in 1846, having lived for only an hour: Dibble, op. cit., 7. The death certificate of Edward Clement Hervey Parry gives the date of death as 8 July 1845 and the age of the infant as seven months. These deaths in the Parry family call to mind the fact that Elgar lost a brother in 1864 and again in 1867: before suggesting the existence of causal links between these tragedies and Elgar's creativity, we should perhaps remember that all these deaths occurred at a time when public health and medical science were quite different from what they are today and when the advent of the NHS and the work of Alexander Fleming were a long way off. Tragic though they were by any yardstick, such deaths may have been less unexpected and possibly less shocking than they would be today.

24 Verey, David, *Gloucestershire: The Vale and the Forest of Dean* (London: Penguin, 1988), 269-270.

25 According to her death certificate, Anne Elgar died on 3 September 1902.

III The narrowing of the social gap

The narrowing process may be said to have begun on 8 May 1889, the day on which Elgar married Caroline Alice Roberts (1848-1920).²⁶ In 1872, Parry had married Lady Maude Herbert (1851-1933), a member of a stratum of Victorian society even loftier than the one that he himself inhabited.²⁷ Elgar followed his example, for Alice (as she was known) was the daughter of Major-General Sir Henry Gee Roberts, a military man sufficiently distinguished to merit an article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. It was probably just as well that Sir Henry died in 1860, for it seems most unlikely that he would have allowed his daughter to marry an impecunious musician who was, moreover, a Roman Catholic.²⁸ The ceremony took place not at any church in Gloucestershire or Worcestershire, but at Brompton Oratory, a choice of venue eloquent of the Elgars' social ambitions. By marrying Alice, Elgar in a sense acquired what we might nowadays describe as a manager: it is



Parry by Lafayette of London, 1898.

Parry as we tend to think of him: white-haired, nearly bald, possibly somewhat overweight. (*Illustration courtesy of Arthur Reynolds*)

was on the verge of acquiring international recognition. Alice thought that Elgar was a genius,²⁹ and she devoted herself unflinchingly to his cause. We can take it that in addition to giving him the benefit of her considerable practical ability, and bringing to the marriage a small income, she gave him advice in sartorial matters and generally tutored him in the ways of her class. One of the results of her tutelage was that Elgar came to acquire a somewhat military appearance, as perhaps befitted the husband of a soldier's daughter; and she seems to have enlarged, or helped him to enlarge, his social milieu, for when in 1899 Elgar dedicated an orchestral work to 'my friends pictured within', no less than six of the 'friends' were educated at Oxbridge, two of them, H.D. Steuart-Powell and

26 The date of the ceremony is taken from the marriage certificate.

27 The marriage certificate gives the date of the ceremony as 25 June 1872, its venue St Paul's, Wilton Place. The bride's father is described as 'Lord Herbert of Lea', and W.E. Gladstone was one of the witnesses.

28 The year of Sir Henry's death is taken from his memorial in the church of St Bartholomew, Redmarley d'Abitot. His death certificate confirms it.

29 See, for example, her letter to Jaeger of 12 June 1908: Moore, J.N., *Elgar and his publishers* [:] *letters of a creative life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 697.

B.G. Nevinson, at Parry's old college; and one of them, William Baker ('W.M.B.'), was a squire.³⁰

It was more or less inevitable that Elgar would eventually meet Parry himself. As a violinist in Three Choirs and other orchestras, he from time to time encountered Parry when the older man conducted his own works.³¹ According to one source, the first personal encounter took place at Leeds on 5 October 1898, when the cantata *Caractacus*, Op.35 received its premiere.³² Parry certainly heard the work at its first London performance, on 20 April 1899, for his letter to Elgar of 23 April includes the following:

I was very glad to be able to be at the performance of *Caractacus*. I thought it went remarkably well [,] and it certainly is brim full of life and colour and artistic detail.³³

It seems that thereafter Parry made a point of attending Elgar premieres, for just a few months later, on 19 June 1899, he was at St James's Hall for the first performance of Elgar's *Variations*. In a diary note on that date, he described the work as 'first rate', 'brilliantly clever' and 'genuine orchestral music'; and on 26 June, he again wrote to Elgar, addressing him as 'My dear Mr Elgar':

I'm behindhand through constant pressure of work, but I won't give up the intention [,] with which your *Variations* inspired me [,] to write and congratulate you upon such an achievement. They are indeed a brilliant success and will bring the old country as well as yourself honour wherever they are heard. I am sincerely glad of such first-rate artistic work being done by an Englishman, and to hear that Richter is going to preside over their presentation to the Viennese. It will wake them up and no mistake.³⁴

It was a most generous encomium, given especially that Parry's *Symphonic Variations*, first performed in 1897, now had a competitor, and a far superior one (note, incidentally, Parry's reference to pressure of work). In a letter to Jaeger on the same day, Elgar referred thus to Parry's letter:

I have had a nice rapturous letter from C.H.H.P. – most kind of him.³⁵

-
- 30 See Clark, R., 'Elgar and Oxford', in Mitchell, K.D. and Morris, D., eds, *A Pilgrim in Cockaigne* (London: Elgar Editions, 2022), 191-201, 193-4. The others were R.P. Arnold (Brasenose), W.M. Baker (Trinity, Cambridge), A.T. Griffith (Oriell) and R.B. Townshend (Trinity, Cambridge).
- 31 For example, Waite refers to the Gloucester Festival of 1892, which included the first performance of Parry's second oratorio, *Job*. Elgar was among the first violins on that occasion: Waite, V., 'Parry, Elgar and Stanford' in Redwood, C., ed., *An Elgar Companion* (Ashbourne: Sequoia Publishing, 1982), 178-188, 179. It is clear from Dibble, op. cit., 511-512 that it was Parry himself who conducted that performance.
- 32 Kennedy, M., *Portrait of Elgar* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 43. However, Dibble states that the first meeting took place not at Leeds but at the London rehearsals for the Leeds Festival: Dibble, op. cit., 358.
- 33 HWRO 705:445, 5247/8:2790.
- 34 Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar [:] letters of a lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 78.
- 35 Moore, J.N., *Elgar and his publishers [:] letters of a creative life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 128. Note that the efficiency of the postal service in those days was such that letters could be posted and delivered on the same day.

On 25 January 1900, Elgar wrote to ‘Dear Sir Hubert Parry’ and offered him a copy of the full score, which Novello had recently printed.³⁶ On 1 February, Parry replied, again addressing Elgar as ‘My dear Mr Elgar’ (and again referring to pressure of work): he said that it would be ‘extra pleasant’ to have a score from the composer himself.³⁷ Note that by this time Parry was ‘Sir Hubert’, the offer of a knighthood having been made by the then Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, in a letter dated 18 May 1898. Parry accepted it somewhat reluctantly and mainly, or perhaps entirely, because he felt that if the Royal Academy of Music had a knight as its head³⁸ it was right that the Royal College of Music should be similarly endowed (Parry having in 1894 succeeded George Grove as Director of the college).³⁹

Whether Parry attended the first performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*, which took place on 3 October 1900 at that year’s Birmingham Festival, is not entirely clear. He was certainly present at the rehearsal of the work on 29 September, and he was certainly present at Birmingham for the performances of his *De Profundis*, which he himself conducted, and *The Soldier’s Tent*, which he wrote for that festival.⁴⁰ At any rate, it is clear that by the turn of the century Parry and Elgar were on friendly terms; and in professional matters they were in a sense working alongside each other: in 1899 both had made a contribution to a collection of part-songs marking the eightieth birthday of Queen Victoria;⁴¹ and both made a contribution to the coronation year of 1902, in Parry’s case the anthem *I was glad*,⁴² in Elgar’s his *Coronation Ode*, Op.44, a work dedicated to Edward VII and setting words by the Eton master A.C. Benson. The narrowing of the social gap continued. Elgar’s Cambridge doctorate had been conferred, at Stanford’s instigation, in 1900, and in 1904, which for Elgar was something of an *annus mirabilis*, came his own knighthood; election to the Athenaeum Club, for which his sponsors were Parry and Stanford; a three-day all-Elgar festival at Covent Garden, parts of which were attended by members of the royal family; and his appointment as Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham, the chair having been created on the understanding that he would be its first occupant.⁴³ By this time, he could therefore reflect not only on all of these things but also on recognition abroad, and on his having the wherewithal to pay the rent reserved by the recently acquired lease of an impressive home on the outskirts of Hereford. The gap narrowed, but for Elgar it never closed, notwithstanding the acquisition of further honours, including in 1911 admission to the Order of Merit. He was always touchy about status: on 3 May 1913, for example, he walked out of a Royal Academy dinner because he was put on what he described as ‘the bottom table’ (he went instead to The Athenaeum, where he

36 Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar* [:] *letters of a lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 82.

37 *ibid.*, 83.

38 Sir Alexander Mackenzie.

39 Dibble, *op. cit.*, 355-6 (Dibble states that the honour was conferred at Windsor on 13 July).

40 *ibid.*, 373. Parry’s diary entry for 6 June 1903, on which date he heard the Elgar work in Westminster Cathedral, suggests that he did indeed attend its first performance.

41 A reference to *Choral Songs by various writers and composers in Honour of Her Majesty Queen Victoria* (Macmillan, 1900). It was compiled by Walter Parratt. Elgar’s contribution was *To her, beneath whose steadfast star*, a setting of words by Frederick (in some sources ‘Frederic’) Myers. Parry’s was *Who can dwell with greatness*, a five-voice setting of words by Henry Austin Dobson.

42 A setting of Psalm 122.

43 The appointment was effective from 1 January 1905: Young, P.M., *A Future for English Music and other lectures by Sir Edward Elgar* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1968), 19.

was served a herring and no doubt received the deference he considered his due);⁴⁴ in 1924, he audaciously and successfully lobbied for the post of Master of the King's Musick, writing to the King's Private Secretary at a time when the corpse of Sir Walter Parratt had yet to be disposed of;⁴⁵ and at various points in that decade he furtively and unsuccessfully attempted to insinuate himself into the House of Lords. We have seen that Parry accepted a knighthood somewhat reluctantly. His reaction to Edward VII's offer of a baronetcy does not appear to be recorded,⁴⁶ but we can take it that, having had 'status' thrust upon him by the circumstances of his birth, he was not particularly bothered, and not bothered by not becoming a member of the Order of Merit, or by not reaching the highest rung of the ladder created by the Royal Victorian Order.⁴⁷

IV 1905

Before 1905, Parry's admiration for Elgar seems to have been a private matter, evidenced only by diary entries and correspondence. The year 1905 is significant for being the one in which that admiration appears to have been expressed in public for the first time. In 1899, Parry succeeded Sir John Stainer as Professor of Music at Oxford,⁴⁸ and we have seen that in the following year Elgar received an honorary doctorate from Cambridge. It is not clear why it took Parry until 1905 to arrange for Elgar to receive a doctorate from Oxford, but the degree was conferred on 7 February that year, he himself composed and read out the oration,⁴⁹ and the following day a concert took place at Oxford Town Hall in which Parry conducted *Blest Pair of Sirens*, Elgar conducted his *Variations*, and Hugh Allen, the Organist of New College, conducted Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.⁵⁰ A little over a month later, on 16 March, Elgar delivered his inaugural lecture at Birmingham University. He entitled it *A Future for English Music*, and at one point he referred to Parry as 'the head of our art in this country'. He went on to say that his name would always be spoken at Birmingham with 'deepest respect' and 'deepest affection'.⁵¹ These were generous words. Did Elgar believe them? Did he truly believe that Parry was the head of music in England? He had a good idea of his own musical worth, and by the time of the inaugural lecture, Hans Richter, Richard Strauss and many others had confirmed it. It would be surprising indeed to learn that Elgar considered any of Parry's

44 Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar [:] the Windflower letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 117.

45 See Shaw, H. Watkins, op. cit., 350-1.

46 Dibble, op. cit., 385. This was in 1902. He evidently accepted the offer. We can take it that it was made in connection with Parry's work at the RCM, Edward VII in his days as Prince of Wales having done much to launch the college.

47 According to the Calendar of the Royal College of Organists for 1917-8, p. 20, Parry by that time was 'Bt., C.V.O., D.C.L., M.A., Mus.D., F.R.C.O.' (he was then the President of the RCO).

48 Parry had been buttered up by the prior award of an honorary DCL: Dibble, op. cit., 367.

49 For the English text, which Parry himself wrote, see Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar [:] letters of a lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 160-1.

50 *The Oxford Times*, 11 February 1905, 2. I am indebted to David R. Young in this connection. According to Anderson, R., op. cit., 68, the concert took place in the Sheldonian Theatre, but the newspaper report is quite clear. See also Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar [:] a creative life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 455. The band was the recently formed London Symphony Orchestra.

51 Young, op. cit., 49.

works, even *Blest Pair of Sirens*, superior to *The Dream of Gerontius*, say, or to *The Apostles*.⁵² Why, then, did he make the remark? Perhaps it was something to do with warmth generated by the visit to Oxford the previous month; but there may be another explanation. Elgar no doubt accepted the chair for a number of reasons, one of them almost certainly financial, for a freelance musician welcomes a source of regular income, and the Birmingham stipend was £400 per annum.⁵³ Another reason may well have been that the post gave him a platform on which he could express views about those whom he disliked. By the time of the inaugural lecture, Elgar had had a serious disagreement with Stanford, notwithstanding the latter's role in the Cambridge doctorate and the election to The Athenaeum, and the rift lasted until the Gloucester Festival of 1922. The lecture contained much that was critical of English music, and its claim that Englishmen were unable to rhapsodise was almost certainly aimed at Stanford and his recently composed *Irish Rhapsodies*.⁵⁴ And Stanford gobbled the bait.⁵⁵ If Elgar set out with the intention of being insulting, he had to ensure that Parry was somehow removed from the field of condemnation, not only because he admired and was grateful to him, but also because of the risk of collateral damage, Elgar's social circle having by this time expanded to embrace a number of Parry's friends. For example, G.R. Sinclair was not only the subject (or one of the subjects) of Elgar's Variation XI but also a yachting companion of Parry's.⁵⁶ Charles Stuart Wortley was not only one of Parry's contemporaries at Oxford⁵⁷ and a fellow bass in the Bach Choir⁵⁸ but also the husband of Alice Stuart Wortley, with whom Elgar maintained an intense but almost certainly chaste relationship. Anything that looked like criticism of Parry might have been taken badly not only by Parry himself but also by the friends they had in common - hence, perhaps, the generous exempting praise.

V 1907

In 1907 came evidence that Elgar's Parry-related remarks at Birmingham may have been, at least to some extent, sincere. Parry's *The Vision of Life*, a Cardiff Festival commission, had received its premiere on 26 September that year,⁵⁹ and on 8 October, in a letter to Jaeger, Elgar wrote:

52 We know that Elgar had a low opinion of Parry's orchestration, for in a letter to Jaeger on 9 March 1898 he wrote: '... I cannot stand Parry's orchestra: it's dead & is never more than an *organ part arranged* [Elgar's emphasis].' See Moore, J.N., *Elgar and his publishers* [:] *letters of a creative life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 69. One must, however, take note of Vaughan Williams, who wrote: '... I was sitting next to Elgar at a rehearsal of Parry's 'Symphonic Variations' ... I said, "I suppose many people would call this bad orchestration; I do not find it so." Elgar turned on me almost fiercely: "Of course it's not bad orchestration, the music could have been scored in no other way.'" See Vaughan Williams, R., *National Music and other essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 128.

53 Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar* [:] *a creative life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 448.

54 By the time of the lecture, Stanford had written the first and second of these works (D minor, Op.78 (1902) and F minor, Op.84 (1903) respectively).

55 Young, op. cit., 94: Stanford wrote to *The Times*.

56 See Dibble, op. cit., plate 23.

57 He attended Balliol College.

58 See Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar* [:] *the Windflower letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 269-70.

59 Dibble, op. cit., 512.

I say! That ‘Vision’ of Parry’s is *fine stuff* & the poem [by Parry himself] is literature: you must hear it some day.⁶⁰

By 1907 Parry had completed a good number of festival commissions. From 1880 to 1907, both years inclusive, he undertook at least eighteen (Appendix II), and for much of that period he was producing a festival work on an annual basis. Frank Howes commented as follows:

No festival was complete without a new work from his [Parry’s] pen – indeed it is *devastating* [my emphasis] to read the procession of cantatas and oratorios from Hereford to Birmingham, Gloucester to Leeds and Worcester to Norwich.⁶¹

What the majority of these works have in common, despite the noble efforts of Chandos and of Parry enthusiasts, is that they are today more or less unknown, and have been so for decades. In 2019, an attempt was made to revive *Judith*, which was performed at the Royal Festival Hall.⁶² Subsequent world events have not helped, but the work does not seem to have aroused widespread enthusiasm.⁶³ Why was it that Parry, year after year, said ‘yes’ to festival committees? Why did this immensely busy man, with all his commitments, assume such a burden so regularly? Perhaps part of the answer is simply ‘money’. He had an aristocratic wife and two daughters, a home in London (17 Kensington Square), a home in Sussex (Knight’s Croft, Rustington), and a yacht. Such things do not come cheap. Did the salary of the Director of the RCM enable him to maintain a family, two homes and a yacht without recourse to savings and other sources of income? Was he rich in assets but poor in cash? Perhaps another and larger part of the answer is to do with Parry’s personality, for he seems to have regarded himself as a trustee of his energy, knowledge, skills, time, and even money. He seems to have taken the view that these things were to be applied not just for his own benefit but for the benefit of others; and he was evidently a man of great kindness, a quality readily apparent from his letters. We have observed his encouragement of Elgar, whose success he might well have regarded as militating against his own, and in 1920, defending Parry against Shaw, Elgar wrote:

The moment to enumerate the many occasions on which Parry advised and encouraged me is not now: I hope to make known all I owe to his *ungrudging kindness* [my emphasis] at some future time.⁶⁴

We can surely take it that Parry accepted the Directorship of the RCM partly for the scope it gave him for advancing the cause of music and helping the students; and it was surely the same with the Heather Professorship at Oxford. He shouldered these responsibilities for the same reason that he said ‘yes’ to festival committees. And with that kindness and that generosity of spirit went sociability. Parry was not a solo yachtsman: he had with him, on *The Wanderer*, a crew and friends. In 1875 he joined the Bach Choir, the act of a man who was not only sociable but also humble

60 Moore, J.N., *Elgar and his publishers* [:] *letters of a creative life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 677.

61 Howes, F., op. cit., 131-2.

62 The concert took place on 3 April 2019.

63 All that I myself now recall of the occasion is the appearance of the hymn-tune *Repton* (and being surprised by the presence of Anthony Payne and his wife in the audience).

64 The quotation is from a letter dated 7 March 1920 and written to the editor of *Music and Letters*. See Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar* [:] *letters of a lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 332-333.

enough to be told that he was flat, or behind the beat, by someone possibly less qualified than himself. It is impossible to imagine the mature Elgar joining a choir, for his engaging with others tended to be from positions of superiority. He was certainly capable of kindness; we see it in his behaviour towards his siblings and towards Jaeger. But on 3 May 1913 it did not occur to him that the 'nobodies' on 'the bottom table' at the Royal Academy might be glad of his company, or that he might have enjoyed theirs;⁶⁵ and his reference in a letter to Ivor Atkins to 'people who don't matter' is similarly disgraceful.⁶⁶ Perhaps because of the *Variations*, we think of Elgar as a sociable man, but he needed the solitude of Birchwood, Longdon Marsh, Judge's Walk, and Schuster's music room at Bray; and there seems to have been an element of pragmatism in his choice of friends, some of whom gave him lavish hospitality, or flattered him, or caused him to think of himself as a man of letters. None of his friends constituted the slightest threat to his supremacy as a composer. We are of course beneficiaries of Elgar's self-centredness; of his shunning of committees and councils; of his shunning of teaching; of the self-knowledge that caused him to write what he wanted to write and no more. On the other hand, Parry's inability to say 'no' led to overwork and eventually, in 1908, to a breakdown in health sufficient to force his resignation from the Oxford chair.⁶⁷ But he nonetheless carried on. In that year he finished both a Worcester Festival commission⁶⁸ and his *Eton Memorial Ode*. On 7 December, he attended the first London performance of Elgar's First Symphony and wrote in his diary:

Place packed ... Work received with enthusiasm. Very interesting, personal, new, magnetic. A lofty standard.⁶⁹

In 1909, he published his book about J.S. Bach;⁷⁰ the following year he revised his Fourth Symphony; and just as in 1902 he and Elgar had composed for the coronation, so in 1911 they were similarly active,⁷¹ Parry setting the *Te Deum*, Elgar writing a march and a setting of words from Psalm 5.⁷² In 1912, for Parry surely an *annus mirabilis*, came two of his finest works, the Fifth Symphony and the *Ode on the Nativity*.

VI War

The outbreak of war in August 1914 meant that a country whose music had inspired both Parry and Elgar was now an enemy. We have seen that Parry had studied in Stuttgart. In 1876, he had gone to Bayreuth in order to hear *The Ring*. He had met Wagner the following year, at the Wagner Festival held in London, and in 1882 he re-visited Bayreuth and heard *Parsifal*. He greatly admired

65 See footnote 44.

66 Atkins, E. Wulstan, *The Elgar-Atkins friendship* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles (Publishers) Ltd, 1984), 326.

67 Dibble, op. cit., 424.

68 *Beyond these voices there is peace*.

69 Dibble, op. cit., 429.

70 Parry, C. Hubert H., *Johann Sebastian Bach [:] the story of the development of a great personality* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1909).

71 Edward VII died on 6 May 1910 and was succeeded by George V.

72 The *Coronation March*, Op.65 and the motet *O Harken thou*, Op.64.

Brahms and was sufficiently moved by the news of his death to write his *Elegy for Brahms*.⁷³ Elgar too had gone to Germany in order to hear Wagner. He did so in 1892, when he visited Bayreuth. He did so again in each of the three following years, when he visited Munich, and yet again in 1902, when he paid Bayreuth a further visit. Elgar too admired Brahms, to the extent that his Birmingham lecture on 8 November 1905 was devoted entirely to the Third Symphony.⁷⁴ Both men had been encouraged by German musicians. In Parry's case, one thinks of Edward Dannreuther, who was for decades his mentor. In both cases, the conductor Hans Richter and the Novello manager August Jaeger come to mind. Turning to Elgar, one thinks of Richard Strauss, who in 1902, after hearing *Gerontius*, praised Elgar by describing him as 'the first English progressive'.⁷⁵ One thinks also of Fritz Kreisler, who gave the first performance of the Violin Concerto, Op.61. Suddenly such men were aliens, anti-German feeling was high, and English residents with German names felt it prudent to Anglicise them;⁷⁶ and in due course the Title Deprivation Act 1917 removed British titles from German royalty.

Both composers were affected by the suspension of provincial festivals, Elgar probably more so than Parry, for the Three Choirs Festivals had for decades been an important part of his annual routines, and they were a large element in his romantic, rags-to-relative-riches personal story. Each of them, however, had particular reasons for being adversely affected by the war. Some of Parry's difficulties were quite different from those borne by Elgar. How do you run a college of music when so many students are fighting in France? Some of them were killed in action (George Butterworth). Some of them returned with life-changing injuries (Douglas Fox). At least one returned with internal scars (Ivor Gurney). Personal matters preyed on Parry, too. His health did not improve. He continued to have heart attacks. Age was not on his side: at the beginning of the war, he was well into his sixty-seventh year, at a time when the Biblical span of 70 years had relevance.⁷⁷ Parry could not have been unaware that his father had died at the age of 72.⁷⁸ There were problems, too, at Highnam, where trees were compulsorily felled in order to provide wood for rifle butts. As Jeremy Dibble put it:

... it broke his heart when Government orders arrived compelling him to fell his larch plantation and the chestnut grove.⁷⁹

Vistas he had known and loved from boyhood suddenly vanished. Perhaps, at that time of great uncertainty, Parry sought comfort in the certainties of the past, or in what Churchill later referred to as 'the august, unchallenged and tranquil glories of the Victorian era'.⁸⁰ Perhaps in his imagination

73 Brahms died on 3 April 1897.

74 Young, op. cit., 96-110. Commentators sometimes hear the influence of the Brahms work in the fourth movement of the First Symphony: Meikle, Robert, "The True Foundation": The Symphonies' in Monk, R., ed., *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 45-71, 60-61.

75 See Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar [:] a creative life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 368-9.

76 Gustav von Holst became 'Gustav Holst'. August Jaeger's widow became 'Mrs Hunter'.

77 Psalm 90, verse 10.

78 Information obtained from T.G. Parry's death certificate.

79 Dibble, op. cit., 491.

80 Words quoted from Churchill's address to the House of Commons on 7 February 1952, King George VI having died at Sandringham the day before.

Parry found himself walking again along Eton High Street, crossing the Thames, making his way up the hill to the King Henry VIII Gate at Windsor Castle, entering Elvey's organ-loft at St George's Chapel, hearing again the sound of an unaccompanied choir, and hearing again organ music reverberating around that incomparably lovely building. Perhaps in his imagination Parry found himself at Highnam during his school holidays and Oxford vacations, riding to Gloucester and again playing voluntaries at the cathedral. The years of the war certainly produced works that support such a thesis. Parry had written many part-songs, but most of his choral music was for chorus and either orchestra or organ. By writing six motets for unaccompanied voices, the *Songs of Farewell*, was he in a sense returning to his musical roots, to Elvey's organ-loft and the singing of the choir at Windsor? In any event, the motets' title is not the work of a sentimental editor being wise after the event, for they were published during Parry's lifetime, in 1916 and 1917, and he heard them performed.⁸¹ They are the work of an artist dwelling on transience and conscious of time's 'ever-rolling stream';⁸² and in the final number, *Lord, let me know mine end*, he queries with the Psalmist the number of his days: here, and in *There is an old belief*, Parry approaches the sublimity of the slow movements of Elgar. And there was organ music: in 1912, Novello had published a set of chorale preludes; and in 1913 came not only his *Elegy*, written for the funeral of a brother-in-law,⁸³ but also the *Fantasia and Fugue* in G major, dedicated - significantly, perhaps - to Sir Walter Parratt, the Organist of St George's. In those war years, he again turned to the instrument he mastered in his youth, and Novello published a set of chorale fantasias (1915) and a second set of chorale preludes (1916).

One writer made the claim that Elgar had 'a good war'.⁸⁴ So far as his music is concerned, the description is not unfair. The recitation *Carillon*, Op.75 enjoyed great popularity. There were innumerable performances of *Land of Hope and Glory*. There came a point at which Elgar was conducting two performances a day of *The Fringes of the Fleet*, a setting of words by Kipling.⁸⁵ In all other respects, though, the statement is insensitive. Some of the reasons for this have been given already. Others include Elgar's health. Biographers invariably convey the impression that it was never very good, that Elgar continually endured illness; and by March 1918 matters were so bad that he was obliged to undergo a painful tonsillectomy. He was depressed by the deaths of friends and relatives. A nephew died in 1915,⁸⁶ Richter in 1916, G.R. Sinclair ('G.R.S.') as well as an uncle in 1917,⁸⁷ Marie Joshua in 1918. Perhaps in those depressing and uncertain times he too sought comfort in the certainties of the past. In 1917 Elgar took a sub-lease of a cottage in rural Sussex and there wrote his three chamber works; and recalling that Parry in those years turned to the instrument he learned as a schoolboy, perhaps there is significance in the fact that the first of Elgar's trio is a violin sonata. Was the Violin Sonata, Op.82 inspired at least partly by reflections on the days when Elgar contemplated a career as a professional violinist? Were the String Quartet, Op.83 and Piano Quintet, Op.84 inspired by thoughts of music-making in the Worcester of his youth?

81 Dibble, op. cit., 514.

82 Isaac Watts.

83 Sidney Herbert (1853-1913), the 14th Earl.

84 Newton, Carl, "Now he belongs to the big world' [:] the historical Elgar' in Mitchell, K.D., ed., *Cockaigne [:] essays on Elgar 'In London Town'* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2004), 58-93, 77.

85 Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar [:] a creative life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 710.

86 William Henry Elgar, a son of his brother Frank (Francis Thomas Elgar).

87 Henry Elgar died on 24 February 1917 (grant of letters of administration). There is no middle name on the grant.

VII Parry's death

Parry died on 7 October 1918.⁸⁸ He had celebrated his 70th birthday in February that year and had therefore exceeded by some seven months the span of 'three score years and ten' referred to in Psalm 90. On 21 October, in a letter to Ernest Newman, Elgar wrote: 'We have been very sad over Parry's death'.⁸⁹ The Elgars had attended the funeral, and it says much about Parry's stature that the service took place at St Paul's Cathedral; that it was presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury; and that the royal family and many other institutions were represented. It is not generally the case that the funeral of the Director of the RCM takes place at St Paul's. Nor is it generally the case that even the most outstanding of our composers enjoys the distinction of such a service and such a resting place. Elgar's funeral took place at St Wulstan's, Little Malvern (a building that not even the most architecturally illiterate could ascribe to Christopher Wren). Britten's took place at Aldeburgh Parish Church. We associate funerals at St Paul's with figures such as Nelson and the Duke of Wellington, and Prime Ministers such as Churchill and Thatcher. Writing in 1966, Frank Howes goes a long way towards providing an explanation:

[Parry deserves] the chief credit for the awakening of English music from the complacent lethargy that had been growing on it for the best part of two centuries. He more than anyone, except Stanford, pulled it out of the rut of sentimentality, easy-going standards, and disregard of literary values in vocal music; he raised the intellectual status of the musical profession and [,] with that [,] its place in public regard; he infused new life into musical education, set up higher standards and established worthier ideals; he gave to the art as practised in Britain an integrity, moral, social and aesthetic, that it had not possessed since the time of Byrd and Gibbons.⁹⁰

In October 1919, little over a year after Parry's death, Elgar's Cello Concerto received its first performance, and there in a sense his creativity came to an end, for he wrote no more masterpieces. Elgar, by focusing on composition, brought English music into the mainstream of European culture. Whether Parry's music belongs there is perhaps a moot point, but if he was not a 'great' composer, he was certainly capable of achieving greatness from time to time; and he was undoubtedly a 'useful' composer: it is hard to imagine a world without *Jerusalem, I was glad, Blest Pair of Sirens*,⁹¹ the *Songs of Farewell*, the suites for strings,⁹² the splendid hymn-tunes,⁹³ the double chant in E major,⁹⁴ and the finely wrought music for organ. But the symphonies and other orchestral works of Parry, fine though some of them are, face the difficult and possibly hopeless task of competing with those of Elgar and the continental masters of the period. The King is however a Parry enthusiast, and no one knows what the future will bring.

88 The death certificate gives influenza and septicaemia as the causes.

89 Moore, J.N., *Edward Elgar [:] letters of a lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 320.

90 Howes, F., *op. cit.*, 129. This seems a little hard on Purcell.

91 Some of our leading choirs are in the habit of treating this as an anthem. At Westminster Abbey on 16 November 2022 and at Magdalen College, Oxford on 21 January 2023, the anthem at Evensong was *Blest Pair of Sirens*, with of course organ rather than orchestral accompaniment on both occasions.

92 The *Lady Radnor Suite* (first performed in 1894) and *An English Suite for Strings* (first performed in 1922).

93 For example, *Laudate Dominum, Repton, Rustington*.

94 See *RSCM Chant Book* (Dorking: The Royal School of Church Music, 1981), number 110.



A photograph taken at the west end of Gloucester Cathedral during the 1922 Gloucester Festival: the Parry memorial tablet is being dedicated. Other memorials to Parry may be seen at St Paul's Cathedral, London and at the Church of the Holy Innocents, Highnam, Gloucestershire.

(Illustration courtesy of Arthur Reynolds)

Appendix I

The staff at Highnam Court, according to the 1851 census

Housekeeper, butler, cook, house maid, under maid, third maid, kitchen maid, nurse, nursery maid, footman, coachman, groom

Appendix II

*Some of Parry's festival commissions*⁹⁵

- 1880 *Prometheus Unbound*
Gloucester
- 1883 *The Glories of our Blood and State*
Gloucester
- 1888 *Judith*
Birmingham
- 1889 *Ode on St Cecilia's Day*
Leeds
- 1890 *L'Allegro ed Il Penseroso*
Norwich
- 1891 *De Profundis*
Hereford
- 1892 *Job*
Gloucester
- 1893 *Overture to an Unwritten Tragedy*
Worcester
- 1894 *King Saul*
Birmingham
- 1895 *Invocation to Music*
Leeds

95 See Dibble, op. cit., 511-2.

- 1897 *Magnificat*
Hereford
- 1898 *A Song of Darkness and Light*
Gloucester
- 1900 *Thanksgiving Te Deum*
Hereford
- 1903 *Voces Clamantium*
Hereford
- 1904 *The Love that casteth out fear*
Gloucester
- 1905 *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*
Norwich
- 1906 *The Soul's Ransom*
Hereford
- 1907 *The Vision of Life*
Cardiff

Relf Clark's early musical education took place, like Parry's, at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle (but with Sidney Campbell rather than George Elvey). He subsequently studied with Robert Sherlaw Johnson and F.W. Sternfeld as an exhibitioner at Worcester College, Oxford, and his doctorate followed research at the universities of London and Reading. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists and an honorary life member of the Elgar Society and the Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain. A solicitor, he practised with a City law firm and retired in 2017.

Elgar, Barrie and the ‘Cinema Supper’

Kevin Mitchell

In November 1913 James Barrie and the five Llewelyn Davies boys,¹ who had been under his care since the death of their mother, Sylvia, in 1910, went to see a revue in London in which the French music-hall star, Gaby Deslys² played a prominent part. Barrie and the boys were entranced by her, and he made himself known and invited her for tea at his Adelphi Terrace flat. For a time Barrie became infatuated and planned to make her his next star and write a revue specially for her: she was overwhelmed.

Gaby Deslys ‘was a phenomenon of the decade, the first of the modern sex-symbols, whose fantastic head-dresses, semi-nudity on stage and provocative dancing and scandalous private life more than compensated for her limited acting talent’.³ She had ‘good looks but no conspicuous talent except for the wearing of clothes which contrived to be at the same time voluminous and scanty’,⁴ and even though this might have been one of Barrie’s unpredictable flirtations, he was in writing a ragtime revue attempting to engage with a younger generation and the five boys, who supported the idea: he started to fill his notebook with preliminary ideas for the revue.

1 Arthur Llewelyn Davies (1863-1907) and his wife Sylvia (1866-1910) had five sons, George (1893-1915), Jack (1894-1959); Peter (1897-1960), Michael (1900-1921) and Nicholas (1903-1980). They were unofficially adopted by Barrie after Sylvia’s death and he could afford to maintain them, provide a home and pay for their education – mainly Eton, Oxford and Cambridge, save Osborne Naval College for Jack. They were instrumental in the creation of Peter Pan, as well as the Darling family and the Lost Boys. Barrie recalled in his dedication to *Peter Pan*: ‘I made Peter by rubbing the five of you violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame. That is all he is, the spark I got from you’. Peter Hollindale ed., *Peter Pan and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75 and see Andrew Birkin, *J.M. Barrie & The Lost Boys* (London: Constable, 1979) for a full and fascinating account of Barrie’s connection with the Llewelyn Davies family. A third edition was published by Yale University Press in 2003.

2 Gaby Deslys (1881-1920) music-hall star, actress, dancer and singer. One of her dances was known as ‘The Gaby Glide’.

3 Birkin, op. cit., 216. It could be argued that Maud Allan was an earlier ‘sex symbol’ when she danced topless with only jewels covering her body in *The Vision of Salome*, first seen in Vienna in 1906 and 1908 in London.

4 W.A. Darlington, quoted in Janet Dunbar, *J. M. Barrie: The Man Behind the Image* (London: Collins, 1970), 207.

By Easter 1914 the revue had evolved to include the new medium of cinematography and he planned to have a 'Cinema Supper' where guests would be invited to the Savoy Theatre for a lavish banquet, to be followed by the performance of a series of sketches written by himself. He proposed to have cameras in the auditorium and at the supper to record the guests' reactions, then to edit the film and show short sequences - these would be projected on a large screen throughout Deslys' revue, which would provide a startling and original back-drop to one of her erotic dance routines.

Was Elgar to be involved in the revue? A letter from Elgar to Harley Granville Barker⁵ dated 27 May 1914 suggests that he might have been: 'I am mightily taken with Barrie's Burlesque, but there are difficulties regarding the musical possibilities which I should like to talk over with you and Barrie before I decide. Please understand I am most desirous of doing the music, but I do not think I am capable of it ... Could J.M.B. be tempted to lunch here with us hermits...'.⁶ There is no record of Barrie going to Severn House for lunch.

Invitations were sent by Barrie and Granville Barker to the 'great and the good' of London Society for 'a Cinema Supper and other adventures on the Stage of the Savoy Theatre on Friday 3rd July at 11.30pm'. The guest list was headed by The Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and his wife Margot, together with four family members. Other guests included the Waldorf Astors, Rupert Brooke, G.K. Chesterton and his wife Frances, Lady Curzon, Anthony Hope Hawkins and his wife Elizabeth, John Lavery and his wife, Sir George and Lady Lewis, Edward Lutyens and his wife, Eddie Marsh, Sir Arthur Pinero, Charles Ricketts, Robert Ross, Charles Shannon, George Bernard Shaw, Sir Edgar and Lady Speyer, Sir Herbert and Lady Tree, W.B. Yeats and Sir Edward and Lady Elgar. The printed guest list showed 149 people.

For the event Barrie wrote a series of short sketches, the first being *Why? A Conundrum*, the second *One Night* for Lillah McCarthy⁷ and Henry Ainley.⁸ This was followed by *When The*

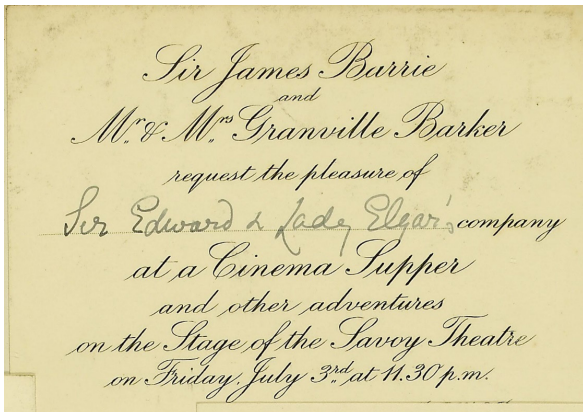


Gaby Deslys
(courtesy of Arthur Reynolds)

-
- 5 Harley Granville Barker (1877-1946) actor, dramatist, director and manager who reformed the Edwardian theatre and produced notable productions at the Savoy Theatre of *A Winter's Tale* and *Twelfth Night* in 1912 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1914.
 - 6 Letter Elgar to Granville Barker, 27 May 1914, transcription by Martin Bird BA1977 448 from Francis Edwards bookseller sales catalogue.
 - 7 Lillah McCarthy (1875-1960) actress and first wife of Granville Barker.
 - 8 Henry Ainley (1879-1945) actor. He recorded *Carillon* with Elgar in 1915.



Gaby Deslys



Supper invitation

(courtesy of the Elgar Birthplace Museum)

Kye Comes Hame, then *Taming a Tiger* with Irene Vanbrugh⁹ and Godfrey Tearle¹⁰ and *The Bull-Dog Breed* featuring Gerald du Maurier¹¹ and Granville Barker. The dramatic part of the evening concluded with 'still another version of *The Adored One*' including Marie Tempest,¹² which according to the programme, would 'be subject to interruption'.

Before the evening Barrie wrote to Chesterton:

It is immensely good of you to help us in our adventure ... and I am very beholden to you. Care will be taken of your arm - indeed as I understand the slower things are done for the cinematograph the better, and in any case you shall do nothing you would rather not. I hope Mrs Chesterton is to be at the supper also, as the plays are meant to amuse her.¹³

Alice Elgar's diary for 3 July 1914 included the following:

... E. doubtful if he wd. go to Granville Barker & Barrie's Supper but he & A. went about 11 P.M. Were cinematographed on arriving & at supper & during short plays & at leaving. Very amusing evg. E. much amused - about 150 people - not home till after 3 -

9 Irene Vanburgh (1872-1949) actress who appeared in many of Barrie's plays including *Ibsen's Ghost* (1891), *Walker, London* (1892), *The Admirable Crichton* (1902), *Rosalind* (1912) and *Seven Women* (1917). She created the role of Gwendolen Fairfax in Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).

10 Godfrey Tearle (1884-1953) actor. He appeared in Hitchcock's 1935 film *The 39 Steps* and was the star of the wartime *Medal for the General*.

11 Gerald du Maurier (1873-1934) actor and manager. Acted in Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton* in 1902 and created the roles of Mr Darling and Captain Hook in *Peter Pan* (1904). He was the brother of Sylvia Llewelyn Davies.

12 Marie Tempest (1864-1942) actress.

13 Viola Meynell ed., *Letters of J.M. Barrie* (London: Peter Davies, 1942).

ACT I.

Melon Cantaloup Rafrnichi . . .	Monsieur Franciscorro Chef Fruiter.
Consommé Glacé Madrilène . . .	Monsieur Guillemain Chef Potager.
Saumon d'Ecosse en Gelée au Cliequot } . . .	Monsieur Livvereau Chef Poissonier.
Poulet Nouveau Printanière . . .	Monsieur Allanic Chef Saucier.
Petits Pois de Jersey	Monsieur Mahieux Chef Entremetier.
Buffet Froid	Monsieur Cartier Chef Garde-Manger.
Salade de Saison	Monsieur Francisco Chef Saladier.
Pêches Frappés	Monsieur Clavière Chef Pâtissier.
Mignardises	Monsieur Darquez Chef Confiseur.

ACT II.

FRANK TINNEY'S REVUE.

In which Mr. TINNEY will appear, supported by his specially trained Company.

SCENE 1, in which Mr. TINNEY will double the parts of Compere and Commère.

SCENE 2. WHY? A CONUNDRUM.

Give It Up... .. Miss MARIE LOHR.
Wait a Bit... .. Mr. DION BOUGICHAULT.

SCENE 3. ONE NIGHT.

Olivo Miss LILLIAN MCCARTHY.
Jack Mr. HENRY AISLEY.

SCENE 4. WHEN THE KYE COMES HOME.

Effie Miss JEAN ATLWIN.
Pete Mr. EDMUND GWENN.
Henders Mr. HENRY VIBANT.

SCENE 5. TAMING A TIGER.

The Tiger Miss IRENE VANBRUGH.
The Tamer... .. Mr. GODFREY TEARLE.

SCENE 6. MISS INA CLAIRE.

SCENE 7. THE BULL-DOG BREED.

1st Bull Dog Mr. GERALD DU MAURIER.
2nd Bull Dog Mr. GRANVILLE BARKER.

The Curtain will fall three times during this play to indicate the passing of years and years and years.

To conclude with still another version of

THE ADORED ONE,

which will be subject to interruption.

She Miss MARIE TEMPEST.
He Mr. GRAHAM BROWNE.
It Mr. O. P. HEGGIE.

Savoy supper menu and plays
(courtesy of the Elgar Birthplace Museum)

Elgar's reticence and indecision about attending a large Society event was nothing new.¹⁴ Even as recently as 1911 he had refused to attend the Coronation of King George V at Westminster Abbey. However, he overcame his reluctance to attend the Savoy and enjoyed the evening far more than he had anticipated: before the plays Barrie provided a magnificent supper which ran to nine courses – called Act 1 in the programme - each one supervised by an individual chef, which sounded like a supper prepared by Anatole, the French chef employed by Bertie Wooster's Aunt Dahlia at the fictional Brinkley Court, Worcestershire.

14 Years before he had refused to attend a formal lunch and sent a note to his hostess an hour beforehand: 'I am sure you would not wish your board to be disgraced by the presence of a piano-tuner's son and his wife'. Story relayed by a Malvern resident to David Franklin, quoted in a review of Burley and Carruthers, *Edward Elgar; the record of a friendship* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972) in *The Musical Times*, November 1972, 1086.

Elgar was allocated table 'K' along with Sir Arthur Pinero, Mrs Chesterton, Lady Speyer and Miss Marie Lohr. Alice sat at table 'P' with Edwin Lutyens, Sir George Alexander and Lady Horner. Alice subsequently reported to Troyte Griffith: 'I sat next Lutyens at that amusing supper given by Granville Barker & Barrie at the Savoy Theatre – he was nice & interesting to hear about Delhi & I have always have a feeling of some affinity to the Cathedral in his Church in the Hampstead Garden City'(sic).¹⁵

A number of accounts of the evening were recorded. On 4 July Asquith wrote to Venetia Stanley that the previous night he attended

... a rather garish affair in the way of a supper party. I have never experienced such a glare of lights as when we were all 'cinema'd' (if that is the right word) for Barrie's play. I sat between or among Lillah, Miss Gladys Cooper, & Lady Howard de Walden. I did not find the company very amusing, nor the little plays that followed, but that did not matter as I had lots to think about...¹⁶

Charles Ricketts¹⁷ wrote a lengthy account of the evening in his diary:

Savoy Theatre Barker supper, quite an amusing evening. All the theatre stars: Shaw, Yeats, Rupert Brooke, Chesterton, Barrie for letters, Asquith, his wife and pretty daughter, countless people in society: quite one of the most representative meetings brought together. On arrival we were met by a fierce light: this it seems was a cinema machine, both Shannon and I shaded our eyes and made faces. At my table old Lady Lewis who is a dear, talked my head off, the pretty Lady Lytton sat on the other side: facing me was the beautiful young actor Godfrey Tearle. I never learnt the name of the other man ... At the next table sat Shaw, Mrs Patrick Campbell, Lady Mond, an English blonde woman who is an Indian Princess and the beautiful Rupert Brooke. Poor Shannon sat next to Mrs Asquith ... and the German Ambassador ... The performances varied between quite charming sketches by Barrie acted by very noted actors and others that were far-fetched. This part of the entertainment was too long ... Altogether the evening was most entertaining and everybody fizzled a great deal. I have quite a childish wish to be visible in the cinema films. I should like to see how I look and move.¹⁸

In his *Autobiography* Chesterton recalled the evening:

-
- 15 Alice Elgar to Troyte Griffith, 29 July 1914, Percy M. Young, *Elgar O.M.* (London: Collins, 1955), 171. Alice Elgar was thinking of Westminster Cathedral. Lutyens designed two churches in Hampstead Garden Suburb and was working on his designs for the construction of New Delhi.
 - 16 Letter to Venetia Stanley, 4 July 1914, *H.H. Asquith, Letters to Venetia Stanley*, selected and edited by Michael Brock and Eleanor Brock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 95. Venetia Stanley (1887-1948) came from an aristocratic Liberal family and married Edwin Montagu, one of Asquith's cabinet colleagues, in 1915. Asquith had a romantic, but platonic relationship with Venetia from 1912 to 1915.
 - 17 Charles Ricketts (1866-1931) artist, illustrator, author and printer. He had a lifelong personal and professional partnership with the artist Charles Shannon (1863-1937).
 - 18 Ricketts' MS diary, British Library Add. 58105 Vol XXI. He refers to Barker's supper as he was still closely involved with the Savoy Theatre and probably gave Barrie permission to hold the event there. I am indebted to Professor John Kelly for directing me to the diary manuscript. Ricketts was on table 'O'. The man he did not know was Mr E. Montague (possibly Charles E. Montague (1867-1928) novelist and journalist). Shaw was on table 'U' with H.R.H. The Rance of Sarawak, a friend of the Elgars. Shannon was at table 'Q' with Princess Lichnowsky, wife of the German ambassador.

I went to the Savoy supper [and] found the stage of the Savoy Theatre thronged with nearly everybody in London, as the Society papers say when they mean everybody in Society. From the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, to the ... most cryptic Oriental attaché, they were all there, dining at little tables and talking about everything but the matter in hand ... Towards the end of the meal, Sir Edward Elgar casually remarked to my wife: "I suppose you know you're being filmed all this time". From what I know of the lady, it is unlikely that she was brandishing a champagne-bottle or otherwise attracting attention; but some of them were throwing bread about and showing marked relaxation from the cares of State'.¹⁹

Later Chesterton, William Archer²⁰ and Lord Howard de Walden took an active part in Barrie's scheme. Following the supper they 'were approached with private instructions, which worked out in public as follows'. Chesterton continued:

The stage was cleared and the company adjourned to the auditorium, where Bernard Shaw harangued them in a furious speech, with savage gesticulations denouncing Barker and Barrie and finally drawing an enormous sword. The other three of us [Chesterton, Archer and de Walden] rose at this signal, also brandishing swords, and stormed the stage, going out through the back scenery. And there We ... disappear for ever from the record and reasonable understanding of mankind; for never from that day to this has the faintest light been thrown on the reasons of our remarkable behaviour'.²¹

Chesterton seems not to have been aware of Barrie's intention to use the film in his music-hall revue.

A few of Barrie's intimates saw the film, but when his ultimate intentions for its use became known, problems arose as the supper guests thought they should have been warned and had attended what they thought to be a private party. Subsequently when Asquith discovered that a thirty-foot close-up of himself and his unguarded gestures would be used as part of Barrie's music-hall revue for Deslys, he wrote from 10 Downing Street refusing permission for the film to be shown.²²

A few days after the supper, a second film was made with Chesterton, Shaw, Archer and de Walden which began with 'Shaw coming to [Chesterton's] house in Beaconsfield, in the heartiest of spirits and proposing that we should appear together as Cowboys, in a film of some sort, projected by Sir James Barrie'.²³ Dressed as cowboys, they, together with Granville Barker, repaired with the film technicians to waste land in Essex to make this Western burlesque. However shortly after Chesterton received 'a friendly and apologetic note from Sir James Barrie, saying that the whole

19 G.K. Chesterton, *Autobiography* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1936), 233-234. Chesterton was seated at table 'T' together with Barrie, A.E.W. Mason, the Duchess of Sutherland and O.P. Heggie.

20 William Archer (1856-1924) theatre critic who championed Shaw and Ibsen.

21 Chesterton, op. cit., 234. Two pages of Barrie's draft typescript for this part of the evening can be found on the Barrie database: jmbarrie.co.uk

22 Perhaps if Asquith had seen Gaby Deslys he might have been less censorious of Barrie's film, for when in 1908 Maud Allen, whose daring dance in *The Vision of Salome*, came to his attention, she was invited to a Downing Street garden party, much to the horror of his colleagues who objected to encountering Miss Allen while with their wives.

23 Chesterton, op. cit., 231-232.

scheme was going to be dropped'.²⁴ Shaw also 'had qualms as the magic dried off'²⁵ and refused permission for the film to be shown in public. Barrie did write a revue for Gaby Deslys, *Rosy Rapture*, that opened in March 1915: it was a failure and did not use the Savoy footage.²⁶

Photograph of the 'Cowboy' film.

Left to right, Howard de Walden, William Archer, Barrie, Chesterton and Shaw, 1914.



24 Ibid., 234. In an interview given to the *New York Herald* in 1914 Barrie stated: 'Do you know I like the moving pictures? In them I can see cowboys. I have always wanted to be a cowboy', quoted in Birkin op. cit., 223.

25 Denis Mackail, *The Story of J.M.B.* (London: Peter Davies, 1941), 470.

26 It opened on 22 March 1915 with music by Herman Darewcki and Jerome Kern and used cinematography in some scenes.

There is a letter from Barrie to Elgar simply dated 19 March – it gives no year – which may relate to the Savoy supper film: ‘Yes, I shall be delighted to show you the film sometime when I can venture out again. Incidentally they were done indoors they are good pictures and an amusing record of what seems now far-off time’.²⁷ Alas no further records shed any light on this.

Within a month of the supper Europe was engulfed in war and for the participants - although unknown to them then - the evening marked the passing of the old world, and for some – Raymond Asquith, Rupert Brooke²⁸ – it was the last such grand social event they were to enjoy in peacetime.

Both Elgar and Barrie were in Scotland at the outbreak of The Great War, the Elgars at The Gairloch Hotel Ross-shire, Barrie and ‘his boys’ at Auch Lodge, near the Bridge of Orchy in Argyllshire. Elgar wrote to Alice Stuart Wortley: ‘How truly awful all the news is – I cannot think of anything else - ... we get very little news & have been wiring to London ... posts very vague and newspapers scarce & old’.²⁹ Barrie wrote on 4 August: ‘We are so isolated from news here, that when I wrote last I was quite ignorant that Europe was in a blaze ... It seems awful to be up here at such a time catching fish, or not catching them ... We occasionally get the morning papers in the evening, and there may be big news to-day’.³⁰

* * *

James Barrie was born in Kirriemuir, Angus on 9 May 1860, one of ten children and the third son, to David Barrie, a loom weaver, and Margaret Ogilvy. He had a sound Scottish education; there was just sufficient money to send Barrie to Edinburgh University and in April 1882 he obtained his M.A. Wanting to be a writer, in 1883 he obtained a job, which lasted for eighteen months, with the *Nottingham Journal*. He submitted articles, some of which had been accepted by the *St James’s Gazette* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, as his aim was to work in London: in March 1885, he caught the night train to the capital. Hard years of grinding journalism followed, but gradually more articles, novels and eventually plays began to be accepted. He married Mary Ansell, an actress in his play

27 Martin Bird transcription, letter number 7980. Dan Laurence states that both films were subsequently destroyed by Barrie, see Dan H. Laurence, ed., *Bernard Shaw Collected Letters, 1911-1925* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1985), 445, but the ‘Cowboy’ film was shown at a Charity matinee in 1916 and given the bizarre name *How Men Love*. Mrs Patrick Campbell wrote to Shaw on 8 June 1916 that the next day she was giving ‘an introduction before a movie event of yourself rolling down a hill in a barrel to be spoken by me at the Coliseum’; Alan Dent ed., *Bernard Shaw and Mrs Patrick Campbell: Their Correspondence* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1952), 188. Shaw mentioned the film in a letter of 30 December 1916 to William Archer: ‘I saw the Barrie film: why did not you ask him to shew it to you? There were several reelings-off of it. It wasn’t in the least funny. Chesterton has possibilities as a comic film actor – or had before his illness spoil his figure – but the rest of us were dismal failures as amateur Charlie Chaplins. The Savoy supper was the most interesting’, Laurence op. cit., 447-8. According to Denis Mackail the film was known to still exist in 1941, but both films now appear to be lost. Barrie’s biographer, Andrew Birkin, has searched the archives for the films, but to no avail - email from Andrew Birkin 1 February 2023. The photograph shown above is the only surviving visual evidence of this escapade.

28 Raymond Asquith was killed on 15 September 1916 in fighting near Ginchy aged 37. Rupert Brooke died on 23 April 1915, aged 27 on board a hospital ship moored by the Greek island of Skyros where he was buried.

29 Letter to Alice Stuart Wortley, 2 August 1914, Jerrold Northrop Moore, ed., *The Windflower Letters* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2015), 159.

30 Letter to Lord Lucas, Birkin op. cit., 219-202. War was declared at midnight on 4 August 1914.

Walker, London, in July 1894 and undertook a successful trip to America in 1896.

Further theatrical success was to follow with *The Admirable Crichton* and *Quality Street* in 1902 and his increasing preoccupation with the Llewelyn Davies family led eventually to the creation of Barrie's masterpiece *Peter Pan* first performed, at the Duke of York's Theatre, on 27 December 1904. It was a huge success, and remained so for many years, being revived every Christmas.

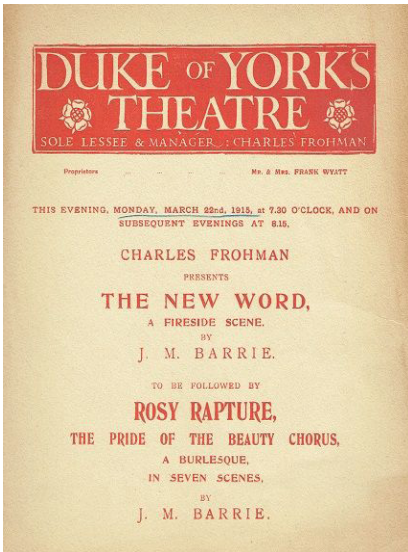
Elgar and Alice went to see *Peter Pan* on 11 March 1905 and found it 'lovely'.³¹ Over the years they saw more of Barrie's plays as they appeared in London. On 16 October 1908 they saw *What Every Woman Knows* which had opened on 3 September, with Gerald du Maurier and Lillah McCarthy, at the Duke of York's Theatre. Alice made no further comment in her diary but wrote to Carice that it was 'very interesting',³² but when she and Carice saw it on 1 October 1913 during the Leeds festival, they found it 'Dreadfully dull – came away soon –'. Elgar and Alice went to a Triple Bill (but only saw the last two pieces) at the Duke of York's Theatre on 17 March 1910, which comprised two one-act plays by Barrie, *Old Friends* and *The Twelve Pound Look* with Lena Ashwell, with *The Sentimentalist* by Meredith between the two. Alice found *The Twelve-Pound Look* 'Quite delightful'.³³ In this play a wealthy man who is about to be knighted is sent a typist to write the letters of congratulation. She is the man's first wife, who left him years before after saving £12.00 to buy a typewriter and obtain her freedom, as she found her husband's self-satisfied comfortable life stifling. On 16 April 1910 Alice and Carice saw *The Twelve-Pound Look* with a play by Harley Granville Barker.³⁴ Elgar and Alice Stuart Wortley saw further plays on 9 October 1913 and Alice recorded: 'E. enjoyed the Plays thought the 'Adored One' too clever for general comprehension & 'The Will' most touching'. They saw another Barrie play *Half an Hour*, with Irene Vanburgh at the Hippodrome on 12 November 1913 which Alice found 'Powerful & thrilling'. *Half an Hour* tells of an unhappy marriage. The wife intent on leaving her husband flies to her lover leaving her jewels, her wedding ring and a note for the husband. They intend to elope to Egypt, but the lover is knocked down and killed by a London bus. The wife manages to return undetected to the matrimonial home and adroitly manages to recover and burn the letter and salvage her wedding ring, without her husband knowing what has happened.

There exists correspondence in June 1914 between Mr Harrington Bailey of the Kingsway Theatre and Elgar, concerning another prospective collaboration with Barrie, but it is not clear what was envisaged and like the putative burlesque scheme it came to nothing.

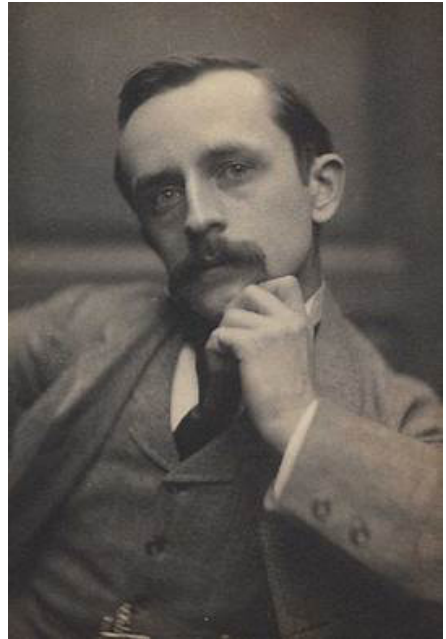
In October 1915 *Carillon* was performed at the London Coliseum with Lalla Vandervelde as narrator. On 9 October 1915 – Alice's birthday – she met Elgar there and they saw Barrie's new play *The New Word*: '... very English & very appealing to A'. This one-act play presented the last evening together of a middle-class family before the next day their surviving son goes off in uniform for the Front.

On 21 April 1917 Elgar and Alice joined Alice Stuart of Wortley to see a Triple Bill. This comprised two plays by Barrie, *The Old Lady Shows her Medals* and *Seven Women*. Alice recorded:

-
- 31 Martin Bird, ed., *The Wanderer; Diaries 1905-1907* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2018), 27. Another composer who enjoyed *Peter Pan* was the fourteen-year-old Benjamin Britten, who after seeing it on 12 January 1928 wrote that it was 'wonderful'.
- 32 Martin Bird ed., *Darling Chuck: The Carice Letters* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2014), 173.
- 33 Martin Bird and Paul Chennell, eds, *The Elgar Family Diaries* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2020), 246.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 262.



Poster for *The New Word* and *Rosy Rapture*



Barrie at about the time of his marriage, 1894.

‘The 1st Barrie piece very touching 2nd rather amusing & the other piece amusing but needed a better ending. E.& A. enjoyed the little change -’.³⁵ *The Old Lady Shows her Medals* shows the deception by a charwoman in inventing a son at the front who has regularly ‘written’ to her. She has chosen his name and regiment, the Black Watch from a newspaper account. A friend comes across the soldier on leave back from the Front and brings him to his ‘mother’. After initial anger and incredulity, the two carry on the deception throughout his leave, as the soldier has no other living family. He returns to France and is killed, leaving the woman to cherish his medals, which she is sent, and his memory.

In November *The Old Lady Shows her Medals* was revived at the Coliseum theatre and shared the bill with the last week of *The Fringes of the Fleet* conducted by Elgar.³⁶

Elgar and Barrie no doubt met at London social events and elsewhere in their latter years, but many of these are not recorded. A few known meetings are set out.

On 23 November 1920 Elgar dined at Arnold Bennett’s home, 12B George Street, Hanover Square, with Barrie, Siegfried Sassoon, W.H.R. Rivers and Henry Head. Bennett noted that ‘Elgar is fine’.

35 Jerrold Northrop Moore ed., *The Windflower Letters* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2015), 212. The third play was by A.A. Milne.

36 Carice went to see *Dear Brutus* starring Gerald du Maurier and Norman Forbes on Boxing Day 1917 at Wyndham’s Theatre.

Sometime in 1922 another possible collaboration with Barrie to provide incidental music for a play appears to have been mooted, which came to nothing. The only evidence of this is in a postscript of a letter from Ivor Atkins to Elgar dated 4 June 1922: 'I was very sick about J.M. Barrie'.³⁷ He occasionally met Barrie on his visits to London, sometimes at the Beefsteak Club and at literary events.³⁸ On 22 February 1929 he was invited by Norman Forbes Robertson to a rehearsal of Barrie's *Quality Street*: 'The rehearsal ... is postponed until ... Wednesday at 8 o'clock. Do come. I telephoned to Barrie this morning, that perhaps you might be able to come. He was delighted at the honour your presence would give him. Do come if possible'.³⁹

Although the two films mentioned above appear not to have survived, there is one short film which shows Elgar and Barrie, albeit separately. This was shot by J.B. Priestley in the garden of Lawnside School, Malvern during Barry Jackson's Malvern Festival in August 1932. Elgar is shown talking to John Drinkwater, H.G. Wells is in a deckchair and Barrie is playing 'trains' with a group of children running around the garden – he is the 'guards van'. Among the other guests is the artist Laura Knight.⁴⁰

Mary Anderson de Navarro was a mutual friend to both Elgar and Barrie, having known the latter since the 1890s when he brought his cricket team, the Allahakbarries to Broadway, Worcestershire to play against a team captained by Mary Anderson. In a letter to *The Times* dated 24 February 1934 and published on 28 February 1934, she recalled a lunch at her home Court Farm, Broadway with Elgar and Barrie:

Not long ago Sir James Barrie was coming to lunch. We knew he liked being alone with us, as we did with him. Sir Edward happened to ring us up and proposed himself for lunch on the same day. My husband laughingly told him two O.M.'s [sic] at one meal would be more than an ordinary household could grapple with. But he replied: 'I don't care a hoot who the other O.M. is. I am coming'. He arrived early, very smartly dressed. He had beautiful feet and was wearing patent leather shoes and white spats. While we were chaffing him about them, Barrie stood at the door showing visible signs of dismay. 'Who is he?' he whispered. 'Elgar.' 'Oh', with a look of relief, 'I don't mind him: I've known him for years'. We had a lively lunch. Sir James does not care for music. Elgar, turning to me said, 'After lunch, Mamie, we'll bind Barrie to a chair and put him to death to slow music'. Sir James looked at him and answered quietly: 'I'd rather be trodden to death by your buskins'. This retort delighted Elgar.⁴¹

Elgar became ill in the autumn of 1933 and on 8 October underwent an operation. On 20 October Barrie wrote to Elgar: 'I am sorry to see you have been ill and this is just a line of friendship to wish you a happy recovery'.⁴² The operation revealed terminal and inoperable cancer: he gradually declined, but rallied in December and even though nothing could be done medically, he was allowed to return to his home Marl Bank in January 1934. Knowing this Barrie wrote a final

37 E. Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1984), 342. Barrie did not write a new play in 1922.

38 Bird, *Darling Chuck*, 342, 407.

39 Martin Bird transcript letter 1526.

40 Dame Laura Knight (1877-1970), artist. The film is now held at the British Film Institute. I am grateful to Andrew Youdell for information about the film and to Andrew Birkin and Andrew Neill for directing me to the BFI.

41 Mary Anderson de Navarro, *A Few More Memories* (London: Hutchinson 1936), 214.

42 Martin Bird transcript letter 654.

letter on 3 January 1934:

I am happy to see in tonight's papers that you are now sufficiently recovered to be able to return home. I know by experience that this is a blessed state. You never knew, but I have long had a great admiration for you, and I was down-hearted by your illness ... I know you are well tended ... May 1934 be kind.⁴³

It was not, as Elgar died at his home on 23 February 1934 and was buried in the churchyard at St Wulstan's, Little Malvern on 26 February. He had a modest private funeral attended only by his family and a few chosen friends, with scarcely a score of people. There is one newspaper photograph of the coffin leaving the church, followed by his daughter Carice and her husband.⁴⁴ For probate purposes he left a gross estate of £13,934.⁴⁵

After Barrie died, in London on 19 June 1937, he was taken back to Scotland and buried in the family grave in Kirriemuir on 24 June. By contrast, large numbers attended his funeral at St Mary's Episcopal Church, shops and factories closed and hundreds of townspeople lined the roads to watch the hearse being driven to the cemetery. Sir James Irvine was one of the pall-bearers⁴⁶ and many well-known public faces were in the procession including Ramsay MacDonald and Sir Harry Lauder. Reporters were present and British Movietone News recorded the event.⁴⁷ The gross value of his estate was £173,500.⁴⁸

* * *

Michael Kennedy in his essay 'Elgar the Edwardian' when writing of Elgar's contemporaries in the first years of the twentieth century drew attention to 'another Victorian-Edwardian whose most celebrated work appeared in 1904, another boy from a poor family who became one of the greatest figures of his day, another boy who like Elgar was always seeking the Wand of Youth, the land of lost content, "the happy highways where I went and cannot come again"'.⁴⁹ This was of course James Barrie, who along with other writers in the Edwardian era – such as Kenneth Grahame in *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) and Kipling in *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) – sought refuge in an idealised past, a world of childhood innocence.

As he grew older Elgar looked back to his childhood in the mid-nineteenth century as an idyllic time, particularly recalling the holidays he spent in rural Broadheath as a boy, where he and his siblings produced a play, for which the young Elgar wrote the music and which around his 50th birthday he recomposed and re-orchestrated to produce the two suites for orchestra, *The Wand of*

43 Martin Bird transcript microfilm BA5184 formerly held at the Worcestershire Record Office.

44 The photograph is reproduced in Moore, *The Windflower Letters* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Works, 2015), 467.

45 John Drysdale, *Elgar's Earnings* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), 213. Drysdale compares the earning abilities of authors, painters and composers, 28-55.

46 Sir James Irvine (1877-1952) research chemist and Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of St Andrews.

47 Film of Barrie's funeral can be found on the J.M. Barrie database: jmbarrie.co.uk

48 Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw, Volume IV, The Last Laugh* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992), 3.

49 Michael Kennedy, 'Elgar the Edwardian', ed., Raymond Monk, *Elgar Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 113.

Youth. He retained a special regard for the cottage where he was born, revisiting it often, showing it to friends and in old age expressed the hope that it would be preserved. Barrie might have called it 'The cottage which likes to be visited'. Nostalgically looking back to 'boyhood's daze', childhood innocence and the boy who was found in the reeds by the river Severn 'with a sheet of paper trying to fix the sounds' became increasingly evident when he found fame as a composer and is a thread running through much of his mature music. This yearning is evident not only in *The Wand of Youth Suites* but also in *Dream Children* and the late *Nursery Suite* as well as many orchestral miniatures and other works.

Peter J. Pirie captured this beautifully when writing of the coda to the last movement of the Second Symphony:

It is a farewell to a vision that had been glimpsed but never held, to an illusion, stubbornly maintained in the face of overwhelming evidence, that the dignity of the 19th century society was real, its values true, its structure stable. The vision was seen by a boy in a candlelit bedroom of a country cottage ... it was the blackcurrant tea that he mourned, the life of a schoolboy on Malvern slopes.⁵⁰

The need and desire to escape back to childhood is perhaps most strongly evinced in the enchanting incidental music and songs which Elgar wrote for the sub-Barrie play *The Starlight Express*. This was adapted from a novel by Algernon Blackwood, and the music was written in late 1915 as the horrors and slaughter of the Great War were unfolding - agony to a sensitive creative artist such as Elgar, as it was to so many of his contemporaries. To underline this, it is no accident that Elgar, movingly and tenderly, quoted several times from *The Wand of Youth* to heartrending effect and at the end of the score wrote his age as fifteen. The reversion to the innocent world of childhood was necessary as the real world was too tragic and painful. Michael Kennedy astutely commented that 'when Barrie is acted well and sincerely his mawkishness vanishes and what may embarrass us in a lesser performance becomes magical and occasionally sinister. So it is with Elgar in his children's play'⁵¹ and even though the distinction between reality and fantasy is sometimes blurred in Blackwood's novel, Elgar's music makes it credible and shows 'his capacity to restrain the too imaginative impulse; with one foot on the ground he strengthens the whimsy with something that is substantial'.⁵²

For Barrie too, his childhood provided themes that were to resonate throughout his life and work. His birthplace, a cottage in Kirriemuir was for him the 'dearest spot on earth'⁵³, and the small wash-house adjacent to it was the theatre of Barrie's first play, written and performed at the age of seven. According to the Dedication to *Peter Pan*, the original of the house the Lost Boys built for Wendy in the Neverland and boyhood games of pirates and desert islands were to resurface in that play over thirty years later.

When he was six his brother David was killed in a skating accident. David was thirteen. His mother Margaret Ogilvy was devastated and never recovered from this tragedy, but as Barrie wrote, for the remainder of her life 'he was not removed one day further from her ... When I became a man ... he was still a boy of thirteen'.⁵⁴ Whilst this provided some comfort for his mother, in that he

50 Peter J Pirie, *World's End* from the 'Music Review' (1957), 89.

51 Kennedy, op.cit.,113.

52 Percy M. Young, *Elgar O.M.* (London: Collins, 1955), 358.

53 Dedication to *Peter Pan*, Hollindale, op. cit., 77.

54 James Barrie, *Margaret Ogilvy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896), 19.

would for ever remain a boy, Barrie found inspiration in this and it was the basis for *Peter Pan* as Peter is ‘The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up’. The theme of time and timelessness, time continuing and time stilled, change and changelessness was one to which Barrie often had recourse.⁵⁵ Peter declares: ‘I don’t want to go to school and learn solemn things. No one is going to catch me ... and make me a man. I want always to be a little boy and have fun’. He is stilled in youth for ever; Wendy will grow old. The theme resurfaced in *The New Word*, where the mother remembers a son who died in childhood: ‘He would be twenty-one now; but ... I have always gone on seeing him as just seven’.

Cynthia Asquith, who was Barrie’s secretary for almost twenty years, wrote that the premature death of Barrie’s brother and the strain of having to support his mother in her grief was ‘the reason why the very thoughtlessness – heartlessness, if you will – of a happy childhood appealed to him so strongly. His determination that the children he liked should enjoy to the full what he had missed made him tend to exaggerate the joys, privileges – above all the *immunities* – of their age. The “Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up” was the conception of a man who had to grow up much too soon’.⁵⁶ She considered that Barrie ‘tended to invest the past with delights which, if they ever existed, he had at all events failed to appreciate at the time ... Childhood ... is the phase most easily glorified. And glorified it Barrie undoubtedly did’ and he had a ‘genius for collaborating with children in endless games of make-believe’.⁵⁷

In considering the importance of childhood to Barrie, his close relationship with the Llewelyn Davies family and their five boys is paramount. He first met George, Jack and Peter with their nurse in 1897, whilst walking in Kensington Gardens with his St Bernard dog and his ability to tell tales of adventure involving desert islands, pirates and fairies – as well as cricket – entranced the children. At a New Year’s Eve dinner party in December 1897, Barrie found himself sitting next to ‘the most beautiful creature he had ever seen’,⁵⁸ Sylvia Llewelyn Davies, the mother of the boys he had met. He was soon a regular visitor to their home in Notting Hill and increasingly became an integral part of their lives, which was strengthened following the birth of Michael in 1900 – Barrie’s favourite – and Nicholas in 1903. Holidays in rural Surrey with the family resulted in Barrie involving the children in games and make-believe adventures with redskins, pirates and mermaids, which later found their way into *Peter Pan*, which Barrie later said was ‘streaky’ with the five boys.

Their father Arthur died in 1907 and tragically Sylvia died three years later, leaving Barrie in a position to informally ‘adopt’ the boys and provide a home for them, with day-to-day care still provided by the family nurse, to pay for their expensive education and to stand in *loco parentis*.

Further tragedy followed when the eldest boy, George, was killed fighting in France in 1915 aged 21, and Michael, the most intelligent, artistic and sensitive of the boys, drowned when an undergraduate in Oxford in 1921, aged 20. Devastating though these events were, and even though Michael’s death ‘altered and darkened everything for the rest of his life’,⁵⁹ Barrie, like his mother, found some measure of consolation in that both boys would forever remain aged 21 and 20. When

55 It is one of the themes of Barrie’s play *Mary Rose* (1920).

56 Cynthia Asquith, *Portrait of Barrie* (London: James Barrie, 1954), 52.

57 *Ibid.*, 52-53. In Act Two of *The Admirable Crichton*, what happens to the participants on the island is a game and ‘the happiness they achieve ... is partly the happiness of rediscovered childhood play, and they enjoy it as children do’, op. cit., Hollindale, xxii.

58 Birkin, op. cit., 45.

59 Mackail, op.cit., 560.

he gave his Rectoral Address 'Courage' to the students of St Andrews University in May 1922, he concluded with a sonnet written by Michael on his last summer holiday in Scotland in 1920 and spoke of him as 'the lad that will never be old'.⁶⁰

I thank Christopher Bennett for providing documents held at the Elgar Birthplace Museum, 'The Firs', relating to the 'Cinema Supper'. I thank Andrew Birkin, Professor John Kelly and Andrew Youdell for their assistance. I thank David Morris for his proof-reading and for his work on improving the illustrations. Andrew Neill read through an early draft and offered suggestions and improvements. Thanks are due also to Arthur Reynolds for his assistance and to the staff at the Barbican Library. I acknowledge material from the J.M. Barrie database run by Andrew Birkin. I am indebted once again to the late Martin Bird for the letters and documents contained in his magnificent database, upon which I have been able to draw.

Kevin Mitchell is Vice-Chairman of the London Branch.

60 Dunbar, op, cit., 275.



Kassel, Bärenreiter,
2007. xxxvi + 144 pp

MUSIC REVIEWS

Elgar: Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 36

Full score, edited by Christopher Hogwood.

This score comes from today's most prolific publisher of complete editions, newly researched and edited, and newly set in print. As far as I know, no rival is planned to the ongoing Elgar Complete Edition, on which we receive regular reports from John Norris in the Society's *News*. Besides the Variations, Bärenreiter's catalogue includes the *Serenade for Strings* with the same editor, and the Cello Concerto edited by Jonathan Del Mar, who also introduces their facsimile edition.¹

The structure of scholarly editions is standard: a substantial introduction, the score itself, a description of the sources consulted, and critical notes listing variants between sources. The purpose is to reconcile differences between sources, resulting in what is often, as here, claimed as Urtext – a German word used in English as there is no neat equivalent. Taken literally, it means 'original text', but it has come to mean music edited by a scholar (or scholars) from sources close to the music's origins; the aim is to establish the most authoritative version.

In this case, as with other Elgar works, the primary source should be the edition published in his lifetime. Sources of *almost* equal status are the autograph MS, and the orchestral parts. If this seems to downgrade what Elgar physically wrote (the autograph), I offer an example of why it isn't the last word. To quote Elgar's own programme-note: 'the drop of a seventh in the Theme (bars 3 & 4) should be observed' (i.e. listened for in the variations).² In Nimrod, some of the violins' falling sevenths are slurred in the autograph, implying a single bow-stroke for each pair of notes. The slurs aren't cancelled in the autograph, but do not appear in any published score. Playing the sevenths with two bow-strokes must be a very early revision, intended to obtain a fuller sound as the music swells towards a *forte*. This sort of alteration probably resulted from Elgar listening to rehearsals and perhaps from suggestions from Richter or the actual players.

Discrepancies arise (a) because the autograph isn't always 100% clear; (b) because the first performances used engraved string parts (several copies being needed for each section), but hand-copied wind parts, prepared from the MS score and engraved only later. Hence editors try to settle not on what Elgar wrote in his own hand, but what he *intended*; only by collating

- 1 See this *Journal* Vol. 15 No. 3 (November 2007); my review of the facsimile, pp. 51–3, and John Pickard's of the Urtext, pp. 54–6.
- 2 Elgar, *My Friends Pictured Within* (notes written for the recording issued in 1929 by the Aeolian Company); quoted from Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (third edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 90–91.

sources can this be ascertained with some degree of confidence. The task, if not impossible, can be impossibly complicated. Perfection, however, may be impossible; details disputed between sources of apparently equal authority can't always be reconciled. Editors must make choices; different editors choose differently. Hence scholarly editions claiming the status of Urtext need not be identical.

The claim of the Bärenreiter Urtext

My concern here is with Bärenreiter's claim: 'First Urtext edition of this popular concert work'. Interest was aroused when John Wilson used it for his performance of the *Variations* at a Promenade Concert (16 July 2022), and announced that the editor, the late Christopher Hogwood, had introduced 'many, many hundreds of changes' made by Elgar 'over the years ... stripping back to what Elgar wrote'; Hogwood was 'chiselling off the barnacles' of habit and tradition, as if Novello's scores were not, for by far the greater part, exactly 'what Elgar wrote'.

This should matter; an editor's revision of a score and consequent adjustment to the orchestral parts can affect what we actually hear. As a pioneer of 'HIP', Hogwood discusses performing practice in his introduction – although this affects not so much what Elgar wrote, but how musicians today react to what he wrote.³ However, in performance most of Hogwood's commentary has little to do with the actual notes. Most entries are dynamic markings from double pianissimo (*ppp*) upwards; *crescendo* and *diminuendo* instructions, in words or by 'hairpins' (<>); and articulation markings affecting the length of notes and their connection to each other: *staccato* by dots or 'dashes', *tenuto* (*ten.* or a line above the note), and slurs.

Hogwood's introduction draws attention to Elgar's correspondence with August Jaeger about revisions, and reasonably enough he blames Novello for not changing the publication date (1899) on their revised reprint (1904); this matters. He quotes correspondence about the ending, Walford Davies's protest to Jaeger ('Elgar's finale is grand, and too long, you sinner'), and Donald Tovey's suggestion that it be restored, as he'd heard a rumour that it ended quietly (it's *fortissimo*). This edition prints the original ending at rehearsal fig. 76 (it needs only one page) *ahead* of the revised ending, which starts overleaf at a second fig. 76. This seems perverse; both endings are 'what Elgar wrote', but I don't think he repented of his decision to lengthen the finale. It is perhaps a case of an editor going a little too far in trying to be original. A worthier aim is to be merely definitive, if possible.

Up to fig. 76 the pagination in Novello's and Bärenreiter's scores is identical, the same bars on each page, with one exception. As Hogwood reminds us, Elgar hoped for revenue from performances of certain variations

3 'HIP': Historically Informed Performance, based on original sources, even if not using period instruments, as with Roger Norrington's vibrato-free (or relatively free) performance of Elgar's First Symphony – not to everyone's taste, but a trial worth making.

separately; Bärenreiter has neatly tucked in the extra bar required to close R.P.A., normally attached in complete performances to Ysobel. This is not in Novello's scores, which do include the extra bar to close B.G.N., similarly attached to the 'Romanza' (***). Bärenreiter's publicity sheet (with accompanying order form and prices: wind parts, £147.50; each string part, £10), mentions the inclusion of an 'original ending to the Intermezzo (variation X)', although there is no sign of it; 'Dorabella' isn't linked to the rambunctious G.R.S. or his dog.

Hundreds of changes?

I fear John Wilson cannot have investigated Hogwood's commentary carefully, if at all. There are over 600 entries on twelve pages, in columns; but relatively few itemise *changes* affecting what's played. The list is swollen by mentioning, for example, 'cautionary' accidentals missing in places where they aren't needed, and readings unique to one source but clearly aberrant; otherwise it's mostly articulations (especially *staccato*) missing in the autograph but clearly authentic, as they are in the printed score.

For his commentary, Hogwood uses the abbreviations adopted below: **A** for the autograph, **O** for orchestral parts, and **N** for Novello scores, divided as **N1** (1899) and the principal source, **N2** (1904).⁴ But somehow Hogwood must have overlooked the Novello Complete Edition (1986) edited by Robert Anderson and Jerrold Northrop Moore. I call this **N3**, and the Bärenreiter score **H**. Unfortunately **N3** seems also to have missed something: describing its principal source simply as **N**, dated 1899, the editors have overlooked revisions made in **N2**. My apologies if what follows is a rough ride, but it is essential to justify my conclusions.

N3 and **H** are Urtexts in the normal sense, as both take into account the relevant sources including what most matters in performance: the music used by orchestral players (**O**). But **O** is also dated 1899; and, as Hogwood puts it, revisions didn't always 'find their way into the orchestral parts', creating 'a multitude of problems [that] persist to the present day'. Bärenreiter's parts ('in large format') conform to their score, perhaps the greatest advantage of this edition (and modern digital setting) over Novello's. Nevertheless, a selection of detailed differences suggests that neither Urtext can justly claim to be the last word!

The nitty-gritty of an Urtext

Both Urtexts conveniently add bar numbers, but comparison isn't helped by **H** numbering each variation separately, while **N3** numbers the whole work as a unit (1–780). But in earlier scores without bar-numbers the rehearsal figures correspond, as do page numbers up to fig. 76. However, unlike other scholarly editions I've been involved with, there were apparently no additional eyes – a moderator, a series editor – seeking for inconsistency, redundancy, or lack of clarity.

4 **N2** was reproduced as an Eulenburg miniature score (No. 884) in 1985.

If this were a race, **N3** wins for its fuller source description, before being disqualified for overlooking changes in **N2**. **H** would win on length of critical commentary; **N3** has only c.200 entries. Entries in **H** are more wordy, though not always easy to see the point of (and I found some that seem meaningless). The entries in **N3** can be maddeningly cryptic.

In the theme and first variation alone I found six readings of **H** that are present in **N3**; many more follow. Here are a few samples of what tries one's eyes and sends one back and forth between the *four* scores: **A**, **N2**, **N3**, and **H**.

C.A.E., bar 14 (p. 6, fourth bar). **N3** lists one detail, **H** lists six. Happily, they agree on the one: all four horns should slur their quavers (**N2** overlooks this for Horns III and IV). **H** adds 'slur missing in **O**'; this matters because without a slur, players would attack freshly a note intended to be approached smoothly.

Those quavers are followed by two crotchets, with added trumpets – slurred, although the horns are not; this discrepancy that recurs in bar 15. This is odd, but all editions accept it. However, all sources mark horns *sostenuto* in bar 14, trumpets *sostenuto* in bar 15. Unlike **N3**, **H** brings the trumpet *sostenuto* forward to bar 14, contrary to the sources. This may seem reasonable, but it's an editorial emendation, *not* what Elgar wrote!

There are few such emendations, not all so reasonable. In the 'Romanza' (p. 88, at fig. 56) all sources have the same slur for violas and cellos. **H** arbitrarily adjusts this to match the first bar on p. 92, but this is not a precise enough repetition to justify the change.

In the Finale (p. 114, second bar), clarinets in all sources slur onto the first beat, then rest. Other instruments (e.g. oboes) start the melody from the same notes. I assume that's why Hogwood extended this clearly authentic slur, making the clarinets attack (tongue) this note, but the difference is surely intentional: a small emendation, not for the better.

Such matters won't much impinge on what we hear, but that's true of most editorial work on complex music. In his introduction Hogwood singles out only three things that had 'escaped all previous editions to date':

(1) p. 80 at fig. 51: for four bars in **H**, trombones play the same notes as the horns. Although it's already *fortissimo*, this would affect the sound. The notes, overlooked even in **N3**, are clear, and not cancelled, in the autograph, but only in the commentary do we read that Elgar entered them *in red ink* and that they appear in the players' music (**O**) as *cues*. This seems odd; the trombones are active in the previous bar, so they don't need cues. Certainly Elgar wrote these notes, but it isn't clear what he *intended*. There's insufficient evidence to enter them in the score (and parts), without qualification – a footnote to alert a conductor to the possibility that Elgar did not intend them to be played.

(2) p. 111: at fig. 73 and two bars earlier: triangle notes (*pianissimo*) are missing in **N2**. **N3** prints only the second; **H** has both but (tut-tut) lists only the second in the commentary. Both triangle strokes are clear in the autograph, and both Urtexts note that Elgar also added them to his copy of the printed score. Other percussion is playing at the same time; this is hardly a major change to what we hear.

(3) the last bar of the whole work: **A** has an organ chord (manuals) above the held pedal, overlooked in **N3**. **H** retains the pedal *crescendo* ‘hairpin’ (<) in the two previous bars, which is *not* in the autograph.⁵ Perhaps Elgar approved it; it’s in all the other instruments. But of course the organ is *ad lib.*, so this correction would not affect every performance.

The following examples from the theme itself show the scale of the editor’s problem:

p. 2, second bar: **H** notes that **N2** lacks *cresc.* for Flute II (ditto **A**; why not say so?). Both flutes are playing the same notes; the intention is clear; a good part-copyist presumably entered it in **O**. An improvement to the score, but not a change.

p. 2, third bar, Bassoon I, Horn III: a slur, missing in **A**, is longer in **O** than in **N** (it reaches into bar 10). **H** chooses the **N** reading. This seems right; Horn I and Violins I enter in bar 10, providing a fresh attack. If players using **O** slurred, it wouldn’t be noticed. (Contrast, above, ‘Romanza’ bar 10: both are examples of Elgar’s care in such matters:).

p. 3, first two bars, Cellos: Hogwood notes ‘slur extended lightly to b.13 in **A**’. Indeed it is; and it’s extended *firmly* in **N2**. The intention was always clear; was this worth listing?

p. 3, fourth bar, Clarinet, Violins II, Cello: **H** lists *f*, missing in **A**, **N1**, and **O**, but in **N2**. It’s at the centre of a ‘hairpin’ (<*f*>), and the bowing is missing in **A** and **N1** but is *not* listed as missing in **O**. **H** accepts these readings which are all in **N2**, and the direction (Violins II) to use the G string. So these are not actually changes, although they didn’t make it into **N3**.

p. 3, fourth and fifth bars, Clarinet I: **H** notes a tie is missing in **N1**, **N2**; it’s entered in **N3** (so presumably in **O**, and regularly played). And (tut) it’s *both* clarinets, not just the first.

p. 3: in the last bar Violas are marked divided in **O** (so played thus although the chord could be played), but not **N1/2**; so **N3** includes *div.*. But if an editor may *emend* an ambiguous reading, here’s a good place: *div.* would be better in the previous bar because Violas II are slurred into the last bar, but Violas I are not. All the players would see the same music, so – no viola jokes, please – violists would use their common sense.

And that, surely, suffices to show that no editors are absolutely right absolutely all the time, and that ‘hundreds’ of changes is a gross exaggeration. I could go on ...

A few more details; some broader issues

Unaware of **N3**, Hogwood implicitly used **N2** as his principal source but sometimes seems to value the autograph equally. Yet he quotes his fellow Bärenreiter editor, Del Mar, on Elgar’s ‘punctilious’ markings, and adds

5 In **A**, a staff-line and wobbly tie look only a little like a ‘hairpin’ – but this is only in the penultimate bar, not the antepenultimate.

that Elgar ‘was well served by his editor and engravers and was himself a thorough proof-reader’. Editor and engravers were Novello employees, but lower echelons of staff may not have troubled to update what orchestral players used.

While **N3** has fuller source descriptions, Hogwood, I think, delved more deeply. Though **N3** was surely in good libraries by the time he set to work, acknowledging Anderson and Moore’s Urtext would not have diminished the commentary much. Most readings listed would hardly be questioned in rehearsal by the most head-in-score conductor. Readings not in **O** but in **A** or any version of **N** make a significant contribution to **H**, and so to the new set of parts. Yet orchestral players would mostly respond to missing articulations without being told: in Troyte, for example, they wouldn’t play smoothly notes intended to be *staccato* because a few dots are missing. Again, common sense – or musicianship – comes into play. Changes **H** lists listed as ‘in **N2** only’ – so not in **O** – are also significant:

p. 32–3, Ysobel: the first three clarinet and flute arpeggios were raised from **A**’s *pp* to *mf*, effecting a contrast to the later ones (**N3** overlooks this revision). A conductor might notice the discrepancy in rehearsal (‘Hey, too loud! It’s *pp*’. ‘But maestro, the part says *mf*!’).

p. 74, G.R.S.: bar 2 of **A** and **N1** have bassoons *pp*, adjusted to *mf* in **N2**. Surely something must have been in the orchestral parts, yet it remains *pp* in **N3**. It is rightly adjusted in **H**, which also adds *arco* for the double basses, previously playing *pizzicato*; *arco* in **N3** is in parentheses, implying the editors, unaware of **N2**, realised that it was needed.

A curiosity: in his introduction Hogwood cites a letter from Jaeger asking Elgar if Bassoon I should play bottom C at the beginning of Troyte (and parallel places), because a player in a Hereford performance had marked this in the part. Hogwood doesn’t give the reason, but it’s probably that this orchestra had no contrabassoon. Ever practical, Elgar anticipated this possibility in R.B.T., cuing some important contrabassoon passages for tuba; also curiously, Hogwood writes that these are ‘presumably’ (rather than explicitly) intended as a substitute. In Troyte, the contrabassoon might not be missed against the timpani uproar.

In **H**, the editorial commentary is thorough beyond the call of duty, not always to the readers’ advantage. Why include readings of sketches? All such are superseded by autograph scores, and are not a valid source for an Urtext. Provisional tempo and metronome indications, while interesting, are better discussed together (as in the introduction); they too never got as far as **A**. We are spared more such entries because sketches belonging to Jaeger were unavailable to the editor and not mentioned (they are registered in **N3**).⁶

The Bärenreiter score, as usual with this publisher, is clearly laid out, allowing more space than Novello’s for all markings to be distinguishable.

6 When **H** was in preparation, these sketches were in limbo. See my ‘A. J. Jaeger’s copy of “Enigma” recovered’, this *Journal*, Vol. 21 No. 5 (August 2019), 44–8.

One example near the end of Nimrod (last bar of p. 55 to first of 56) affects the distribution of slurs when two horns on the same staff cross: Horn I goes below Horn II. The slurs seem clear in **A**, but they were confused by Novello's engraver and remain so in **N3**; **H** clears this up, with the assistance of **O**. Four bars from the end of Nimrod, the oboes, despite having different pitches, seem to share a slur; **N** is so cramped here that the difference in slurring isn't marked for Oboe II. Bärenreiter has enough space to correct this, another change unlikely to be noticed in performances of these climactic bars.

Three bars from the end of Variation 13 (***) there's another perversity to add to his altering the violas' slur (see above). Noting the absence of rests in **A** for Clarinet II (they are in **N** and **O**), he speculates that Elgar intended that two notes, plus a grace-note, in the clarinet solo might be intended for two players in unison. Ever practical, Elgar would have known that adding Clarinet II would have little effect on dynamics and timbre, but might put the tuning at risk.

Conclusion

The words attributed to John Wilson may reflect the closer agreement between the full score and orchestral parts: undoubtedly a good thing, saving rehearsal time even if we wouldn't usually hear any difference; there's no need to throw away older recordings as untrue to 'what Elgar wrote'!

However, the implied comparison with stripping varnish from old-master paintings to reveal their true colours doesn't work for performing arts, and inspection of Hogwood's commentary shows that 'chiselling off the barnacles' is mere hyperbole. Nearly everything in the Novello scores *is* what Elgar intended; even the three points Hogwood emphasizes in his introduction are not unequivocally *changes* that should affect every performance.

Nevertheless, despite niggling a bit, I wouldn't want readers to interpret this review as essentially negative in respect to **H** or, indeed, **N3**. Yet (alas) there is still potential for another shot at an Urtext, should the Elgar Complete Edition find someone with younger eyes than mine to undertake this mammoth task. But **H** seems to be the best edition currently available, and for those that can afford it I recommend its use in performances.

Julian Rushton

Julian Rushton, once editor of this Journal and jointly of Cambridge University Press's Elgar Studies and Cambridge Companion to Elgar, has edited four volumes of the New Berlioz Edition (published by Bärenreiter), and two volumes of the current Elgar Complete Edition: Music for String Orchestra and Solo Songs with Orchestra.

Elgar: *The Black Knight* and *The Banner of Saint George*

Edited by Iain Quinn

As the proud owner of *The Overtures* from the Elgar Complete Edition (from which I've gleefully transcribed *Froissart* and *In the South* for organ solo), the latest instalment of this great series is of considerable interest and is welcomed most warmly by this humble reviewer.

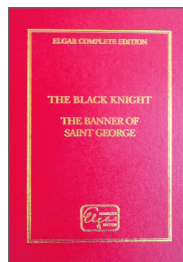
The Black Knight is a hugely important stepping-stone in the early development of the young Elgar – he fought hard to get it performed, and, as his first large-scale choral work, it paved the way to the more familiar choral works a decade or so later (namely *Gerontius*, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*). Similarly, *The Banner of Saint George* (1897) is a cantata that is nowadays under-performed – yet it is important in its close relationship with a larger scale choral work, *King Olaf*. Seeking funding for a performance of *King Olaf*, Elgar had contacted Novello for support – in turn, they suggested he write the *Imperial March* and a cantata about Saint George, for the Diamond Jubilee of 1897.

Details of the birth of these significant works, the first performances, the to-and-fro between EE and Novello about the two works, are comprehensively dealt with in Iain Quinn's meticulous foreword - together with an account of the correspondence between Elgar and Alberto Randegger (conductor of the Norwich Musical Festival) about the proposed commission of a setting of *The High Tide*, Jean Ingelow's poem. This never became a reality, due to Elgar's eye-trouble. One dubiously-related bar survives of the sketches.

These volumes of Elgar's music are intended for both scholarly and practical use. For the purpose of study, there is a satisfying array of exhaustive source descriptions – there are some extremely interesting illustrations of autograph scores, poem editions and correspondence, which will appeal to Elgarian student and connoisseur alike. In the 'Sources' section of this publication, there are typeset, (in full) the poems on which both pieces are founded, and detailed documentation on the whereabouts and provenance of the source material in this edition – meticulously recorded.

For practical use, the representations of the full scores are quite something. In music that is thickly scored, as is often the case with Elgar, the published pages of the full score can sometimes seem cluttered, unclear and, more often than not, impractical. This edition, including the many volumes that have already been released, makes light work of portraying the many parts in a clearer light. While there is a lot happening on the page, it is eminently readable, due to the high-definition print quality – every note, word, accent and staccato is clear and vibrant on the page. Elgar's articulation is famously intricate and particular, so to print it all with such clarity can't be an easy task. Hats must be doffed to the publishers for this achievement.

To sum up – this volume of the Complete Edition is another must-have for the Elgar scholar and/or performer, and I hope that it will help reignite the interest in these two formative works. For me, to see the work of the great



The Elgar Complete Edition (2023) - 268pp + liv

man being so faithfully and artistically re-issued is very heartening indeed, and I have found myself checking my bank accounts to see if I can afford the many other volumes. Keep them coming!

Jonathan Hope

Jonathan is Assistant Director of Music, Gloucester Cathedral.

BOOK REVIEWS

[This review by Michael Trott follows our occasional practice of commissioning more than one review of a book or CD. Michael is an Honorary Member of the Society, was Chairman of West Midlands Branch and recently published a book on Parry]

A Pilgrim in Cockaigne: Elgarian Essays

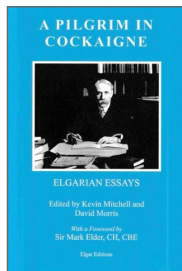
Edited by Kevin Mitchell and David Morris

The Elgar Society branch talk is, to my mind, the core activity of the Society, where ‘Elgar’ and ‘Society’ come together. Any branch is able to publish selections of its talks and thus add to the accumulating knowledge of hundreds of articles in the *Elgar Society Journal*. To its great credit London Branch has now done so twice. *Cockaigne: essays on Elgar ‘In London Town’* was published in 2004 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Elgar’s death. Reviewer Geoffrey Hodgkins applauded the work of editor Kevin Mitchell with the nine essays. I readily do so too with the new collection of sixteen essays, *A Pilgrim in Cockaigne*, that Kevin Mitchell and David Morris have now ably prepared to mark the 50th anniversary of London Branch. An impressive table of speakers and topics since 1971 is presented in an appendix: there are several hundred, and one is astounded to think of the knowledge encompassed. The talks have been meticulously edited and prefaced by a polished review by Kevin Mitchell and followed by memories of all the meetings - a branch history - from Andrew Neill and Ruth Hellen. It is especially interesting to read the review of London Branch’s talks in the 1970s and 1980s, when there were speakers who had known Elgar and spoke from personal experience: Wulstan Atkins, Vivian Dunn, Martin Grafton and Yehudi Menuhin.

The much-missed Michael Kennedy starts the collection with ‘Elgar, Holst and Delius: 75 Years On’, in which he claims that Elgar ‘is now one of the most fully documented of all composers’. (The Elgar Society may surely claim part credit for this.) With his customary fluency and wide musical knowledge Kennedy describes the relative standing of the three composers who died in 1934, that black year for British music.

The most illuminating talk on Elgar I ever heard was one by John Pickard on the first 24 bars of ‘Nimrod’! Robert Saxton in ‘Perspectives on Elgar from an early 21st-century composer’s viewpoint’ mines this rich seam, shedding light on Elgar’s genius. Yes, we all know the piece so well, but familiarity can make us take it for granted, so it is good to have explained something of the underlying artistry.

Talks to the Elgar Society fall into several categories: the music, the man,



Elgar Editions

ISBN:

978-0-9548553-5-2

520 pages

his times and his associates, and this is, for this reviewer, the order of interest. I found the talks dealing with Elgar's associates somewhat recondite at times, yet there is always material of interest and the research done by the speakers is impressive. At the time of the accession of King Charles III it is timely to be informed of Elgar's relations with Edward VII. Arthur Reynolds in 'The King and the Troubadour' tells us of the trepidation felt by many when Edward, Prince of Wales, succeeded Queen Victoria. Yet Edward VII did much for the Arts, established the Order of Merit, and his son King George V made Elgar the first musician recipient of that honour.

For me the best essays come last in this collection, starting with David Bury's account of Elgar's visit to Delius in 1933; the story is widely known but retold well, and photographs of Delius's house - and Elgar's Imperial Airways luggage labels! - are included.

Despite its unpromising title, John Drysdale's presentation, 'Elgar's Earnings in Context', is fascinating, possibly breaking new biographical ground for a composer. Who would have thought what the balance sheet could reveal? The market for music largely conditioned what Elgar wrote, 'he was much better off than he cared to imply' and 'his protestations of poverty were not justified by (his) earnings'.

Wulstan Atkins's 'Elgar the Man' is gold: we shall never again hear any first-hand memories of the composer, let alone such thoughtful and incisive ones. Atkins warns us of the dangers of biography: writers 'try to give the general public what they feel they want, namely a picture in strong emotional contrasting colours', so 'the portrait drawn is only too often a grossly exaggerated one'. He remembers in his godfather 'a dynamic personality, a sensitive, brilliant and quick mind ... restless movements and twinkling, hypnotic eyes, with kindly, mischievous humour never far away'.

The essays are somewhat mixed in terms of interest - perhaps inevitably - yet the standard of production is high, the collection is highly recommended and London Branch's enterprise is to be praised and supported. Among the many photographs is a rarity, one of Elgar at a fancy-dress ball in the costume of a Japanese magnate.

Michael Trott

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

Bank transfers to Lloyds Bank plc Ashford Branch, Sort code 30-90-28, account number 69429168, The Elgar Society (London Branch). Please quote ref 'Pilgrim Book'.

Please contact Philip to discuss postage overseas.]

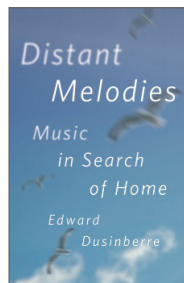
Distant Melodies [:] music in search of home

Edward Dusinberre

A descendant of Sir John Stainer, Edward Dusinberre is the leader of the Takács Quartet and Artist-in-Residence at the University of Colorado, of which he is a Fellow. In *Distant Melodies*, he explores what the dust jacket describes as ‘changing ideas of home, exile and return in the lives and particular chamber works of ... Antonin Dvořák, Edward Elgar, Béla Bartók and Benjamin Britten’. It goes on to claim that as he engages with some of the places associated with these composers, Dusinberre discovers ‘ways in which music may both accentuate and ameliorate homesickness’. All four composers have in common that they went to America from their respective home countries; but they did so for widely different reasons and periods. Bartók emigrated because of the political situation in Europe; Britten, fed up with England, sailed to America in 1939 but returned in 1942; Dvořák spent some three years in New York, where he was director of the National Conservatory. Elgar is the odd-man-out, for his visits were mainly for the purpose of conducting his works, he composed nothing during the months he spent in America, and he was soon back in England.

There are two chapters relating to Elgar. In both, Dusinberre reflects on some Elgar-related locations and the works associated with them. In the first, *Elgar’s Hills*, we find him in the Wye Valley, where he refers to *Introduction and Allegro*, Brexit, and the role played in Elgar’s career by German musicians such as Richter. A little later, the author is at Upper Wyche, from where he visits the churchyard of St Wulstan’s, Little Malvern and encounters a volunteer tending graves, including that of the Elgars.¹ He talks to her, and her remarks include a reference to the Elgar Society. He then sets out for the Worcestershire Beacon and offers some thoughts about *Caractacus*. It is not clear what this chapter has to do with chamber music, although mention is made of Elgar’s String Quartet, in the context of Alice’s funeral. However, in the second and longer of the Elgar-related chapters, *Elgar’s Retreat*, Dusinberre recounts a visit he made to Brinkwells and reflects on the Piano Quintet and on Elgar’s activities, musical and non-musical, in the days he spent in the Sussex cottage. Both these chapters, like all the others in the book, are dominated by what are essentially personal reflections: they may therefore be of more interest to followers of the Takács Quartet, and to the author’s close associates, than they are to Elgarians, some of whom may find them a little discursive and by no means easy to paraphrase. Moreover, neither appears to say anything new about the works themselves; and sadly there are several minor inaccuracies. For example, it was in December 1901 (not 1900) and May 1902 (not 1901) that Düsseldorf heard the second and third complete

1 Dusinberre’s reference to ‘their graves’ (page 22) might be taken to mean that Elgar and his wife were buried separately, but the volunteer notes with what seems like pleasure that he has found ‘it’. A reader unfamiliar with St Wulstan’s might be confused at this point.



Faber & Faber

ISBN
978-0-571-36654-5

233 pages

performances of *Gerontius*. But this thoughtful musician's accounts of his Elgarian pilgrimages are not without interest, and many will doubtless enjoy the experience of re-connecting vicariously with the locations visited, about which he supplies information that even devotees may be unaware of. Who knew, for example, that plaques above the bar in The Swan Inn at Fittleworth record not only a visit by Kipling but also one made by Parry?

Those whose focus is solely upon Elgar may perhaps feel that the two chapters are not entirely sufficient to justify purchasing the book; but for anyone whose interest extends to the whole of English music, the Britten chapter may well tip the scales (in it, Dusinberre discusses the String Quartet in D major, Op.25, a work written in America and given its first performance there in 1941). This being a Faber publication, the book is, as one would expect, beautifully produced; and it includes a bibliography, notes, and an index. Moreover, Dusinberre is a good stylist, as careful with words as he is with notes. Guardians of English usage may jibe at the habit of giving everyone's name a job-title prefix ('violinist Billy Reed', 'artist Rex Vicat Cole') and there is a point at which an excess of punctuation makes George Bernard Shaw the one and only friend of Elgar. But these are small matters.

Relf Clark

Vaughan Williams

Eric Saylor

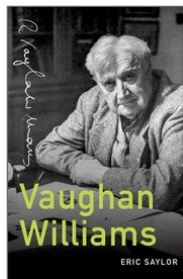
A new biography of RVW is welcome at any time, but especially when published during the year celebrating the 150th anniversary of his birth. Eric Saylor states in his preface that this book does not replace the standard texts by Michael Kennedy and Ursula Vaughan Williams, but in the years since those magisterial accounts were published many of the earlier works have been heard for the first time, and there have also been new insights into RVW's life and relationships. This volume is able to shed light on various areas that were hitherto in the shadows.

This new issue in the 'Master Musicians' series devotes odd-numbered chapters to biographical matters, and even-numbered ones to a detailed consideration of the music itself. The scheme works well, although overall I found myself wanting more – the text runs to 'only' some 234 pages, but there are in addition extensive endnotes (rather than footnotes - the former a particular dislike of mine) and a detailed calendar, lists of works and personalia, a select bibliography, and index. Saylor is a native of the US and although a product of OUP, the book is published in the US, as are now all this august organisation's music books. The author does not attempt to anglicise the text, so we have measures rather than bars, quarter-notes instead of crotchets, and so on. This nomenclature, and the US spellings, did not disturb me greatly, but I did find it annoying to have historical sums of money referenced to current day US dollar values – with the likely audience for the book being largely in the UK, a second reference to £ sterling could have easily been added. The font used throughout the book is also rather faint, and may give problems for those without 20/20 vision or in poor lighting.

Saylor's commentary and conclusions are always cogent and intelligent, although I did not always totally agree with them. Nevertheless, it is good to have one's views challenged, even if I remain unconvinced by some of the views expressed. The volume is thoroughly researched and blessedly free from major inaccuracies – not all recent publications reviewed in this *Journal* have been so thoroughly prepared and proof-read.

So, a well-researched and enjoyable read, a little more taxing in the even than the odd chapters but a book that will repay careful study. If I agree with the author that it does not replace the previous biographies (albeit both are now somewhat historical) or indeed James Day's previous book in this Master Musicians series, it is good to have an up-to-date and thoroughly readable new biography, drawing on much that has become known over the last few decades. Michael Kennedy once said that RVW was the greatest man he ever met, and the multi-faceted, complex personality of this great composer – and man! - are well presented here. Warmly recommended.

David Morris



(Master Musicians series)

Oxford University Press

ISBN
978-0-190918-56-9

339 pages



CD REVIEWS

Elgar: Viola Concerto arr. Tertis **Bloch: Suite for Viola & Orchestra B41**

Timothy Ridout, viola

BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Martyn Brabbins

Harmonia Mundi

HMM902618

This is a recording with a pedigree antithetical, but not at all inferior, to that of my personal favourite, Julian Lloyd Webber's with the RPO conducted by Yehudi Menuhin. Martyn Brabbins is unfailingly a fine Elgarian, the BBC Symphony Orchestra is on splendid form and the soloist, Timothy Ridout, has made waves with an already wide repertoire and significant recordings under his belt. Readers may have heard him perform the Walton Viola Concerto at the BBC Proms in August 2021 with the BBCSO conducted by Sakari Oramo. Ridout's performance was lauded by *The Strad* critic, who referred to his encore (the second movement of Hindemith's Viola Sonata), as the encore of the season. In 2016 Ridout won 1st Prize in the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition, the first British violist to win the first prize since the competition was established in 1980. He made his début recital at the Wigmore Hall in London in March 2017 and that same year released his debut album 'Vieuxtemps – Complete Works for Viola' with Champs Hill Records. Awards and plaudits have not let up in the ensuing five years.

Elgarian purists may object to the 1929 viola version even though its arranger, Lionel Tertis, had Elgar's blessing. And why not, when Elgar's orchestration is unchanged and the viola's solo part simply accommodates raising the cello's lowest passages an octave? There's a bit more to it than that, of course, and Ridout made a few further adjustments to Tertis's work but the version stands or falls on the musicality brought to Elgar's tragic, late, 'Brinkwells' flowering and here Ridout, Brabbins, the orchestra and the engineer (unnamed, shame on you, Harmonia Mundi!) triumph.

Compared to JLW's version, Ridout is somewhat brisker in the last three movements but overall he is less than a minute faster (and, compared with Jacqueline du Pré, only about 90 seconds faster, and she draws out the last movement to explain that difference).

Elgar Society members will have heard me expound for years that Elgar's cello concerto is of a piece as chamber music with the other Brinkwells compositions and the inevitably smaller - however gorgeous - and more plangent tone of Ridout's instrument (apparently by the Brescian violin maker Pellegrino Micheli c.1565–75) makes the grief of the concerto more intense, more solitary and thus more personal. How this version would stand up in a major venue with a full Elgar-specified orchestra I don't know, as I have never heard the viola version live, but the sound people have enabled us, through this recording, to value afresh a work that can sound hackneyed played by an unsympathetic cellist but sounds superb in the care of a fine violist.

Bloch's *Suite for Viola & Orchestra* is the other work on the disc and is almost exactly the same length as the Elgar. Knowing no more than a dozen works by

Bloch, and none of them well, I made the mistake of reading Stephen Pettitt's excellent liner notes and listened then to a work that apparently is suffused with orientalism incorporating 'highly specific evocations of Java, Sumatra and Borneo' and originally having its movements entitled 'In the Jungle', 'Grotesques', 'Nocturne' and 'Land of the Sun'. And I didn't enjoy it. I left it a while, forgot the notes, listened to it with fresh ears a few more times and thoroughly enjoyed a colourful concertante work that follows the trail blazed by *Harold en Italie* in demonstrating that the viola is a gorgeous solo instrument in the right hands. A thoroughly recommended disc.

Steven Halls

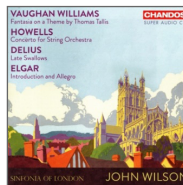
Ralph Vaughan Williams: *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*

Herbert Howells: *Concerto for String Orchestra*

Frederick Delius, arr. Fenby: *Late Swallows*

Edward Elgar: *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*

Sinfonia of London conducted by John Wilson



Chandos

CHSA 5291

Here is the much-anticipated recording of the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* foreshadowed in my piece in last April's *Journal* (Vol. 23, No 1). Of the 20th century composers of notable string compositions that I listed there, John Wilson and his exceptional orchestra have now covered Britten, Elgar, Strauss and Vaughan Williams. I hope they will go on to record (at least) Tippett's two great string pieces and Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagète*. Here the inclusion of Howells's Concerto adds a lesser-known masterpiece to Wilson's considerable recorded legacy, thus balancing his reputation as a performer of rehabilitated Hollywood scores, something that seems almost from his past now.

Wilson has an ability to make you think afresh about the music he performs and records as his recent CDs of Rachmaninov's Third and Korngold's single Symphony did for me. Clearly considered over a long time before being recorded, these are wonderful contributions to our knowledge of two misunderstood 20th Century symphonies. From my discussion with Wilson it is clear that he had also given much thought to his interpretation of the Elgar, as well as the other pieces recorded here and the links between them. If I ignore recordings by current and former Presidents and Vice-Presidents, I have three favourite recordings of the Elgar - two famous and deserving of being constants within the catalogue - Barbirolli's from 1962 and Britten's from 1968. Both still sound brilliant and all three, including the Wilson, are more or less the same length; the Britten being very slightly longer. I also love the BBCSO recording by Edward Gardner. What is also obvious with this new recording is the exceptional

sound – Chandos at its best. St Augustine’s Church in Kilburn has a substantial reverberation and presents something of a challenge to the recording engineer but this has been overcome with seeming ease and there is no loss of clarity in this recording. We can hear everything whilst cocooned in the church’s natural warmth - Ralph Couzens take (another) bow. Most importantly the quartet in the Elgar and Vaughan Williams pieces is clearly delineated too.

For the Elgar, the care that has gone into performance and recording is obvious when the difference in markings such as *pp* and *ppp* can be heard clearly as can the divided strings of the orchestra in the different demands made on such instruments as the violas, thereby preparing us for those moments when all the instruments play at full or near full force. The ‘nobilmente’ marking at Cue 12 is particularly moving. There are other magical moments such the two bars marked *ponticello* (10 and 11 after Cue 15) sounding so clear and relaxed. As I listened to the ‘syncopated theme’ I went back to the comments of Sally Morgan¹ regarding the contribution the double-bass makes to the *Introduction and Allegro* and the ‘release of tension in a great *arpeggio* section played by all the strings. Elgar knows how to support his players. It is a really exciting piece to play with every string player getting the marvellous tune’. That is what we get here: another wonderful contribution to the recorded legacy of this astonishing masterpiece.

Unsurprisingly, Andrew Burn’s notes are beautifully written and informative. He makes some interesting links too, thereby joining the Elgar, Howells and Vaughan Williams pieces. He quotes a programme note by Michael Kennedy from 1993 when Howells said (after hearing the Vaughan Williams *Tallis* for the first time) that ‘a few weeks later I heard the *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*. For me, those were two intensely timely, kindling, formative experiences – as well they might be for any teenager already instinctively searching for what he could later call the power and beauty of strings in consort’.

St Augustine’s comes into its own for the Vaughan Williams: quartet and double string orchestra. The clarity of the recording and acoustic combine to wonderful effect. Like the Elgar, this performance is stunningly well played. At over a minute swifter than Barbirolli in 1962 this may not be for everyone but, for me, it is a refreshing look at the work, its inner textures wonderfully exposed. The Delius rounds off an indispensable recording. *Late Swallows* is Eric Fenby’s arrangement of the slow movement from Delius’s String Quartet composed in 1916. Already called *Late Swallows* by Delius after his favourite birds, Fenby scores the string parts, as Burn points out, ‘*divisi* virtually throughout in order to create a mellow texture’. The addition of the double-basses further alters the texture. A theme from the opera *Koanga* permeates the central section.

Herbert Howells began his substantial Concerto as a memorial tribute to Elgar, but in 1935 his life was turned upside down by the loss of his son Michael aged nine. The middle of three movements is marked ‘In Memoriam: EE (1934) and M.K.H. (1935)’ and follows the rigorous first movement which is punctuated by angry string chords. The finale, sadness not entirely banished, ends vigorously. This is a fine alternative to the recordings by Boult, Handley and Hickox and made me wonder why I had not listened to it for a long time.

Very highly recommended.

Andrew Neill

1 *Journal* (Vol. 23, No 1).

A New Light

Elgar: Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 82

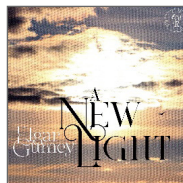
***Salut d'Amour*, Op. 12**

***Chanson de Nuit*, Op. 15, No. 1**

***Chanson de Matin*, Op. 15, No. 2**

Ivor Gurney: Sonata for Violin and Piano

Rupert Marshall-Luck(violin), Duncan Honeybourne(piano)



EM Records

CD075

This enjoyable new disc of Violin Sonatas by Elgar and Ivor Gurney, both written in 1918, opens with Elgar's fine example in a performance of much sensitivity by Rupert Marshall-Luck and pianist Duncan Honeybourne (whose instrument's tone quality is beautifully captured, and particularly to be commended is his attention to the details of Elgar's very precise pedal indications). Both artists are finely attuned to the emotional landscape of the work which has elements of Elgar's post-First World War lamentation for what was lost in that conflict and which was to be more overtly addressed in the Cello Concerto.

The first movement opens firmly, the players setting the mood with superb address but then the impetus is held back at fig.3 (of the Novello score) contrary to the composer's marking which is *espressivo*. Once the music becomes more reflective at fig.5 there is a sense (for me) of almost too much relaxation not indicated by the composer (except for the two markings *tranquillo* and *espressivo*). That this need not be the case can be confirmed by listening to Albert Sammons' fine performance from 1935 (my own benchmark performance of the work). Sammons and his pianist, William Murdoch, manage to sustain the pulse and mood change without losing any forward momentum, at the same time they sustain naturally the musical and emotional contrast of this section. In the context of this new performance as a whole, however, this is a small criticism.

The slow movement, 'Romance' (in Elgar's own words 'a fantastic, curious movement' and which Alice called 'wood magic') is given a lovely reading. The music of the central section one bar after fig.28 is particularly exquisite (a response to a telegram from Alice Stuart of Wortley who had broken her leg whilst holidaying at Tintagel), the players here rising movingly to the climax with fine technical control and musical understanding, dying away gently at the end of the movement with the violin's final note suspended on its own, the piano's final pedalled chord being directed to be released before the violin.

The final movement is given a sensitive reading through its variety of moods, the touching return of the music of the Romance's central section providing a particular lyrical and musical highlight in the performance. The return of this most expressive melody is a tribute to Marie Joshua, an Elgar family friend of many years standing who had died on 14 September 1918. The players rise most eloquently to this section of the work. Marshall-Luck has previously recorded this Sonata (in 2012 with pianist Matthew Rickard) also in a very fine performance. The new one is certainly more expansive and perhaps more acute in expression.

Interestingly, that previous recording of the Elgar is coupled with an Ivor Gurney Sonata, as is the present performance. The sonata this time, in D major, is a World Premiere recording and is as yet unpublished. Its fascinating history is related in Rupert Marshall-Luck's detailed booklet note. The work was possibly begun between August and December 1918 even if not completed at that time. 'Possibly',

as there are no dates on any of the manuscript material. The work is dedicated to the poet F.W. Harvey, a close friend from Gurney's youth who had an early influence on Gurney's own development as a poet. Timings on the manuscript suggest that there may have been plans for a private performance. A problem with any more recent performance of the work has been made more difficult by the fact that the last page of the piano part has been lost or mislaid. As the violin part survives complete, a realisation of the missing eight bars has been effected by composer Ian Venables for this recording.

There are four movements, the first shaped in a clear-cut sonata form, a scherzo is placed second succeeded by an expansive slow movement, and then the finale, with many and varied changes of mood, concludes the Sonata energetically. The writing is rich harmonically and sounds idiomatically conceived for the two instruments. There is much of Gurney's gentle lyricism as well as climactic moments of expressive and emotional power. This is a major discovery and, should it be published in due course, will be a fine addition to the chamber music repertoire particularly for players interested in early 20th Century music. The performance is superb and, one must assume, well-nigh definitive. Congratulations to both musicians for bringing to life another facet of Gurney's extraordinary musical gifts, all the more valuable in the light of his subsequent incarceration in that asylum in Dartford where he died at the age of 47 in 1937.

In between the two Sonatas are placed Elgar's *Salut d'Amour*, *Chanson de Nuit* and *Chanson de Matin*: these well-known and beautifully crafted miniatures are given most sensitive readings.

The recording (made in March 2021) is throughout superbly well-balanced, the instruments coming over with exemplary clarity in an airy acoustic (the Concert Hall at Wyastone Leys). The informative booklet notes are by Marshall-Luck himself on the music, a biographical note on Gurney is by Em Marshall-Luck and the biographical note on Elgar is contributed by our own Andrew Neill. This is a most desirable disc of well-known and completely unknown repertoire and, especially for the Gurney, is to be highly recommended.

Stephen Dickinson



Eroica: Unaccompanied Violin Music by Tovey, Sammons and Elgar
Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin)

This CD of unaccompanied violin music takes its title from the *Sonata Eroica* Op.29 by Donald Francis Tovey (1875-1940). Tovey's will be a name familiar to musicians of a certain age who know his volumes of *Essays in Musical Analysis* as well as the introductions and analyses of the 32 Beethoven Piano Sonatas for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music edition. As a composer he is much less familiar, though some of his output has been recorded in recent years, for example the Symphony and Piano Concerto, as well as the Cello Concerto written for Casals. As a fine pianist, Tovey performed his Piano Concerto under

EM Records

EMRCD079

both Henry Wood and Hans Richter as well as playing Brahms's 2nd Piano Concerto under Elgar's direction in November 1911 (a 'rather diffident soloist' according to Jerrold Northrop Moore). Following a considerable performing and composing career, Tovey was appointed Reid Chair of Music at Edinburgh University and from then on, his career turned to teaching and musicology. He was knighted in 1935, perhaps on the recommendation of Elgar himself.

The *Sonata Eroica*, written in 1913, is dedicated to the distinguished violinist and leader of the famous Busch Quartet, Adolf Busch. Whether he actually played it is not disclosed in the extensive note on the music by Rupert Marshall-Luck. It is a considerable work lasting over half-an-hour in four strongly-argued movements: a sonata form first movement is followed by a scherzo, a concentrated slow movement then leads directly to the fugue finale. The influence of J.S. Bach is clear, especially in the finale, but without that master's greatness of utterance the thematic material does not lodge itself in the mind. Even so, Marshall-Luck rises to the challenging demands made on the player with remarkable skill, musicality and artistry, bringing much clarity to even the most taxing moments of the writing.

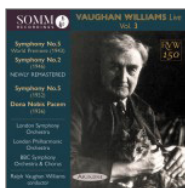
Following this major work are eight studies from Albert Sammons' *Virtuosic Studies*, Op. 21 (published in 1921) in a recording premiere. Sammons was, of course, one of the greatest British violinists of the early 20th Century; his connection with Elgar being considerable, leading the quartet which gave the first public performances of the String Quartet and Piano Quintet (with pianist William Murdoch) and whose recordings of the Violin Concerto and Violin Sonata are superb examples of his art. He was also a distinguished teacher, one of his most notable students being Hugh Bean whose own recordings of Elgar's Concerto and Sonata many of us will be familiar with. The complete set of studies is divided into two volumes and clearly designed to deal with the various technical challenges of advanced violin writing. Musically, the chosen eight are not overly interesting, five of them are in fast tempi, the other three being marked a contrasting *moderato*. Marshall-Luck's playing is admirably secure and appropriately virtuosic throughout, providing an example to aspiring professional violinists as to how the various challenges can be approached.

The *Etudes Caracteristiques pour violon seul*, Op.24 by Elgar were first published in 1892. One of the set is known to have been composed on a specific date, 30 April 1882, the remainder having probably been written between then and the year of publication. The set is dedicated to Adolf Pollitzer, the composer's violin teacher. Here, Elgar provides more musically interesting material as well as presenting many technical challenges to the player. The set is not numbered but listed alphabetically A to E and no titles are appended to the individual études, only the tempo indications: A-C are marked *allegro*, étude D marked *presto* and the final étude a (slower) *allegretto*. Elgar is exploiting, as Sammons did, diverse technical requirements for advanced violin playing whilst also making them studies of musical and imaginative worth. Again, Marshall-Luck is fully equal to Elgar's demands and characterful contrasts are evident between each individual piece, the final étude being particularly effective: 'the wistfulness that would become such a hallmark of Elgar's mature style is already evident', says the player in his note.

The recording, made in 2016, is very clear in a warm acoustic (the Church of St Michael and All Angels, Downholme, Richmond, North Yorkshire). Presentation is exemplary, the very informative booklet has notes on the music by the violinist

himself and biographical notes on Tovey and Sammons are by Em Marshall-Luck (though as printed the Sammons recording of the Elgar Concerto is said to be conducted by Charles rather than Henry Wood!). Our own Andrew Neill again writes the expert biographical note on Elgar and the Society is thanked for its generous support of this recording, a worthwhile addition to the Elgar (and solo violin) discography.

Stephen Dickinson



Vaughan Williams Live, Vol. 3
***A London Symphony*^a (r1946), *Symphony No. 5 in D major* (r1943 *Premiere*)^b, *Symphony No. 5 in D major* (r1952)^b, *Dona Nobis Pacem* (r1936)^c**

^aLondon Symphony Orchestra, ^bLondon Philharmonic Orchestra, ^cRenée Flynn, ^cRoy Henderson, ^cBBC Symphony Orchestra & Chorus
 All conducted by Ralph Vaughan Williams

SOMM

ARIADNE 5019-2

RVW's blistering account of his own Fourth Symphony is widely regarded as the finest available, despite the restricted sound. Whilst he was apparently not a great conductor in the technical sense, he appears to have had the ability to inspire his musicians to give of their best and it is a matter for the most enormous regret that he was not asked to record more. Alan Sanders suggests in his note for the CDs that HMV's Fred Gaisberg 'relied on the evidence of his eyes rather than his ears' when he saw RVW conducting and concluded that 'Self-effacing and silent to a degree, he had not the equipment for a good conductor'.¹ Whilst composers are admittedly not always the best conductors of their own works, all the available evidence suggests that was not the case with RVW, however un-Bernstein-like his technique. The Fourth Symphony was his only commercial recording but SOMM has previously released recordings of RVW conducting his Fifth Symphony from the Proms in 1952 and *Dona Nobis Pacem*, a BBC broadcast from the Concert Hall of Broadcasting House in 1936. The source material for the former had a missing section, which was previously filled in from the Proms premiere performance of 1943. For this second reissue Lani Spahr has located alternative – and complete – source material for the 1952 broadcast so the entire performance can now be heard without patching. And it is a splendid performance, full of energy and very well played. Indeed, I find it superior to some extent to the 1943 premiere also included in this issue: better recorded and with the composer no doubt having conducted the work many times during the intervening period.

Dona Nobis Pacem is again given a vigorous performance and the (BBC) recording is excellent. The singing style is of course of its time with both soloists' and choir's words articulated in clear Received Pronunciation. I confess I have never been a particular fan of Roy Henderson but he is at his best here, and Renée Flynn is first rate. Leslie Woodgate's BBC chorus sings its heart out, and Boult's BBCSO is on top form. And let us remember that in 1936 the pleas for peace

1 In his autobiography *Music on Record* (London: Robert Hale, 1946)

would have meant a great deal to everyone. Given the relatively-small hall, and the large numbers of performers, the sound is remarkably unrestricted: I had previously thought this emanated from the larger Maida Vale Studio but the BBC records are clear.

The remaining performances are not absolutely complete. Kenneth Leach recorded over the air using a single disc cutter so there are inevitably breaks where it became necessary for him to change discs. If only he had possessed two machines! We hear RVW conducting *A London Symphony* in a 1946 Prom and it is an amazing performance full of passion – in some ways equalling that recording of the Fourth Symphony for verve and excitement. The sound is so good it seems almost unbelievable that it can have come from a home disc-cutter, recording an AM broadcast – older readers will remember the difficulties with broadcasts prior to FM (let alone DAB and internet radio!) with wandering tuning and ‘birdies’ sometimes aurally intruding. As indicated above there are gaps every 4/5 minutes but the quality of the performance is such that I can easily set these imperfections aside against the sheer magnificence of the performance.

We also have the 1943 premiere of the Fifth Symphony (the one which supplied the missing section in the previous reissue of the 1952 broadcast). Again, there are gaps to contend with but, despite my (slight) preference for the 1952 broadcast, this is a fascinating ‘document’ with the LPO playing very well throughout – one imagines that more rehearsal time had been allowed than for Sargent’s premiere of the Ninth reviewed in the last *Journal*. In truth there is little difference to choose between the 1943 and 1952 versions, although the recording of the latter is superior. What balm this serene music must have supplied to a public suffering the deprivations and losses of war. Applause is heard at the end – no cheers and whistles but these were very different times.

Lani Spahr has again worked wonders in restoring these recordings and whilst one has to accept that the Leach discs are more challenging than the others, the amount of information he has conjured from them all is quite amazing. Despite these being public performances (the BBC records suggest there was an audience at Broadcasting House), there is little if any audience noise – has Spahr worked another electronic miracle in removing this or were audiences better behaved than many in the present day, when during some Proms relays one might imagine a serious outbreak of tuberculosis had occurred in Kensington Gore?

I cannot summon enough superlatives: these CDs are essential listening for anyone who loves RVW’s music. Truly outstanding - and indispensable!

David Morris

100 YEARS AGO ...

Arthur Bliss's *A Colour Symphony* was given its first London performance by Adrian Boult, its dedicatee, with the student orchestra of the Royal College of Music on 5 December 1922 which Elgar attended with Frank Schuster. They both dined with Lord and Lady Stuart of Wortley in Cheyne Walk on 11 December.

Elgar was approached by Laurence Binyon to write incidental music for his forthcoming play *Arthur* and in mid-December Elgar wrote to his daughter that he 'was thinking of writing a few bars for that lamb (Binyon), he has a new play at the Old Vic'.

On 12 December Ivor Atkins had conducted a performance of *King Olaf* and reported its success to Elgar who replied on 30 December that it was 'strong ... characteristic stuff' and reminded Atkins how Alice had financially supported the work so it could be printed: 'You who like some of my works, must thank HER for all. I shd. have destroyed it all & joined Job's wife in the congenial task of cursing God'. Elgar spent Christmas with his sister Pollie Grafton in Bromsgrove and, when returning to London on 1 January, he met Atkins and his son Wulstan between trains at Shrub Hill station and informed them that he wanted to rent a house in the country near Worcester and asked if they could seek out a suitable property. His wife Katharine subsequently discovered that Napleton Grange in Kempsey would be available to lease from March or April. He told Alice Stuart of Wortley – the 'Windflower' – on 5 January that 'I do want the country so much'. On 9 January he went to a Music Society concert at St John's Institute, Tufton Street, given by the Chamber Music Players (Sammons, Tertis, Laura Kennedy and Murdoch with Andre Mangeot) to hear his Piano Quintet and grudgingly told the 'Windflower' 'I suppose it was alright but I was alone in that vaulted room', and in a misanthropic mood he told her on 23 January that 'music has deserted me', yet the following day Laurence Binyon was able to report to Lillian Baylis, the manager of the Old Vic, that Elgar had agreed to write music for *Arthur*:

He met Binyon on 28 January and explored the possibility of staying with Carice and her husband at their farm in Chilworth, Surrey to commence composition. She agreed and he arrived on 1st February. She recorded his progress as follows: 2nd February: 'Father not very well, tried writing but did not "go"'; 3rd: 'Father not well all day'; 4, 'Father better – trying to work in morning'; 5, 'Father not well & disinclined to work'; 6, 'Father better'; 7, 'Father better & busy'; 8, 'Father busy all morning'; 9, 'Father busy all morning resting after lunch'; 10, 'Saw Father off ... he seemed sorry to go'.

Adrian Boult was due to conduct *The Dream of Gerontius* in the Royal Albert Hall with the Royal Choral Society on 3rd February and wrote to Elgar inviting him to the rehearsal and asked about the higher pitch of the Albert Hall organ. Elgar was not able to attend the rehearsal stating that he detested 'the high pitch – why could not the *organ* play ½ tone lower? You cannot do *Gerontius* (in that all especially!) without the O[rgan]'.

Elgar left Carice on 10 February taking the train from Guildford via Oxford – where he briefly called on Richard Townshend and his wife Dora – and went onto Worcester to stay with Ivor and Katharine Atkins. On 11 February he went to view Napleton Grange – he said the name sounded like a novel title – a half-timbered 15th century house near Kempsey, which he liked. On returning to London, he continued to work on the *Arthur* music and then dashed to Brighton to see John Drinkwater's play *Oliver Cromwell*, produced by Henry Ainley, with Algernon Blackwood playing Colonel Pemberton. From there he wrote to the 'Windflower' on 19 February: 'I have worked at the Binyon music & have nearly finished it – one or two Windflowerish bits – but it is

short’.

He met Charles Corri, the Old Vic’s Musical Director and the producer, Robert Atkins at Frank Schuster’s house to go through the music on 21st February and delivered the score five days later ahead of a rehearsal on 2 March, which he told Carice produced ‘such a funny noise with about six players (lambs)’. There was to be a further rehearsal on 6 March, when he would decide whether to conduct at the first night and urged Carice: ‘Do come up for the day if you can’. He also asked Lady Stuart to attend: ‘I shd.be only too delighted ... We tried the entr’actes on Friday evening – a curious sound I think from such a small but very good-hearted seven!’. Carice attended the rehearsal at the Old Vic on 6 March: ‘lovely – Lady Stuart there’. He wrote to the ‘Windflower’ afterwards: ‘Only to thank you for coming & to say how glad I am that you liked it’. There was a further rehearsal on 9 March.

The play opened on 12 March. Elgar conducted and Lord and Lady Stuart took a box and afterwards joined Elgar, Binyon, Frank Schuster and two other friends at the Savoy for supper. There were to be nine further performances of *Arthur*.

Elgar told Carice on 13 March that the play went well, despite some minor mistakes by the orchestra, and following the post-performance supper he got to bed at 1.30: ‘I am not sure about conducting again – it depends on the orch. The thing is lovely, so do come (Thursday?) before it is over’. Carice came to London on 15 March and on arriving at Elgar’s flat found him ‘writing extra piece of music for Arthur’, and after lunch at Simpson’s they went to the Old Vic. Lady Stuart was there and Carice noted: ‘Very beautiful play, & music sounded lovely -’. The next day Elgar wrote to the ‘Windflower’ that few of his friends showed interest in the *Arthur* production: ‘Not a single friend has shewn any signs of life, except your house, for years ... Blackwood sent a telegram – that’s all’.

On 26 March Elgar gave evidence in court to support the contralto Phyllis Lett who had brought an action for libel against Pathé, who had reissued highly unsatisfactory early recordings of hers. Apparently, he made a tremendous impression and got the better of the Defendant’s Counsel.

Carice returned to London on 31st March when Elgar conducted the last two performances of *Arthur*. She lunched with her father, Lady Stuart and W.H. Reed and went to the matinee noting: ‘Arthur beautiful’, but the ending of the run was a muddle as Elgar wrote to the ‘Windflower’: ‘I could not get away down to you at the interval as I was held up: after the performance I had to rush off with C. – Mr. Reed had to leave early and all was confusion’.

After a short trip to Bournemouth, he prepared to leave his London flat and having signed an agreement for six months in March, he moved into Napleton Grange on 7 April 1923.

Kevin Mitchell

ISSN 0143-1269

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