



The  
Elgar  
Society

# JOURNAL



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## The Elgar Society Journal

37 Mapledene, Kemnal Road, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 6LX  
Email: [journal@elgarsociety.org](mailto:journal@elgarsociety.org)

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*The Editors do not necessarily agree with the views expressed by contributors,  
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*Front Cover: 100 Years On: The Loughborough Carillon Tower celebrates its centenary on 22 July  
2023. Illustration courtesy of Andrew Neill.*

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#### **Presentation of written text:**

**Subheadings:** longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

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

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

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*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*.

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*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:

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## EDITORIAL

'The Land without Music'<sup>1</sup> was the title of a largely anti-English book, published by Oskar Adolf Hermann Schmitz in 1904. The title was of course completely untrue at that date, and largely untrue in the decades before, but it is not difficult to see how the view might have been formed before a self-taught musician from rural Worcestershire began to make his mark. However, one wonders whether the statement might come to be true nearly 120 years after the book was published. Despite the efforts of Classic FM, it seems that classical music continues to be thought of as the interest of an elitist minority and most of our politicians (of all persuasions) appear happy to accept this view, despite the undoubted advantages (financial and otherwise) to the UK by what remains of our musical excellence.

I had the opportunity to learn the violin at my (state) school. It soon became clear that I had no aptitude for the instrument and my 'maladroit essays' upon the poor beast were as painful to me as to my tutor, but at least I was given the opportunity and I was able to obtain an invaluable introduction into the world of music. Music education in state schools has reached a nadir and if nothing is done soon we may well find that only those attending private schools will have any insight into the wonders of 'serious' music. Musical education has been shown to have benefits beyond that of the musical study *per se* and yet this neglect continues. It must have an effect on the supply of players in future years: I hear that already string players are becoming increasingly difficult to find in the UK.

The recent decision by Arts Council England to cut subsidies to, amongst others, English National Opera and Glyndebourne have received national (and largely adverse) coverage and one must sympathise with the latter commenting 'These cuts have been justified in part by the need to redirect public funding to support culture in the regions. In this context, the decision to reduce Glyndebourne's funding by 50% appears contradictory because it has the direct, inevitable and foreseeable consequence of rendering our tour financially unsustainable' and 'This would have seen hundreds of children singing with the Glyndebourne Chorus, workshops in care homes and chamber music recitals in universities. Sadly, this autumn we will not be able to offer these extraordinary opera experiences so widely across England'.

On 25 May, a piece from Martyn Brabbins (Music Director of ENO) appeared in *The Times*. To quote just one passage 'ACE's demand . . . is that ENO uproot from its home for the last half-century, and relocate to an as-yet-unspecified base outside London . . . An under-planned and under-funded move poses an unequivocal threat to the continued success of this operatic powerhouse, along with the livelihoods of the individual ENO musicians and their families'. In the same letter Brabbins also mentions his own background, coming from a Midlands council estate and benefiting from free music lessons – and meals – at school.

Whilst one must applaud initiatives to improve access to the arts for those living outside London and the South East, this surely should not result in a diminution in the 'Centre of Excellence'

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1 *Das Land ohne Musik: englische Gesellschaftsprobleme* – 'The Land without Music: problems of English society' (Munich, 1904)

that attracts many overseas visitors to the UK. One wonders where the sense is in such decisions.

Recently, the BBC also announced the disbandment of the BBC Singers – one of our few professional choruses – and plans to reduce salaried orchestral posts across the BBC Symphony, Philharmonic and Concert orchestras by about 20%. After a veritable storm of protest, these cuts have been postponed and, it is to be hoped, permanently withdrawn. But one wonders about the priorities of an organisation set up to ‘inform, educate and entertain’ if it can seek to make cuts in these areas whilst continuing to pay vast amounts to a number of ‘celebrities’.

Since the UK left the European Union, whether that be for better or worse, it has become extremely difficult for our musicians to perform abroad because of long waits for visas; also, overseas artistes face long delays in obtaining visas to appear here. Whilst this is obviously not deliberate policy and is just a side-effect of ‘Brexit’, it remains lamentable and an additional strain upon this sector.

What is to be done? The BBC’s change of mind after massive criticism, shows that decisions can be changed, but it is politicians (and I again stress of all persuasions) that need to be brought to understand the benefits that are in danger of being lost. Ironically, many of them probably do attend Glyndebourne, etc. – I have seen them there! – but do not wish to appear ‘elitist’ to their constituents, always thinking of the next election and their desire to remain employed. And, at a time when financial priorities are difficult after the Covid pandemic, and we have a struggling NHS, pot-holed roads, etc., finding ‘new money’ for the arts may well be a contentious issue. But in many cases it isn’t extra funding that is needed, but a redistribution of existing funds to ensure that the arts, and arts education (both of which contribute massively to tourism in the UK) can blossom rather than perish. Society Chairman Stuart Freed has I know been discussing a non-political initiative with other Societies and by the time you read this you may well have been sent a specimen letter with the request that you send it to your MP. Please do respond to this (MPs are normally contactable by email so there is no need to spend money on a stamp!) and this will undoubtedly help.

Let me close on this subject with a quote from conductor Hilary Davan Wetton: ‘...never lose sight of the transformational power of music. Great art may be mankind’s finest achievement; we have never needed it more’.<sup>2</sup>

In this issue we have the second part of Kevin Allen’s essay on ‘RPA’. This has brought this hitherto little-known figure in the *Variations* into the spotlight and Kevin has provided a wealth of fascinating and highly readable background on a very interesting man. Kevin has proposed to write about further ‘Variations’ in due course and we look forward to these.

Andrew Neill writes about Anthony Griffith and his siblings. Elgarians are greatly in Anthony’s debt for his pioneering work on transferring to LP Elgar’s own recordings for HMV and Andrew’s initial work to provide a tribute to him has unearthed a very interesting story about the Griffith family.

Andrew also writes about the Loughborough War Memorial Carillon and Elgar’s *Memorial Chimes for a Carillon*. It is an interesting story and one that Andrew has written after making a special journey to the town, where he was welcomed by the various authorities and given every assistance. As an aside, many years ago, a Society AGM was held in Loughborough and some of us were able to ascend the tower and play the instrument, with very mixed results...

We have two reviews of Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore’s new book *Friend of Friends* which contains much of huge interest to Elgarians. I have also reviewed a short book about the great

English tenor Richard Lewis; a very entertaining series of anecdotes by his widow.

There are CD reviews by Andrew Neill of James MacMillan’s *Christmas Oratorio* and Stanford’s *Requiem*. The former work has clearly impressed him greatly and Andrew’s enthusiastic review of the CDs has persuaded me to purchase a copy. MacMillan is a composer whose work is usually approachable and always interesting, and since he is, like Elgar, a Catholic, it is appropriate that we review this large-scale new work. Andrew is equally enthusiastic about Martyn Brabbins’ new recording of the Stanford which appears to have brought to life a work that from its first recording I found rather underwhelming. Whilst some *longueurs* remain, it seems that this new issue is very successful in presenting a work in the choral genre that perhaps suited Stanford’s talents best.

Andrew Keener provides, as always, a thoughtful and expert review of an historic reissue, Boult conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra in RVW’s *Job, a Masque for Dancing*. I also contribute reviews of two other CDs, the first a reissue of the first recording of RVW’s *Songs of Travel*, sung by Richard Standen and initially issued on the US Westminster label. The second CD contains the first recording of Ian Venables’ *Portrait of a Mind* together with RVW’s *On Wenlock Edge* and *Four Hymns*. A very interesting issue and Venables’ music is entirely accessible. Both these CDs emanate from the excellent Albion Records label of the RVW Society.

Ruth Hellen also reviews a new CD of Elgar chamber music, together with a short piece by Albert Sammons.

Kevin Mitchell continues the ‘100 Years Ago’ series, always giving interesting background on Elgar’s day to day life a century ago.

Finally, as we go to press we hear that Society Vice-President Tasmin Little was awarded the CBE in the King’s Birthday Honours, upgrading her previous OBE. We send her our congratulations.

The deadline for contributions for the December issue is **29 September 2023**.

David Morris

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

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2 Hilary Davan Wetton, *Reflections on Conducting* (Buckingham: Queen’s Temple Publications, 2021), 91

## ‘Pictured Within’ - Richard Penrose Arnold (1855-1908)

### Part Two: The Variation

#### Kevin Allen

‘Dick has come home perfectly *possessed* by Mr Elgar & his wonderful cleverness’.

Ella Arnold to Alice

‘I am returning the book on harmony you so kindly lent me’.

‘RPA’ to Elgar

‘A gentleman of the old school if ever there was one’.

Dorabella

With the benefit of hindsight, one is tempted to see Richard Arnold’s apparently chance posting to Worcester as the result of some sort of Providential gravitational pull. It would be the making of him, providing personal and professional fulfilment after a largely purposeless and uncertain earlier life; and it led to the musical incarnation through which his name is remembered.

At some point in the early 1890s he assumed the Factory Inspectorship for the Worcester District, covering most of the county, together with surrounding areas including Herefordshire, Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud, Tewkesbury and Cirencester. It was a very large area and one year Richard was recorded as travelling over nine thousand miles on his visits.<sup>1</sup> Such a posting would seem to indicate that the wobbles of the past were behind him and he was now able to work consistently and responsibly without his father’s constant mentoring. If it appears that he never renounced his drinking and gambling, at any rate it may be supposed that they were kept in control under his wife’s steadying influence. His salary was now £370,<sup>2</sup> enabling the couple to move house between several fashionable areas just north of the City centre – the Georgian Foregate Street, the elegant Regency enclave of Britannia Square with its many stucco-fronted houses and terraces with front gardens set well back from the road, and the more recent tastefully designed development of Shrubbery Avenue, with all its lavish decorative detail, nearby.<sup>3</sup>

H.M. Inspector Arnold’s new district comprised some 1,300 factories and workshops, many of whose functions – china and porcelain, glove-making, salt production and fruit pressing – offered refreshing contrast to the ‘dark satanic mills’ of Manchester. Even so, he would encounter distressing problems, signs of the times in a country where the most recent Factory Act, that of

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1 Appendix to the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, 1896.

2 Ibid., 1895

3 Both Britannia Square and Shrubbery Avenue are now Conservation Areas and well worth a visit by interested Elgarians with time to spare in Worcester.



1891, had for the first time prohibited the employment of women within four weeks of confinement, and raised the minimum age of child labour from ten to eleven. In an early Report, Richard wrote as follows –

To speak more particularly of this district, I am very glad to be able to say that what strikes me most, after having been for many years in Lancashire, is the comparatively small number of accidents that occur, and the majority of these is, as might be expected, provided by the Stroud and Kidderminster districts. There have been two fatal accidents, one in the Forest of Dean, the other at Gloucester, the former I received notice of from the coroner, but not of the latter. Curiously enough they both took place in workshops in which men only were employed, and in each case death was caused by scalds received from the man having fallen into an open tank of boiling liquor, naphtha [sic] in one case, beer in the other. Besides these two cases a man was crushed between two wagons at Hereford, and a boy died in Worcester from anthrax contracted in a horsehair factory. With regard to the fatal accident at the brewery, I would like to point out that there are large numbers of these little workshops attached to small inns all over the Kingdom in which the mash tun, and less frequently the copper, will often be found to be in a very dangerous condition, only being raised a few inches above the ground. In the cases I have come across I have directed a rail to be put round, and I strongly suspect there are many others that are not known of.<sup>4</sup>

One aspect of Manchester life that the music-loving Richard Arnold must have missed on his departure was its high-class concert life. To a progressively-minded musician used to Hallé's and Richter's programmes, the Cathedral City of Worcester might at first have seemed a disappointingly conservative, old-fashioned backwater, where Mendelssohn was seen by many as the limit of acceptable musical modernity.

Yet it would not have taken Richard long to discover that his new home town could boast an active and well-established musical life, well supported by the local aristocracy, the clergy, the professional classes, musical performers and tradesmen such as the Elgars, and entrepreneurs such as William Spark, the promoter of Subscription Concerts which brought many distinguished artists to the city. Opera lovers could enjoy the visits of the D'Oyly Carte company, while amateur singers and instrumentalists in plenty supplied the rank and file of such bodies as the Glee Clubs, the Worcester Musical Society, the Worcester Musical Union, the Worcester Amateur Vocal Union, and the Worcester Philharmonic Society. This last had been re-christened as the Worcester Festival Choral Society, forming the backbone of the city's contribution to the triennial Three Choirs Festival, another special factor in local music life. And it could not have taken Richard long too, to become aware of some of the leading figures of Worcester's music, particularly Edward Elgar, whose compositions were gaining him the reputation of a home-grown genius from whom much was expected, and his friend Hugh Blair, the Cathedral Organist and progressive conductor of the Festival Choral Society. The two men were working together to refresh that static musical atmosphere by mounting a pioneering series of choral and orchestral concerts designed to educate audiences and raise standards, through the introduction of an eclectic repertoire of works of all periods and styles. And Blair made every effort to encourage and perform his friend's music, most notably by giving the first performance of his most ambitious work to date, the cantata *The Black Knight*, at a Festival Choral Society concert on 18 April 1893. The tuneful, deftly-orchestrated work would establish Elgar's name and reputation among the Midlands choirs.

It is not clear if Richard and Ella were present that day. They were certainly in Worcester

a few months later for that year's Three Choirs Festival, for *Berrow's Worcester Journal*<sup>5</sup> listed them among the guests at a house-party at Broughton Park, just south of the river in the suburb of St Johns. Such gatherings were a feature of the Festival, a social as well as a musical event, and the Broughton Park party was a token, not only of the Arnolds' presence in Worcester, but of their acceptance among the cultured classes. Not for the first time, the family name must have counted for something. Fellow-guests included John Gott, Bishop of Truro, and his wife and daughter, and the Reverend Hon. Edward Lyttelton, a music-loving son of the fourth Baron Lyttelton of Hagley Hall, later Headmaster of Eton. Gott had been Dean of Worcester for five years in the late 1880s, and would have known both Blair and Elgar. The party would have enjoyed an ambitious programme at the Festival, Blair's first as conductor. In addition to his own *Te Deum*, and the expected standard choral works of Spohr, Mendelssohn and Handel, he mounted the first Three Choirs performance of Bach's Mass in B Minor, and the first Worcester hearing of the Brahms Requiem in the Cathedral, complementing them with a refreshing programme of Mozart, Schubert, Dvorák, Wagner, Leoncavallo, Parry and Sullivan at the secular concert in the Public Hall. But as always in those days, the performances would have been handicapped by inadequate rehearsal; in particular, the audience for the challenging and unfamiliar Mass in B Minor was disappointingly small, and the performance was not of the best. Richard might have compared the standards of the Festival rather unfavourably with those of the Hallé and Richter concerts at Manchester, but he surely recognised the significance of Blair's efforts and innovations. And he must too have become accustomed that week to seeing among the players the striking face of Edward Elgar, who famously annotated his copy of the programme, 'I played 1<sup>st</sup> violin for the sake of the fee as I cd. obtain no recognition as a composer'.<sup>6</sup> Blair would ensure that Elgar received recognition by encouraging the commissioning of an Oratorio for the next Festival, in 1896, by which point the composer was on the point of emerging as a major national figure, his work encouraged and supported by a circle of loyal and devoted friends, among whom Richard and Ella Arnold would come to hold special places.

It was another of those good friends, Winifred Norbury, a highly musical member of an old-established family of county gentry with a wide social network, who provided her own early perspectives on the Arnolds' presence in Worcester. A few months after the Festival, she noted that 'Mrs Campbell & Mrs Arnold drove over from Worcester & had tea with us'.<sup>7</sup> Richard's widowed mother, Fanny Lucy, together with her two daughters and their children, paid several visits to Richard and Ella about this time. Worcester was a more manageable journey than Manchester and it must have been reassuring to see 'Dear Dicky' evidently on an even professional keel at last, no doubt exerting all his famous charm. The Arnold ladies easily passed the Norbury afternoon tea test; the children were 'nice' and the ladies were 'very pleasant' according to Winifred; 'all so very nice' chimed her sister Florence.<sup>8</sup>

The first documentary evidence of Richard Arnold's meeting Elgar is to be found in Alice's Diary for 19 June 1894: 'E into Malvern golf in pm, with Mr Arnold'. On his return, Edward no doubt made Alice fully aware of the distinguished background of his new acquaintance. He was playing a great deal of golf at the time, finding creative stimulus in an outdoor activity, and enjoying the opportunities it afforded of meeting the movers and shakers of Worcester's world.

5 16 September 1893.

6 Moore, J. N. 'Edward Elgar: A Creative Life (Oxford: OUP, 1984), 177.

7 Diary, 1 December 1893. Sherridge Papers.

8 Diaries, 16 July, 1894. Sherridge Papers.

4 Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, 1893.

Both he and Arnold had joined the Club at Malvern Wells the previous year, Elgar fitting games around his teaching commitments, just as Arnold was evidently able to fit play around his factory visits. They played several more times that year as the friendship grew, Elgar no doubt attracted by Richard's antecedents, charm, and genuine love of music, while for his part Richard began to know something of Elgar's many-sided personality, his humour, and his musical ambitions. In October a new step in the relationship was marked when Elgar visited the Arnolds at their Shrubbery Avenue home one afternoon, paving the way for Alice to pay a first call on Ella ten days later. The friendship was now a properly established family one according to the etiquette of the day.

Richard and Ella would have enjoyed two Festival Choral Society concerts so far that year (a third would come in December), the first a performance of Gounod's *Redemption* with a specially erected platform in Worcester's Public Hall to accommodate the necessary extra trumpets and harps, the second offering a varied miscellany of vocal and instrumental items by Beethoven, Schumann, Berlioz, Wagner and Sullivan, together with extracts from Blair's own incidental music for a children's play. But it was a Herefordshire Philharmonic Society concert in November, featuring Elgar's *The Black Knight*, which Richard enjoyed most. He made sure to accept the composer's invitation to be at Hereford on the day. 'My dear Mr Elgar', he wrote afterwards,

I must send you a line to thank you so very much for having given me the opportunity of hearing your Black Knight. I think it is *splendid*, and was delighted with it, and I now wish to hear it again, but I hope when I next hear it the chorus will be a very much larger one. The orchestration seemed to me to be so specially interesting and varied, & I shd think, beastly difficult. I saw poor Blair once or twice in terrible difficulties, though everyone seemed to be as busy as possible.

Are we going to play golf on Tuesday afternoon next?<sup>9</sup>

The versatile Blair often played French Horn in local amateur ensembles, and Richard's mention of him suggests that the pair were already acquainted; it was a friendship that would develop productively. That Tuesday afternoon golf duly took place, while Ella returned Alice's earlier call in a first visit to Forli. The two men joined them for tea, and no doubt the enthusiastic discussion of *The Black Knight* continued, much to Alice's delight. It was, she emphasized, a 'Very nice time', marking the development of a special warmth in their friendship. Within weeks there would be another Blair-Elgar collaboration for the Arnolds to look forward to, the next Festival Choral Society concert, a mixed affair of contemporary English choral music including a substantial new choral work by Blair himself, and orchestral music by Beethoven and Wagner. An anxious period developed as Blair became unwell and found himself unable to complete the orchestration of his cantata, which Elgar took over and finished at the last moment. The work was judged a success, while the Society's performance of *Blest Pair of Sirens* was found to be 'well-nigh perfect.' With Elgar leading the orchestra, it was Blair's first concert mounted entirely without outside help, realising one aspect of his vision for

11: XI: 94.  
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'My Dear Mr Elgar' (British Library)

the Society. A week later Alice and Edward met up at the Arnolds', as they often would from now on after going their separate ways in Worcester. It was a 'delightful time', an occasion marked for Richard and Ella by Elgar improvising at the piano; he 'played gloriously' for them. It was another sign of a continuing special friendship, with dinner invitations added to the golf, the calls and the Shrubbery Avenue *rendez-vous* over the next few years. And it was a friendship that offered opportunities that Alice would have treasured, such as a dinner at which she 'met Mrs Matthew Arnold' one evening in October 1895.

### *A Singular Happiness of Expression*

One of Richard Arnold's obituarists wrote of him that though 'he was not a student or a scholar, he had a considerable share of that literary gift which seems to be hereditary in the Arnold family; and his letters, his musical criticisms, even his Factory Reports, were marked by a singular happiness of expression'.<sup>10</sup> It is tempting therefore to see his hand behind some of the enthusiastic and supportive newspaper reviews of the Blair-Elgar Festival Choral Society concerts at this time. Worcester boasted three weekly newspapers, and they all regularly offered generous column inches for concert reviews, even to the point of including the names of every single member of the orchestra and chorus. The concert of 30 April 1895, for example, received a notably warm and fluent description in the *Worcester Herald*,<sup>11</sup> which covered all the works performed, large and small, in order, explained their backgrounds, and gave the obligatory gracious mentions of the soloists, without ever becoming tedious or laboured. The writer showed himself well aware of the Society's reputation, a reputation that was being maintained at its 'highest mark', and went out of his way to praise Blair, who, with 'commendable punctuality . . . gave the signal for commencing the bright and spirited overture' to Mendelssohn's *Walpurgisnacht*. And the overture's difficulties were dealt with very tactfully as 'it made a strong call upon the executive powers of the band, who, however, rendered with great skill the many tricky movements in this and the other numbers of the cantata'. One can imagine what a less partisan critic might have made of that. And the review was particularly marked by a sensitive view of both words and music of one of Elgar's most atmospheric short works.

But the chief item in the second portion was Mr Edward Elgar's new Spanish Serenade, now first performed in Worcester. This is a new setting of the old stanzas, 'Stars of the Summer Night,' an excerpt from Longfellow's "Spanish Student." It is just about two years ago that Mr Elgar's cantata *The Black Knight* was produced with such success by the Choral Society, and the capital chorus work and elaborate orchestration that he then showed himself capable of writing is seen anew in this Serenade. Mr Elgar has evolved some clever effects in imitation of bagpipes, guitars, and percussion instruments, all supplying a sympathetic accompaniment to the sweet, sustained melody of the chorus. The soft, dreamy strains of each final verse, "She sleeps, my lady sleeps!" are exquisite in their tender grace of expression, and not a whit of their proper effect was lost in their interpretation by the band and chorus. Mr Blair, in conducting, brought out every varying phase in the composition.<sup>12</sup>

Reviews were very largely unsigned in those days but Richard's *Harrovian* obituary, his literary background, lifelong musical interests, and his friendship with Blair and Elgar, all suggest the

9 11 November, 1894. EB 3906.

10 'G.W.E.R.' 'The Harrovian' April, 1908.

11 4 May, 1895, duplicated in the Worcester Chronicle of the same date.

12 Ibid.

possibility of his being the author of this and other keenly supportive reviews of the Festival Choral Society concerts. It showed how much he understood and shared Blair's vision for the Society – as a vehicle for the development of a city-wide musical culture – and in his turn the conductor must have appreciated the extent to which loyal and consistent advocacy in the local press helped fulfil his aims. Richard was thus becoming a part of the Blair-Elgar project, and a figure in Worcester's music.

\*

Elgar had at this point in 1895 been toying with a setting of parts of the Icelandic sagas and on the strength of the success of *The Black Knight*, the influential North Midlands conductor Swinnerton Heap had persuaded the somewhat unwilling committee of the North Staffordshire Festival to consider a new work based on them, which would become *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*. The prestigious commission was finally confirmed that October, and Elgar lost little time in seeking Richard's judgement. He was told the news over golf one afternoon, heard some of the sketches over tea later, and was, as Jerrold Northrop Moore writes, 'staggered'.<sup>13</sup> His enthusiasm for what he had heard, and his awareness of the significance of the new development was such that he poured it all out to Ella on his return to Shrubbery Avenue that day. She could not resist writing to Alice immediately, with a warm rush of sisterly sympathy.

My dear Mrs Elgar, Dick has just come in & told me the deeply interesting news that Mr Elgar has been asked to write for the Staffordshire Festival, & I cannot help writing off at once to tell you how *truly* delighted I am. It will give the world a chance of hearing that there is great musical genius *yet* to be found. Dick has come home perfectly *possessed* by Mr Elgar & his wonderful cleverness, (that is hardly the word). He says Schumann was a babe compared to him, & can think & talk of *nothing* else. I need not say he adored his afternoon & has made me very envious. I hope you will not mind my writing to you, but I am so honestly & deeply thrilled, & I know how you must feel. I am writing in frantic haste to catch the post.

With love, affectionately yours <sup>14</sup>

Richard's 'over the top' reaction says everything about a temperament where heart had so often ruled head, but the intensity and sincerity of his and Ella's support were all of a piece with the 'delightful' evenings they continued to spend with the composer and his wife, a wife who must have been more than delighted with Ella's letter.

The commission was another sign of the momentum that Elgar's career was gaining following the success of *The Black Knight* in 1892. Since then Blair had encouraged the composition of *Sursum Corda*, a devotional work for organ, strings, and brass, and a substantial Organ Sonata, and had no doubt been influential in securing Elgar a commission for an Oratorio for that year's Worcester Three Choirs Festival; the composer would be working on that and the *Saga* piece together. Arnold was given early access to the Organ Sonata, playing it from proofs,<sup>15</sup> and also to the new *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands* which he also played from proofs after dining at

Shrubbery Avenue one evening.<sup>16</sup> And no doubt he heard parts of both the Festival commissions as Elgar worked hard to have them ready for the autumn.

Meanwhile Blair showed himself keen to mount two Festival Choral Society concerts before he would have to concentrate on the Worcester Festival. The first, in January, was notable for the inclusion of Dvorák's vivid folk-tale cantata, *The Spectre's Bride*, a challenging work requiring enlarged forces. The second featured a miscellaneous programme of choral and instrumental items, featuring the first performance of Elgar's *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*, Guilmant's Symphony for Organ and Orchestra, and two dance-based items, a *Suite for Orchestra* by the French theatre composer Clément Lippacher, and *Two Spanish Dances* by a local musician, William Moore. Once again there were stylish reviews in the *Worcester Herald*, noting how 'from one success to another the Festival Choral Society pursues its artistic career' and how the large audiences 'seemed gratified that such a cultured entertainment could be furnished by local amateurs'. And there was a distinctly cosmopolitan tone to the account of the lighter items Blair had introduced. In Moore's *Spanish Dances* –

... the abilities of the band were well displayed, alike in the slow movement, the quickest melodic passages, and the more picturesque finale, in which, by the introduction of tambourine and castanets, one could almost realise that some pretty gitana was illustrating the poetry of motion as well as that of her native music. Somewhat similar, but more ambitious in style, was the delightful orchestral suite by Lippacher, performed later in the evening, – a composition that naturally recalled reminiscences of the Eden Theatre in Paris, or the Alhambra of London, and their well-trained troupes of coryphées.<sup>17</sup>

The review in *Berrow's Worcester Journal*<sup>18</sup> on the other hand was notably prosaic. The Spanish Dances were 'charmingly simple' and 'delightfully Spanish in suggestiveness', while Lippacher's Suite was 'very dainty and bright'. Both papers praised *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands* and noted its reception, which was an exceptionally warm and enthusiastic one. Arnold again painted the scene effectively. 'At its conclusion prolonged and hearty applause and cheers greeted the composer, who, recalled again and again, bowed his acknowledgements of the compliments so well deserved'. And he added, 'If it be true that a prophet finds no honour in his own country, Mr Elgar can certainly congratulate himself that Worcester people appreciate native talent and genius when applied to music'.<sup>19</sup>

He joined the ranks of the Stewards of the Festival that year, and together with Ella was invited to the Mayor's civic lunches on every day of the week, a week that saw Blair again mounting innovative and ambitious programmes, giving the first Three Choirs performances of Verdi's Requiem and Schumann's *Rhenish* Symphony. Elgar's commissioned oratorio, *The Light of Life*, received its premiere to general acclaim, paving the way for the sensational success of *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* at Hanley at the end of October. Richard and Ella, who must have heard a great deal of the work in progress, were all the more deeply disappointed at not being able to

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>14</sup> 12 October, 1895. EB 8982. (Paragraphing editorial).

<sup>15</sup> Alice Elgar Diary, 19 January 1896.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 7 February 1896.

<sup>17</sup> i.e. dancers in a 'corps de ballet.' 'Worcester Herald, 25 April 1896. The oriental-style Eden-Theatre in the Rue Boudreau was noted for its exotic ballet productions, and there is every possibility that Richard visited it while on holiday in Paris in 1873. And given his youthful transgressions, he may well have been familiar with the notorious Alhambra in Leicester Square.

<sup>18</sup> 25 April 1896.

<sup>19</sup> 'Worcester Herald,' 25 April 1896.



attend the historic performance, and they both wrote their feelings. Firstly, Ella to Elgar.

I cannot help writing to tell you how deeply & sincerely delighted I have been, so see in one & all the London papers, the splendid recognition King Olaf has had. I always knew he *must* electrify everybody but still it is good to think *what* a reception he has had. Never, never have I hankered to go to any performance, as I did to that, but alas! it was not to be done.

Dick brought home a sheaf of papers yesterday, & even forgot our luncheon & everything else in the pleasure of reading them. You will have heaps of letters & congratulations so do not think of answering this, but please do you & Mrs Elgar come in, whenever you are near & let me hear of *the* day. With love to Mrs Elgar & best congratulations.<sup>20</sup>

Reading the many warm reviews in the provincial and national press, especially one by Joseph Bennet in *The Daily Telegraph* provided compensation for absence. Richard followed Ella's letter next day with one of explanation.

You will have had by now probably thousands of letters of congratulation, but I do not think any are more *meant* and *sincere* than Ella's and mine. I am so *very very* glad, though I cannot say I am the least surprised, my only doubt was the intelligence of the B[ritish] P[ublic]: or rather their audiences, the Press; the latter made a faint show of existence at Worcester, but have now entirely climbed down, again & again my best congratulations. You were right, after all I was not there, but on the Thursday I was telegraphed for to go to Stroud & had to do so; it was such a *bitter* disappointment, more especially as on the Thursday morning I had had a letter offering to put me up near Stoke. However it is sure to be done very soon either in London or Birmingham so we shall hear it. I could not help sending you one line.<sup>21</sup>

And knowing and understanding the Elgars and their marriage so well, as he must have done by this point, he added a special message for Alice.

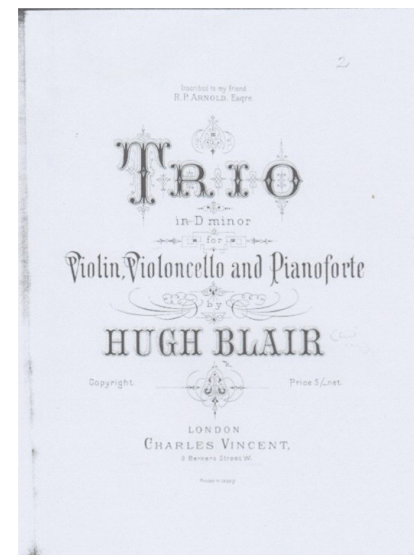
I am enclosing this tiny note to you in a little letter I have sent to EE to tell you how cordially & sincerely we both congratulate you on the unparalleled success of King Olaf. I don't think anyone was so delighted at reading the papers on Saturday than I was, & felt all the time I wished to say I told you so. But my chief reason in writing to you is also to congratulate *you*, for all *you* have done for King Olaf, and how splendidly you have helped EE all through, and indeed by your devotion & care made this triumph possible. I feel he is [word illegible]. I shall be glad to reckon with him at golf any day next week. Again with every possible good wish.<sup>22</sup>

Richard's judgement about further performances of *King Olaf* was correct; a London performance was arranged for the following April, and Blair would programme it for a Festival Choral Society concert the month after that. Soon there would be a series of performances around the country. Meanwhile the work's success brought paying commissions from Novello for a march

and a cantata to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. Richard and Ella had a preview of the completed *Imperial March* one January afternoon – 'Mr & Mrs Arnold in the afternoon. Sent "Imperial March" finished' – and Ella was treated to a domestic performance by Edward, Alice and Hilda Fitton on calling one afternoon a few weeks later.

### *A Piano Trio for a Friend*

If 1897 was a year marked by the national celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, it was no less a notable one in Worcester's musical life, a year of upheavals and new beginnings. Blair's two concerts – the first in February, the second in May including a no-expense-spared performance of *King Olaf* – showed the Society continuing to mount from strength to strength. But they proved to be Blair's swan-song in Worcester. His drinking had been an open secret for some time, and after several warnings, the Dean and Chapter were beginning to feel that they had no option but to replace him. Blair decided to jump before he was pushed, and formally submitted his resignation shortly after the May concert. Recently a new factor had come into his life, in the form of Catherine Mary Dorell, from a family of prosperous local drapers, and Blair, an apparently confirmed bachelor in his thirties, married her that June. It was her influence that now took her husband away from Worcester completely in the aftermath of his resignation. The pair eventually settled in London, where Blair worked for the rest of his career. Catherine's determination to achieve such a fresh start was evidently sparked by her husband's weakness for the bottle. 'Family lore held it that Aunt Kate took him away from Worcester because he got into bad company', according to a descendant.<sup>23</sup> One cannot help but ponder the nature of this company. There is anecdotal evidence of Blair drinking and laughing in a hostelry near the Cathedral with some of the lay clerks after services, although this might be innocent enough. But given a supportive friendship with Richard Arnold, it is possible that the pair had been enjoying more convivial company than was good for them. And Arnold had a known weakness for gambling too. It may be suggestive of a particularly close friendship that the year of Blair's leaving Worcester saw the publication of a substantial stand-alone work among his extensive output of liturgical, church and organ music, a four-movement Piano Trio in D minor. No doubt encouraged and played through over many sessions at Britannia Square, it was



**The Title Page of Hugh Blair's *Piano Trio*, with its Dedication to Richard Arnold. (British Library)**

'Inscribed to my Friend  
R.P. Arnold. Esqre.'

\*

23 Communication from Robert Hale to the writer, 20 April 2020.

- 20 1 November 1896. EB 3915. Written from Eastbourne Lodge, the Arnolds having moved to Britannia Square.
- 21 2 November 1896. EB 3914. Following Richard's summons, Reuben Rom, Herbert Payne and Charles Allen, all tailors at Stroud, were prosecuted at the Town Hall on 13 November and fined the sum of two shillings and sixpence with six shillings costs, for 'failure to affix abstracts and notices.' Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, 1896.
- 22 Worcester Archive and Archaeology Service Microfilm.

1897 was also a notable year for Worcester in that it saw the creation of a major new musical initiative. With Blair's Festival Choral Society now in the initially uncertain hands of his successor, Ivor Atkins,<sup>24</sup> and with the second largest Worcester musical society, the Worcester Musical Union, gradually losing momentum under the abrasive and conservative conductorship of the Reverend Edward Vine Hall, a group of active music-lovers and Elgar supporters, led by Winifred Norbury, Lady Mary Lygon and Martina Hyde, one of Elgar's violin pupils, took the opportunity of filling the vacuum. Their new society, the Worcestershire Philharmonic, was deliberately created for Elgar to conduct, making him *de facto* the leader of music in the county, and he would follow Hugh Blair's example in mounting eclectic programmes with an emphasis on contemporary European music. The Society was publicly launched at a well-attended meeting that November, securing the necessary aristocratic patronage in the persons of the Earl of Dudley and Lord Hampton, adopting the rules, and electing officers. Richard and Ella were involved from the beginning, no doubt sharing in the general excitement, attending the meeting, and providing fortifying lunches and teas as Elgar was soon plunged into voice-testing and rehearsal trips into Worcester. But increasingly busy as he was, the composer still found time for two rounds of golf with Richard before Christmas.

### *A Surrey Interlude*

Richard himself had plenty to occupy him at the time, for his involvement in music-making was not confined to Worcester. He and Ella often visited his mother at the Arnold family home since 1873, Pains Hill Cottage at Cobham in Surrey, a useful base from which to keep in touch with old family friends in the area, particularly Katharine, Margaret and Susan, three musical daughters of the celebrated Lushington family, presided over by their father Vernon, a County Court Judge; their house Pyports, was nearby.<sup>25</sup> The Lushington girls were typically well-connected. Kitty, the eldest, married the journalist Leo Maxse, a friend of George Meredith; a friendship with Virginia Woolf led to her becoming the model for Mrs Dalloway in the eponymous novel. Margaret married Stephen Massingberd, a connection of the Wedgwoods and Darwins; Vaughan Williams, a cousin, played the organ at their wedding. Susan, the youngest and longest-lived (1870-1953) remained unmarried, actively devoting herself to promoting local music-making, for which she received an MBE in 1943.

The sisters' musical accomplishments are attested to by the extent to which they became part of the extensive social and musical circle of no less a figure than Hubert Parry. He first met the girls in 1882 at the home of mutual friends at Blessingbourne in Ireland, and a camaraderie developed through much chamber music playing, either at Parry's Littlehampton house, Knight's Croft, or at his home at Kensington Square, where the Lushingtons had a London house. The sisters constituted a string trio and to mark the friendship Parry composed *Two Intermezzi* for them.<sup>26</sup> In later years, when they had all drifted apart somewhat he would write to Susan

you can hardly have an idea of the affection with which I look back to the days when I used to see so much of the family. They are quite among the dearest memories I have - and wonderfully vivid - including things as long ago as Blessingbourne! Do you remember how keen you were about billiards there? And our expedition to Bundoran? And the gale? I took the car round a few Sundays ago just to look at the outside of Pyports - and the frequent sight of your old house in Kensington Square always gives me a twinge. Such times we had then!<sup>27</sup>

In fact it was with the single-minded Susan that Parry enjoyed the longest and closest friendship, and he came to rely on her as a copyist and occasional member of the small ensembles he would form to illustrate his College lectures.

She early established herself as a leading figure in local music-making and fund-raising. In November 1897 she had mounted a concert in aid of the Ripley Football Club, playing violin sonatas by Handel, Bach and Mozart; now she had gathered an orchestra sufficient to plan a concert for the new year in which she would perform a concerto, along with Parry's celebrated Wedding March from his music for Aristophanes' *The Birds*. The composer was characteristically keen to help. 'My dear Sue', he wrote, 'what a grand Orchestra! You'll have splendid fun with them. I'll look for the parts of the Birds march with pleasure. You are quite welcome to rescore it for anything you like . . . I hope you will achieve the Beethoven Violin Concerto successfully'.<sup>28</sup> Richard was also supportive of his friend's venture, writing to her towards the end of December from his London Club, the Wyndham in St James's Square (adjacent to the London Library) in a way that marked him as a knowledgeable hand in dealing with the practicalities of local music-making.

I have seen Toogood<sup>29</sup> and it seems to be rather unlucky as he wd. be delighted to come, only he has some rehearsal fr 5 to 7 on the 14<sup>th</sup> & something in the evening fr 8 to 10.30. The latter there seems to be no difficulty about, but the affair fr 5 to 7 he seemed rather anxious about, I explained it did not matter a hang whether he went or no so long as he came to Cobham, & he cd. easily find some one else to take his place. However he is going to see about it this evening & will let me know.

He says Lawford is the name of the drummer & that he is a perfect fool as a player as he plays with no expression and does not catch on: if it will in any way be of convenience to you he will find you a drumming amateur if possible, professional otherwise. He also says he thinks he could get a Mr Smithers (or some such name) to play viola for you, but very likely Massingham knows him.

I only write this now because of what he says about the drums, so that if you have any better plan you may not lose a post by waiting till we meet tomorrow, wh. I look forward to with the greatest possible pleasure mingled with a good deal of terror & anxiety.<sup>30</sup>

Richard's 'terror & anxiety' were evidently due to a try-out Susan and her sister were due to give of a work of his own; his hobby of music was now developing into serious composition. The girls' verdict on the piece may be gauged from a letter Richard wrote a few days before the concert, which included some well-meaning advice for Susan over her entry in the Beethoven concerto.

24 Winifred Norbury noted 'we elected Mr Ivor Atkins conductor & do not foresee a very brilliant future for the Society.' Florence also recorded Atkins' election as conductor, adding 'tho he is a very futile one!' Diaries, 25 October 1897. Sherridge Papers.

25 The Surrey History Centre (hereinafter SHC) at Woking holds a collection of many thousands of Lushington family letters and photograph albums, including items from Vaughan Williams, Parry and several of the Pre-Raphaelites.

26 Available on YouTube.

27 28 February 1913. SHC Lushington Collection 7854/4/29/1/35a

28 30 October 1897. SHC Lushington Collection 7854/4/29/1/21

29 Reginald Curtis Toogood (1856-1929), retired soldier turned solicitor, a Lushington family friend, was an amateur double bass player. His 'Times' Obituary states that 'although an amateur, he was invited to play at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester,' possibly through Richard Arnold's influence.

30 SHC Lushington Collection 7854/4/36/1/11.

I am so glad to hear that all the outside arrangements for your concert are now complete. I had a note fr, Reggie to-day to say he had written to Henderson, whose fee for the 2 nights was £3:3/- which he hopes you won't think too much: personally I call it very cheap as it is to include bringing drums & all expenses and is also for both nights. You & Mrs Massingberd made such a game of my poor tune, à la mode Thorne,<sup>31</sup> that I am going to put it into three-four time & mark it "massig langsam", wh I believe is now the proper way to mark things, & with such a marking I think you both will not fail to like it!

I have been thinking about your start in the concerto, have you tried starting *f* & by the time you arrive at the end of the passage getting it to *fff* for if you start *p* & hairpin it up to *f*, I still think it is apt to sound thin: it would be *quite* different if the solo instrument opened the whole thing by itself, but you see you come in after your audience have been revelling in the trombones, cornets, clarinets, etc of the Cobham orchestra. Please don't think me forward for saying all this, but believe me to be with every good wish.<sup>32</sup>

Alas, for all the planning and efforts, the brief review of the concert which appeared in the *West Surrey Times*<sup>33</sup> proves disappointing, being more taken up with listing local worthies among the audience, including Richard and his mother, than with offering any critical judgement. However, the orchestra was 'particularly good', and Susan, who conducted, was 'to be congratulated upon the success attending her endeavours . . . one of the greatest treats of the evening was concerto for violin [sic], Miss Lushington taking the solo in masterly style'.

### Rather a Silly Question

On his return to Worcester that January, Arnold would have picked up the threads of his involvement with another local, if larger-scale, musical venture, Elgar's Worcestershire Philharmonic Society. With its first concert due in May, and together with many familiar names - Rosa Burley, Ivor Atkins, Hubert Leicester, Lady Mary Lygon and the Norbury sisters among them - he became a subscribing member, together with Ella, who would later join the sopranos. His support of Elgar's ambitious programmes for the Society's concerts over the next few years is surely to be found among the many consistently complimentary reviews which appeared in the Worcester newspapers, and in his position among the composer's closest musical and social circle. Dora Penny gives us a portrait of Arnold, now an established and respectable figure, his many failures now behind him, as he hosted one of the regular post-concert tea parties, reminding us of the quality above all others that had assisted him so much through the vicissitudes of his life - charm.

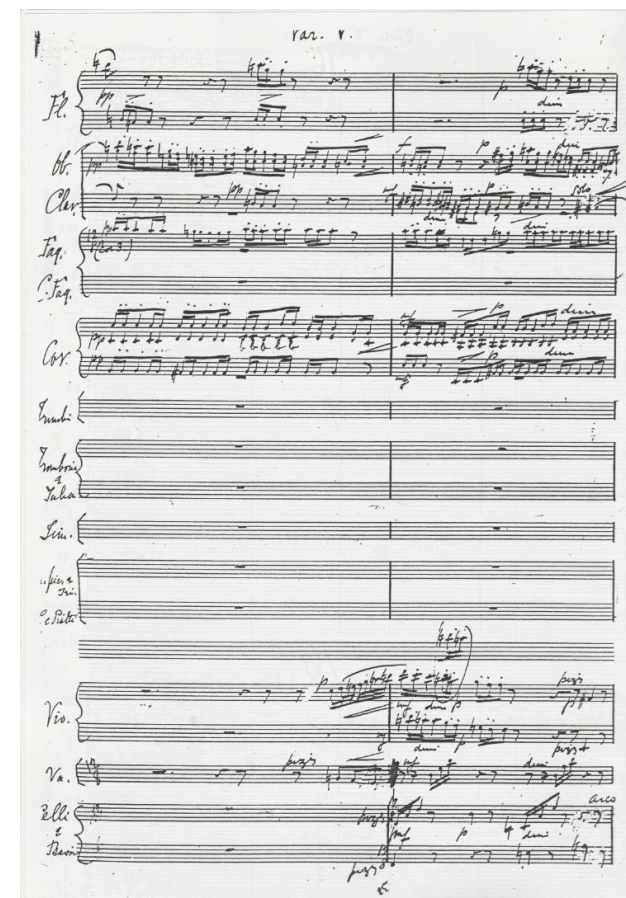
People have asked me which is my favourite Variation. Rather a silly question but if I must make a choice I think I should say 'R.P.A.' This is a portrait of a very charming person. Literary, interesting, and amusing, Richard Penrose Arnold was the son of Matthew Arnold, the poet. He was a delightful talker, and he always seemed to me to be happy when he was with other people. I met him several times at Mrs Hyde's tea-parties but the picture that remains with me is of the day (15 April 1898) when the tea-party after the Philharmonic Concert had to be held at another house because Mrs Hyde had influenza, so R.P.A. invited us to his.

It was a smaller house and there was rather a pack of people but he had it all beautifully arranged. Tea was in the dining room, with the table pushed back across a corner, and his housekeeper pouring out

from behind a large silver urn. I can see him now, finding chairs for those who wanted them, handing cakes and bread and butter, and every now and then one heard his funny little nervous laugh -

'HA-ha-ha, ha ha HA-ha-ha!'

(you can hear it plainly in the woodwind) as he went round talking to first one and then another. A gentleman of the old school if ever there was one.<sup>34</sup>



"Ha ha ha" - part of the RPA Variation MS Score. (British Library)

31 I am unable to elucidate this.

32 SHC Lushington Collection 7854/4/36/1/2. (Paragraphing editorial).

33 21 January 1898.

34 Powell, D. M., 'Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation' (4th Edition, Scholar Press: 1994).



## *A Curious Vein of Humour*

The Worcestershire Philharmonic Society was not Elgar's only preoccupation that year, for his largest work so far, *Caractacus*, was given its first performance at the Leeds Festival in early October; many friends were present, but, as with the *King Olaf* première, Arnold's commitments meant that he was unable to attend. Immediately after the Festival, the Elgars spent most of the rest of the month in London, although an unmissable Worcestershire Philharmonic rehearsal intervened on the 11<sup>th</sup> and the composer travelled to Worcester for it, staying overnight with Richard and Ella. The Elgars finally returned home to Malvern on 19 October, and Edward reluctantly resumed his teaching two days later, on the twenty-first. That evening, according to accounts subsequently appearing in *The Music Student*<sup>35</sup> and in Basil Maine's *Elgar: His Life and Works*<sup>36</sup> saw Alice intervening to encourage her husband's idle improvisations at the piano, an encouragement that resulted in the Variations Op. 36, the evergreen portrait-gallery of friends that marked a new era in English music. Initial progress on the Variations was quick, although it would slow down over the winter. As with so many of the friends portrayed, there is no surviving documentary evidence of contact between Elgar and Arnold about his variation - we do not know when he was told about it, or what his and Ella's responses were when they first heard it. A possible connection has been suggested in an article by David Pearce<sup>37</sup> in which he reminds us of an item about the Variations which appeared in a musical gossip column in the *Sheffield Independent* of 12 June, 1899, shortly before the first performance of the work.

Mr Elgar, it is said, displays a curious vein of humour in this composition. It happened that he was extemporising on the pianoforte one evening, and chanced upon a pleasing theme. Turning to a friend in the room he remarked that a certain person would play the melody in a particular way, that somebody else would play it differently, that a violoncellist might make it an agreeable solo, and that a cathedral organist would embellish it with pedal notes.

The possibility exists therefore that the 'enigma' theme was born during that overnight stay at Britannia Square, and that Richard Arnold's connection with the Variations goes beyond his own portrait.<sup>38</sup>

Eastbourne Lodge, the  
Arnolds' House in Britannia  
Square, Worcester.  
(Cora Weaver)



35 December 1932, 243.

36 (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1933), 101

37 'The Imp of the Perverse: A Conclusion.' *The Elgar Society News*, December 2021, pp.17-28.

38 The identity of the writer of the *Sheffield Independent* article is unclear. Henry Coward was for many years the newspaper's music critic, but according to his 'Reminiscences' (London: Curwen, 1919), 95) he resigned the position in 1896. The source of the writer's information also remains unclear. Possibly it was August Jaeger, keen to promote the new work in musical circles, and anxious for whatever reason to downplay Alice's part in the conception of the Variations.

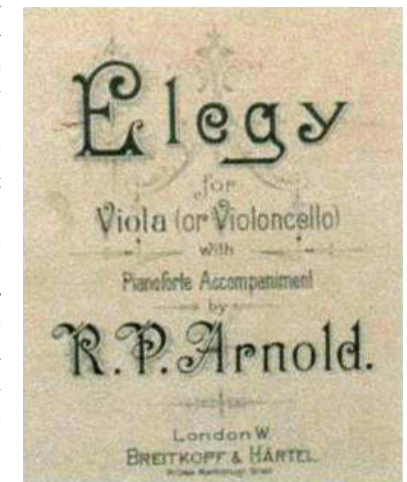
At much the same time Richard was continuing to develop his own composing with marked success, as he wrote diffidently to Susan Lushington that December.

How very particularly kind of you to send me a Christmas card. I have only just come back here from Cobham, &, thinking of last year, made it forlorn than ever. I wonder if you have been playing much lately. I am sure you will be interested to hear that Breitkopf and Härtel are bringing out my *Elegy*, but I have not yet had the proof from Germany. I have also made a larghetto in F: for piano, 2 violins, viola, & violoncello: I hope you will observe that it is only the really ignorant persons who start by trying the hardest forms of music: I have also made two marches for the Worcestershire regiment, & you will be distressed to hear a pendant to my *Thorné* (wh you may remember you disliked so much) but I hope not quite so common.

Ella has been very ill, & had to be up in London all of November in a nursing home, but she is I hope all right now. I can never express to you *how* we both wish you would come and stay here, not that there is any inducement to offer, but still we should be so glad if you did or rather *wilt* would come. Please give my best love to yr father who I hope is well. I saw your sister at Miss Bramwell's wedding, she looked so uncommonly well.<sup>39</sup>

Arnold's *Elegy* was duly published the following year. Marked *Tristo e molto adagio*, it was cast in straightforward ternary form, and well adapted for performance by the Lushingtons, being for viola or cello with piano accompaniment. Although it bears the occasional stamp of the amateur composer, it certainly 'suggests the real feeling', and it is not difficult to see how the piece gained the *imprimatur* of publication by the famous firm. It convincingly projects a deeply-felt atmosphere through its admittedly conventional gestures and figurations, and builds to an effective climax in the freely (sometimes very freely) modulating central section. There is every likelihood of course that Elgar knew of his friend's work and helped with it in some way; Arnold would later acknowledge the loan of a harmony book.<sup>40</sup> Arnold also achieved the publication of two songs, *Requiescat*, a setting of his father's poem (Boosey, 1886), and *A Faery Song*, to words by Keats (Novello, 1907).

The Title Page of Arnold's 'Elegy'  
(IMSLP)



39 SHC Lushington Collection 7854/4/36/1/3a. (Paragraphing editorial).

40 Conspiracy theorists may like to note that the 'Elegy' and the Variations seem to have come about at roughly the same time, and that they share several features. Both are set in C minor, changing to the major in the middle section. Both vary between simple quadruple and compound quadruple time (4/4 and 12/8) and feature cross-rhythms. Arnold's work makes much use of sequence, and has a touching (Elgarian?) counter-melody at the reprise. And the first five notes of the 'RPA' Variation are an exact transposition of those which open the 'Elegy.' (No traces of the Larghetto or the Regimental Marches survive).



### **Mentone and Rome to Bournemouth and Broadstone**

Ella's poor health would become a recurring theme in her husband's letters, but she was evidently well enough to sing in the second Worcestershire Philharmonic concert early in January. The subsequent tea-gathering seems to have been the occasion of some literary conversation with Alice, leading to a promise from Richard to send a collected edition of Matthew Arnold's poetry. The volume was promptly sent as a New Year gift, coming with some golf talk, a suggestion for an Elgar work, and some gallows humour about the Elegy, about which the Elgars were clearly well informed.



**White Barn, the Arnold's House at Broadstone, Dorset. (Broadstone Public Library)**

I am sending you by this post the complete copy of my father's poems, & I am sure it goes with every conceivable good wish to you and yours from us both for the New Year. If you will look at a note on page 509 about Westminster Abbey you will find the story of the tradition: don't you think you might elaborate it a little, & make it suitable for a short cantata by E.E. Please give him my best love, & ask him if he saw the notice in the Telegraph yesterday about the new and fashionable disease, called golficitis – no respectable [word illegible] should be without it

I had a proof of the proposed outside sheet for the Elegy from Breitkopf the day before yesterday. You never saw such a thing. It had an *immense* mourning border round it, & it breathed "funerals completely furnished in all styles, with an elegy for performance at the graveside thrown in".<sup>41</sup>

The rest of that year saw continuing teas with Ella and golfing with Richard, who was an early visitor to Craeg Lea, the Elgar's new home overlooking the golf course. Rehearsals and committee meetings of the Worcestershire Philharmonic were duly noted by Alice, who joined Ella and many members of the Society at Foregate Street station to sing 'Auld Lang Syne' in bidding farewell to Lady Mary Lygon *en route* for Australia. But the Arnolds' Worcester life of teas and golf and music was to change over the next few years, as they left the area and met the Elgars less frequently. The reasons are to be found in the deteriorating health of both Arnolds, and the substantial inheritances which they received on the death of Fanny Lucy in the summer of 1901.

In addition to the copyright in his father's many published works, Richard benefited from family trust funds, as well as inheriting income from a special Memorial Subscription Fund in his father's name, while Ella was left £350 absolutely. The enlarged income enabled Richard to retire from his Inspectorship and embark on a new and somewhat peripatetic lifestyle, increasingly dominated by the need to improve his and Ella's health. The couple first moved briefly to Eastnor House (now a listed building), a substantial property in Malvern Link overlooking the Common, which they left in February 1902 for London, where the leading specialists of the time were to be found. Richard sent the Elgars a hasty, regretful goodbye.

I must send you just one line to wish you, & Mrs & Miss EE every conceivable good wish, and also to say *how* sorry I am not to have had a chance of seeing you again: I had hoped to have had some more

41 11 January 1899. EB 8984. (Paragraphing editorial). The note about Matthew Arnold's poem 'Westminster Abbey' refers to the legend that St Peter came to its consecration, when 'an innumerable host from heaven accompanied the apostle, singing choral hymns, while everything was illuminated with a supernatural light.' *Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1898).

games of golf again with you, for I always like to think you & I had more enjoyment from our many games than most: now, alas! the scores wd, I fear, probably be –

EE. 85-18 = 67  
RPA 87-20 = 67

(I may incidentally mention I took over 140 over my last round but one & then got tired of counting.) Do now and again give me news of yourself; of what you are doing I shall see in the papers: a line to the Windham [sic] Club, St James's Sq. will always find me. Please give my very best regards to Mrs EE and my love (if I may) to Carice to whom I send two very commonplace stamps, & with every possible good wish I am

Ever yrs, RP Arnold

We leave here tomorrow, and Ella asks me to send her best love to Mrs EE. I am returning the book on harmony you so kindly lent me.<sup>42</sup>

He wrote again from an address in Sloane Street few weeks later with more detailed news of their plans, sparked by the advice of a Malvern doctor. Ella's condition was such as to require a period abroad.

I was so very sorry not to see you & Mrs EE before we left, but the whole thing at the end was hurried on very much as Brockett was I think anxious for Mrs A to get away as soon as was possible, and see Douglas Powell:<sup>43</sup> this she has done, or rather he has done, for she, poor dear, has been in bed ever since we came here with the exception of one day, for in addition to all her other illnesses, she has of course had influenza while here. The Doctor has ordered us to go to Mentone for a month and then Rome, and, at the latter place I see there is a Mr & Mrs Henry S Bethell, who also are at Garmisch: I wonder if they are the people you knew,<sup>44</sup> & shd be so grateful if you would tell me, as we may have to stay some time in Rome.

When you are next in London, &, if you have not already seen it, do go and see 'Pickerton's Peerage' at the Garrick, it is delightful. We have our plans for Sunday next for Mentone, but shall very likely go to Calais on Friday or Saturday, so do send me a line about the Bethells if you can by return.<sup>45</sup>

The sociable Arnold was evidently keen to develop English contacts while abroad, but there is no trace of a reply from Elgar, and there is little documentary evidence of contact with him from this point. Richard and Ella's names disappear from the programmes of the Worcestershire Philharmonic Society, and from the pages of Alice's Diary. We have no information about those visits to Mentone and Rome, although some details of the Arnolds' lives can be gathered from Richard's correspondence with the American literary scholar, William Angus Knight. Over a year after the departure from Malvern, Arnold wrote to him from an address in Bournemouth, a classic health resort of the well-to-do. He reported that Ella was currently in a London nursing home, while he too had been ill, and had resigned his position. In further letters Richard said nothing of the onset

42 24 February 1902. (Paragraphing editorial). Worcester Record Office Microfilm.

43 [Sir] Richard Douglas Powell, 1842-1925, Consulting Physician to the Brompton Hospital for Consumption and Diseases of the Chest; also Court Physician-in-Ordinary.

44 The Elgars had stayed at the Bethells' guest house at Garmisch during their Bavarian holidays in the 1890s; their warm friendship was marked by the dedication of 'From the Bavarian Highlands.' The Bethells later moved to Rome, drawn by their devout Catholicism.

45 18 March 1902. EB 8985.

of his own illness, cancer, but concentrated on Ella's evidently deteriorating condition, although in fact she would come to outlive him. He wrote of her attacks of asthma and violent coughing, and possible further expeditions abroad, although ruling out the American's suggestion of a period in Egypt. By early the next year Ella was somewhat better and able to do more, but

this beastly asthma does not go, & we are in a perpetual state of going down to Bournemouth for 3 or 4 days, & then having to return to London for 3 or 4 weeks. Dr MacDonald however hopes the intervals between the attacks will become more and more prolonged, & that the period of the attacks will get shorter & shorter.<sup>46</sup>

Once again, Richard was sparing no expense in his efforts for Ella, for Greville MacDonald was a distinguished ear, nose and throat specialist at King's College Hospital, with a Harley Street consultancy. It is possible that he had been recommended by Elgar, who had himself consulted MacDonald, as well as referring August Jaeger to him over his tubercular condition. Amid all the anxieties, Richard was quick to congratulate Elgar on the day of the announcement of his Knighthood that June, writing too of his disappointment at a missed meeting, in London a few weeks before, and of Ella's continued periods of confinement in the London Sanatorium.

It is a very long time since the newspaper has delighted me so much as to-days has done, & I send you my most cordial and delighted congratulations, & will you also give them for me to Lady Elgar. Everyone must be so especially pleased I think, for your success absolutely [word illegible] to you for yourself & for what you have done, without any help fr Academies & schools of Music & the like. It is all though rather disturbing for I see I have addressed you as EE & spelt cordial with a K & it seems so disrespectful, not that I think you will mind. With again my warmest congratulations I am ever yrs,

RP Arnold

About dining the other Sunday the fault was that of the Langham not mine, for, directly after I left you, I went to the hotel & left my card & address on it, & I hoped to the last moment to hear you were coming, & I especially asked them to see you had the card as soon as you came in. Ella, I grieve to say, is still in London, but I hope may return early next week.<sup>47</sup>

The letter to Elgar is the last that has been preserved. At some time in the next few years, Richard and Ella made a final move to Broadstone, just outside Bournemouth.<sup>48</sup> The town boasted a first-rate golf course. But his leisure was marred by the inexorable progress of his illness and an operation for the removal of a growth in his mouth became necessary. It proved unavailing and further growths developed. In search of some amelioration from the waters Richard and Ella moved to lodgings in Edward Street, Bath, where he died in February 1908, of asphyxia caused by oesophageal cancer, a condition associated with excessive use of alcohol and tobacco. He was 52. An obituary<sup>49</sup> referred poignantly to the contrast between his halcyon days of youth and the recent years of illness -

Yet to those who knew him from his early days at Harrow and Oxford the memories that will come back at to-day's news will be far enough from illness and infirmity. He had been a pretty boy with

golden hair, and he grew up a strikingly handsome man. He had played in the Harrow football eleven, and as a man he was tall and strong and fine-looking . . . He had no inheritance of his father's literary gifts, but he was a very considerable musician, with a real passion for music.

'A very considerable musician, with a real passion for music'. That is the point, a point which the accepted judgements on Richard - 'feeble', 'headstrong', 'pampered' - ignore. It was a love of music that led him to a like-minded partner and a marriage that was probably the making of him. It was a love of music that led him to develop into a published composer, disproving A. L. Rowse's verdict that 'he achieved nothing in his short life'. He certainly achieved a useful career, however belatedly. And he had the good fortune to begin a new life in Worcester, finally completing the transformation from charming n'er-do-well to Dorabella's elder statesman. It was his musical instinct that quickly led him to recognise a significant new voice in Edward Elgar, and together with his wife, to become one of his most ardent and loyal supporters. He was rewarded in music that ensures his immortality, for Elgar saw the best of him.

*My thanks to the Archivists of Harrow School, Balliol College, the Surrey History Centre, Woking, the Morgan Library and Museum New York, and the Mercian Regimental Museum, Worcester; and to Kate and Ian Russell of Shulbrede Priory, Peter Norbury of Sherridge, William Hale, Cora Weaver, the late Dr Park Honan and the late Dr Joan Harding.*

*The author would be interested to hear from any string player interested in giving Arnold's 'Elegy' a hearing (allenkevcar@aol.com).*



**'RPA' in Later Life  
(My Friends Pictured Within)**

46 29 February 1904. Morgan Library and Museum, New York, MA 8820.5.

47 24 June 1904. EB 5192 (Paragraphing editorial).

48 Some sources say the pair also spent time at Salcombe in Devon, where Richard took up sailing.

49 Manchester Guardian, quoted in 'The Harrovian,' April 1908.

## Elgar's *Memorial Chimes* and the opening of The Loughborough War Memorial, 1923

Andrew Neill



*Carillon*: 'A set of bells so hung and arranged as to be played upon either by hand or by machinery'. [Oxford English Dictionary].

How deeply rooted the English idea of bell music is appears strikingly illustrated in the famous work on which an English composer has set himself to celebrate the glories of the Belgian carillon. Sir Edward Elgar, in his music to M. Cammaerts's poem, has pictured not the carillon but the peal ringing out from an English belfry. All unconsciously he has treated the bells exactly as Purcell has treated them in the Bell Anthem<sup>1</sup>, except he has chosen as his 'ground' a half peal instead of a whole one. But the persistent descent of the four notes with their accents falling across the bar are the very method of Purcell's 'Rejoice' and of his 'Elegy'. The 'Carillon' is, in fact, a piece of English music offered to the honour of Belgium.<sup>2</sup>

1 Rejoice in the Lord Alway.

2 H C Colles, *Bells and 'Burdens* (The Musical Times, 56 (871)), 530-531.

That observation by H C Colles in *The Musical Times*, written in 1915, honours Elgar's most popular composition of the Great War. That Colles feels this tribute to Belgium is rooted in England anticipates the poem by Laurence Binyon written in 1942. Set to the music of Elgar's *Carillon* Binyon obtained the agreement of Cammaerts to use the same title and set it to Elgar's music. Binyon reflected on 'this home-land of our fathers' where 'the bells are dumb' and longed for the time when the bells of England's churches would ring again when another war would surely end. If Cammaerts's poem is 'of its time' the Binyon poem has a wider application and even a contemporary resonance: 'released at last, the living, exulting resurrection of the bells'.

What follows allows one of the shortest of Elgar's compositions, his *Memorial Chimes for a Carillon* to take centre stage, a work for the fixed bells of a carillon not the bells of the imagination and the English landscape. Readers are directed to the article in *The Elgar Society News* (No 80), in which the Carillonneur Ludo Geloën writes of his playing Elgar's music.

*Carillon*, a word infused with Elgarian significance, preceded a composition which contributed to one of the most magnificent of all Britain's War Memorials erected in a town of then little more than 30,000. On Thursday 19 July 1923 the following headline appeared in *The Times*:

## THE LOUGHBOROUGH WAR MEMORIAL. A CAMPANILE AND CARILLON.

Below this, the writer announced that:

The Loughborough (Leicestershire) War memorial will be unveiled on Sunday by Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson and the dedication will be pronounced by the Bishop of Peterborough. Among the many schemes adopted in the British Empire for perpetuating the memory of the fallen, this memorial is the only one of its kind. In 1919 it was decided by plebiscite vote to erect a lofty campanile to contain a carillon of bells, and this project has been carried out on a much larger scale than was at first thought possible. The inclusion of a carillon as part of the scheme is significant for the carillon and its music are inseparably associated with Belgium, a country possessing many fine chromatic sets of bells and producing the finest bell-players in the world.

The article then provided a detailed description of the tower and its bells (see below) and ended:

Carillon recitals will be given by Chevalier Jef Denyn of Malines. At 3.30, 5.30, and 8 p.m. on Sunday and also every evening till July 29. The most important item to be played by M. Denyn at the dedication service is the latest composition of Sir Edward Elgar, "Memorial Chime", composed for the occasion, specially written for the carillon, and inscribed to William Wooding Starmer, Tunbridge Wells.

When he came to compose *Carillon* in 1914 Elgar recognised the patriotic and cultural significance of the carillon bell towers that dotted the northern landscape of Flanders, responding to the passion in Emile Cammaerts's poem and the certainty of an eventual victory: '*Chantons,*

*Belges, Chantons!*'. However, it is no masterpiece, unlike the later *Une Voix dans le Désert* which is timeless. On 10 March 1916 Elgar wrote from Severn House:

I know or rather knew Belgium and its carillons very well and in writing an illustrative accompaniment to E. Cammaert's poem memories of bell music came naturally. Any musician would know that to use proper notes as are so largely played by the Belgian carillons would be impossible, so I used the four notes as you see.<sup>3</sup>

The British public also caught on and this understanding no doubt partly contributed to the enormous popularity of Elgar's *Carillon* during World War I. Britain became a haven for Belgian refugees during this time, some of the Cammaerts family for example, settling and making a significant contribution to British Society artistically and later through intelligence work in World War II. One of the leading Carillonneurs in Belgium, Jef Denyn (1862-1941), also escaped to Britain with his wife Helene, son and four daughters, staying with the organist and musicologist William Wooding Starmer (1866–1927) in Tunbridge Wells. Denyn became the most renowned carillonneur of his day founding, in 1922, what eventually became the Royal Carillon School 'Jef Denyn' in Mechelen.



Denyn at his Desk

So it was that by the end of the war, the pieces were in place that would eventually come together in Loughborough nearly five years later, resulting in Elgar composing a piece lasting little more than five minutes and which can be played on only a relatively few instruments in Britain.<sup>4</sup>

3 Letter from Elgar to William Wooding Starmer housed in the Library and Archives Canada [R1795-0-4-E]. I am grateful to Dr Scott Orr (see later citations) for drawing my attention to this archive.

4 There are fifteen carillons in the UK and Ireland. They range from Bournville Primary School to York Minster, Charterhouse School, Holy Trinity St Andrews and St Colman's Cathedral in Cobh (the one with the largest number of bells).



Starmer, a fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, served as organist of St Mark's Church, Tunbridge Wells. He was fascinated by bells and became a recognised authority on campanology, contributing articles on the subject to Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians and in 1925 he was appointed Professor of Campanology at the University of Birmingham.<sup>5</sup>

Since 1899 Starmer had corresponded with Elgar and, with his wife the youngest daughter of the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Athlumney, lunched at Severn House in 1913. Starmer and Elgar had exchanged letters during the war about *Carillon* which as Dr Scott Orr suggests shows Elgar's 'motivation for *Carillon* as more emotive and connected to a national tradition than concerned with the semantics of its title'.<sup>6</sup>

Starmer, whose expertise had been sought by those wishing to install a carillon in the Loughborough tower, wrote to Elgar on 18 May 1923:

Now I approach you with fear and trembling to make a request in the name of Loughborough and that is will you write a short piece to be played on the Carillon? It need only be 32 bars which can be repeated, and I will tell you every peculiarity of the instrument and arrange the music if necessary, as long as we can get you to do this.

A melody with simple chords, one or two in a bar, is most effective. The key, say C, G or F, but preferably the former for certain technical reasons. But I need not enlarge on this because if you will do something for us, I will see you and explain everything to you so that there shall be no trouble as far as you are concerned re the natural arrangement of playing parts.

If you will do this you will get European exposition because this function will be fully reported in every country in this Continent.

Now please say 'yes' to one of your most enthusiastic friends and I will do everything you ask me,

As ever  
Willing Wooding Starmer<sup>7</sup>

Eventually Elgar replied to Starmer from his home in Kempsey, from which all the letters below originate:

June 2 1923

Dear Dr. Starmer:

I am sorry for the delay: your letter finds me here where I am for the summer. Many thanks for the invitation to write for the new carillon at Loughborough. I do not feel that I am equal to the task but shd. like to do something for you. Will you send me something—anything—written for the carillon.

5 James R. Lawson, *Edward Elgar and the Carillon* (The Elgar Society Journal, May 1983, Vol. 3. No. 2). Mr Lawson, who wrote this article for The Bulletin of the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America, Vol. XIX, April 1968, was then Carillonneur of the Riverside Church, New York.

6 Orr, S.A., (The origins, development, and legacy of Elgar's Memorial Chimes (1923). *Beiaard-en klokkencultuur in de Lage Landen*, 1(1), pp.81-101), 2022: <https://doi.org/10.5117/BKL2022.1.004.ORR>.

7 When this letter was researched it was then in the archive of The Elgar Birthplace, now The Firs.



William Wooding Starmer



—I thought of something like the enclosed few bars—but shd. like to know more of the 'position' of chords etc. I have heard no carillon since the old days in Bruges &, in the state the machine then was, the 'music' was unexhilarating.<sup>8</sup>

In great haste  
Yours sincerely  
Edward Elgar<sup>9</sup>

June 15 1923

Dear Dr Starmer

Many thanks for your letter about a visit to Loughborough: you will have rec'd a telegram – I am fully engaged in London next week – then Wales.

With this I send a sketch for the piece: I know some of it simply will not do, but it is best to send it to you for you to see & arrange it, if it is possible to adapt it to your liking. I could be back here on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you  
Yours sincerely  
Edward Elgar<sup>10</sup>

8 Whatever Elgar sent to Starmer has been lost.

9 Charnwood Borough Council Archive (CBC), Loughborough & Ed. Percy M Young, *Letters of Edward Elgar* (London. Geoffrey Bles, 1956), 281.

10 CBC

June 26 1923

Dear Dr Starmer:

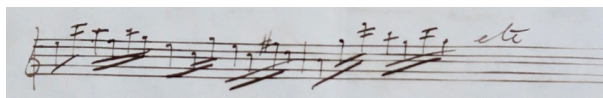
Many thanks: I return your ms. (I will send mine later) I am glad to gather from your letter that the piece will 'do'—I wish I could have seen the instrument—I might have done better.

In writing it out 'fair' please use the square mark for the triplets—they are not slurred. I shd. like the *cadenza* passages in small notes.

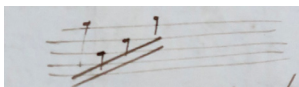
On (your) page 3—last line you will see I ask for the sound of A—I leave this to you.

On second thoughts I enclose the first version which is longer than the m.s. I sent to you: this is more satisfactory *musically*, but I do not know how far it can be arranged for carillon.

In the adaptation of the semiquaver passage p.1 last line I do not like the 'passing notes' (or appoggiatura sort if things) cannot we compromise thus?

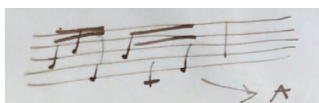


if this will not do, your second emendation of the same passage (p.3) likes me better except the group in have marked in green—if this cd. be



then this passage on p.3 wd. do for both occasions.

The group on p.2 (also in green) like me not: could not the arp[eggi]o descend thus:



and land on the A in the L.H. —the 'C' cd. be omitted.

—I have lengthened the cadenza on p.2. a little (see back of p.1 [])—but this elongation maybe ineffective.

By all means accept the dedication: please put

'Inscribed to  
W. W. S. — Mus D. [\*]

\*Or Dr . first as you like best

In great haste  
Yours sincerely,  
Edward Elgar

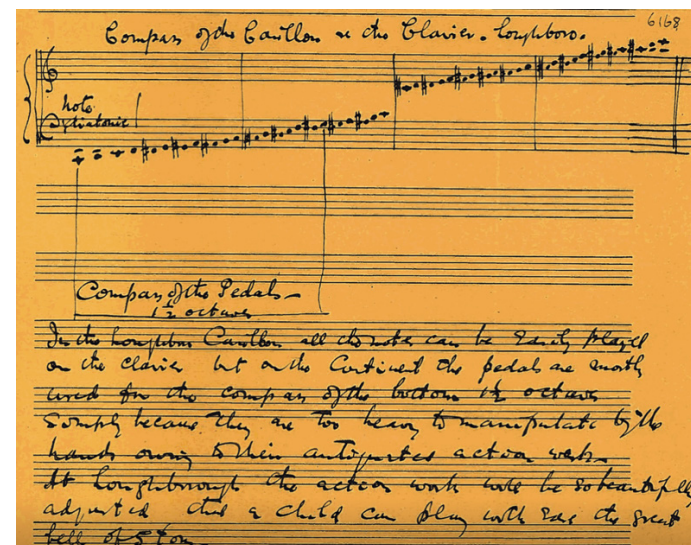
P.S. It is very kind of you to suggest my going to Loughborough—I cannot say at present if I can get away for the 22<sup>nd</sup> I have some rehearsals round about that date.

It is understood the copyright remains mine I think I shall arrange it for organ.<sup>11</sup>

11 CBC and also: Ed. Percy M Young, *Letters of Edward Elgar* (London. Geoffrey Bles, 1956), 281-283.

Elgar forgot to enclose his MS and sent it to Starmer with a quick note on 28 June and on 4 July he asked Starmer to pass on a letter to Jef Denyn in which he thanked the Carillonneur for playing his 'little piece'. Elgar did indeed make an organ arrangement. 'Though only completed in draft, the organ version of *Loughborough Memorial Chime* amply reveals the work's melancholic charm'.<sup>12</sup>

Percy Young observed that 'the letters of Dr. Wooding Starmer show how concerned Elgar was even in respect of a small and necessarily ephemeral piece that his craftsmanship should be adequate'.<sup>13</sup> Jerrold Northrop Moore notes too that 'Elgar was always meticulous over his music'.<sup>14</sup>



Above is an excerpt from the material sent to Elgar by Starmer who has written: 'In the Loughborough Carillon all the notes can be easily played on the clavier but on the Continent the pedals are mostly used for the compass of the bottom 1½ octaves simply because they are too heavy to manipulate by the hands owing to their antiquated action work. At Loughborough the action work will be so beautifully adjusted that a child can play with ease the great bell of 5 tons'.<sup>15</sup>

It is now that matters become complicated as various versions of Elgar's composition existed before the unveiling on 22 July. Readers who are interested in the details should consult Dr Orr's paper. However, what is clear that after Elgar submitted a second draft of his composition to Starmer the latter transcribed it and returned it to Elgar for his comments. Dennison Taylor of John Taylor & Co, the Loughborough bell foundry, also wanted to know how the programme for the inauguration should print the name of Elgar's piece. Elgar confirmed that the title should be

12 Tom Winpenny, from the notes to his recording of *Elgar Complete Organ Works*, (Naxos 8.574366).

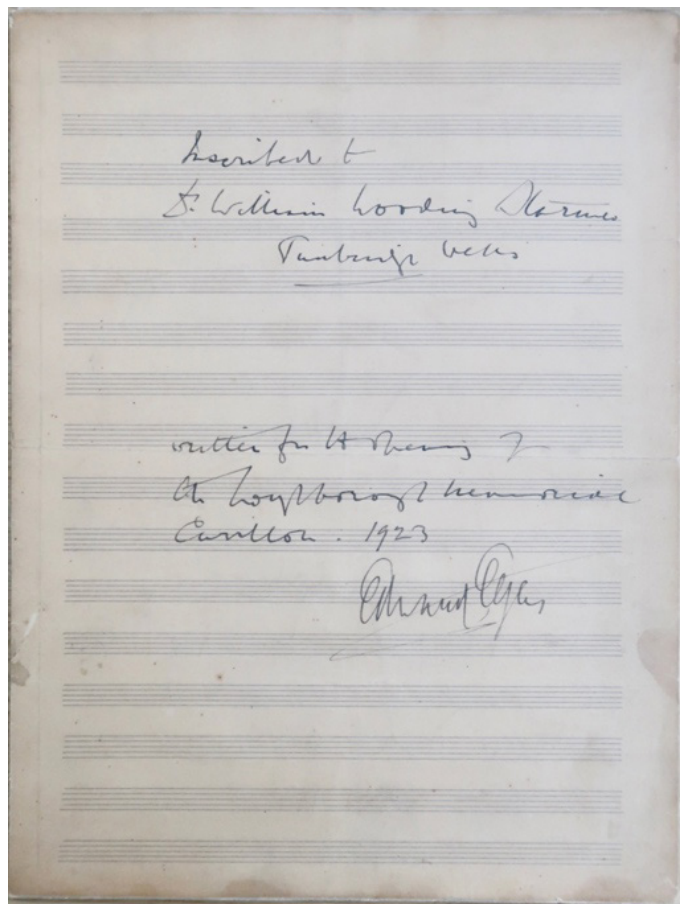
13 CBC & Young, *Letters*, 280.

14 Ed. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990), 375.

15 Orr.

*Memorial Chime* and thus it appeared in the programme. However, a newspaper reported the music as *Memorial Chimes* and, somehow it is this title as *Memorial Chimes for a Carillon* which became accepted and appears as such in Stewart Craggs's Catalogue Raisonné.<sup>16</sup>

Although various transcripts of Elgar's composition were produced and different manuscripts created by the composer ended up in Starmer's possession, it took some time to agree what would be the version which the British Carillon Society (now the Carillon Society of Britain and Ireland) eventually published. Furthermore, there were cases of manuscripts being 'lost and found' some of the stories relating to these being almost farcical. For a comprehensive analysis of the music and its development readers are directed to Dr Orr's paper.<sup>17</sup>



The front page of the manuscript held in the offices of Charnwood Borough Council.

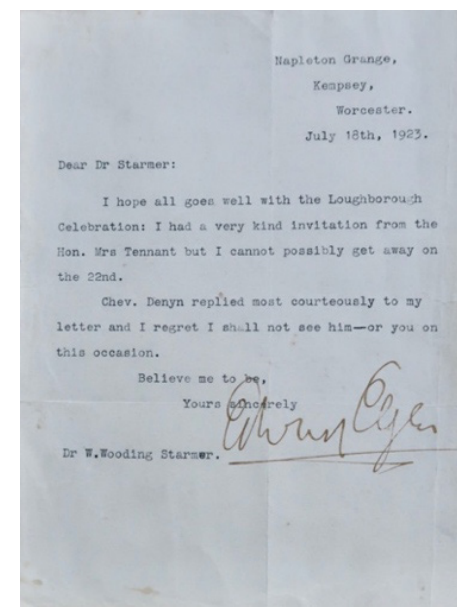
16 Stewart R Craggs, *Edward Elgar A Source Book* (Aldershot, Scolar Press. 1995). I have yet to identify the newspaper concerned.

17 Versions of the score are available for examination on the Society's web-site.

In his paper, cited above, Dr Orr calls this version B and goes on to write: 'In his Second Draft [B], Elgar makes extensive use of a series of diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords (another recommendation of Starmer's, acknowledging their efficacy on the carillon as series of minor thirds, which accord well with the prominent minor third overtones of well-tuned European bells)'.

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On 13 February 1919, after consideration of how Loughborough should commemorate its dead, The Great War Committee, chaired by the mayor, decided to erect a carillon and tenders for its erection were sought. The scheme was partly driven by the Taylor family which owned the John Taylor Bell Foundry; they had suffered grievous losses during the war and were concerned to ensure that 'their' dead were honoured appropriately. An area within the Queen's Park was selected as the site for the tower and Walter Tapper was appointed the architect.<sup>18</sup> His original design was considered too expensive, so a revised design was adopted. Tapper's inspiration came from the tower in Moulins situated on the river Allier in central France. On 22 January 1922 General Lord Horne laid the first foundation stone, a second stone being laid by the mother of a son killed in the war. Later in the year a fundraising scheme was established to purchase the carillon bells. After the opening ceremony the first official Carillonneur, William Eric Jordan, was appointed. Elgar did not travel to Loughborough, and it seems he never heard his composition.



18 Sir Walter Tapper (1861-1935) later became President of the RIBA. He was knighted one month before he died. Queen's Park was created from four acres of land purchased to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and formally opened on 7th June 1899. In 1907 the council purchased two adjacent fields of six acres and the carillon tower was built on that extension.



The unveiling took place as *The Times* reported:

The tower, designed by Mr Walter Tapper rises to a height of 152ft. The base, 26ft. 9½ in square and 16ft. high, is of Portland stone, on which four large bronze panels bear the names of 478 men in whose memory it is erected. A bronze plate in the entrance hall records the laying of the foundation-stones on January 22 1922, by General Lord Horne and Mrs. P. J. Godber. Internally the tower is divided into four chambers, the entrance a room which it is suggested shall be used as a museum, the clavier chamber, and the bell chamber. The bell chamber contains forty-seven bells, the largest of which weighs 4½ tons and the smallest 20lb., the total weight being 21 tons, and the compass is four octaves chromatic, the lowest two semitones being omitted.

The greatest care has been exercised in the construction of the bell chamber, which has been specially designed acoustically so that all the bells shall be heard equally well, while the musical effect of the carillon as a whole shall be the best possible. For richness of tone, accuracy of tune, and perfection of mechanism the Loughborough carillon is the finest in the world. All the bells have been given either by individuals, by local organisations, or by the men and women engaged in the industries carried on in the neighbourhood, and the total cost of the scheme is approximately £21,000.

That so many of Loughborough's citizens contributed to the cost of the memorial shows not only how the emotional rawness that was the legacy of the war years had not dissipated but how a community can contribute to a memorial that is of long-lasting value and sustained interest. Elgar was not the only distinguished composer to write for carillons in the years after World War I. The Belgian, Jef van Hoof (1886-1959) composed his *Preludium quasi una fantasia* in 1927 'for the inauguration of the carillon in Albany, New York'.<sup>19</sup> Samuel Barber, Gian-Carlo Menotti and Nino Rota, according to Dr Orr, also composed for the instrument.

The unveiling of the Memorial was a great occasion. Dame Nellie Melba attended and crowds filled the park beneath the tower. Later in the year John D. Rockefeller visited: apparently, he had a great interest in carillons. On 22 July 1923 those who had subscribed to the cost of the memorial charged the 'Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of Loughborough' as follows:

We charge you to hand on the duty and privilege of maintaining and preserving this great memorial, so that generations yet unborn may be reminded of the sacrifice which these men made and the great principles for which they died.

From the experience of my visit in June, there is little doubt that this charge has been honoured.

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19 Orr.



The unveiling ceremony, 22 July 1922.  
Field Marshall Sir William Robertson addresses the crowd.



Dame Nellie Melba at the ceremony. From the design of her hat, it could be that she is the female figure to the right of Field-Marshal Robertson in the photograph above.



Caroline Sharpe, the Loughborough Borough Carillonneur, playing Elgar's *Memorial Chimes*. In this carillon the bells, fixed to steel frames, are above her in the tower. The wiring, connecting the keyboard to the clappers – it is only the clappers that move – can be seen clearly.



## Acknowledgments

The internet can, in the right hands, be a valuable source of information. In researching the Loughborough Carillon, I came across a paper by Dr Scott Allan Orr of University College London entitled *The Origins, Development, and Legacy of Elgar's Memorial Chimes (1923)* which I cite above. This proved to be an invaluable resource and clarified much about an instrument of which I knew very little. I am most grateful to Dr Orr for his assistance and for allowing me to quote extensively from his research paper.

On 15 June 2023, I visited Loughborough and was made welcome at the three organisations I visited. Arranged by Peter Minshall, Vice Chairman of the Loughborough Carillon Tower and War Memorial Trust, we called on the offices of Charnwood Borough Council where Kevin Stanley and his colleagues had made ready for inspection the manuscript of Elgar's score and the letters from Elgar to Starmer that are in their possession. At the Loughborough Library I was also accommodated with great enthusiasm and allowed to photograph various items which were on display. Finally, we returned to the Carillon Tower and, after inspecting the War Memorial Museum on the second floor, we climbed the tower and looked at the magnificent view which, that day, stretched for miles (on a really clear day it is alleged the Malvern Hills can be observed). On the way up we passed the bells of the carillon and subsequently descended to the third floor to meet the resident Carillonneur Caroline Sharpe who, in her afternoon recital, included Elgar's *Memorial Chimes*. She said, 'It is not easy to hum, but is a joy to play as Elgar uses the full range of the instrument'.

I extend my thanks to Kevin Stanley and fellow staff members of Charnwood Borough Council, Sharon Gray and members of the Loughborough Library Local Studies Volunteers, Caroline Sharpe and above all to Peter Minshall who went out of his way to make the day one of great interest.



PRYCE & GWEN  
IN PROUD AND LOVING MEMORY  
OF HIS THREE NEPHEWS  
KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE  
JOHN WILLIAM TAYLOR COURCELETTE 1916  
GERARD BARDSLEY TAYLOR ST. QUENTIN 1918  
ARNOLD BRADLEY TAYLOR CONTALMAISON 1916  
SONS OF JOHN WILLIAM TAYLOR (1853 - 1919)  
GRANDSONS OF JOHN WILLIAM TAYLOR (1827 - 1906)  
EDMUND DENISON TAYLOR  
THE FOUNDER OF THESE BELLS  
GIVES THIS THE LARGEST  
1923

The 'Taylor' Bell. Photograph by Peter Minshall

## Postscript

In the May 1991 edition of the *Journal* (Vol, 7 No 2) Trevor Fenimore-Jones, a former Vice-Chairman of the Elgar Society, wrote a short essay entitled *The Clock Chimes of Eaton Socon*. Now part of St Neots in Cambridgeshire, Eaton Socon occupies the area between the Great North Road and the west side of the River Great Ouse. This is a sad tale of what seems to be the 'home grown' being preferred over a composition of Elgar's which he completed in July 1931. To make matters worse he was also addressed, by letter, on at least two occasions as 'Sir Edwin'. However, he duly completed the chime for the peal of eight bells which were to be installed in St Mary's church following a disastrous fire.

Elgar, having been commissioned to compose the piece, was then subjected to a competition for which two other entries were submitted. One was by the distinguished organist and founder of what became the Royal School of Church Music, Sydney Hugo Nicholson (1875-1947) and the other S. G. Wilkinson the organist of St Mary's. Local sentiment won the day and Wilkinson's composition was chosen. Once Elgar was informed that his chime was not accepted, he requested the return of his manuscript of which, despite a detailed search by Carice Elgar Blake, no trace could be found. According to Dr Orr 'after working with the installation firm, the church reported that they were unable to achieve the musical attributes Elgar's melody would require'.

As is often the case, there may be two sides to this story. This is from the *Wikipedia* entry on the history of St Mary's: 'Sir Edward Elgar was asked to compose a chime for striking the hour, but although he agreed, he seems to have been dilatory. However eventually his manuscript was received, but now the Parochial Church Council decided to ask for local compositions. This caused considerable controversy, quite apart from the discourtesy to Elgar, and in fact the chimes composed by S G Wilkinson, the Eaton Socon organist, were used. Percy Benthams, the stonemason, carved a reference to the conflict in a corbel to the right of the north door: it shows a satyr snatching the pipes from the mouth of a musician'.

# Elgar, the Gramophone and *Gramophone*

Andrew Neill

*Gramophone* magazine is now 100 years old and, as part of its celebrations, the April 2023 issue contains a decade-by-decade summary of *Gramophone's* life and how it reflected the recording industry as the latter developed. In 2012 Malcolm Walker, a former *Gramophone* editor (1972-1980), wrote the note published below about the late Tony Griffith. He sent this to the editors of this *Journal* shortly before his recent death and we are publishing this in celebration of Malcolm's life. This note has also enabled us to consider the important role Tony Griffith played in bringing Elgar's own recordings to a wider public. Furthermore, we are taking this opportunity to express our gratitude for the role *Gramophone* has played in disseminating information about the music of Elgar and also in widening our understanding and appreciation of what is generically called 'classical' music. We send our congratulations and thanks to *Gramophone* as it celebrates its centenary.

Malcolm Walker, like Tony Griffith, was one of the great men of the recording industry and a devoted member of our Society, as the appraisal of his life elsewhere confirms.<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps no coincidence that, under Malcolm's watch (during the 1970s), two of the longest reviews published by *Gramophone* were of the LP releases of Elgar's own recordings. These reviews by Richard Osborne speak of a different time when EMI (then one of the great classical music recording companies) honoured its Elgarian legacy by producing two luxury box sets each containing a book by Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore. When, in 1950, Sir Adrian Boult suggested the formation of an Elgar Society he had only just embarked on the mammoth series of Elgar recordings which Decca, EMI, Lyrita and Pye were to make between 1949 and 1978. These recordings, and their reviews in *Gramophone*, did much to widen interest in Elgar's music.

## Anthony Griffith 1915-2005

Malcolm Walker, 2012 revised 2022.

Anthony Chevalier Griffith was born in London in 1915. After leaving school he worked in the film industry as a sound recording engineer.<sup>2</sup> He had fond memories of working on the film entitled *For Whom the Gods Love* (1935), a biography of Mozart's life. The musical examples were conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham and the Austrian Bernard Paumgartner. Of the former conductor Griffith

1 Elgar Society *News*, No 79. April 2023.

2 This was for Ealing Studios.

formed a long-time admiration.<sup>3</sup> After wartime service in the Royal Air Force he applied for a position as a recording engineer at Abbey Road Studios in London's St. John's Wood. Interviewed by Charles Gregory (who died very shortly afterwards) Tony was taken on by W. S. Barrell. This was the first new appointment to the recording staff at the studios since the earlier 1930s. After working with his senior colleagues in the skills and pitfalls of recording directly on to wax masters, Griffith was eventually allowed to take charge of the technical side of recording. Working initially just in the United Kingdom his work would take him to London's Kingsway Hall and venues in Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester during the years 1946-48.

In January 1949 he went to Vienna to work with producer Walter Legge, recording both Wilhelm Furtwängler and Herbert von Karajan. The following year he returned to working on the complete recording of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* conducted by Furtwängler. In July 1950 he was the balance engineer for the final sessions of the 33-year-old Rumanian pianist Dini Lipatti in Geneva. Lipatti would die of cancer just six months later. Griffith's working relationship with Walter Legge soon markedly declined and he was forced to resign from the Abbey Road Studios by the end of that year.

Griffith was then employed for a number of years in the research and development department of the General Electric Company in Wembley. However, he soon joined the newly established Philips Record Company in their recording department in Central London where he was involved in the transfer of recorded tapes to disc. In 1958 he was appointed the Recording Manager of the recently formed World Record Club in London. The company was one of the first to sell its recordings via the mail order process. Griffith supervised recordings with conductors such as Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Alexander Gibson, Alexander Faris, Anthony Collins and Muir Mathieson, in addition to chamber music and instrumental recordings.

The organisation soon expanded its activities when it began to licence and release recordings from overseas companies. During the 1960s the company built up a very considerable catalogue of over 1000 long playing (33½ rpm) and extended play (45 rpm) recordings as well as pre-recorded tapes, before EMI purchased a controlling interest in the company in the early 1960s. Recordings continued but at a reduced rate, so that the label became more of a reissue one. However, in the late 1960s, Tony Griffith became much involved in the transfer of historic shellac recordings to the medium of the long-playing disc. His wide experience of the technical aspects of wax recording proved extremely valuable in the transfer to the newer medium. In fact, such was the success of this activity that it is for this that Griffith's subsequent career is now best remembered.

In 1980 EMI's management decided to close down the World Record Club operation and Tony Griffith was transferred to the International Artist Department with special responsibility for historical projects in addition to vetting the new German-made recordings with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Herbert von Karajan. Although he officially retired from EMI in June 1979 aged 64, he continued to be used in a consultative role until 1992 when he was employed on the three CD boxes devoted to the electrical recordings of Elgar conducting. He died in Totnes aged 90 in 2005.

3 Griffith also worked on films such as the Oscar winning *Goodbye Mr Chips* starring Robert Donat and another Donat film, *Night Without Armour* which also starred Marlene Dietrich. Griffith served in the RAF during the war, rising to the rank of Squadron-Leader. He was mentioned in despatches for his work as a night-fighter radar operator.

## The Elgar Edition, Thirty Years On

Andrew Neill

Tony Griffith's pioneering work led to a further development in the production of Elgar's own recordings which was celebrated with a formal launch in Abbey Road's No 1 Studio on 14 May 1992. Sponsored by the Elgar Foundation and this Society, EMI produced the first volume of *The Elgar Edition*: three compact discs of the 'electrical' recordings conducted or supervised by Elgar for HMV between 1926 and 1934. Notwithstanding the considerable aural advances made when the recordings were previously reissued on LP these CD releases featured further improvements in the quality of the sound. This first release, which received a *Gramophone* Award, was followed by two further volumes, each of three discs, the final volume being released thirty years ago in 1993. These releases, arranged by Roger Lewis and Richard Abram of EMI, were overseen by Jerrold Northrop Moore who inspired the project and kept a close eye on it as it developed. Dr Moore unveiled the first volume during a ceremony on the stage of No 1 Studio before an invited audience, including the Society's President, Sir Yehudi (later Lord) Menuhin. The Society took the opportunity to present an engraved rose bowl to Sir Yehudi who also presented to Dr Moore the first of the Society's medals to be commissioned.

Few will forget the experience of hearing an excerpt from Elgar's Violin Concerto played in the studio where its soloist recorded the Concerto 60 years before. Michael Dutton and Andrew Walter were responsible for the engineering behind these releases, but the work undertaken by their predecessor, Anthony (Tony) Griffith, who oversaw the project, was acknowledged in the booklet for the third release: this thirtieth anniversary is an opportunity to acknowledge Griffith's pioneering work. Recently, the chance reading of correspondence from editions of *The Gramophone* published in 1941 and 1945 presented an opportunity to widen this story to one not just about Tony Griffith but to one about his siblings too.

### Wellington College & the Griffith Brothers

As we look forward to celebrations for our Society's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026 and the impetus inspired by Sir Adrian Boult's suggestion in 1950, it is interesting to note that a writer to *The Gramophone* (it used the definite article in those days) had, in some ways, anticipated this initiative albeit with a more focussed aim. Later writers to *The Gramophone* expanded on the subjects raised by the first correspondent, Michael Griffith, which included the idea of forming an Elgar Society with the purpose of raising money to record more of his music. In introducing these letters, I have kept the grammar used as well as the somewhat inconsistent style of *The Gramophone* at the time.<sup>4</sup> The Archivist of Wellington College, Caroline Jones, was very helpful too. I have not altered the language and punctuation used in the material she kindly provided.

Stephen Connock, founder of the *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society*, on looking randomly through the pages of *The Gramophone*, came across letters from the 1941 and 1945 editions to which he drew my attention. The writer of the first letter, Michael Griffith, was a frequent correspondent, as an earlier letter from him in February 1941 suggests, and which was later confirmed by his brother. Potentially of no significance I was intrigued by Mr Griffith and his enthusiasm and wanted to know more, not the least why he wrote from Canada in late 1941.

4 James Jolly, Editor-in-Chief of *Gramophone*, makes the point in the April 2023 edition: '...throughout the entire war, not a single issue of *The Gramophone* was missed, even given the reduction in the number of records released, as well as the need to conserve paper as rationing was a major issue'.



Dr Moore and Sir Yehudi Menuhin. Photograph taken by Steve Hartley in Abbey Road Studios, 14 May 1992. Copyright: EMI Records (UK). Reproduced with permission.

Michael Griffith was born on 26 April 1922. It turned out that he was the third of the four Griffith brothers, Tony being the oldest. The two words 'Wellington College' as the address of Michael's younger brother, when he also wrote to *The Gramophone*, enabled me to unearth the story of Michael's short life and to understand a little about the personality behind this prolific and enthusiastic writer to *The Gramophone*.



### Under the heading ‘Re-recording Elgar’

From Michael Griffith, Torquay (February 1941)

Looking through past copies of THE GRAMOPHONE, I read with mixed feelings the surprisingly large number of requests for a re-recording of Elgar’s Second Symphony (with the first not far behind).

I am glad that the British public (and American too, judging by the correspondence) do take such pride and interest in such works, but I am infuriated (that’s a mild word!) at finding the gramophone companies not recording British music when it is asked for. The usual excuse that there is no sale for British music does not hold here. There have been far too many requests for these recordings for that.

I find that the only other demand which is continually recurring in your columns is for Rachmaninov’s Concertos and Symphonies. That demand has been met in the past few months. For which, many thanks. But I would suggest that it approaches a criminal act, at this time, to answer the wishes of the public for Rachmaninov’s and Elgar’s music by paying attention to Rachmaninov and neglecting the Englishman.

Let’s have the second symphony. Let’s have the first symphony. Let’s have the *Dream of Gerontius*. And let’s have the *Spirit of England*. I’ll buy then Purchase Tax or no purchase Tax, Income Tax or no Income Tax.<sup>5</sup> I’ll buy them if it lands me in the Workhouse. But buck up, in case I get there too early.

By the summer of 1941, Michael Griffith’s thoughts had developed and, ignoring the limitations and exigencies of wartime under the heading ‘Elgar Society?’, he wrote once more to *The Gramophone*.

### From Michael Griffith, Torquay (August 1941)

You published a letter of mine in your February issue in which I asked for certain Elgar recordings. Since then it has been proposed to me that an Elgar Society is formed in order to record such works as “Gerontius” “The Music Makers” and the Symphonies. If any of your readers are interested in this proposal, I should be very glad to hear from them, but I should also like to know their views on an alternative proposal, that of issuing albums at regular intervals, each album containing records of a great British masterpiece.

I append a list of some works which would, I trust, come into this category, and be made, once and for all, “Permanent Music”:-

Parry.	“Blest Pair of Sirens.”
Elgar.	“Dream of Gerontius,” “Music Makers,” “Spirit of England,” Symphonies, ‘Cello (Concerto).
Bliss.	“Morning Heroes,” “Colour Symphony,” “Piano Concerto.”
Walton.	“Belshazzar’s Feast,” “Sinfonia Concertante” (and a re-recording of the Symphony at some date), Violin Concerto.
Dyson.	Symphony, “In Honour of the City,” “Three Songs of Courage.”
Bax.	The Symphonies.
Holst.	“Hymn of Jesus,” “The Planets,” “At the Boar’s Head.”
Bridge.	“The Sea.”
Vaughan Williams	Pastoral Symphony, “On Wenlock Edge,” Sea Symphony.

5 James Jolly (*Gramophone*, April 2023) confirmed that ‘another major concern was the imposition of a Purchase tax in October 1940 on ‘luxury goods’ – these included records which were taxed at 33½ per cent. The tax remained in place until 1969’. To have applied the tax rate of 33½ seems to have been a somewhat prescient figure.

This, I realise, is an over ambitious programme, but if only a fraction of these works were recorded, it would result in a triumph which British music now fully deserves. Witness the destiny and popularity of Sibelius. We have a perfect example of the result of a recording Society. Let us, then, use this example to our own personal and national advantage.

In suggesting an Elgar Society, it is clear Michael Griffith was proposing the formation of a Society to raise funds by subscription to record Elgar’s music. Compton Mackenzie, the founder of *The Gramophone* had formed the National Gramophonic Society in 1923 which recorded, among other works by Elgar, his Piano Quintet in 1926<sup>6</sup> and his *Introduction and Allegro* in 1927 conducted by Barbirolli. The small subscriber base was insufficient to enable the scheme to survive but it led, in the following decade, to the formation of Society Editions, ‘limited to 500 subscribers who paid up front’.<sup>7</sup> The new scheme, managed by Walter Legge for EMI (created by the merger of the Columbia and HMV labels in 1931) produced classic recordings such as Casals’s Bach, Schnabel’s Beethoven, Kajanus conducting some of the Sibelius symphonies and Hugo Wolf’s lieder.

In its December 1941 issue, under the heading ‘Albums of British Masterpieces Wanted’, *The Gramophone* included two letters and an editorial comment.

### From Michael Griffith, Canada

I hope that, despite space restrictions, I may be allowed to reply in your columns to your many enthusiastic readers who have written to me supporting my proposal for recorded Albums of British masterpieces. I fear that I am unable to reply to one and all personally at the moment, but I have been deeply encouraged by their letters and wish to thank them very sincerely for their interest.

Hardly any two letters agree with each other, although over half demand immediate recordings of *Gerontius* or the Elgar Symphonies or of both, while Vaughan Williams’ *Sea Symphony* is also a firm favourite. But perhaps the most striking note of all these letters is their refusal to cater to popular tastes and their demand for personal satisfaction. Mr. Loudon Merry demands the exclusion of Parry and Dyson from the repertoire of the Society, and instead wants Moeran’s G minor Symphony, Vaughan Williams’ *Five Tudor Portraits* and Britten’s *Les Illuminations*. And he cannot understand (nor can I) my omission of John Ireland, whose Piano Concerto, Sonata in A minor and “London” Overture are urgently requested.

Mr. J. H. Walsh, of Orford, Kent, alone mentions the already existing English Music Society, and I feel that this singularity shows that something new is needed if the attention we demand for good English music is to be achieved.

Mr. Pear suggests dividing the works into two categories, “Choral” and “Orchestral.” Except for the incomprehensible omission of “Chamber Music.” I think this is admirable.

In order to judge more accurately the appeal of our proposed Society, I should be pleased to hear from everyone who is interested. I cannot promise a reply, but I can guarantee that every letter will be carefully read, and all suggestions noted. I hope that everyone who wants this Society will write, as every letter will enable more pressure to be brought to bear upon those who need it. There are many who love the music of Elgar, Walton, Vaughan Williams, Bax, Bliss—and John Ireland—(to mention only a few) who would, I am sure, be grateful to know that at last there is hope, a rising hope, that these composers will no longer have their compositions sandwiched in between favourite classics in the concert halls, but will provide whole programmes on the family radiogram, and then, when they

6 Ethel Hobday, piano, with the Spencer Dyke Quartet.

7 *Gramophone*, April 2023.



are firmly established in the repertoire, advance to the Albert Hall and we hope a rebuilt Queen's Hall<sup>8</sup>, and provide their fellow countrymen with worthy and aesthetic pleasure.

#### From Alfred Solomon, Wallington

With reference to a letter headed "Elgar Society" in your August issue from Michael Griffith, may I be permitted to voice my approval of his second suggestion concerning the issue of British Masterpiece Albums. I should have thought that having regard to the present international situation, English music would have been performed in ever-increasing proportions. Perhaps this has been so with our former modern composers such as Elgar and Delius, but comparatively little has been heard of our contemporaries.

I am greatly interested in the list Michael Griffith suggests in his letter but note that he makes no mention of Chamber Music. Might I remind him of the Alan Busch Piano Quartet Op. 5, and the Arthur Bliss Oboe Quintet, as examples of the type which might be included.

During the war years *The Gramophone* struggled to survive, which no doubt explains the somewhat dismissive editorial comment on Michael Griffith's idea for the formation of an Elgar Society as the editor interpreted Mr Griffith's proposal as one seeking the magazine's sponsorship.

[In his letter, Mr. Griffith puts forward the suggestion that THE GRAMOPHONE should sponsor a Society to further these issues. We regretfully decline, feeling that this is not an auspicious moment to "persuade" the gramophone companies to embark on a project fraught with such enormous possibilities. But if readers have suggestions to make we will forward them to Mr. Griffith.—ED.]

By the summer of 1945 the War was over, but it fell to Michael Griffith's brother to confirm the melancholy news that his brother had died. This was contained in a letter published under the heading 'English Composers'.

#### From J. C. Griffith, Wellington College (August 1945)

Up to his death in November 1942, my brother was a constant writer to THE GRAMOPHONE in which many of his letters, including his views on an "Elgar Society" in August 1941, were published.

It is fitting for me to say that within 3 years of his death, five great English masterpieces have been recorded. All these works, except the Symphony of Vaughan Williams,<sup>9</sup> uncomposed at that time, were on the list which my brother included in a letter to your paper.

His only wish now would be to thank all those concerned in the manufacture of these records all of which are unparalleled in their performance and reproduction.

The younger generation, especially at this college is, I believe in favour of "good" music, but they are not being encouraged to keep this up if the price of records remains so high. So we look forward to the day when purchase tax is removed.

In August 1945, under the heading *The Dream of Gerontius*, another correspondent supplied a post-script. Of course, the later CD issue of this the first complete recording directed by Sir Malcolm Sargent, transformed the sound, notably of the organ!

#### From Gilbert Benham, New Barnet

Having purchased this work, I must enter a protest at the exclusion of organ tone. No efforts of an orchestra can adequately compensate for the lack of grandeur imparted by organ tone, and those who have learned what this can be like at the Albert Hall, will be saddened by its total absence; the more so as nothing can now be done to supply it.

I cannot understand why it was ruled out—for my H.M.V. radiogram reproduces 32 ft. pitch—although not all instruments do so.

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Who was Michael Griffith? The first letter reproduced above was written from his family home in Torquay but why did he move to Canada in wartime? My presumption that this was for flying training proved correct but, because he died young did this mean he was subsequently killed? As it turned out Michael Griffith was clearly a remarkable young man of some considerable musical talent. In July 1938, in a concert at Wellington College, with his brother G F Griffith he played a two-piano arrangement of the Entracte from *Rosamunde* by Schubert and the following February read a paper on ballet to the Music Society. Michael was also competent enough to conduct the School Orchestra in the slow movement from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and in 1940 he read a paper on 'Edward Elgar' to the College Music Society and it was reported that:

He addressed his opening remarks to those of his audience who disliked Elgar's music, saying that he hoped that his paper would cause them to change their opinion. One is inclined to regard Elgar as the composer of a few rather noisy but nevertheless beautiful works, which are universally popular. It is for the Enigma Variations, the Pomp and Circumstance Marches, and the Cockaigne Overture, that we know and respect Elgar. Griffith, however, succeeded in showing us the enormous amount of variety of Elgar's work. Few people know that he composed several part-songs, two of which, "It's oh to be a wild wind," and "Feasting I watch," were sung by members of the Society. Elgar's skill in composing for the violin was made clear when we heard Ireland<sup>10</sup> play a movement from a violin sonata. Indeed, Elgar seemed as much at home composing for a solo instrument, as for double choir and full orchestra. But, like Kipling, he lived in an age when imperialism was at its height, and for this reason he has failed to win the renown which his work deserved. The sentiment of "Land of Hope and Glory" was made fun of by the cynical post 1918 era. Now, however, the spirit of nationalism has re-awakened, and perhaps the simple grandeur of Elgar's work will find the high place it deserves in the heart of every British musician.

Griffith showed an immense knowledge of his subject, and the Larghetto from Elgar's Second Symphony, with which the paper ended, further convinced at least one member of the Society that

8 Destroyed during a bombing raid, 10 May 1941.

9 Presumably this was Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony premiered on 24 June 1943 in the Royal Albert Hall as part of a Promenade Concert with Vaughan Williams conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra. His Sixth Symphony was not premiered until 1948.

10 Patrick Ireland (b.1923) studied the violin with Max Rostal later becoming a viola player. The Wellington College Year Book of 1940 records 'The Society is fortunate in possessing a talented violinist in W P Ireland'. He played with the Allegri Quartet and taught at the Menuhin school later becoming a Professor at the Royal College of Music. He also performed with his wife, the pianist Peggy Gray.

Elgar was no ordinary composer. Without doubt he paved the way for the modern school of British composers, and the debt which British music owes to him is indeed great.

During his last year at Wellington, Michael ‘became a School Prefect and in particular, Prefect of the Choir. However, his interest was not confined to classical or ‘highbrow’ music: he was Secretary of the Sing Song Society, a group which performed popular songs and sea shanties for local charities. In March 1941 he was made a member of the Upper X – the most senior group of Prefects. Not surprisingly, he was also Head of his dormitory, the Hardinge.

Easter Sunday in 1941 was on 13 April so these privileges did not last long as Griffith left the College at the end of the Lent term. By the end of the year, he had qualified as a fighter pilot.

#### From The Wellington School Roll of Honour:

Sergeant Pilot Michael Harold Griffith, Royal Air Force, Hardinge 1936 to 1941, was Head of his dormitory, a Prefect, member of the Upper X, Prefect of the Choir and mainstay of every musical activity at Wellington. Devoted to every form of music he founded the College Gramophone Society, to which his collection of records was presented. Griffith was senior Scout and enjoyed being assistant cook for a month at a wartime harvest camp. After leaving Wellington he trained with the R.A.F. at Torquay, went to Canada and won his wings in 1941. Posted to a night fighter squadron in the north of England, Sergeant Pilot Griffith was killed on November 7<sup>th</sup>. 1942, while making a forced landing on patrol.

Wellington College



Wellington College in Crowthorne Berkshire was established in 1859 (after the Crimean War) ‘to educate the sons of Army officers who died while serving’ at a minimal financial cost. In both World Wars, nearly 2000 former pupils lost their lives but, like so many young men of his generation, Griffith wasted no time in ‘joining up’ in 1941. Then the college was under one of the flightpaths of German bombers attacking London and the boys could not have ignored what was taking place above their heads. The college was therefore in danger, particularly from discarded bombs, and in 1940 a stray bomb killed the Master, Robert Paton Longden, who had just left his house to check on the boys in their shelters. Wellington College’s Houses are named after significant military commanders. Henry Hardinge, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Hardinge (1786-1856) served with the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular War and at Waterloo, later serving in the administrations of Wellington and Peel. In 1848 he was appointed Governor-General of India. Of interest to Elgarians is that his younger grandson, Charles Hardinge (1858-1944), later First Baron Hardinge of Penshurst, was appointed Viceroy of India in 1910. Hardinge was, therefore, Viceroy at the time of the 1911 Durbar, the inspiration behind *The Crown of India* Masque for which Elgar composed the music in 1912. Furthermore, Edward White Benson, the first Headmaster of the College and later Archbishop of Canterbury was the father of Arthur Christopher Benson the author of the words ‘Land of Hope and Glory’.

At their meeting of November 1942, The College Music Society paid tribute to Michael Griffith who was due to return to the College to read a paper to the Society on William Walton. The College *Year Book* for 1942 recorded that The Gramophone Society continued to be a ‘popular institution’ and that it had been ‘greatly helped by gifts of records from the late Michael Griffith, O.W’. In 1943 *The Wellingtonian* recorded that Dr and Mrs H K Griffith (his parents) had asked that the sum of £212 16s 8d be invested to buy records for the Gramophone Society. ‘This sum represents the estate of Sgt. Pilot Michael Griffith, R.A.F., O.W.’

Michael’s younger brother, John Crossley Griffith, made less of an impact on Wellington College than Michael. However, *The Wellingtonian* reported in 1946 that John had been involved in extensive recataloguing which ‘has prevented concerts from taking place’. He talked to the Music Society on ‘Modern British Music’ one evening and was also Secretary of the Gramophone Society. Michael’s older brother, Geoffrey Francis, shared the family interest in music and was clearly a pianist of some competence as is shown by his playing of the arrangement of music from *Rosamunde*. He returned to Wellington a year after leaving to address the College Music Society on Tchaikovsky. However, Geoffrey’s main interests, whilst at Wellington, were sporting.

Tony Griffith would have been at Wellington with the composer John Linton Gardner CBE (1917–2011). Interviewed for radio in 1984, Griffith remembered Elgar coming to Torquay in 1929 and conducting a concert of several of his popular short pieces with the local orchestra.<sup>11</sup> Elgar shared the platform with Dame Ethel Smyth. When, in 1992, the first of the EMI *Elgar Edition* volumes was released and the music became available to a new audience, Tony Griffith generously agreed to write a commentary for the third volume of three discs which was released in 1993. This can be consulted on the Society’s Website. In the 1984 interview Griffith lamented how spontaneity in music was lost through the precision of modern recording techniques. He wished that ‘live performances’ could be recorded and then issued commercially. I imagine he would have been delighted with the way orchestra’s ‘own labels’ have become a staple of the industry. One of Tony’s sons, born after WWII, was baptised Michael.

11 Interview for BBC Radio Devon. It can be heard on YouTube, as can another interview for an American radio station when Griffith discusses his admiration for Sir Thomas Beecham.



Tony Griffith in a characteristic pose.

## Elgar and the Coronation of King George V

Kevin Mitchell

In my article ‘Elgar, Barrie and the ‘Cinema Supper’ (Journal, April 2023, Vol.23, No. 4) I misrepresented the reasons why Elgar decided not to attend King George V’s Coronation on 22 June 1911. There were probably several reasons for this, but their placing in the Abbey is possibly the most significant.

The Elgars had been allocated seats some time before the Coronation – the tickets arrived on 10 June – and as these were in the south aisle of the nave, they would have seen little or nothing of the event. Crucially this seating arrangement was decided before Elgar received notification of King George’s invitation to join the Order of Merit on 17 June, just five days before the Coronation.

Having written the offertorium *O Hearken Thou* and the *Coronation March*, Elgar attended rehearsals, the second and the third of these being in the Abbey on 19 and 20 June. The next day Elgar tried on his court dress and Alice went to ‘Auxiliary Stores & chose dress. A. to Gorringer & bought veil and feather *in case* of going to Westminster Abbey’.<sup>1</sup> At some point, possibly on 20 June when there was a full rehearsal of the whole ceremony, Elgar having finished rehearsing his music, he with Alice and Carice ‘went into the Nave & sat in front & saw rehearsal of procession’<sup>2</sup> as the peers and peeresses, in their robes, proceeded up the nave – some called out their congratulations – and discovered to his dismay, that the other members of the Order of Merit and their wives, were seated in very favourable positions in the nave where they would have had a view of the ceremony. As the offer of the O.M. had only just been received it was too late to upgrade the Elgars’ original seats from their distant position. He took umbrage and in high dudgeon, which amazed their friends, refused to attend the Coronation and forbade Alice to do so, who according to Rosa Burley ‘was really hurt by this prohibition’.<sup>3</sup> Alice’s diary records a contributory factor as to why they did not attend: ‘Felt it was impossible for E. & A. to sit 7 hrs. in those seats –’.<sup>4</sup>

To put Elgar’s misanthropic decision in context, he was worried about financial matters at the time. The Second Symphony had been a relative failure on 24 May and in accordance with the 1904 agreement, Novello did not make any copyright payment for the two Coronation works – within a few days he informed his publishers that he wished to terminate that agreement after seeing his annual royalty account at Novello’s offices on 27 June, which he found ‘very disappointing’.<sup>5</sup>

1 Alice Elgar diary 21 June 1911.

2 Alice Elgar diary 20 June 1911

3 Rosa Burley and Frank C. Carruthers, *Edward Elgar: the record of a friendship* (London, Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 190.

4 Alice Elgar diary 21 June 1911. Carice did attend with Alfred Littleton and his family.

5 Letter to Novello 27 June 1911, Jerrold Northrop Moore, ed., *Elgar and his Publishers: Letters of a Creative Life*, Volume 2, 1904-1934 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 744.



Further, there is no record of the Palace paying for the two Coronation compositions. With the purchase of an expensive London house in the offing, he needed capital.<sup>6</sup>

He explained his decision to Ivor Atkins: 'Now we are in the thick of coronation things & a free fight is on as I refused to go the Abbey – I loathe a crowd even to crown a King'.<sup>7</sup> However, a crowd did not prevent him attending a great service of thanksgiving at St. Paul's Cathedral on 29 June where, robed as a Cambridge Doctor, he was given a prominent seat in the Choir alongside Parry. Alice and Carice also attended this service and 'were fortunate taking very good places ... Saw the procession very well. Loved the Fanfare of trumpets. E.'s [*Coronation*] March sounded splendid & he looked most booful conducting'.<sup>8</sup> Attendance at St. Paul's must have gone some way to placate her for missing the Coronation.

Presumably seating arrangements mattered to Elgar for on 3 May 1913 he complained to Alice Stuart Wortley that he did not attend a Royal Academy dinner as 'they had omitted my O M & put me with a crowd of nobodies in the lowest place of all – the bottom table ... I left at once and came here [The Athenaeum] & had a herring'.<sup>9</sup>

*I am grateful to Arthur Reynolds for his assistance with this information and the chronology of events and to John Drysdale.*



**Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary,  
by Sir Emery Walker**

6 Elgar's royalties on the *Coronation March* up to 1914 were miniscule – 11s 3d (57p) as only six copies of the full score had been sold. A copyright payment would have been preferable – see John Drysdale, *Elgar's Earnings* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2013), 102-103.

7 E. Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (Newton Abbott, David & Charles, 1984), 218. Atkins dates the letter 13 June 1911, but 23 June is the more likely date.

8 Alice Elgar diary 29 June 1911.

9 Letter to Alice Stuart Wortley, 3 May 1913, Jerrold Northrop Moore, ed., *The Windflower Letters* (Rickmansworth, Elgar Works, 2015), 138-139.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Friend of the Friends**

Meetings with Elgar's Circle of Friends in the 1950s  
Jerrold Northrop Moore

This booklet represents the last echo (from the not so distant past) of original source material on Elgar and his times. This material formed part of the foundation of books by the author such as the biography *Elgar, A Creative Life* published in 1984. This new publication is of inestimable value to anyone interested not only in Elgar and his music but also in the times in which he lived and the circles in which he moved. It is also about something else: the intangibility of friendship and its lasting value beyond the lives of the Elgars and it shows what it meant to those who befriended or were befriended by Elgar. Dr Moore includes some autobiography which is not only fascinating but also essential in putting in context the whys and wherefores and his reasons for first coming to Europe in the summer of 1954. It is also about those friends of Elgar who in turn became friends of an enquiring American student who called on them and found a welcome warmer than he could have imagined. It is partly the memories of these friends which imbue this booklet, but it is the spirit of their later friendship with the author which gives it life.

Dr Moore's intellect and experience has been brought to bear on the music of Elgar for nearly seventy years. For him everything developed from first hearing Elgar's music in his teens and, later, his appreciation of Elgar's own recordings, bought in New York. This led directly to Dr Moore's arrival in Britain and his inspired decision to contact many of those who were friends of the composer or who remembered him. It is the welcome he received from these friends that contributed to Dr Moore's decision to settle permanently in Britain.

Friendship works in two directions and the tribute which Carice Elgar Blake, Elgar's daughter, paid Dr Moore in her foreword to his 1963 *Discography* says much about the relationship he was able to establish with those like her, 44 years his senior: '... this is a very worth while work and one which will appeal to all Elgarians, of whom Dr Moore has shown himself to be one of the most devoted, and I hope will be rewarded with great success for this volume'.

The reason for Dr Moore's writing *Friend of Friends* is therefore clear. Now in his 90<sup>th</sup> year, Dr Moore's wish to have these rich memories recorded places us all in his debt. A publication of this nature speaks for itself so, in writing this review, I am taking this opportunity to pay a personal tribute to one of Elgar's finest scholars and to thank him for his extraordinary contribution to our understanding of Elgar's genius and personality.

I can record a conversation and even music on my telephone, which



Elgar Works

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978 1 9048956 90 0

(A4, soft cover,  
57 pages)

remains a source of wonder and is one example of progress – desirable or not. On returning to Britain in 1959 Dr Moore began the journey which led him to become a friend of so many friends. He also hired a tape recorder (then about the size of a small very heavy typewriter) and used it to record many of the conversations which form the foundation of his valuable memories. Later he travelled by train to the home near Wetherby of the two Grafton sisters, May and Madge. There he was able to make a recording of May Grafton playing Elgar's *Sonatina* 'composed expressly for May Grafton by her affectionate Uncle, Edward Elgar. Jan'y 4: 1889'.

That 'enchanted summer of 1954' provides a prologue, the climax for Dr Moore being that year's Three Choirs Festival in Worcester where he met Carice Elgar Blake for the first time. It would be five years before he could return and, finding Carice receptive to his idea of a book of photographs, which had been inspired by his first visit to the Birthplace, she not only became a friend of the young Dr Moore but, in turn, was able to offer him introductions to many of those who inhabit *Friend of the Friends*.

Who were these friends of Elgar and Dr Moore? The front cover tells us several things. The elderly lady photographed with him in 1959 is Helena, Lady Bantock (1868-1961). Corgi at her feet, she rests on his right arm while his camera, in the hands of Raymond Bantock, records the occasion. The Kodachrome slides from those days, their rich hues reproduced gloriously, are another part of what makes this such a valuable document. It may be the only photograph of the author, but it seems fitting he is there with the first of these 'friends', whose welcome - with only one or two exceptions - set the standard. Her signature heads a list, collected on the finest paper, of those whom Dr Moore asked to sign when they met. Sir Barry Jackson was next and, before the neat signature of Carice Elgar Blake, the expansive one of Agnes Nicholls Harty stands out. She is the first of those who recalled performing for the composer. There are many more names: Dora Powell, Astra Desmond, Rutland Boughton, Herbert Howells and Sir Percy and Lady Hull to name but a few. Of great importance was the time spent with the Harrison sisters, Margaret and Beatrice. There they stand, surrounded by dogs, looking with confidence at the camera. That confidence, in Beatrice at least, resulted in her playing for the author; an experience he has never forgotten!

From the time I first got to know Dr Moore I obtained glimpses of his ability to befriend people like those who appear in these pages. There was Ursula Vaughan Williams, to whom I was later introduced and got to know slightly, and the wonderful Nella Leicester, the daughter-in-law of Sir Hubert Leicester in whose Worcester home, The Homestead, I stayed for the Three Choirs Festivals of 1975 and 1978. Once a neighbouring house to Marl Bank, lamentably destroyed with the approval of an uncaring council, life in The Homestead, even then, gave me a glimpse of Elgar's world: its pace and manners. I also had the privilege of getting to know Dr Moore's mother when she came to Britain in 1982 and later when I visited her in her home in Florida. She was a lady of great intelligence and grace; a representative of an America that has almost gone.

Nowadays some writers and broadcasters seem intent on portraying Elgar as misanthropic, grumpy even; a somewhat distant figure. Dr Moore not only records the friends of Elgar who befriended him, but also corrects this impression. For many, Edward Elgar became a sun around whom they circled as his company and friendship enhanced their lives as his music has ours. He was the kind of person who lit up a room on entering. Should anyone doubt this, they should read this booklet. It was inspired by another 'friend' the late artist Graham Ovenden and beautifully brought into existence by John Norris of *Elgar Works*.

Dr Moore once reminded me of the words of Robert Louis Stevenson in the preface to his *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*. Stevenson wrote this as a letter to his friend Sir Sidney Colvin who became a friend of Elgar's too, '... the best that we find in our travels is an honest friend ... Every book is, in an intimate sense, a circular letter to the friends of him who writes it'. Stevenson, I feel, gets to the heart of this matter particularly when he ends, 'Of what shall a man be proud, if he is not proud of his friends?'

Andrew Neill

A recent edition of Maidenhead's local newspaper reported that one of the town's residents had reached the age of 106. The fact that she was born at a time when Elgar had yet to compose the chamber music and the Cello Concerto leads one to reflect that there may still exist quite a number of people who could in theory have met him (and perhaps a few who did). Such longevity demonstrates that although we think of Elgar's world as remote from our own, to some extent that remoteness is less to do with the passage of time than with the many changes wrought by the twentieth century and the dismantling of so much of what constituted that world. The point had been underlined last year by the death of a nonagenarian former resident of nearby Windsor, Queen Elizabeth II, the last survivor of Elgar's dedicatees. It is further underlined by the fact that those of us who were born in the decade or so immediately following the Second World War lived for a while in a kind of Elgarian slipstream, many of Elgar's colleagues, friends and relatives having survived into the 50s and beyond. Such survivors were a dwindling band, however. Devotees had to be nimble, and to know the right people, in order to meet them. Many opportunities were necessarily missed, even when survivors were encountered. In 1967, for example, Bray Church appointed an organist who began his career by singing in the Worcester Cathedral choir in the years of the Great War.<sup>1</sup> Ivor Atkins had taught him the organ, and he in turn taught me; and one day he recalled, from his time as a Worcester treble, singing in a concert conducted by Elgar and noticing at one point in the

1 Frank Hammersley (1905-1983).

performance that the great man's face was glistening with tears.<sup>2</sup> With regret I dwell on my failure to ask the questions that my choirmaster's observation could have prompted: the time was not right, and enthusiasm and curiosity came too late. No doubt similar stories can be told by others. Contact with those of Elgar's younger associates who achieved a ripe old age, such as Wulstan Atkins, Adrian Boulton and Herbert Sumson, provided compensation for those lost opportunities, but lost, and causes for regret, they remain.

Dr Moore stands between the Maidenhead centenarian and the baby boomers, and in this addition to what was already an output of incalculable value, he provides very welcome further compensation by sharing recollections of the meetings he had with individuals who knew and had first-hand knowledge of Elgar. In 1954, aged 20, fired with overwhelming enthusiasm for all matters Elgarian, and possessed of apparently inexhaustible energy, he crossed the Atlantic and, amongst other things, attended the Worcester Festival. There, at a Guildhall lunch, he met Carice Blake, and in due course, armed with the list of addresses she gave him, he began the task of making contact with other survivors of Elgar's circle. It says much for Dr Moore's personal gifts that so many of them were willing to see him and answer questions, and that some of those meetings led to long friendships. Only a few, and for reasons to do with either infirmity (Ernest Newman, Mary Clifford) or apparent grumpiness (Havergal Brian), were not willing; and in 1959 the visits commenced, Dr Moore making use of tape recorders and a camera. He began with Lady Bantock, who lived on the outskirts of Birmingham. In Malvern he met a somewhat reserved Sir Barry Jackson. At 160 Wardour Street, the elegant premises acquired by Novello & Co. in 1906, he met John Littleton, a grandson of Alfred Littleton. Agnes Nicholls shared with him her memories, as did Carice herself. Two of the Harrison sisters, Beatrice and Margaret, offered hospitality and answered questions. He made his way to East Grinstead, where he met Mrs Richard Powell, the subject of Variation X and by then the sole survivor of the 'friends pictured within'. He travelled to Wetherby and met May and Madeline ('Madge') Grafton, who would eventually treat him as a kind of honorary nephew. Indeed, that particular meeting led to a relationship that lasted until the death of the sisters' survivor, Madge, in 1971; and to this day Dr Moore enjoys contact with family members. Another meeting in the summer of 1959 led to a similarly close and lengthy relationship: back in Worcester, Dr Moore made the acquaintance of Philip Leicester, a son of Elgar's lifelong friend Hubert Leicester. Like the Grafton sisters, Colonel Leicester and his wife Nella provided generous hospitality; and here again a lengthy relationship ensued, one that came to an end in 1980 with the death of the widowed Nella (it is good news indeed that the British Library will be publishing some of the notes handed to Dr Moore when he first visited The Homestead).

Dr Moore's investigations embraced buildings as well as people. During

the course of his first visit, he called at 10 High Street, Worcester, by then a footwear shop, but was refused permission to inspect the accommodation above it. Naturally, he visited the birthplace, then in the care of John Goodman and his wife. One evening, he surreptitiously gained access to Marl Bank, then standing empty, and admired its view of Worcester Cathedral (one that the Ken Russell film preserves). And we are given glimpses of places as well as buildings (London, for example, still war-scarred in 1954) and a general flavour of a pre-Beeching, pre-motorway, pre-Beatles, pre-decimal England in which overnight accommodation could be had for 12/6d (and even, if you were lucky, ten bob).

Some of the photographs - in particular, those of Elgar and Beatrice Harrison (page 25) and the ceremony at Worcester Guildhall on 3 July 1914 (page 40) - will be familiar to devotees. Most of them will not, however, and those in colour are especially delightful: 'Dorabella' in old age; Beatrice and Margaret Harrison (and many dogs); Lady Bantock with her son Raymond (with a corgi in attendance); Philip and Nella Leicester in their garden; Percy and Molly Hull outside their house at Farnham; Marjorie Ffrangcon Davies outside her cottage. Fascinating also is a black and white snap of Agnes Nicholls and Elgar taken at Gloucester in 1922: it defies an apparent convention of the photography of those days by showing the singer smiling.

Physically slender, this is a volume with a large message. The primary sources for the study of history sometimes include the living, and whereas the contents of archives and libraries may endure for centuries, people, even those residing in salubrious Maidenhead, will not. Time has wings.

Relf Clark

2 This was almost certainly the performance of *For the fallen*, Op.80, No.3 given at Worcester Cathedral on 15 March 1917.





Austin Macauley  
Publishers

ISBN  
978-1398429413

149 pages

## When the Last Note Sounds

Elizabeth Muir-Lewis

This book about Richard Lewis is not, and neither does it pretend to be, a detailed biography. Rather it is a series of anecdotes written about this great singer's life, written by his second wife, herself a singer. Many of these stories are delightful and shed their own light on the man behind the singer.

We learn that Lewis's birth name was Thomas Thomas but (wisely) Norman Allin advised him to change it. Many composers and performers are mentioned in the pages, amongst them Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Pavarotti, Solti, Barbirolli, Bernstein and many, many more. It is a veritable 'who's who' of contemporary musicians, some clearly being appreciated more than others, and there are many charming stories to be read. There is a short chapter on Gerontius and his performances and recordings with Sargent and Barbirolli.

Many years ago, I sang in a performance of *Gerontius* with Richard Lewis as soloist. It was a remarkable experience although the very reverberant acoustic of Brompton Oratory (with its obvious Elgarian association) was not ideal. I do however remember the conductor (the late Donald Cashmore) telling me that Lewis had been delightful and readily acceded to all he wanted, even though he (Lewis) knew much more about the piece that he ever would! This says a lot about the man.

It is a shame that some errors have crept in to the text and the book would have benefited from being proof-read by a musical editor. But these small imperfections do not seriously detract from the enjoyment of this little volume. Recommended for those with an interest in the singer who wish to spend an enjoyable hour or two reading about his times.

David Morris

## CD REVIEWS

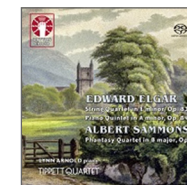
**Elgar: String Quartet, Piano Quintet;**  
**Sammons: Phantasy Quartet in B, Op.8**  
Tippett Quartet, Lynn Arnold (piano)

A quick glance through lists of available CDs show that there are currently at least eleven versions of the Quartet and Quintet together, plus additional performances of one of the pieces coupled with works by other composers. You might ask why you should invest in this latest one. One answer might be the addition of a little-known work by Albert Sammons, an extremely important figure in Elgar's music. The concise sleeve-note by Lewis Foreman tells us that this piece won the Cobbett Competition for chamber music in 1915, so it pre-dates the Elgar works. As required by the competition, this is a 'phantasy' quartet: a multi-movement work in a single span. Most of Sammons' other works are shorter pieces and studies, so it is good to have this recorded. The piece lasts just under nine minutes and is a very attractive piece with varying moods. Cobbett commented on its 'marked originality' and Foreman points out that it reflects the new repertoire of the time. The sleeve notes for the Elgar pieces are by Garry Humphreys, putting the works in their historical context and providing a brief, accessible outline of the music.

The Elgar pieces are so well-known that it is difficult to be objective, at least for someone like me, for whom the technique of string playing is a mystery. It is tempting to fall back on 'I know what I like' (for the record, the version by the Sorrel Quartet with Ian Brown). Music, after all, should make us feel something, and we will all have different feelings about particular performances. On first listening, I was rather disappointed that some of my favourite passages, particularly in the Quintet, didn't move me in the way I expected. It did, however, grow on me with repeated listening.

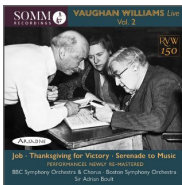
Most of the time the players are faithful to the score and only deviate slightly from the published metronome markings in the slow movement of the Quartet, which I found rather too fast and lacking some of the 'wood magic'. They are significantly faster than the Sorrel in both slow movements; the Sorrel play more slowly than marked, but it doesn't feel like it because of the increased intensity of the reading, particularly in the slow movement of the Quintet. The recording of the Tippett Quartet makes each instrument very clear, although I found the lower instruments to be slightly too strong and less mellow than some other versions. The piano, too, was very strong and stood out a little too much for my taste. Having said that, all the music on this CD is very well performed. Attending a live performance or looking at the scores, I am always struck by the number of times phrases pass from one player to another, which you don't always hear on recordings; here each instrumentalist is allowed to make the most of their parts, allowing us to appreciate the genius of this music afresh.

Ruth Hellen



Dutton

CDLX 7406



SOMM

ARIADNE 5018

**Vaughan Williams: \**Thanksgiving for Victory (A Song of Thanksgiving)*;**

**\*\**Serenade to Music*; \*\*\**Job: A Masque for Dancing***

\*Elsie Suddaby (soprano), \*Valentine Dyll (narrator), \*George Thalben-Ball (organ), \*Choir of the Children of the Thomas Coram Schools, \* & \*\*BBC Chorus, \*\*Isobel Baillie (soprano), \*\*Astra Desmond (contralto), \*\*Beveridge White (tenor), \*\*Harold Williams (baritone), \* & \*\*BBC Symphony Orchestra/Sir Adrian Boult, \*\*\*Boston Symphony Orchestra/Sir Adrian Boult

\*Recorded November 1944; \*\*September 1946, \*\*\*January 1946

This remarkable release brings the number of available recordings of *Job* under Sir Adrian Boult's magisterial baton to seven. This one is the earliest. Two months later came the premiere studio account with the conductor's own BBCSO, and a 1977 Prom with the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra marked Boult's final performance of the work and his last appearance at the Proms. The latter, available as a download from CRQ Editions, moved me very much when I first heard it, and subsequent acquaintance hasn't diminished the impression. The performance somehow manages to combine one or two swift tempi with a sense of spaciousness and is beautifully played. In between came a 1954 Decca account with the LPO (among the most successful of Boult's Vaughan Williams recordings for the label during that decade), a variable, sometimes impatient-sounding taping with the same orchestra for Everest projecting some odd recorded balances, a refined - and very well recorded - 1970 EMI issue with the LSO and a 1972 concert performance at London's Royal Festival Hall briefly available on the pirate Intaglio label (coupled with Richard Lewis's memorable performance at the same concert of the orchestrated version of *On Wenlock Edge*). All these are in addition to over forty performances with British orchestras, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the Belgian Radio SO, the Suisse Romande Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra and Vienna Symphony Orchestra.\*

Small wonder, then, that Boult told Robert Layton in 1966 that 'although I've been fortunate enough to have a number of very fine works dedicated to me, I think that [*Job*] really is the one of which I am proudest'.

And now we have this broadcast concert from Boston. Trumpets are rich-timbred but have that cutting edge so characteristic of this orchestra over decades (*tutti*s tend to sound rowdy), and right from the beginning, with the flutes' ample vibrato matching that of the violas - and even more notably in the trio of flutes towards the end of Scene V - it is fascinating to hear American orchestral colours in this work. Some of the heavy violin *portamenti* will strike some as compromising the purity of the writing in - for example - the 'Saraband of the Sons of God' (there is a particularly treacherous slide at 5 bars after Fig. 6, 6'10" into Track 3). When as a rather naïve young music journalist I interviewed the retired Sir Adrian at the beginning of the 1980s, I enquired about the spareness of *portamenti* in his early recordings with the newly-formed BBC Symphony Orchestra, he replied with a twinkle 'I took what I was given!'. Did Sir Adrian, I wonder, not supply in advance string parts heavily marked with bowings and fingerings as many conductors do?

Compared with Boult in 1970 on EMI, the Boston violas in 'Job's Dream' sound rather prosaic, and the first violins cannot match the serenity of their London counterparts when they enter a minute or so later. Here the BBC Northern SO strings in the 1977 Prom glow with an inner light, distance lending enchantment. The tempo, more flowing than on any of Boult's other recordings, retains a feeling of serenity. Yet in Boston, the terror which conductor and players whip up in the sequence following Satan's entrance at Fig. 26 (Track 6, 2'23") makes Boult's EMI/LSO account sound sleepy by comparison, and the wily hypocrites in 'Dance of Job's Comforters' are appropriately dolorous, solo cello splendidly out-doing saxophone in deceitfulness. As on the 1946 HMV studio recording, the orchestra does duty for an absent organ in Scene VI, and the un-named violinist in Scene VII plays beautifully, even if the close-up concerto-style balance dilutes some of the mystery of this heart-stopping solo.

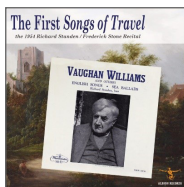
As a document, then, of a great conductor taking Vaughan Williams abroad, this is of considerable value, a complement to, but not a replacement for, Boult's other recordings of *Job*, notably his recorded premiere of the work, the 1970 EMI issue or that wonderful 1977 Prom.

The 1944 broadcast of *Thanksgiving for Victory* is a vivid piece of *Zeitgeist* indeed. This is the work's premiere, and the burning conviction of players and singers (the fresh young voices of the choir are a special delight) is palpable at a time when the war was to rage for another six months. Valentine Dyll is a sombre-voiced narrator, even if listeners of a certain age may find it hard to shake off associations with his *Man in Black* radio persona from the same decade. Then, like balm, comes *Serenade to Music* recorded just a year into peacetime. Not sixteen voices here, but the version for solo quartet and chorus. Baillie and Desmond featured as two of the sixteen on Sir Henry Wood's famous 1938 recording. The former is still radiant in 1946 (if rather below pitch at her final top A), the latter a touch tremulous. Sir Adrian was to find an easier flow during the opening minutes 23 years later in his EMI account featuring a full complement of soloists, and the un-named violinist sounds awkward beside Rodney Friend in that recording, but with the G major release at 'Such Harmony' I confess that tears started as they usually do. The closing announcement is retained. No gushing adjectives, telling us how marvellous the performance was, simply a gently dignified statement of what we've just heard and who performed it. Today's Radio 3 presenters and scriptwriters take note!

Lani Spahr's remastering of the two shorter works is excellent. I suspect that he could do nothing about the distortion at some climaxes in *Job*, and the cramped acoustic is not ideally suited to this visionary music. The harps are sometimes too faint in the picture, but so they are on several modern recordings of the piece, including one of those that I produced! Here, perhaps, VW himself miscalculates things occasionally, not least when he writes *ppp* in the harp part within a rich string texture. Each of the nine scenes is tracked. Applause and the Boston announcer's closing words have been retained. Excellent booklet notes by Simon Heffer.

Andrew Keener

\*Listing contained in Nigel Simeone's indispensable book *Ralph Vaughan Williams and Adrian Boult* - Boydell Press, 2022.



Albion Records  
ALBCD055

# A RECITAL OF ENGLISH SONGS and SEA BALLADS by Vaughan Williams, Stanford, Warlock, Ireland, Keel, Head, Mallinson and Davidson

Richard Standen (bass-baritone), Frederick Stone (piano)

In 1954 the US label Westminster issued the first complete recording (made in London) of RVW's *Songs of Travel* as part of a recital of songs with Richard Standen and Frederick Stone. Complete that is, apart from 'I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope', the ninth song in the RVW cycle, which was only discovered after the composer's death some four years later. I knew little of the artists until I heard this recording, but was most impressed by them both. Standen had an attractive voice and although inevitably, given the recording date, he sings with a degree of 'received pronunciation' the words are admirably clear and the production is not 'mannered'. He brings considerable understanding of the texts and it is no wonder that, as the sleeve notes aver, the composer admired both Standen and this recording. Pianist Frederick Stone is perhaps best remembered now as accompanist to Kathleen Ferrier but he had an extensive career as a BBC accompanist and amassed over 1700 broadcast credits. His work on this recording is first-rate.

*Songs of Travel* are performed here in the order of publication rather than composition. This did not disturb me greatly; the songs are superb in whatever order they are heard. After the cycle, three further RVW songs are heard, *Silent Noon*, *The Water Mill* (from *Four Poems by Fredegond Shove*), and *Linden Lea*. All beautifully done.

The remainder of the CD comprises a recital of English Songs, some well known others much less so. Stanford's 'Drake's Drum' and 'The "Old Superb"' from *Songs of the Sea*, Warlock's 'Captain Stratton's Fancy' and Ireland's 'Sea Fever' count amongst the former, but there are other very attractive songs by Frederick Keel, Michael Head, Albert Mallinson, and Malcolm Davidson which deserve to be much better known. I have been delighted to get to know some repertoire with which I was unfamiliar. Mallinson apparently wrote over 400 songs and one would like to hear more of them, and of Davidson's other songs.

Although transcribed from two copies of the 1959 LP reissues of the recording, the recording is very clear and quite well balanced, with the piano perhaps a little recessed. It is of course mono – but I could have believed it was stereo. Ronald Grames, who undertook the transcription and also writes the excellent extensive sleeve notes, indicates that some noise may be heard but this was not apparent to me over a high-quality system. As Grames observes, to get nearly an hour's music on an LP in 1954 was not easy and this had to be cut at a low level, but this is not apparent on this stunningly remastered recording. Presentation is well up to the usual extremely high Albion standards.

Some of the first LPs I bought were of John Shirley-Quirk in similar repertoire (on the old Saga label) and in truth this CD does not supplant that or more modern recordings. But it is hugely enjoyable, well recorded and has been played more often than reviewing duty required. Warmly recommended.

David Morris

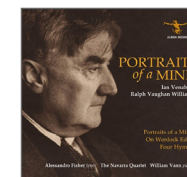
# PORTRAITS OF A MIND

Vaughan Williams: *On Wenlock Edge*

Venables: *Portraits of a Mind*

Vaughan Williams: *Four Hymns*

Alessandro Fisher (tenor), The Navarra Quartet, William Van (piano)



Albion Records  
ALBCD057

For many the principal interest here will be the first recording of a new song cycle by Ian Venables, commissioned by The RVW Society to commemorate the latter composer's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was first performed, by the artists on this recording, at the Oxford Lieder Festival on 21 October last year, and broadcast live from the Holywell Music Room by BBC Radio 3. Although I live nearby, I was unable to attend the performance but heard the broadcast and was very impressed by the Venables work, so this recording is welcome. Let me stress at the outset that Venables' idiom is entirely approachable and listeners need not fear this is 'squeaky door' music. The composer has set five poems (or verses therefrom) starting with the George Meredith verses that inspired RVW's *The Lark Ascending* – there is no direct quotation from RVW but the music is beautiful and the solo violin passage might be thought of as a homage to the earlier composer. There is no space here to analyse all the remaining songs (texts by Ursula Vaughan Williams, Robert Louis Stevenson, Christina Rossetti and Walt Whitman) but each is set with rich, sometimes slow, sometimes intense, but always wonderfully-crafted music. Ian Venables is established as one of our greatest English song composers and this is a magnificent work, fully worthy of his illustrious predecessors, such as RVW and Gurney. I would be surprised if this cycle were not acknowledged as one of the finest contributions to this genre composed during the last half-century and it is a magnificent achievement. I urge readers to listen to this recording: you will not be disappointed.

RVW's *On Wenlock Edge* cycle is extremely well performed, as is *Four Hymns*, the latter in a new arrangement for these forces by Iain Farrington. A previous arrangement was known to exist and to have been used for a 1925 performance but now appears to be lost, hence The RVW Society commissioned this new arrangement based on both the original version for viola *obligato* and string orchestra accompaniment and the later, with piano replacing the orchestra. The viola part differs between the two. Farrington seems to me to have made a splendid job of the arrangement.

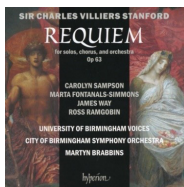
Alessandro Fisher has a thrilling tenor voice, and performances of both the Venables and RVW are extremely well supported by The Navarra Quartet and William Vann. When I first played the CD, I felt that Fisher was perhaps a little too intense in places, but subsequent auditions have confirmed that although this is a big voice, he is able to shade it down when necessary. The recording is admirably clear, made in a Harrow church I had not previously encountered in recordings.

I need hardly add that Albion's excellent standards are maintained throughout, with extensive commentaries, including by Ian Venables for his own work.

Highly recommended – indeed, a 'must have' particularly for the Venables.

David Morris





Hyperion

CDA68418

## Sir Charles Villiers Stanford

### Requiem, Op.36 (1896)

Carolyn Sampson, soprano

Marta Fontanals-Simmons, mezzo-soprano

James Way, tenor, Ross Ramgobin, baritone

University of Birmingham Voices (Chorusmasters: Simon Halsey, Julian Wilkins), Organ, Julian Wilkins, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/  
Martyn Brabbins

A reproduction of *Time, Death and Judgement* by George Frederic Watts (in whose memory Stanford composed his fine Sixth Symphony in 1905: 'In Memoriam G. F. Watts') adorns the cover of the CD booklet for this recording. Time and Death are prominent, but a black panel obscures the figure of Judgement. It sets the tone for this serious tribute, a setting of the Catholic Mass for the Dead by a devout Protestant to a distinguished Roman Catholic friend, Lord Frederic Leighton, the neo-classical painter who died in 1896. Like Stanford, Leighton lived within the Holland Park area of West London. Stanford's Requiem was premiered during the 1897 Birmingham Festival on 6 October.

It was my privilege to interview Martyn Brabbins through the medium of 'Zoom' when Covid dominated our lives. This experience made me think again about some music I thought I knew and about Elgar's music in particular – especially the symphonies. Now that Brabbins has completed his cycle of those by Vaughan Williams (one of the finest) is it too much to hope that Hyperion will do Brabbins and us the favour of recording, with one of our finest orchestras, Elgar's three symphonies - I know he would love to include his version of the Payne completion of the Third? Throw in his recording of Walton's First Symphony and Brabbins will then have given us recordings of (in my opinion) the greatest British symphonies.

I have not listed Stanford's nor indeed Parry's symphonies in this august company, not because they are not worthy of consideration but because, for me, they do not have that unique touch of the individual that is brought to the symphonies of those named above, or those by Malcolm Arnold. For these reasons, and because he composed so much music, it is easy to overlook Stanford even if we cannot ignore the benign if rigorous shadow he cast over British musical life. Indeed, what we cannot ignore and should not overlook is his choral music. Stanford entered my life many years before Elgar did through his great Anglican services, notably that in B flat, which were once at the centre of my life in my school chapel and Bath Abbey whence we went as a family every Sunday. If pushed, I might even be able to sing it today – from memory. 'To Thee all Angels cry aloud; the heavens and all the powers therein': it is stirring stuff and it is easy to imagine how excited I was to hear Stanford's symphonies recorded by my old friend, Tod Handley. Then came the shock: what had happened to that individualism that permeated these choral works, where was the imaginative orchestration worthy of someone

who had taught Vaughan Williams, indeed half the musical world in which I grew up? Can this be the same man who composed those services and the wonderful *Songs of the Sea* and *Songs of the Fleet*?

I came to this recording of Stanford's Requiem with only modest expectations, but here we have his sensitive setting of words with some glorious solo and choral writing as well as some superb orchestration. However, what I had thought was rather a dull work from a previous recording (Naxos 8.555202-02) now mostly blazes. However, if it is to be performed in a major concert hall today the Stanford has to compete with the requiems of Berlioz, Mozart and Verdi as well as those intimate ones composed by Fauré and Duruflé and the protestant Brahms. This recording suggests that it deserves its place in the sun. Made in Birmingham's Symphony Hall with the recording team of our own Andrew Keener (producer), Phil Rowlands, Tim Burton and Matthew Swan it is above all a tribute to the indefatigable Martyn Brabbins who controls the proceedings and urges a performance from the musicians, few of whom will have known the work before opening the score for the first time in advance of this recording. They all made me think deeply about a work which I had only considered *en passant* before.

The opening 'Introit' is compelling, beginning in a quietly Gounod-like world with a memorable falling phrase on the horns and then bursting into light at the words 'et lux perpetua luce at eis'. This is stunning. Immediately I was aware of the quality of the choral singing and that of all the soloists when they joined Carolyn Sampson, whose pure voice leads at the words 'te decet hymnus'. After that inspirational opening the 'Kyrie' at first sounds rather pedestrian but assumes an urgency before the soloists enter (again) at the conclusion. A gentle prayer for the soloists follows ('Gradual') before the long 'Sequence (Dies Irae)' begins. Verdi's Requiem from 1874, of course, casts a long shadow for any late Victorian composer and, to a lesser extent, so do those by Mozart and Berlioz. Stanford's 'Dies Irae' sounds rather sinister as it begins and the tenors warily anticipate the 'Tuba Mirum' during which Stanford unleashes a somewhat restrained vision of the judgement to come.

Moving on, I found the 'Offertorium' rather uninspiring: there is little to fear about the 'lion's mouth' here but I can forgive this because of the excellent choral singing. The fugal passage that follows is moved forward immaculately before the four soloists sing the 'Hostias'. The section concludes with a bouncy, cheerful, anticipation of the life to come in 'transire ad vitam'.

The beautifully transparent 'Sanctus' precedes the 'Benedictus'. Some readers may recall the conductor Raymond Leppard suggesting a connection to Elgar's 'enigma' theme. I remember that concert and, at the time, thought the idea somewhat tenuous, as I still do. Ecstatically the choir joins for the ethereal 'Osanna' and an orchestral passage introduces the choir followed by the SATB soli for the 'Agnus Dei' a bass drum suggesting a cortege. The tenor leads the soloists in 'Lux aeterna' with the orchestra taking the listener towards the choral conclusion which, while maintaining respect for the Catholic tradition, keeps its feet on the ground.

There we have it: a superb performance of a neglected work by a still

neglected composer. It was Stanford's misfortune (and that of Parry too) for his music to be swept aside by a self-taught composer from Worcestershire. If it is difficult to pinpoint a Stanford style or sound this does not matter here, for surely, we are beginning to see there should be room for both Elgar and Stanford? Even if this Requiem has its *longueurs* (see above) I was moved more than I expected and enjoyed it greatly which more than makes this point. I recommend it to all.

Andrew Neill



**James MacMillan**  
***Christmas Oratorio***

Lucy Crowe, soprano  
Roderick Williams, baritone  
London Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir/  
Sir Mark Elder

LPO-0125  
(2 discs)

There are two prime reasons for this substantial review of a work not composed by Elgar. One is because the performance is conducted by our President, Sir Mark Elder, and the other is because this is a major oratorio composed by another British composer steeped in the traditions of the Catholic Church. The title *Christmas Oratorio* acknowledges the genius and timelessness of J S Bach's music, but Sir James MacMillan also offers a modern generation something committed, sensitive, genuine and, like Elgar's *Gerontius* before, a vehicle grounded in faith that is also something of a miracle. Few modern compositions have made such an impression on me as Macmillan's did in 2021 and now more than twenty months later my respect has grown as I sat listening to this recording.

Over 60 years of concert going I can recall many where a new composition, the score still wet, is presented to the world. Often that is that. The work is received politely (usually) and disappears, never to be heard again. A few compositions survive the first hurdle and are given a second or even a third hearing but even less enter the repertoire. Only twice have I witnessed a standing ovation for a premiere. Actually, it is three times, but only twice have I felt the ovation deserved. One of these was on the unforgettable evening of 4 December 2021 when the British premiere of MacMillan's *Christmas Oratorio* was given under the direction of Sir Mark.

I appreciate that some readers may be put off by the length of this review so, before going any further, I urge all those who have read this far to buy this important recording. So, with that behind me, I must now give the reader a substantial exegesis before reviewing the performance and recording. For this, I quote the notes by MacMillan published in the December 2021 programme:

*My Christmas Oratorio* was written in 2019 and is a setting of assorted poetry, liturgical texts and scripture taken from various sources, all relating to the birth of Jesus. It is constructed in two parts, each consisting of seven movements.

Therefore, the music of each part is topped and tailed by short orchestral movements (four in all), creating a palindromic structure. The choruses are mostly Latin liturgical texts (although the last one is a Scottish lullaby), the Arias are settings of poems by Robert Southwell. John Donne and John Milton, and the two central tableaux are biblical accounts from the Gospels of St Matthew in Part One and St John in Part Two.

The soloists, who have two arias each, are a soprano and baritone (and they sing in the two tableaux along with the choir). The orchestra is of modest size, using double woodwind, brass and percussion, plus a harp and celeste. There are various characteristic elements and moods throughout, from the ambiguous opening which mixes resonances of childhood innocence with more ominous premonitions, pointing to later events in the life of Jesus. There are also intermittent moments of joyfulness and the childhood excitement and abandon of Christmas at various points, especially in the choral 'Hodie Christus natus est' and in some of the orchestral interludes.

Sometimes we hear the 'dancing' rhythms associated with some secular Christmas carols. There is also, at points, a sense of narrative when the chorus take the role of the Evangelist as he tells the Nativity story. The 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century English poems provide opportunities for reflection in the four solo Arias, firmly based in the oratorio tradition. There is also at points a sense of mystery in both orchestral and choral textures, such as in the setting of the 'O Magnum Mysterium' text in Part Two. The oratorio ends reflectively in Sinfonia 4 with the orchestra alone, highlighting a small ensemble of string soloists amid the larger textures.

MacMillan's oratorio is composed for soprano and baritone soloists, mixed chorus and standard orchestra but with two sets of percussion (with one tam-tam). The first set of percussion consists of xylophone, triangle, cabasa, snare and bass drum and the second vibraphone, wood block, metal pipe or anvil, two timbales, hi-hat and suspended cymbal. What at times is striking is the subtle and imaginative way MacMillan uses this instrumentation conveying different moods and reflections of the various texts.

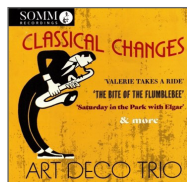
Each part is centred on one of the gospels with excerpts from the liturgy and relevant poems offering contrast. Robert Southwell, a Catholic martyr, is one whose words shine. It is not just Catholic voices for we have those of Milton and Donne too. At times this can be somewhat serious, but MacMillan is always aware that Christ, although born on this happy day, is to die for mankind's sins. Nevertheless, the joy of the orchestral ending to part one is infectious.

Of course, I am unable to compare the performance let alone the recording, but it is difficult to imagine it being bettered. The two soloists (of the highest quality) balance each other superbly in their duets and shine in their solos. They are beautifully matched. Under the ever inspired direction of Neville

Creed the London Philharmonic Choir, one of the great adornments to London's music, completed a brilliant occasion. I should also mention the fabulous solo playing of the orchestra's leader, Peter Schoeman, who is kept busy throughout.

As our society increasingly forgets what Christmas is about and we sink back into a pre-Christian world that celebrates the winter solstice in the shopping malls and supermarkets it is good to be reminded why we are what we are and why we do what we do at certain times of the year. MacMillan's deep rooted Catholic faith shines through in this exceptional work and, although it is not a 'happy clappy' celebration of Christmas it is spot on in its appreciation of why the story is so fundamental to our culture and the society we have developed over 2000 years. For those of an adventurous mind and for those who want confirmation that contemporary music can be sincere, relevant and comprehensible I recommend this recording whole-heartedly.

Andrew Neill



### Classical Changes

#### Art Deco Trio

Peter Sparks, clarinet

Kyle Horch, saxophone

Iain Farrington, piano

SOMM

CD 0663

There is little doubt as to the devotion of the versatile Iain Farrington to the music of Elgar. Many readers will know his orchestration of works such as the *Concert Allegro* and his involvement as General Editor of the Complete Edition. This short review is to draw the attention of readers to Iain's arranging skills which are abundant in the selection of arrangements included in this happy disc. With its amusing titles such as 'Jim's Nobody' for a Satie *Gymnopédie* and 'Valerie takes a ride' as a version of the beginning of Act III of *Die Walküre* the disc's premise will be clear. 'Saturday in the Park with Elgar' contains, as Farrington says: '... the great melody that is often sung to the words "Land of Hope and Glory" at the Last Night of the Proms. These often-criticised words can become a distraction to the glorious original tune. As an alternative, this new version is in a happy swing style, and was inspired by a walk through London's Hyde Park before the Last Night of the Proms. The title alludes to Stephen Sondheim's musical inspired by the painter Georges Seurat, *Sunday in the Park with George*'.

Clearly such an arrangement will not appeal to everyone and may even horrify some. I found it charming as I did most of the other arrangements played by this brilliant trio.

Andrew Neill

## LETTERS

*From Andrew Keener*

I'm puzzled that Steven Halls finds no engineer credit for the above recording in his review in the *April Journal*, Vol.23, No.4 (page 84, '...shame on you, Harmonia Mundi!'). There it is, where you would expect it, on the last page of the CD booklet: 'Pris de son: Dave Rowell, assiste de Katie Earl', along with my own credit as producer ('Direction artistique'). No possible 'shame' is due to Harmonia Mundi for listing the roles in French. After all, it's a French label.

### 'In Good King Charles' Golden Days'

*From David Pearce (Chair, Elgar Society, Southern Branch)*

Regular contributor, Relf Clark, wrote a most interesting and erudite article in the *Journal* last December, *Frank Schuster: Some Notes*, concerning Elgar's friend and a mystery surrounding his magnificent home on the banks of the River Thames at Bray. However, we are left guessing as to the real reason that lay behind these events. Might I be allowed a 'best guess'?

I have to say, given the considerable detail in Relf's article, there is clearly something very fishy going on as Wylde was clearly not a relative. I quickly concluded that entrapment and blackmail may be involved. From Relf's description, we can easily gather that Wylde was a rogue, as well as an alcoholic, who had some form of hold over Schuster.

We know that Frank Schuster was homosexual and also that he had a medical condition in his lower legs. Hence, he would not have walked to the railway station in later life, a distance of at least a mile and a half, without considerable discomfort. The name of 'Wylde' may be serendipitous, but surely the horrifying prospect of Reading Gaol in later life must have been in Schuster's mind.

We now know that the Suffolk police made several visits to Benjamin Britten's home in the 1950s to check him out before male homosexuality was decriminalised by the 1967 Act. It is galling to think that prejudice still exists towards such intelligent and artistically (and scientifically) creative people. However, in the 1990s, I was working in Whitehall heading a science policy department. There was a need for a high security clearance, so I got to know officers in the security service quite well. Some 25 years after the 1967 Act, they remained extremely sensitive about the potential for blackmailing homosexuals. Could this be the actual answer to our riddle?

In a lighter vein and as a throw-away line, Relf in his introduction referred to a certain 'chameleon-like former vicar' from antiquity, who may just have been associated with this part of England. I was cruising up the River Thames in my boat some years ago and arrived at the village of Bray to find a short queue waiting to go through the lock. I got talking to the lock-keeper and some local people and the discussion got around to the old song. I was assured absolutely by the



locals that the vicar mentioned in the song was definitely NOT from their village, he came from 'the other Bray'. I was impressed by their argument and it clearly stuck in my memory.

I was researching articles on Purcell and Handel a few years ago for another magazine when the subject of that vicar came up again, so I began looking further and found an Irish connection. The old song is actually well-constructed in its lyrics and music, and those lyrics must have been written by an expert in political satire of the age – 1660 to 1720. There is a vaguely hidden reference to the Battle of the Boyne in verse three (in its usual English version), so I concluded that the lyricist knew much about both Irish geography and Irish politics of the day. The string of admittedly flimsy evidence led me to the name of Naham Tate, together with his regular 17<sup>th</sup> Century drinking mates, Henry Purcell and Tom D'urfrey. I should add that Tate was born just south of Dublin, a largely Protestant area in those days, not far from the small coastal town of Bray, where his father, the Reverend Faithful Tate was the local Vicar. Family history, including an horrendous attack by a Catholic mob, suggests that Tate junior used his father as the model for the song, implying that father should have been a tad more pragmatic in the pulpit. Admittedly, this also comes under the heading of 'best guess', but an interesting thought nevertheless, which aligns with that local thinking at the other Bray. I have to add that I believe the Wikipedia article on the matter to be inaccurate.

## 100 YEARS AGO ...

Elgar moved in to Napleton Grange, Kempsey on 7 April. His niece, Madge Grafton who acted as his secretary, joined him. He wrote to 'the Windflower' on 19 April reporting that he had settled in and that the house was 'comfortable ... The common, five minutes away, is lovely & I walk about a great deal – lonely & thinking things out: no music yet. There is a fair Bechstein grand in the hall & we have huge peat fires ... the plum blossom is nearly over & the apple coming on – a cuckoo appeared this morning'.

Living near Worcester again Ivor Atkins was able to visit Elgar who also gave 'an open invitation to [Wulstan to] accompany my father on his Sunday visits' whenever he was in Worcester. On a lovely spring evening in mid-April, they both cycled over to Kempsey and after supper Elgar spoke of his recent incidental music for *Arthur*. Wulstan later recalled: 'This evening was the first of many visits for me. Elgar and my father always began by discussing the latest news, and then some reference would be made to past events and compositions, and this was my chance to ply them with questions and try to stir their memories'.

With the coming of spring Elgar sent a letter to *The Times* published on 28 April with the title 'THE VERNAL ANEMONES: A Beautiful Native (From a Correspondent.)'. He wrote: 'The little group of anemones commonly called windflowers are happily named ... for when the east wind rasps over the ground in March and April they merely turn their backs and bow before the squall. They are buffeted and blown, as one may think almost to destruction; but their anchors hold, and the slender-looking stems do not break. And when the rain clouds drive up the petals shut tight into a tiny tent, as country folk tell one, to shelter the little person inside'.

He followed this up on 30 April, by sending to his 'Windflower' some windflowers from his garden, which were growing 'wild in the shrubbery'. He also wrote to her to enlist her support to obtain a knighthood for Herbert Brewer, organist of Gloucester Cathedral; he feared that Brewer did not have 'the goodwill of the R.C.M. – quite unnecessary but those sort of people pull their own strings & not being content to do that, cut other people's – you know Brewer's claims ...'. (Brewer's knighthood eventually appeared in the New Year's Honours in 1926).

Yet the return to Worcestershire did produce some music for in May he arranged Handel's Overture for the Second Chandos Anthem for orchestra and followed this by orchestrating Samuel Sebastian Wesley's anthem *Let Us Lift Up Our Hearts* and, at Ivor Atkins's special request, orchestrated Jonathan Battishill's *O Lord Look Down From Heaven*. These were intended for the Worcester Festival in September, and he sent the score of the Handel Overture and Battishill's anthem to Novello on 27 May who agreed to copy the parts and lend them to the Worcester Festival Committee for nothing. However, they could not proceed with Wesley's anthem as there already existed an edition published by Messrs. Bayley & Ferguson, so Elgar sent his orchestration of the Wesley to them, where apparently it was destroyed years later in a fire. Elgar received what Atkins described as a 'ridiculously nominal amount' from Bayley & Ferguson for his orchestration. Novello doubted that the Handel Overture would be as popular as Elgar's earlier Bach arrangements – 'Bach is always in demand' – but offered Sixty Guineas for it, which Elgar accepted. He cut out four bars from the original score stating that it did away 'with a weak repetition of the modulation into the dom. & a wandering excursion into treble regions ... I have known the overture from the old two stave organ arrangement since I was a little boy and always wanted it to be heard in a large form – the weighty structure is (to me) so grand – epic'.

Elgar had wanted a new work from Atkins for the Worcester Festival, but Atkins was too busy to write anything. However, Atkins' existing anthem *Abide with me* was included in the opening service and Elgar orchestrated it for him in July, writing to Atkins: 'I have nearly finished scoring your anthem! I thought I had better make a shot at it'.

Carice visited on 1 May: '... got to Worcester at 4.32. Father met me in car drove out to Kempsey – Sweet house & garden, walk on common after tea'. On 3 May they had a 'Long walk by river after tea – got lost & went much further than we meant. Sir Ivor came after dinner'. She recorded ten chickens hatched on 5 May. Carice went to Bromsgrove on 9 May to stay with Elgar's sister Pollie, and returned to Worcester the next day with Madge Grafton, who went on to Kempsey, whilst Carice returned to Surrey.

On 11 June Elgar invited her again to Kempsey. She travelled on 12 June: '... arrived Worcester 4.30 – called at Uncle Frank's - & to Kempsey – nice evening but cold'. Two days later she and Elgar visited his brother Frank in Worcester and 'walked home by the river [Severn] about 5 miles – lovely evening'. On 16 June they hired a car and visited old haunts: 'went to Broadheath & drove all around & into Malvern Link ... Father saw Forli - & we went on to Little Malvern & saw grave – all looked very cared for – home through Upton-'. The next day the Leicesters came to lunch and 'Sir Ivor came after dinner'. On 18 June 'Father & I left at 1.30 called at Uncle Frank – caught 2 o'clock train & got to London 4.15. Went with him to his flat & had tea – caught 6 o'clock from London Bridge. S[amuel] met me with car lovely to be home'.

Even though he was living in the country Elgar added the Garrick to his London clubs, where he met actors and artists. In late June he went to Aberystwyth for the festival.

Original composition followed when Robin Legge requested male-voice part-songs for the 'American Quartet' and Elgar wrote *The Wanderer* – he thought the words 'strange & weird' but the setting 'smooth & singable' and sent it to Novello, who offered 25 guineas on 20 July. Elgar responded on 24 July stating that he did not consider their offer quite good enough and sent a second part-song *Zut! Zut! Zut!* with words by himself under the name of 'Richard Mardon' and suggested 100 guineas for both works. Novello thought that music for male voices appealed to a restricted market, internally noted that this was 'rather *cheap* for Elgar' and subsequently offered 50 guineas for both part-songs which Elgar reluctantly accepted on 15 August.

On 29 July Ivor Atkins and Wulstan spent the evening with Elgar who played these two part-songs and they all attempted to sing *Zut! Zut! Zut!* excitedly but 'very badly'.

Kevin Mitchell

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