

# The Elgar Society *Journal*



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# The Elgar Society Journal

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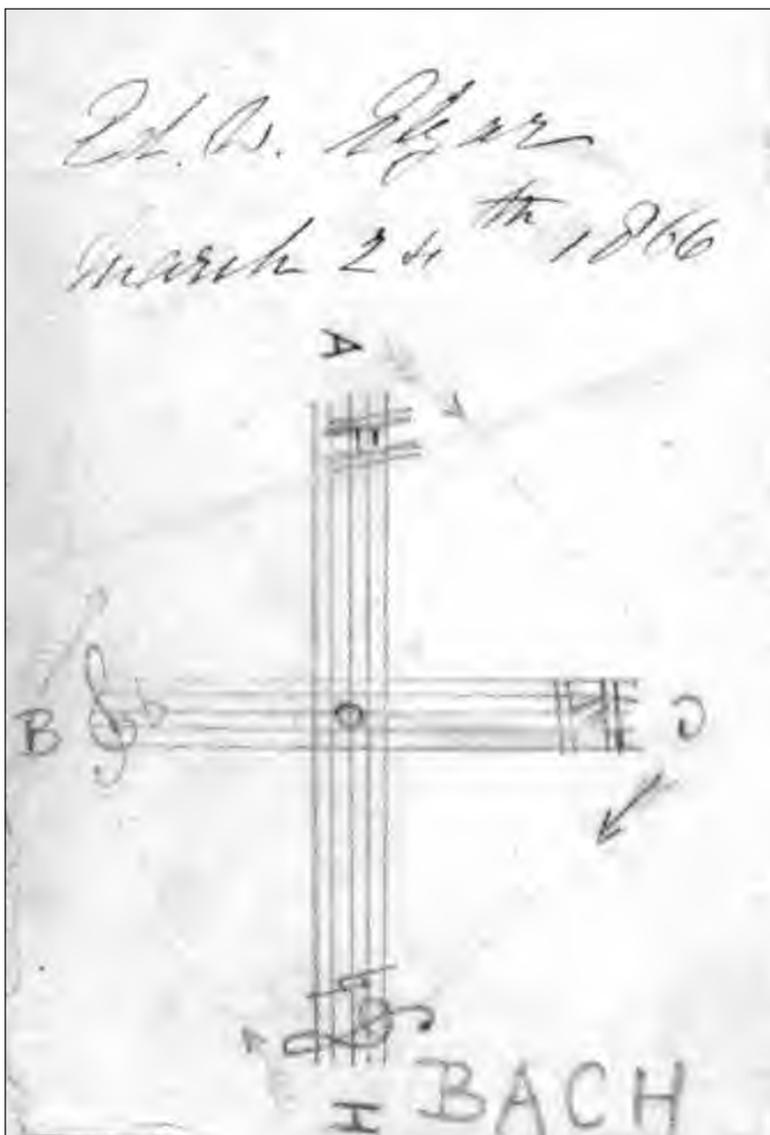
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*The Editor does not necessarily agree with  
the views expressed by contributors,  
nor does the Elgar Society accept responsibility for such views.*

*Front cover (top right, clockwise) : J.S.Bach, Elgar, Ivor Atkins and Charles Sanford Terry. The three contemporaries' shared passion for the music of Bach is explored in Alison Shiel's article in the current issue. Elgar's interest, dating from his earliest years, is demonstrated by his 'cross-clefs' diagram of 1866 which spells out the name of the Baroque master in musical notation.*



1. Elgar's cross-clef doodle spelling out the letters BACH, dated 24 March 1866 when the composer was eight years old. (Reproduced by kind permission of the Elgar Birthplace Museum and the Elgar Will Trust.)

# Elgar, Charles Sanford Terry and J. S. Bach

## Alison I. Shiel

*In concluding her series of articles which began in the July 2002 issue of the JOURNAL on the friendship between Elgar and the historian Charles Sanford Terry, the author explores their common reverence for the music of J. S. Bach, which for Terry's part led him to become a pre-eminent scholar in the field. Sharing their interest was their close friend Ivor Atkins, cathedral organist at Worcester, and together the triumvirate inspired each other in a number of projects which brought Bach's music before a wider audience.*

'The last solo I sang was Bach's "Have mercy" in the "Matthäus Passion". My voice cracked to a promising bass a few days earlier, returned to allow me to sing my swan song, and a day or two after disgustedly left me for ever!' <sup>1</sup> Thus ended the solo-singing career of the young Charles Sanford Terry. But the seed had been sown; Terry's musical and historical researches were later to earn for him the foremost position in British Bach scholarship, and he was to enjoy friendships with many leading musicians of his day.

The venue for the performance of the *St Matthew* was St Paul's Cathedral, where Terry was admitted to the choir as a nine-year-old in 1874, gaining one of six places for which there were 120 applicants, and later attaining the position of 'solo boy'. John Stainer, who had himself been a St Paul's chorister, had returned as cathedral organist in 1872, and was in process of establishing St Paul's at the forefront of English cathedral music. He instigated annual performances of the *St Matthew* from 1873 and these became high points in London's musical life, attended by huge congregations. 'Excellency of voice and a moderate knowledge of the rudiments of English and Latin' were the requirements for new choristers, and the choir school was soon to become a model for others. It is clear that Stainer himself, with his musical ability and his qualities of care and concern for others, was very much a role model for the young Terry, who remained at St Paul's for four happy years. From there he went to King's College School in the Strand, to Lancing College, and then to Clare College, Cambridge to study history, matriculating in 1883. Here he was to come under the influence of Charles Villiers Stanford, Sedley Taylor and others, and was involved in music-making and other academic pursuits at the highest level.

There was to be no such auspicious start for Terry's contemporary Edward Elgar, with whom he was later to develop a close friendship. Yet the music of Bach also found its way into Elgar's life at an early stage, and in fact provides us with the earliest example of his manuscript, a musical 'doodle' on the name BACH, which shows an advanced knowledge of musical theory for an eight-year-old and suggests that Bach was a household name with the Elgar family.<sup>2</sup> Elgar *père* was a church organist, and his music business kept him in touch with music at Worcester Cathedral and the Three Choirs Festival, where he played violin in the orchestra for many years, being joined by his son Edward for the first time in 1878. The music of Bach had been appearing with increasing strength in Three Choirs Festival programmes. Notably, S. S. Wesley conducted a performance, albeit a shaky one,<sup>3</sup> of the *St Matthew* at Gloucester in 1871, but the work made sufficient impression to be repeated at Worcester in 1872.

It is recorded that during the so-called 'Mock Festival' of 1875 Elgar was greatly impressed by the organ-playing of S. S. Wesley in Worcester Cathedral, and especially by a performance of Bach's 'Giant' Fugue. Elgar undoubtedly admired Bach, but his lack of confidence was on occasion to bring him low in the presence of the great master's music. After playing in a performance of the B Minor Mass at Worcester in 1893 he wrote

depressively on his programme: 'I played 1st violin for the sake of the fee as I cd. obtain no recognition as a composer.'<sup>4</sup>

However, Elgar does appear to have also found solace in the music of Bach, and especially in his own playing of the '48'. In an interview in 1896 he told Robert Buckley, his first biographer: 'I play three or four preludes and fugues from the "Well-tempered Klavier" every day. No. 33, in E major, is one of my favourites. No. 31 is another, and No. 29, a wonderful masterpiece, is constantly before me'.<sup>5</sup> Later, in July 1902, he wrote to his friend Ivor Atkins: 'I have been Biking wildly—but not too well—during the last 10 days & playing Bach, who heals and pacifies all men & all things.'<sup>6</sup> The same letter contains the news that Elgar is 'plotting GIGANTIC WORX'—a reference to the fact that he had now begun serious work on *The Apostles*, commissioned for the 1903 Birmingham Festival, to which Bach's music (and especially the *St Matthew Passion*) had been lending inspiration. Later still, after Lady Elgar's death in 1920, their daughter Carice recorded that her father had been 'playing Bach fugues' and was 'busy orchestrating Bach Fugue in C minor'.<sup>7</sup> The youthful experience of hearing Wesley's playing had perhaps come full circle.

The friendship between Elgar and Charles Sanford Terry appears to have developed initially through their involvement in the Three Choirs Festivals. Terry had been a regular attender for a number of years, travelling down from Newcastle upon Tyne where he lectured in history at Armstrong College (part of Durham University) from 1890 to 1898. Later he was to make the even longer journey from Aberdeen, where he was appointed to the university's first lectureship in history in 1898, and in 1903 to the Burnett-Fletcher Chair in History. Meetings with Elgar also took place at the Leeds and Birmingham Festivals, and from 1908 Terry—perhaps from having gained Lady Elgar's approval on account of his excellent social graces and connections—was invited to become a member of the Elgars' regular festival house parties.

The works of J. S. Bach appeared frequently in the programmes of the major festivals of the period, and the newest editions and translations were the subject of much discussion amongst linguists and in the musical press. In 1897 the Bach Choir was bold enough to attempt a performance of the *St Matthew* in German which, judging from the report in the *Musical Times*, was not a success: 'The Passion music was sung in German, a procedure which can scarcely be recommended. To those who were familiar with this language the various modes of pronunciation by the English singers were disturbing...'<sup>8</sup> C. S. Terry and Lady Elgar shared a knowledge of the German language and an interest in German culture; Elgar had earlier started to learn German when he hoped to go to Leipzig to study after leaving school, but for financial reasons this had not come to pass. However, it appears to have been Ivor Atkins, organist of Worcester Cathedral, who initiated the idea of collaborating with Elgar on a new English edition of the *St Matthew*;<sup>9</sup> this in turn was to cement Atkins' own friendship with Charles Sanford Terry. Although as yet there was little hint of the monumental Bach researches on which Terry was to embark, it is recorded that in August 1907, during a cycling tour of the east coast of Scotland, Ivor Atkins called on Terry (at Elgar's suggestion: 'Why not when in Aberdeen call on Professor Sanford Terry (Cults), a good one'), and had subsequently been 'writing to Terry about Bach'.<sup>10</sup>

Atkins made another visit to Aberdeen in July 1908, incurring the envy of Elgar who wrote to him there saying, 'How horrid of you to be in Cults when I am not', and 'Think of me when you wield the tea-pot', as well as 'Give my love to Terry'.<sup>11</sup> The friendship between Terry and Atkins was largely founded on their mutual love of the music of Bach. The first evidence of their professional collaboration is apparent in the Elgar-Atkins edition of the *St Matthew*, which was to receive its first performance at the 1911 Three Choirs Festival. The preface to the edition acknowledges the 'greatly-valued co-operation' of Professor Terry, adding that he 'devoted himself unsparingly to the work of comparison and adaptation' of the text.<sup>12</sup> The *Daily Telegraph* critic who attended the first performance had 'no hesitation in describing the edition as a complete success, for, while the music remains practically intact, there is frequently an enormous gain in the purity of the English used and in its efficient accentuation'.<sup>13</sup>

Elgar himself was unable to set aside much time to deal with the musical side of the edition, being greatly occupied with the composition of the Second Symphony. On 22 March 1911 he wrote to Atkins: 'As to the

Passion I don't see how my name is to come in unless I can do some expr[ession]';<sup>14</sup> and in June 1911, in response to a query from Atkins, Elgar made some suggestions regarding editorial markings, which Atkins adopted.<sup>15</sup> Terry was further involved in the first performance of the new edition at Worcester by being invited to help Atkins conduct Elgar's arrangements for brass band of two of Bach's chorales, famously from the top of the cathedral tower. Terry conducted the chorales again in 1913 at Gloucester, when photographs were taken.<sup>16</sup>

Terry's immersion in these events was greatly inspirational to him. In 1912 he was the influence behind the formation of a Bach Society (now the Bach Choir) in his adopted city of Aberdeen. As conductor of the Aberdeen University Choral and Orchestral Society he used his connections in the wider musical world to arrange major events in the city.<sup>17</sup> Dorothy Silk, Frederick Bridge, Hamilton Harty, Granville Bantock, W. G. McNaught and Henry Coward were among the leading musicians who were invited to take part in concerts and festivals in Aberdeen. At Terry's invitation, both Parry and Stanford produced orchestral versions of their Te Deums for 'first performances' in Aberdeen.

Fulfilling a long-held wish, Terry's concerts included a performance of the *St Matthew Passion* in 1913 using the Elgar-Atkins edition—the climax of one of the choral competition festivals which he had started in Aberdeen in 1909, the first of their kind in Scotland.<sup>18</sup> Terry's first rehearsal for the *St Matthew* was acknowledged with enthusiasm by leading musicians of the day, and he received telegrams from, among others, Elgar—'Heartiest congratulations to you and to Aberdeen on possessing fine chorus with high artistic aims. Greetings to members and best wishes'; Ivor Atkins—'Warmest wishes for your fine enterprise. Hope Festival Chorus will have great start tonight. Enthusiasm over 'Passion' will grow with every rehearsal'; Parry—'Very glad you have made sure of doing 'Matthew Passion'—great achievement—your performers are sure to get very keen about it'; and Stanford—'Wish you and chorus every success'. W. G. McNaught, editor of the *Musical Times* and the leading festival adjudicator of the period, wrote to Terry: 'The members of the Choir have a unique experience to go through in learning Bach's Passion Music. I almost envy them the joy.'<sup>19</sup> Ivor Atkins, who had been in Aberdeen to adjudicate at the 1911 Competitive Festival and had conducted his own anthem, 'There is none that can resist Thy voice' in the Church Choirs Festival Service, returned as an adjudicator in 1913 and played piano continuo in the *St Matthew*—surely a matter of great pride to Professor Terry. On learning of his forthcoming trip to Aberdeen, Elgar had written to Atkins on 13 May 1913: 'I have just recd from dear Terry his goodly book of the festival & you are going, I see, to help in it all. Give my love to him & let me know how you fare.'<sup>20</sup>

The *Aberdeen Journal* critic commented that the performance of the *St Matthew*, which involved over 300 performers (275 took part at Worcester in 1911), 'will probably stand out for many a long day in the memory of those who were privileged to be present in the Music Hall'.<sup>21</sup> It was a matter of great regret to all that Professor Terry was unable to attend the performance because of a breakdown in health. Yet he was proud of Aberdeen's achievement, and commented that 'we have challenged the south!'<sup>22</sup> Ill-health was to be a burden to Terry from that time onwards, but in spite of this his Bach researches, then barely begun, were to become his life's work. A musical successor of Terry's at Aberdeen University, Willan Swainson, summed up the situation in a Bach bicentenary article:

In 1914 it may have seemed that Terry's musical career was over, his best work done. Actually only the years of preparation were over. After a brief respite he applied his powers to the task for which, in everything that had gone before, he had so finely tempered himself. By 1916, though still hampered by ill-health, he had covered long stretches of the new road... There are indications that Terry became a Bach specialist, not from long-premeditated design, but rather as a result of a steadily increased integration of Bach in a general practice.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, from 1915 onwards a positive flood of publications on J. S. Bach and his music came from Terry's pen. First to appear were three volumes on *Bach's Chorals*, the first of which was dedicated to Ivor Atkins, whom Terry describes as one 'most patient and skilled in Bach lore'.<sup>24</sup> Terry describes the chorales as being 'like jewels' in the works of Bach. He points out that his own approach to them is 'historical rather than aesthetic' and that his information is superior to that of earlier Bach scholars, Schweitzer ('who does not deal with it') and



## THE MUSIC FESTIVAL, 1913.

WEDNESDAY, May 21st.

### Grand Orchestral Concert

Conductor - - Mr. HAMILTON HARTY.

FRIDAY, May 23rd.

### Bach's "Passion Music"

#### SOLOISTS

Miss JANET BURT  
(Principa Soprano, Queen's Cross Church).

Mr. GERVASE ELWES  
(Leeds, Birmingham, and London Festivals).

Miss DILYS JONES  
(Leeds Festival And London Bach Choir).

Mr. CAMPBELL McINNES  
(Leeds, Hereford, and Gloucester Festivals)

CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA—300 Performers.

Conductor Mr. WARREN T. GLEMENS.

SATURDAY, May 24th.

### Choral Competitions

MIXED VOICES. FEMALE VOICES. MALE VOICES.  
INDUSTRIAL CHOIRS. QUARTETS.

Judicators - {  
Mr. IVOR ATKINS  
(Organist of Worcester Cathedral)  
Dr. E. C. BAIRSTOW  
(Organist of York Minster)

The Booking Office (Mr. Macbeth's) Opens on Tuesday, May 20th, at 10 o'clock a.m.

Above: Rehearsal for the Church Choirs Festival Service, Aberdeen Music Hall, May 1911. Front right: David Stephen (director of the Carnegie School of Music, Dunfermline), C. S. Terry and Ivor Atkins. (Reproduced by kind permission of Aberdeen University Library.)

Left: Poster for Terry's 1913 Competitive Music Festival in Aberdeen, showing the extent of his connections in the wider musical world.

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Spitta, who is deemed 'unreliable'. The press reviews are largely enthusiastic: 'a monumental and exhaustive study... hardly likely to be superceded' (*The Times*); 'an honour to British scholarship and research' (*Musical Opinion*); and somewhat ambiguously 'a real triumph of laboriousness' (*Oxford Magazine*). The third volume of the set was published in 1921 and was again received with great respect and admiration:

No-one can arise from the perusal of this monumental work without a feeling of profound respect for Professor Terry as a scholar and musician. No less conspicuous is his love and veneration for the consummate genius whose productions he has done so much to elucidate.<sup>25</sup>

As a Bach scholar, C. S. Terry had arrived. Elgar's godson Wulstan Atkins remembered being presented with a gold watch by Terry in April 1920—'and I have no doubt that the watch was also a thank-you to [my father] for all the help he had given Terry in writing his three-volume book...'<sup>26</sup>

In 1920 Professor Terry had also found time to produce an English translation of the book by Bach's first biographer, J. N. Forkel, which had been published in 1802. (Again Atkins is mentioned in the acknowledgements, as proof-reader alongside W. G. Whittaker, whose interest in Bach had been nurtured by Terry in Newcastle and who himself became an eminent Bach specialist). Terry apparently felt that this work of translation was an essential undertaking; referring to an earlier (1820) English version, he states that 'much of it is so bad as to suggest grave doubts of the translator's comprehension of the German original'.<sup>27</sup> Terry had made an extensive study of existing Bach literature; the catalogue of his 'Bach Collection', which he bequeathed to the Royal College of Music, bears testimony to the vast amount of material he acquired in both English and German—some of it bought during lecturing trips to the armed forces on the western front during World War I. As a professional historian (and we must not forget that he was also the author of many distinguished 'historical' publications, particularly on Scottish history, alongside those on Bach) he was said to have the power of 'marshalling intricate masses of detail into lucid and balanced narrative'.<sup>28</sup> Applying those skills to his Bach researches, he now embarked on a series of publications, large and small, which earned him world-wide fame and an acknowledged place as the foremost Bach scholar of the time. Terry's fluency in German was vital to the viability of his researches, as many of his publications included full English translations of the works involved. The most notable publications were his pioneering biographies of J. S. Bach and of J. C. Bach, and *Bach's Orchestra*, all of which are largely unsurpassed. Professor Terry's main publications relating to Bach are as follows:

*Bach's Chorals* (three volumes) (1915–21)

Translation of Forkel's *Life of Bach* (1920)

*J. S. Bach's Original Hymn-Tunes for Congregational Use* (1922)

*A Bach Hymnbook of Sixteenth Century Melodies* (1923)

Bach's B Minor Mass ('The Musical Pilgrim') (1924)

*Bach: The Cantatas and Oratorios* (two volumes) ('The Musical Pilgrim') (1925)

*J. S. Bach's Cantata Texts, Sacred and Secular* (1925)

*Bach: The Passions* (two volumes) ('The Musical Pilgrim') (1926)

*Bach's Four-part Chorals* (1926)

Articles in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* on

'Bach', 'Passion Music' and 'Chorale' (1928)

*J. S. Bach: A Biography* (1928; sixth edition, 1967)

*The Origin of the Family of Bach Musicians* (1929)

*John Christian Bach: A Biography* (1929; second edition, 1967)

*The Magnificat, Lutheran Masses and Motets* ('The Musical Pilgrim') (1929)

*Bach: The Historical Approach* (lectures given on a tour of the USA) (1930)

*Bach's Orchestra* (1932; fourth edition, 1966)

*The Music of Bach* (1933)

Academic honours were showered on Professor Terry from near and far, including honorary degrees from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Durham, Oxford and Cambridge universities. The enormous respect in which he was held amongst German scholars was symbolised when, in 1935, during the celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of the birth of Bach, the University of Leipzig conferred on him the degree of Ph.D.

It is well-known that Edward Elgar did not sit comfortably with academia. His stint as professor of music at Birmingham was less than happy, and his relationships with 'musical' academics sometimes less than comfortable. But Terry—perhaps because he was not strictly a 'musical' academic—was different; Elgar responded to his warmth and conviviality, and actively sought out his company and his help at significant times. Terry in turn was devoted to the Elgar family and was proud of their friendship. (It is worth recording in this context of 'academia' that, on his appointment at Birmingham in 1905, one of Elgar's first purchases for the library was the entire Bachgesellschaft edition).

Bach was to generate world-wide fame for Charles Sanford Terry. Without his detailed researches on Bach and his time, he might be remembered simply as a musically-minded history professor with a sparkling lecturing technique and a particular interest in Scottish history. Bach's contribution to the fame of Edward Elgar is rather less significant, but nonetheless vital in several important areas. Terry's connection with Bach was, as we have seen, 'historical rather than aesthetic', and he does not tend to wear his heart on his sleeve regarding Bach's music. Elgar, by contrast, held Bach in open admiration, declaring the slow movement of the Double Violin Concerto 'the most divine thing ever written',<sup>29</sup> and, referring to his orchestration of Bach's C minor organ fugue (BWV 537), wanting to 'shew how gorgeous & great & brilliant he would have made himself sound if he had had our means.'<sup>30</sup> However, his enthusiasm was not entirely unblemished, as is revealed in a comment to Ivor Atkins in 1926: 'I wish you could get some *decent* Bach instead of the infernally dull (some of them) cantatas; if we had anyone to sing them! it wd be different, but the miserable *yowling* we get wearies me.'<sup>31</sup>

Elgar's debt to Bach is important and well-documented. From his early arrangements for string quartet of some of the '48' right through to the brilliant orchestration of the organ Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, Bach is never far from sight—a fact regularly attested to by Elgar himself. In connection with a fugue in *The Light of Life*, he told Robert Buckley: 'I thought a fugue would be expected of me. The British public would hardly tolerate oratorio without a fugue. So I tried to give them one.'<sup>32</sup> But he made it clear that he would never set out to imitate Bach: 'I certainly can't beat Bach in the Bach manner, and if anyone asks me why I don't write in the Bach style, I think I shall say "It has been done—once and forever—by Bach!"' Much later he told Eugene Goossens, who conducted the first performance of the C minor Fugue in 1921 (the year after Lady Elgar's death): 'Now that my poor wife has gone I can't be original, and so I depend on people like Johann Sebastian for a source of inspiration.'<sup>33</sup>

Various scholarly discourses have suggested ways in which Bach's music influenced that of Elgar. *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom* have been described as direct descendants of the Bach *Passions*, and similarities in form, characterisation and even in musical content have been observed.<sup>34</sup> Of *The Apostles*, Elgar himself wrote to his friend Canon Gorton: 'I have as in *Elijah* and *St Paul* "made speeches" for the characters except for the Christ whose words are of course untouched.'<sup>35</sup> Mendelssohn had of course been very much involved in the Bach revival and had himself used chorales and other Bachian models in his oratorios. Robert Meikle has also addressed the possible influences of the *St Matthew Passion* on Elgar's Second Symphony,<sup>36</sup> citing especially the powerful 12/8 time-signature of the opening movement of the *St Matthew*, and comparing the sequences in the same movement with those in the first movement of the symphony. Ivor Atkins recognised the affinity which Elgar felt for the Bach *Passions*, referring to the *St Matthew* as 'a work after your own heart.'<sup>37</sup>

Bach is also embroiled in the question of the 'Enigma' of the famous Variations. Elgar himself provided a possible clue by writing to his friend August (Johannes) Jaeger in 1900: 'I have sketched portraits of my friends—a new idea, I think—that is, in each variation I have looked through the personality (as it were) of another Johnny'.<sup>38</sup> Ian Parrott has suggested a further possible link in proposing that the musical theme B-A-C-H 'goes' with the 'Enigma' theme but is not heard.<sup>39</sup> Marshall A. Portnoy points out the numerical equality of

'ELGAR' and 'JSBACH' (each totalling 43) and links this to the fact that the main theme of the Variations has 43 notes.<sup>40</sup> This theory may have some credibility, given the fact that Elgar loved puzzles and anagrams, as exemplified in the name of his house, 'Craig Lea', which uses his family's initials and surname. Jack Westrup surmises that the 'Enigma' theme may be 'the product of a musical experience', and cites the setting of 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani' in the *St Matthew Passion*, where musical similarities are evident.<sup>41</sup>

Charles Sanford Terry would undoubtedly have approved of the influence of his hero J. S. Bach on the music of Edward Elgar. Perhaps there was even some regret that Elgar, as a Roman Catholic, could not comfortably use the chorale melodies in any form in his compositions. Elgar's orchestration of the organ Fantasia and Fugue in C minor would certainly have caused delight, even although Terry's particular quest was to encourage authenticity in contemporary performances of Bach. Terry may well have shared Elgar's regret that Richard Strauss did not take up the challenge to orchestrate the Fantasia himself. What a collaboration that might have been!

Lady Elgar's death in 1920 brought to an end the famous house parties of which Terry had been a part. But there is evidence of his continued friendships with Elgar and with Ivor Atkins, and of his association with the Three Choirs Festival, right up to his death in 1936. Ivor Atkins continued to champion the works of Bach, including several of his works in concerts of the Worcester Festival Choral Society as well as at the Three Choirs. On preparing the WFCS's first performance of the B Minor Mass, he wrote to Elgar in February 1922: 'I think it will beat me, but I mean to have a good try for it and am putting in extra practices. Fortunately the whole Society will back my every effort, for they love it—but J.S.B. has crammed a good deal in for the time at our disposal.'<sup>42</sup> Atkins was still exchanging visits with C. S. Terry during the 1920s. Terry stayed with Atkins for a few days after the Three Choirs Festival in 1923,<sup>43</sup> and Atkins was again in Aberdeen in 1924, as recorded in a letter to Elgar dated 11 May: 'I was with Terry for a few days in Aberdeen at the end of April... tremendously occupied with all his irons. He works harder than most men. He really is the most restlessly energetic man I know.'<sup>44</sup> Terry's car, which had notoriously broken down when taking the Elgars on a trip to Deeside in 1909, had let him down again: 'We were to have made expeditions with his motor, but of course the thing got nervous when it heard of my coming and so got into the hands of the motor mechanics. I believe they were putting in something new and wonderful the fruits of which others were to reap; but that is the way of motors; they are always holding out such promise.' Again one imagines that 'much Bach' was talked about during this visit. Atkins may already have had it in mind to produce his new edition of Bach's *St John Passion*, the first performance of which was to be the highlight of the Three Choirs Festival at Worcester in 1929.

Professor Terry had been a steward at the Three Choirs Festival for many years—and an active one at that, from all accounts. Typically, he did not feel it beneath his dignity to help with seating arrangements, and one imagines his practical involvement in the general running of events. Here he was able to use his experience of organising concerts, festivals and academic ceremonies in Aberdeen. Also, as his reputation as a Bach scholar grew, he was invited to provide festival programme notes for some of the performances of Bach. These included notes for a performance of the B Minor Mass at the Gloucester Festival in 1936, just two months before his death.

It has been said that Elgar's 'Three Choirs' friends were his 'real' friends.<sup>45</sup> Charles Sanford Terry was quite clearly part of that circle, not only as friend, but as helper, mentor, supporter, defender and ally at various times. Friendship rather than professional collaboration brought Elgar and Terry together, but Terry gained much of the inspiration for his own life's work from his association with Elgar and the Three Choirs—and especially with Ivor Atkins. The Bach Revival had made its mark on their generation: Elgar's fellow-composers C. H. H. Parry and Rutland Boughton had been moved to produce books about Bach; C. V. Stanford, Walford Davies and Ralph Vaughan Williams became conductors of the Bach Choir. The link between Terry's academic research and the move towards greater authenticity in performances of Bach is fittingly summed up in the words of W. G. Whittaker, his Newcastle protégé:

Professor Terry's amazing erudition and enviable intimacy with the vast bulk of the entire publications of the Bachgesellschaft, and his enthusiasm and understanding, are a trumpet call to professional and amateur musicians to explore these thousands of pages and turn their silent staves into living sound... Scholarship has pointed the way: let the practical musician follow.<sup>46</sup>

Terry's 'hobby to jostle with his profession'<sup>47</sup> continues to illuminate the paths of practical musicians and appreciative listeners, and of all who, like Edward Elgar, have reverence for the music of Bach.

1. *Musical Times*, 1 June 1913, p. 370.
2. See illustration; the cross-clefs diagram is also reproduced in Percy Young, *Elgar O.M.* (London, 1955), opposite p. 49.
3. C. Lee Williams, H. Godwin Chance, and T. Hannam-Clark, *Annals of the Three Choirs of Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester: continuation and history of progress from 1895 to 1930*, p. 250.
4. Quoted in Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar*, third edition (Oxford, 1987), p. 55.
5. Robert Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London, 1905), p. 31.
6. E. Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (London, 1984), p. 76.
7. *Elgar Diaries*, Birthplace Museum.
8. *Musical Times*, 1 May 1897, p. 312.
9. *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship*, p. 207.
10. *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship*, p. 162.
11. *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship*, p. 193.
12. Preface to J. S. Bach, *St Matthew Passion*, edited by Edward Elgar and Ivor Atkins (London: Novello, 1911).
13. *Daily Telegraph*, 15 September 1911.
14. *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship*, p. 215.
15. *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship*, p. 219.
16. *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship*, p. 258.
17. See Alison I. Shiel, 'Charles Sanford Terry and Aberdeen University Choral Society', *Aberdeen University Review*, lix, 206 (Autumn 2001), pp. 122–33.
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# Edward Elgar, A. C. Benson, and the Creation of *Land of Hope and Glory*

**Yvonne M. Ward**

*As befits a musical work with so many royal and patriotic associations, the genesis of Land of Hope and Glory is surrounded by myth and legend. Specially adapted from an extended article which first appeared in the programme booklet of the concert held in Westminster Abbey on 10 May 2002 marking Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee, the author examines the documentary record and offers fresh perspectives on the origins of one of Britain's best known national songs.*

Edward Elgar has frequently been condemned—and similarly applauded—for writing imperialist music; Arthur Benson has been derided as a minor or a second-rate poet with a bent toward jingoism. But the power of the music and the words of *Land of Hope and Glory* has been amply attested throughout the twentieth century. Within the lifetime of Henry J. Wood it became 'our second national anthem'.<sup>1</sup> Today it is enjoyed by thousands of flag-waving promenaders, and is mercilessly added as backing music for film and television footage of anything military or imperial. But despite its huge popularity, it has always clanged in some ears as 'imperialist' and 'jingoistic', and consequently Elgar enthusiasts periodically seek to extricate, explain, or at least distance their hero from these charges. Ideals of one age usually collide with the next, and rejection of or reconciliation with the perpetrators is necessary. Imperialism is certainly one category that provokes such responses. Elgar's biographer Michael Kennedy went to great lengths to distance Elgar from imperialist notions;<sup>2</sup> Bernard Porter moderated Elgar's imperialism by attributing it to his wife and to his perception of his inferior social status;<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Richards in his book *Imperialism and Music* argued that Elgar's imperialism was strongly in evidence but tempered by nineteenth-century notions of chivalry.<sup>4</sup> The librettist Arthur Benson, being less well-known, has had few such rescuers, with the exception of David Bury.<sup>5</sup> In the creation of *Land of Hope and Glory* neither Benson nor Elgar made their contributions purely 'for the good of the Empire'; it was a pragmatic enterprise—to earn money from their respective abilities to 'pen words' and to write 'bootiful music' for special occasions. 'King and Country' came later.

First some Gradgrindian facts! *Land of Hope and Glory* was written to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902, but it was not performed as planned. The first version was written as the finale to a *Coronation Ode*. A second version, the one most widely known now, was written as a popular song for another event of the coronation. They survive as two separate musical works with completely different structures, different music and separate sets of lyrics. But they do share that distinctive two-liner:

*Land of Hope and Glory, Mother of the Free,  
How shall we extol thee, who are born of thee?*

The words and tune are so deeply instilled in our psyches that it is impossible to merely read them!

That stirring melody was first heard as the trio section of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* March in D Major, op. 39, no. 1 in Liverpool on 19 October 1901, and then in a riotous London debut three days later in Queen's Hall under the baton of the young conductor Henry Wood, founder of the fledgling Promenade Concerts. He described the uproar:

I shall never forget the scene at the close of the first [of the marches]... The people simply rose and yelled. I had to play it again—with the same result; in fact, they refused to let me go on with the programme... Merely to restore

order, I played the march a third time. And that, I may say, was the one and only time in the history of the Promenade concerts that an orchestral item was accorded a double encore.<sup>6</sup>

Newspaper critics similarly reported the rapturous applause, by both the 'cognescenti and the hoi polloi!'

Legend has it that King Edward VII himself was so taken with the march that he suggested words should be added to the trio section, and biographers of both Elgar<sup>7</sup> and Benson<sup>8</sup> have perpetuated the story. Indeed, Elgar himself fondly recollected the matter thus.<sup>9</sup> But although the music had taken London by storm in October 1901, the King did not hear the march until he attended a performance by the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society four months later.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, although many letters from visits to Court have been preserved, no letter exists in the Elgar Birthplace Museum which makes any reference to contact with the Court during this period, nor is there any mention in the Elgar diary or at the Royal Archives, Windsor. The Elgars were not presented to the King and Queen until 1903.<sup>11</sup> By the time the King heard the march for the first time, Arthur Benson had written not only a draft of lyrics for the trio of that 'pompous and circumstantial piece',<sup>12</sup> but also numerous other verses which would later comprise five sections of a larger work, that of the now barely remembered *Coronation Ode*.

When Queen Victoria died on 22 January 1901 most people throughout the Empire could not remember life without the old queen, and the reputation built up by her raffish son Edward as Prince of Wales hardly served to allay their fears about the future. But around the Court, business continued; the new monarch had to be installed and ideas for the coronation, possible dates, rituals and music began to be discussed by the combined efforts of the Dean of Westminster Abbey, the Master of the King's Music Sir Walter Parratt, and the Director of Music for the coronation Sir Frederick Bridge.<sup>13</sup>

## The Librettist, Arthur Christopher Benson (1862–1925)

Prominent in Parratt's circle was Arthur Christopher Benson, then a housemaster at Eton College, and son of a former Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>14</sup> When Queen Victoria died, the unmarried Benson was thirty-nine years old, having been born five years after Elgar in the year following the death of Prince Albert. Benson had lived within the most eminent circles of Victorian and Edwardian England. He had first been introduced to the Queen as an infant when she came to open Wellington College where his father was the first headmaster. After being a King's Scholar at both Eton and Cambridge, Benson returned to Eton as a master and moved easily between the linked worlds of the college and the castle. At Windsor he found his remarkable ability with words elevated him for a while to a position of 'a sort of unofficial poet laureate',<sup>15</sup> partially supplanting the lack-lustre Alfred Austin. From 1895 Benson had supplied verses for hymns and odes for various royal occasions, ranging from the Queen's last royal visit (to Ireland),<sup>16</sup> to verses for her Christmas cards.<sup>17</sup> On the occasion of the Queen's eightieth birthday in 1899, Parratt revived an Elizabethan tradition by arranging an *aubade* and commissioning verses from various poets, including Benson, which were sent for setting by the foremost composers of the day, including Elgar.<sup>18</sup> Benson was very moved by the occasion, but there is no evidence that he met Elgar there. Each year on 14 December a ceremony was held on the anniversary of the death of Prince Albert, and Benson happily recorded that Queen Victoria had 'sent again to ask me to write a hymn for the Mausoleum service, to a certain tune...'<sup>19</sup> This 'tune' was one of the Queen's own compositions.

Despite his position at Eton, Benson felt the need to supplement his income. He recognised in himself an ability to 'pen words', and took every opportunity and invitation to write and publish, for example writing two confirmation hymns for Queen Victoria's grandchildren in the train as he travelled from London to visit his mother at Horsted Keynes.<sup>20</sup> In preparation for the various celebrations of the coronation, Benson showed several verses to Parratt, who sent them to Elgar in March 1901, writing:

My dear Elgar,

These words have been sent to me by Arthur Benson, son of the Archbishop. A genuine poet and known to the Royalties. Should it take your fancy—he would be honoured and I much gratified if you could wed it to immortal

music.

Ever yours, Walter Parratt.<sup>21</sup>

Contrary to the assumption of many biographers, these verses were not offered to Charles Villiers Stanford first and rejected. Nor were they *Land of Hope and Glory*. They were verses which became the opening section of the *Coronation Ode* entitled 'Crown the King with Life'.<sup>22</sup>

## The Composer, Edward Elgar (1857–1934)

Although a provincial, Edward Elgar himself was no stranger to the royal court. His father, who kept a music shop in Worcester, had received an official appointment as 'tuner of pianoforte to Her Majesty the Queen Dowager [Queen Adelaide]' during her residence at Witley Court in 1843.<sup>23</sup> By Elgar's early twenties, although largely self-taught, his musical life was busy—playing, teaching, arranging, conducting and composing. He despised teaching,<sup>24</sup> and although he was constantly composing and arranging music for the various musical activities which filled his life in Worcester, he had to wait until his twenty-eighth year for his first work to be published.<sup>25</sup> His first professional position was at the Worcester City and County Pauper Lunatic Asylum. He served as bandmaster, conducting the attendants' orchestra as they provided a weekly musical program, a concert or a dance for the inmates.<sup>26</sup> He bicycled the six miles to the asylum, and his annual salary of £32 was supplemented by a fee of five shillings for every polka or quadrille he wrote for the orchestra. The music had to be scored for the limited and varying instruments and players available. An example of such restrictions was on the 21 December 1879, when he scored a Minuet in G minor for flute, clarinet, two cornets, euphonium, bombardon, violins 1 and 2, bass and piano.<sup>27</sup> These pressures instilled in the young Elgar a particular pragmatism to be associated with creative endeavours—a quality he had in common with Benson. His marriage in 1889 to Alice Roberts underscored an extra awareness of his financial responsibilities and shortcomings.

By the 1890s, the publishing of Elgar's work, and performances in various choral festivals and concert programs had brought him to the attention of Sir Walter Parratt, who was always seeking new music for performances at court.<sup>28</sup> In Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee year, 1897, Elgar had a success with the commissioning by the publisher Novello of an *Imperial March* and a short cantata, *The Banner of St George*. This success encouraged him to seek and obtain the permission of the Queen to dedicate his cantata *Caractacus* to her. Elgar was invited to Windsor for the performance of his madrigal *To Her Beneath Whose Steadfast Star*,<sup>29</sup> and for another concert organized by Parratt at the Royal Albert Institute in the presence of one of Queen Victoria's daughters.<sup>30</sup> Elgar wrote to his sister, '...they did ten of my pieces which I either conducted or accompanied—you shall see a gold programme! Very nice & I slept in the Castle! I sent a line to Dad as I thought it might please him.'<sup>31</sup> In the following year, two of his *Sea Pictures* were performed by command for Queen Victoria at Balmoral.<sup>32</sup>

By the time of Victoria's death in 1901, both Elgar and Benson had separately, forged strong artistic links with the Court.

## The Rapid Evolution of the *Coronation Ode*

The new monarch was already in his sixtieth year. Benson's verses for a coronation hymn praying that the King should be blessed by God ('crowned') with life, might, peace, love and faith were perfectly fitting. The hymn concluded with the verse:

*All that hearts can pray,  
All that lips can sing,  
God shall hear today —  
God shall save the King!*<sup>33</sup>

On the 21 March 1901 Benson had written to Elgar to introduce himself with characteristic self-effacement:

Dear Sir,

Sir Walter Parratt, to whom I gave some lines on the King's Coronation, kindly told me that he would send them to you in case you felt inclined to set them. He now tells me you think favourably of the lines. I need hardly say that I shall be very proud if you decide to set them; and if there is anything that you find musically inappropriate in the words, I shall be delighted to try and mend them.<sup>34</sup>

This marked the beginning of the collaboration and set the tone for it. Unfortunately, of the one hundred and eighty-one volumes of Benson's massive diary, the only one missing covers this period, probably removed by Benson's literary executor Percy Lubbock in a fit of pique totally unconnected with musical composition. However, most of Benson's letters to Elgar survive, but as with much correspondence to Benson, all that has survived are copies the writers may have made.

For Elgar, the years 1899–1901 constituted a high watermark of creativity. During this time he composed and had premiered the *Enigma Variations*, *Sea Pictures*, *The Dream of Gerontius*, *Cockaigne*, and he revised *The Light of Life*.<sup>35</sup> In recognition, Cambridge University awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1900.<sup>36</sup> Elgar was forty-four years old. It was during 1901 that the idea for the series of *Pomp and Circumstance* marches developed and the famous theme for the first one materialised. He recognised the potential of the tune immediately, and concluded a letter to his friend and Novello editor August Jaeger, 'In haste and joyful (Gosh! man I've got a tune in my head).'<sup>37</sup>

At Leeds, on his way to Liverpool for the première of the first two marches in October 1901, he met Henry V. Higgins, the manager of the Grand Opera Syndicate of Covent Garden, an energetic impresario who was planning a gala concert that the King and Queen would attend on the eve of the coronation. He was seeking a new work for the occasion.<sup>38</sup> The Benson verses as a *Coronation Ode* were mentioned by Elgar, as was the possibility of reviving *Gerontius* in an attempt to redeem its reputation after its catastrophic première.<sup>39</sup> With Parratt's help, Higgins was able to have the King's approval of the plan within a week.<sup>40</sup>

Benson had not given up hope that the *Ode* might yet be part of the proceedings at Westminster Abbey. He consulted Randall Davidson, then Bishop of Winchester and later Archbishop of Canterbury, on the matter, but Davidson was of the opinion that the *Ode* 'was not of a sufficiently liturgical character for the Coronation Service'. Practical as ever, Benson promptly wrote to Elgar:

I think to have it produced at this gala performance of which you speak would be a very good thing to do. As to amplifying the *Ode* I will gladly do what I can, if you could give me some idea of the additions required...<sup>41</sup>

At this stage, Higgins envisaged that the *Ode* would be preceded by the popular March No. 1, but Elgar had already decided that the trio of the march would be used for the finale of the *Ode*. By 3 December Benson was hard at work. He sent a five-part outline of the work to Elgar which was altered very little; the only alteration made by Elgar was that 'England' was changed to 'Britain' because it sounded better musically.<sup>42</sup> Benson then asked Elgar to 'string together a few nonsense words' to show him the rhythm of the *Ode* finale.<sup>43</sup> With some lyrics Elgar made suggestions, but one couplet he did not change was the opening lines of the set of verses Benson sent on 10 December 1901, the finale:

*Land of Hope and Glory, Mother of the Free,  
How shall we extol thee, who are born of thee?*<sup>44</sup>

Benson had not heard the trio before he wrote the lyrics. There is no evidence that Elgar sent Benson a manuscript of the trio; and the march was not published until 1902. He relied entirely on the 'nonsense syllables' supplied by Elgar. Benson worked so rapidly that the libretto was completed and ready for Elgar to set to music

when he returned from spending Christmas in Germany.<sup>45</sup>

## The Role of King Edward VII in *Land of Hope and Glory*

It was Elgar himself who, in later life, propagated the idea that *Land of Hope and Glory* had a royal inspiration.<sup>46</sup> It emanated from a remark attributed to Elgar and published in the *Daily Sketch* in autumn 1927. Upon reading those remarks, the much-fêted singer Dame Clara Butt wrote to Elgar as if to prompt his memory. She reminded him that she had sat beside him at a performance of the *Pomp and Circumstance* March No. 1 on 26 November 1901, and had asked him to write something like that for her; ‘after a little talk and persuasion on my part you said, “You shall have that one my dear.”’<sup>47</sup> The seventy-one-year-old somewhat irascible composer wrote in reply, promptly and emphatically:

Dear Clara,

I have just returned home and found your letter here.

I have not seen the “Daily Sketch” and do not know how my remarks were reported. King Edward was the first to suggest that the air from the Pomp and Circumstance March should be sung and eventually that song as is now known was evolved, via the Coronation Ode.

There is nothing to contradict in this.

Believe me to be

Yours very truly,

Edward Elgar<sup>48</sup>

The final sentence is abrupt and defensive. Dame Clara knew him well and with a view to any future friendship, wisely did not pursue the matter.<sup>49</sup>

It may seem surprising to state that Elgar was mistaken about the history of his own work. But it must be kept in mind that by this time King Edward VII’s coronation lay more than a generation in the past and the composer after enjoying a period of great popularity and acclaim before the War, had undergone a period of prolonged melancholy and disappointment. His wife Alice had died after a relatively brief illness in April 1920.<sup>50</sup> Alice had been not only a wife to Elgar, but also a confidante, a manager, and in some ways, a mother. She organized their entire lives to facilitate Elgar’s composing. Alice sent their only child to boarding school to keep the home quiet and free from distraction.<sup>51</sup> She managed the houses, the money and their social life. She ruled his manuscript books for him, transcribed copies of the manuscripts and despatched them to the publishers. After her death, he found that this support for his composing was impossible to replace, and he frequently rearranged his life but never found such unstinting support again.<sup>52</sup> He conducted occasionally, fulfilling promised engagements. He was left with a fixed income of £200 per annum, plus his earnings and the capital on the London house.<sup>53</sup> Despite his financial state, upon the death of Walter Parratt in 1924, Elgar had offered his services gratis as Master of the King’s Music to avoid the position being dissolved, as the King’s Orchestra had been.<sup>54</sup> In 1932 his good friend George Bernard Shaw drolly suggested, ‘Why not a Financial Symphony? Allegro: Impending Disaster. Lento Mesto: Stony Broke. Scherzo: Light Heart and Empty Pocket. All<sup>o</sup> con brio: Clouds Clearing!’<sup>55</sup>

It is possible that in the interview with the *Daily Sketch* reporter Elgar had conflated several different events in his memory of the beginnings of *Land of Hope and Glory*. Since the coronation, Elgar had conversed with the King and Queen several times—in June 1903, for example, when he was first presented to the King at the Union Jack Concert. Alice recorded that the King spoke to Elgar ‘for quite a long time and very touchingly told him how he liked his music & in his illness used to have some of his favourite pieces played to him once & sometimes more than once a day and how it soothed him very much...’<sup>56</sup> In 1904, during the Elgar Festival at Covent

Garden in March, and at his investiture in July, he conversed with the King on each occasion.<sup>57</sup> At this point it was too late for the story to be retracted.

But Clara Butt's description of events fits more logically than Elgar's. She had been a great critical and popular success in premiering *Sea Pictures* in October 1899. She was then invited by royal command to sing for Queen Victoria,<sup>58</sup> and she received excellent reviews for a concert in Manchester when Elgar conducted the work.<sup>59</sup> When a new work attained popularity as quickly as the March No. 1, it is entirely logical that she should 'beg' Elgar to write something like that for her, to repeat their earlier joint successes, and to ride the wave of popularity they were both presently enjoying. It is quite likely Elgar had received the letter from Higgins during the day of the 26 November, with the formal invitation to compose the *Coronation Ode*.<sup>60</sup> This was to be his first opportunity to compose for Covent Garden. Higgins had requested that he treat the letter as 'confidential'. Nothing would have delighted Elgar more—with his quirky sense of humour—than to be able to make such a promise to one of his most renowned artists in the knowledge that something even greater was being projected! Whether Clara Butt's name was mentioned when Higgins met Elgar at Leeds we cannot know; it certainly was mentioned in their next communication on the 1 December 1901.<sup>61</sup>

Fine tuning of the *Ode* continued throughout the first months of 1902. Most of the composition and orchestration was completed by Easter. Benson was out walking at his mother's home in Horsted Keynes, Sussex when it occurred to him that Queen Alexandra had not been mentioned in the whole piece. Upon arriving back at the house, he quickly wrote two charming verses of four lines, beginning 'Daughter of Ancient Kings, Mother of Kings to be', neatly encapsulating her royal Danish ancestry, and her dynastic and maternal links to Britain and the monarchy. He wrote to Elgar immediately, alerting him to the now glaring oversight and including the new verses.<sup>62</sup> Elgar set the verses in close-moving four-part harmony which has been declared by some critics to elevate the *Ode* to a level of genius.<sup>63</sup>

### The Song: *Land of Hope and Glory*

Throughout April, Elgar was busily completing the final checking of proofs of the *Ode* for the engravers, in addition to fielding all manner of inquiries from various bandleaders and chorus managers associated with the coronation gala, and distress calls from Henry Higgins.<sup>64</sup> The actual coronation was set for Thursday, 26 June. Many other coronation events were being planned in order to fill the week. One such event was that planned by the famous Canadian opera singer, Madame Albani.<sup>65</sup> She planned a concert at the Royal Albert Hall for the Saturday afternoon prior to the coronation ceremony, and wanted to present a new work.

The music publisher Arthur Boosey first suggested to Benson that a separate popular song based on *Land of Hope and Glory* should be written for Clara Butt to sing at this concert and that it should be published. Benson wrote to Elgar:

I am quite ready to try and do what I can if you approve...

You will criticize frankly anything I send you, will you not? I don't think I have got quite the popular ring—but I should like to try very much.<sup>66</sup>

Five days later, Benson sent a draft of the song with the usual exhortation to Elgar to criticise freely, and Elgar wrote the new music for it, two verses, with *Land of Hope and Glory* comprising the second part of each verse and being repeated for the chorus—in effect giving the public what they wanted, more of that catchy tune!<sup>67</sup>

This song version of *Land of Hope and Glory* had its première in the Albert Hall as planned, sung by Clara Butt. The concert was reviewed widely and favourably in the newspapers—*The Times* noted that the new song included 'the magnificent Trio' of the *Pomp and Circumstance* March No. 1 and was 'enthusiastically received', and the *Morning Post* reported that Miss Butt was several times recalled.<sup>68</sup> But on that day, neither Benson nor Elgar made any mention of the première of the song—perhaps another instance of their pragmatic approach to

composition.

Madame Albani's Grand Coronation Concert which had premiered the song was unique. All of the other coronation festivities had to be cancelled or postponed when King Edward VII went down with appendicitis. Elgar heard the news of the King's illness as he was bicycling with Rosa Burley along the lanes of Worcester on the afternoon of 24 June. He wrote to Jaeger:

Don't for heaven's sake sympathize with me—I don't care a tinker's damn! It gives me three blessed sunny days in my own country ...instead of stewing in Town. My own interest in the thing ceased, as usual, when I had finished the M.S. [manuscript] ...the news reached me at a little roadside pub: I said 'Give me another pint of cider.' I'm deadly sorry for the King—but that's all.<sup>69</sup>

Alice Elgar's diary entry was very succinct: 'E. out cycling again. Heard the dreadful news about the King's illness and postponement of coronation.'

Benson, at Windsor, was much more anxious, not just for news of the King, but also to know whether the school holidays that had been granted to the Eton boys would be withdrawn—which would mean him having to resume his teaching duties. He, too, was spending the Monday riding his bicycle, to Cookham and Cliveden, and he arrived back to the 'dreadful news—the horrible operation, the King sinking—everything put off—all leave cancelled.' In his diary, Benson confessed his sympathy for the King and for others:

Was there ever a man in a tragic position? Apart from the anxiety itself, they will feel acutely the disappointment and upset to the whole country. Some poor people I fear ruined or very hard hit. The fact that the King has no personal dignity or romance about him heightens the horror. This bourgeois, ungraceful, small-minded, gross, kindly man with the cup (which he made no picture of not enjoying) dashed from his lips. The danger in which he lies give him one touch of dignity—and the courage with which I hear he took it. I have no hope of his life, or very little.<sup>70</sup>

Benson's anxiety about the possibility of the King's dying was widely felt. Operations for appendicitis were known to be risky, and recovery miraculous.<sup>71</sup> Dealing first with the Eton boys protesting at the cancellation of their holiday, Benson lamented: 'Our own [family] arrangements are horribly upset. ...I have wasted money on my Court Suit—and even my poor Ode won't be performed—it will go down to Limbo.' But he cheered himself up: 'I say, "Go on to the next".'<sup>72</sup>

Elgar received many letters commiserating with him upon the postponement of the *Ode*, from Jaeger, Boosey, and Higgins.<sup>73</sup> Benson, in responding to a letter from Elgar, showed disappointment but optimism:

Of course I was naturally sorry not to hear the Ode. To hear one's words, [with] magnificent music and performed by first-rate vocalists is a rare luxury! But the event knocked the bottom, for the time, so completely out of everything that it did not present itself to me in the light of a disappointment. I did not, to speak frankly, imagine that the King had more than an outside chance of recovering.

Your account of your consolations is highly philosophical—Bach and bicycling! We poor professionals, who had expected a five day holiday diversified by historical ceremonials, had to turn feebly to our most ordinary tale of work—construing and correcting exercises! I will admit that I was singularly flat! I do not suppose there was ever an occasional writer who so entirely had the wind taken out of his sails as I—the Coronation Ode, the Loyal Ode (for the King's visit here to Eton) the Kaiser-march words for the... [Recessional at the] Abbey and the two Coronation hymns—all these poor spirits fell straight into Limbo!

But I go on to the next.

I believe we shall have our Ode shortly—...Perhaps you will let me try and write something for you again some day—This has been a great pleasure and honour—and I am a very willing librettist. Ever sincerely yours,

Arthur C. Benson.<sup>74</sup>

Benson's prolific output as a writer is shown by the number of works he had produced for this one event. Benson frequently regretted manuscripts being sent off, but was always looking for the next writing enterprise. For Elgar the completed manuscript signalled an end of the enterprise, unless it was to be revised or prepared for performance, then the work reasserted itself, temporarily. The pragmatic aspect of their creative endeavours which they had in common is in evidence here.

The coronation in shortened form was conducted in August as the King convalesced. The scheduled performance of the *Coronation Ode* in Sheffield on 2 October 1902 now became its première. Alice recorded: 'Magnificent performance of the Ode—immense enthusiasm.' The newspapers agreed,<sup>75</sup> though some of the critics felt the inspiration unequal, and many did not like the *Pomp and Circumstance* setting.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps like the members of the public they had become familiar with the song version, with its repetition of the 'Land of Hope' phrase.

Later in October Elgar conducted the first performance of the *Coronation Ode* in London, in a concert bill with Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. The Elgar diary recorded: 'Immense audience. Overwhelming enthusiasm. [Robert] Newman had to make a speech that Elgar would conduct the *Ode* again next Sunday. Yells of delight, and then came the Choral Symphony.'<sup>77</sup> The *Coronation Ode* was performed at least five times throughout November.<sup>78</sup> Benson heard the *Ode* for the first time on the 9 November, seated beside Alice Elgar as Edward conducted. He met Elgar for the first time after the performance, and wrote two days later:

Dear Dr. Elgar,

...The "Ode" gave me enormous pleasure—...It is all fine—and you can imagine the kind of pleasure it was to me to hear the words thus glorified.

...I hope we shall meet again sometime.

Believe me, ever sincerely yours,

Arthur C. Benson.

P. S. May we drop the formal prefixes in writing? It would seem more natural to me.<sup>79</sup>

At that time, the King and Queen had still not attended a performance of the *Ode*. Lady Maud Warrender, a musician, a friend of Elgar's, and a lady-in-waiting, set about rectifying the matter by organising a gala performance of the *Ode* for the Union Jack Society to commemorate what should have been the first anniversary of the coronation in June 1903.<sup>80</sup> The Elgars were presented to the King and Queen, and Queen Alexandra was given a special copy of the 'Daughter of Ancient Kings' section. Both the *Ode* and the song had been published by this time.

Some people identified with imperial sentiments in the piece; for others it was simply a broad tune like Beethoven's theme in the Ninth Symphony, which can be readily 'caught'. Certainly many people wrote to Elgar proclaiming *Land of Hope and Glory* to be worthy of a national song, and longing to hear it again.<sup>81</sup> The context in which the listener places the music also has to serve to explain it. If you are seeking to reject militaristic impulses then, as film-maker Ken Russell did, you will have Elgar turning his back on *Land of Hope and Glory* (historically a misinterpretation of the event). If as a post-modernist you believe every creative act is somehow the sum total of influences from all over, then Elgar's music is at once imperial, chivalrous, mystical, useful, religious, monarchical, egotistical and provincial.

But the power of Elgar's music and Benson's words has been amply attested. *Land of Hope and Glory*, in both its versions, has proved much more than the 'unhappy marriage' of a set of words to a catchy tune. It was not liturgical enough to be included in the coronation ceremony, but in the largely secular society of today, many people derive almost religious pleasure from singing *Land of Hope and Glory* which has become for them a hymn and an anthem, evocative of kings, queens and country.



1. Henry J. Wood, *My Life in Music* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), pp. 203–4. Wood was only thirty-two years old at this time. On his stationery his 'telegraphic address' was very neatly given as 'CONDUCTETH, LONDON'!
2. Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).
3. Bernard Porter, 'Elgar and Empire: music, nationalism and the war', in *Oh, My Horses! Elgar and the Great War*, ed-ited by Lewis Foreman (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2001), pp. 133–173.
4. Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876–1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).
5. David Bury, 'Was Arthur Benson a Jingoist?', *Elgar Society Journal*, vol. 12 no. 6 (November 2002), pp. 243–51.
6. Wood, *My Life*, pp. 203–4.
7. Percy M. Young, *Elgar O.M.* (London: Collins, 1955), p. 99; Kennedy, *Portrait*, third edition (1987), p. 169; Michael De La Noy, *Elgar the Man* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), p. 109; Simon Mundy, *Elgar*, revised edition (London: Omnibus, 2001) p. 94; Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), p. 53. Anderson suggests the original idea is more likely to have come from the singer Dame Clara Butt via the king, but cites no documentary evidence. J. F. Porte, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: Kegan Paul et al., 1921), p. 96 declared that the suggestion had come from Queen Alexandra.

8. David Newsome, *On the Edge of Paradise: A. C. Benson, the diarist* (London: John Murray, 1980), p. 104–5.
9. Kennedy, *Portrait*, p. 169.
10. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 364, footnote 9. Walter Parratt mentioned the King's growing enthusiasm for the march in a letter to Elgar, but this was much later, on 16 August 1903. Elgar Papers, Elgar Birthplace Museum, 1957.
11. Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 409.
12. A witty phrase of August Jaeger, editor at Novello, in a letter to Elgar, EBM, 8525.
13. Westminster Abbey Muniments, 58424, 'Document of Precedent Coronations from Charles I onwards: The Order of the Service of the Coronation' by J. Armitage Robinson, Dean of Westminster Abbey. In January 1902, Arthur Benson heard from the Bishop of Winchester about some of the difficulties in the planning of the coronation ceremony in relation to the procedure of anointing the King. He reported, rather wickedly, 'The Dean and the Archbishop have to pour oil from an ampulla into a spoon and the whole thing is rather messy—as the Archbishop is blind and the Dean a tremulous septuagenarian, the worst is feared...!' Benson diary, Magdalene College Library, Cambridge, vol. 11, p. 33.
14. Newsome, *Paradise*, p. 106.
15. Newsome, *Paradise*, p. 4.
16. Newsome, *Paradise*, p. 104.
17. Benson diary, vol. 5, p. 61.
18. Donald Tovey and Geoffrey Parratt, *Walter Parratt: Master of Music*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 94.
19. Benson diary, vol. 5, pp. 61–3, entry for St Andrew's Day, 30 November 1900.
20. Benson diary, vol. 7, p. 146, entry before Sunday, 22 September 1901.
21. EBM, 1969.
22. For proof of the Stanford argument, see Yvonne M. Ward, "Gosh! Man I've got a tune in my head": Edward Elgar, A. C. Benson and the creation of *Land of Hope and Glory*, *The Court Historian*, vol. 7, no. 1 (May 2002), p. 22, footnote 26. Evidence for the dates of the *Land of Hope and Glory* verses appears later in the story.
23. De La Noy, *Elgar the Man*, p. 18.
24. Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 155. He fell back on teaching from time to time as a more steady form of income.
25. Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 110. Elgar was paid one shilling by the publisher and given twenty gratis copies of his Romance.
26. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar: A Life in Photographs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 17.
27. Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 82.
28. Letters from Parratt to Elgar, EBM, 1958, 1970, 1960, 1955.
29. Parratt to Elgar, EBM, 1970.
30. Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 292.
31. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) p. 80–1.
32. Kennedy, *Portrait*, p. 102.
33. From sleeve notes for the 1976 Chandos Records recording of the *Coronation Ode*. Words ©Boosey & Hawkes, 1902, 1932.
34. EBM, 3293.
35. Anderson, *Elgar*, pp. 422–3.
36. Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 336.
37. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) p. 267, written 12 January 1901. Many of Elgar's biographers prefer to quote the account from Dora Penny of the development of this march dating from 10 May 1901: 'Child, come up here. I've got a tune that will knock 'em—knock 'em flat.' See Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 348, and Kennedy, *Portrait*, p. 168.
38. EBM, 5905.
39. Moore, *A Creative Life*, pp. 294–337, 356–7.
40. EBM, 5905, 30 November 1901.
41. EBM, 3294, 1 December 1901.
42. EBM, 3295. Moore points out that this was not an ideological change—and there are many examples which confirm his assessment—but that 'Britain' would sing 'better—more forcefully'. Moore, *Letters of a Lifetime*, p. 108.
43. EBM, 3295.
44. EBM, 3296.
45. Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, pp. 108–9. Some of the words of the libretto continued to be modified throughout the period of Elgar's composing. See for example EBM, 3299–3310.
46. The debate about King Edward's role in the coming together of Benson and Elgar cannot be completely

- resolved, but some biographers' theories can be definitely disproved. De La Noy wrote that not only did the idea come from the King, but that a search had been on 'all year' to find a man to supply the words. This cannot be the case because the idea for a coronation ode and the first verses preceded the marches by seven months. (De La Noy, *Elgar the Man*, pp. 109–10). Kennedy surmised that the suggestion was put to Elgar by the King during Elgar's 'visit to Court' in November 1901. This also is impossible because although Elgar joked to Jaeger after the dazzling success of the Marches that he needed his Cambridge doctoral robes 'to appear at Court' (Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, p. 313–4, letter dated 12 November 1901), there is no evidence that he had any correspondence with the King or visited the Court at that time. He maintained a busy schedule at that time mainly up north, and he travelled to Germany for Christmas holidays, so there was no opportunity for a visit to Court. Kennedy's conclusion is based largely on a letter written by Elgar to Clara Butt in 1927 (Kennedy, *Portrait*, p. 169). It is widely quoted throughout the literature, including David Cannadine in his much-quoted article, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c.1820–1977' in *The Invention of Tradition* edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Kennedy's narrative will be addressed here in detail.
47. Quoted in Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 364, footnote 9.
  48. The full letter is printed in Young, *Elgar O.M.*, p. 99. Kennedy cites the letter but without the final sentence. Kennedy, *Portrait*, p. 169.
  49. Elgar had a reputation for being difficult at times. See Chapter 1 'Prelude' in Kennedy, *Portrait*, pp 15–16, and Chapter 8 'Friends and Relations'. There is no evidence of further correspondence between them on this matter.
  50. The following section has been drawn from Kennedy, *Portrait*, pp. 140–7 and Diana McVeagh, *Edward Elgar: His Life and Music* (London: Dent, 1955) pp. 69–74.
  51. Moore, *A Creative Life*, pp. 351–2.
  52. The view that Elgar wrote little after Alice's death has been strongly contested by recent scholarship. Cited and discussed in Richards, *Imperialism and Music*, pp. 79–83.
  53. Mundy, *Elgar*, p. 173.
  54. Moore, *A Creative Life*, pp. 769–70.
  55. Mundy, *Elgar*, p. 206.
  56. Quoted in Young, *Elgar O.M.*, pp. 112–3 from an account by Alice Elgar.
  57. Moore, *Letters of a Lifetime*, pp. 147–8, letter from Elgar to his father; pp. 151–4, official letter from Whitehall, and family.
  58. Tovey and Parratt, *Walter Parratt*, p. 91.
  59. De La Noy, *Elgar the Man*, p. 79; Mundy, *Elgar*, p. 85.
  60. Higgins' letter is dated 25 November, EBM, 5905.
  61. EBM, 5905.
  62. EBM, 3306, 2 April 1902.
  63. Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 367. Anderson also commended the inclusion (*Elgar*, p. 193), but the critic, Ernest Newman (*Elgar* [London, John Lane, 1922, repr. 1976], p. 47) declared the 'chorus... lacking in distinction, and unworthy of a place in the work.'
  64. EBM, 2144, 2145, 5908, 2132, 2134, 2141, 2146, 2135, 2129, 5909, and the correspondence was even more frantic in May! As late as 29 April, Benson, who had organized to have the words of the *Ode* published in 'one or two of the Dailies', didn't know on what day the gala concert was to be held (EBM, 3312).
  65. Emma Albani (1847–1930). Born in Quebec, Canada, she had a long international career that lasted four decades. Between 1872 and 1896 she regularly sang at Covent Garden; in the course of that time, she became a personal friend of Queen Victoria. Stephen Willis, 'Archives of Emma Albani at the National Library of Canada,' *National Library News*, vol. 25, no. 12 (December 1993), pp. 13–14.
  66. EBM, 3309, 21 April 1902.
  67. EBM, 3310, 26 April 1902.
  68. EBM Press Cuttings, October 1900–December 1902, 137, p. 61.
  69. Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, p. 360.
  70. Benson diary, vol. 14, p. 48.
  71. Philip Magnus, *King Edward the Seventh* (London: John Murray, 1964), p. 296–9; Denis Judd, *Edward VII* (London: Futura, 1975), p. 112.
  72. Benson diary, vol. 14, p. 49.
  73. EBM, 2153; 5911 from Higgins, 2148 from Boosey.
  74. EBM, 5922, Benson to Elgar, 8 July 1902.
  75. *Manchester Guardian*, 3 October 1902.
  76. Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 375. Ernest Newman wrote of the music, '...it is married very much against its own will...[and] when it is dressed up in the pompous sentiments of the *Coronation Ode* its clothes seem

- several sizes too large for it.' Ernest Newman, *Elgar* (London: Bodley Head, 1922, repr. 1976), p. 48.
77. Elgar diary, EBM photostat edition, 31 October 1902. Robert Newman was manager of Queen's Hall.
  78. List compiled from press cutting reports, EBM, 1327.
  79. EBM, 7364.
  80. There is a long series of letters relating to the planning of this concert. See EBM, 1848–1855. For the initial suggestion, see 1853.
  81. For example, EBM, 2171 and 2155.

*YVONNE M. WARD is a postgraduate student at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. The research for this article was carried out on the Malvern Hills, at the Elgar Birthplace Museum and the Worcestershire Record Office, at Westminster Abbey, the Royal Archives at Windsor, at Eton College and Magdalene College, Cambridge, as she sought to find out why Land of Hope and Glory was not included in the official music for the coronation of King Edward VII despite being written for it. The article "Gosh! man I've got a tune in my head!": Edward Elgar, A. C. Benson and the creation of Land of Hope and Glory' first appeared in The Court Historian, vol. 7, no. 1 (May 2002) which served as a programme for the Society for Court Studies Concert of Royal and Coronation Music at Westminster Abbey in May 2002. The author is grateful to the editors Robert Lacey and Philip Manse for permission to reproduce some of that material here. She has several other debts of gratitude: to the Masters and Fellows of Magdalene College, Cambridge for permission to access and quote from the Benson diary; to the Trustees of the Elgar Birthplace Museum; and to archivists Margaret Sanders, Aude Fitzsimons, and Tony Trowles; to Dorothy Thompson, Sue and Bob Sutton, Liz and Richard Coyle, Graham Fairhurst and Evelyn Maynard who have generously supported her during her research sojourns; to Jeffrey Richards, David Newsome, David Bury, Jerrold Northrop Moore and Robert Lacey.*

*Panorama of the Malvern Hills (drawing by the author). Aeons ago the earth's crust fractured on a north-south fault line. The layers of rock on the west side of the fault rose up to a great height whilst those on the eastern side remained level. The butt end of the western strata was exposed. Ages of erosion have not yet obliterated this, and the town of Malvern has been slung around as a scarf of habitation round its foot. It was here Edward Elgar, in his early married life, came to live. 'Saetermo', 'Forli' and 'Craig Lea' were three of his houses. South of the range, and left in the picture, lies Redmarley, a district of great interest where Alice Roberts, the future Lady Elgar, had her home and circle of friends. To the north of the range is Birchwood, the Elgars' rural retreat.*



# The Sounds that Elgar Heard: a background for composition—‘Saetermo’ and ‘Forli’

Catherine Moody

*Elgar’s sensitivity to his surroundings and the natural environment is well-known. In this article, illustrated with her own work, artist and Malvern resident Catherine Moody explores the Malvern landscape as it would have been during the years of the Elgars’ residence, making suggestions as to the sights and sounds that would have provided the visual and aural context for composition.*

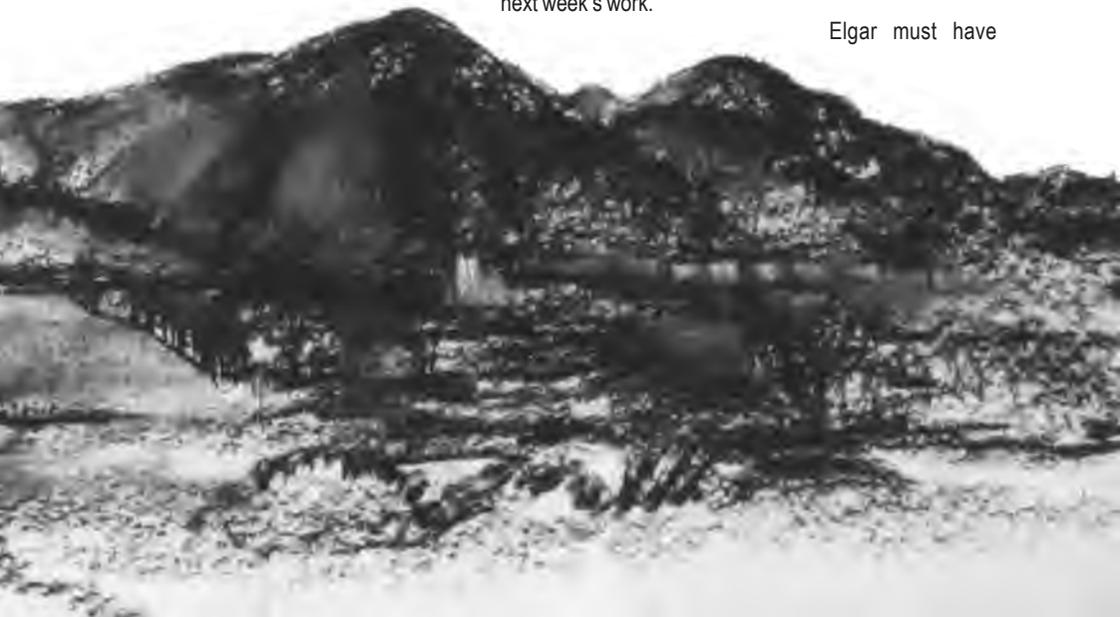
A blackbird sings as dawn breaks and the steep slopes of the Malvern Hills begin to face the morning sun. The fluid and melodious music of Edward Elgar followed as, sleepily with the radio turned on, I muse on these unchanging things of a Malvern morning, the birdsong and the early light. Elgar, at his three houses here, ‘Saetermo’, ‘Forli’ and ‘Craeg Lea’, must have experienced the same light and sound.

Great music takes us into the composer’s mind and we are lifted to a high plane of metaphysical experience. Minor, physical elements also play a part. It was good to hear the blackbird as the night sky receded. My pleasure in the sound of Elgar’s music was increased thereby.

For the creative artist, these mundane details are not without their influence. Elgar wrote to A. Troyte Griffith, ‘...all goes well with Keeble (builder) so far; three pirates came and have made a damned row ...I have shifted my muse into my dressing room where I can only hear a dull thud occasionally...’ (12 May 1912).

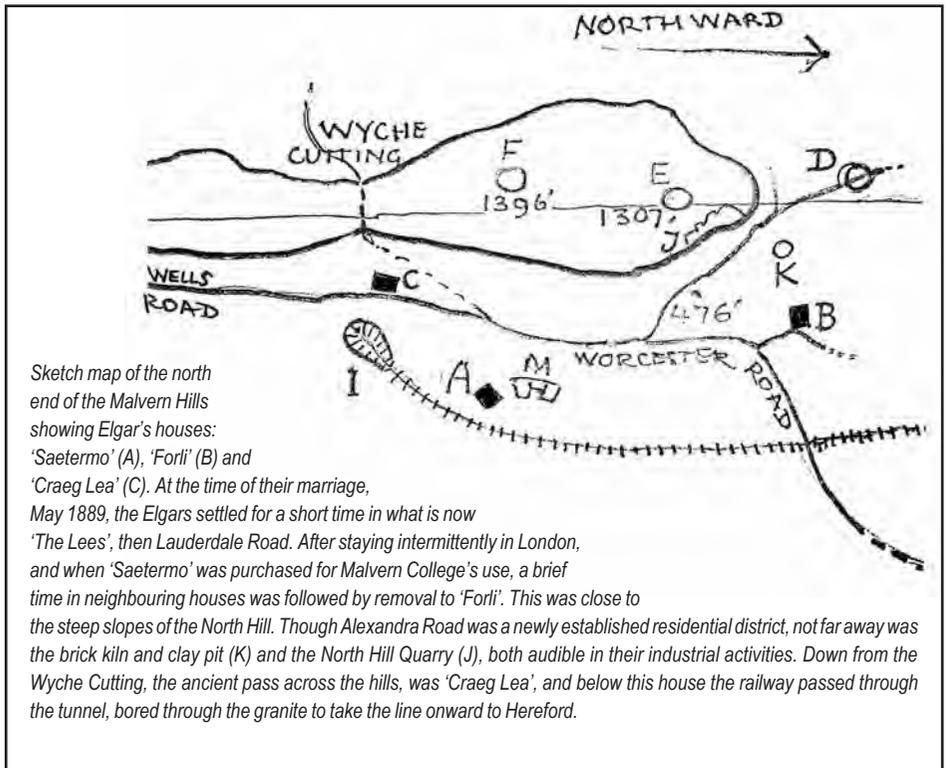
Elgar lived in Malvern during the early part of his career as a composer. ‘Forli’, off Alexandra Road, was where he lived whilst composing the *Enigma Variations*. Coming to Malvern in 1935, I feel there are sounds I have heard over the years that Elgar too may have noticed. Quarrying was still going on then, and I used to hear every Saturday at one o’clock the explosive charge go off at the North Hill quarry, which was not far from ‘Forli’. The fuse was set so that the explosion took place after the quarrymen had left, and it was designed to dislodge a mass of rock ready for the next week’s work.

Elgar must have





Elgar would have been familiar with the birdsong and the early clouds and morning light. Victor Hume Moody captured these unchanging qualities in his painting Dawn over a flock of sheep, Malvern seen from his studio, looking along the range to the south-east as the November day was dawning, and as Elgar would have seen it so many times across the Severn Vale.



'Forli', Alexandra Road (pen drawing by the author). This pleasant house, drawn in 1983, still had its approach across a level lawn, lying sideways on to the road and to Laburnum Walk. The burble of children's talk as they passed along the Walk to Sunday school must have alternated with the sound of hobnailed boots on weekdays. Workmen passed this way to the quarry, the brick kiln and the clay pit. It was here that 'my friends pictured within' received hospitality when their social life was cultivated both indoors and out by Edward and Alice.



come to expect this not inconsiderable bang and the subsequent roar of the fall of rock, which I used to hear when quite far away. It must have been an uninvited percussion and roll of drums intruding on the composition. Could it have been incorporated, perhaps into the seventh variation—'Troyte'?

The brick kiln too was near to 'Forli', at Belmont. The tall chimney of the furnace was surrounded by the circular tunnel of the kiln where the bricks were fired. They were made from the clay excavated on the spot. It was the subject of the pastel I painted some two or three decades after the kiln had ceased to operate. Billows of smoke must have blown across 'Forli' when the kiln was firing, and if the wind was blowing from the north-west, Elgar might have been dusting smuts from his manuscript paper.

A lady, Mrs Mary Beattie, who was born in one of the Belmont houses built of Malvern bricks, has just



*Facing page, above: The North Hill Quarry (oil painting by the author, c.1939). Only a few minutes' walk from 'Forli' was the big quarry where the explosive charge went off at 1 p.m. on Saturdays after the workmen had left. It was designed to dislodge a mass of granite ready for the next week's work. The sound of the explosion and the subsequent roar of falling rock was audible at a distance. All through the week there was the rattle and grinding of the cylindrical sieves sorting the stones and gravel.*

recalled to me how she used to go along Laburnum Walk behind 'Forli' to Sunday School at St Matthias church in the early 1930s. Some thirty-five years earlier the same burble of a group of children may have been heard by the composer on Sundays, and this would have alternated with the sound of hobnailed boots on weekdays.

In Elgar's days, quarrymen and brick makers would have been passing to and fro, and the activity of industry was surrounding him. This needs to be remembered because in the half a century following, all industry and the water cure died away, and Malvern took on its static character as a quiet town of retired inhabitants. It has not yet divested itself of this quality, but in Elgar's day it was different. Then, heavy labour was the keynote of North Malvern and Malvern Link. The children of North Malvern School were brought in from the playground lest they should be hit when the explosion at the quarry shed a shower of stones all around the Tank Clock region.

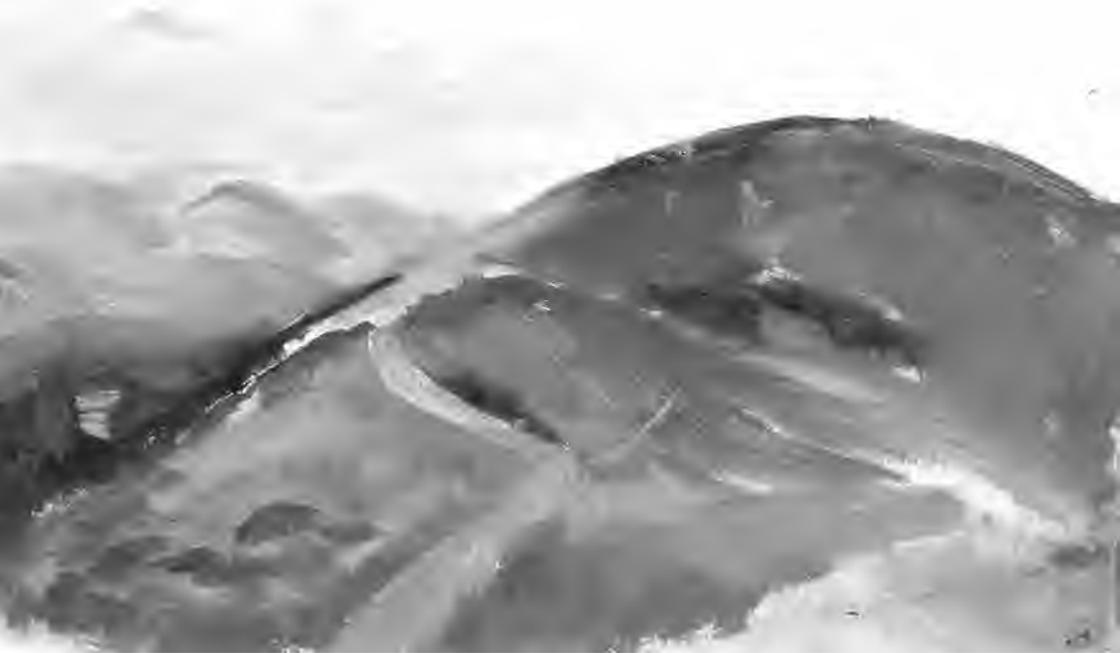
The railway line, thrusting on through the countryside, meant that immense tasks had been undertaken. Cuttings were made and embankments were built up, and it was all pick and shovel work, huge tonnages of earth being moved by men with wheelbarrows. The navies had come with the railway—not all of them had gone when the railway line was pushed further on to Hereford. One of these strong men, William Porter, stayed here. Being a capable builder, he set up a business and built Elgar's house, 'Craig Lea'.

It is worth remembering that strong men engaged on heavy labour were a background to musical composition, as well as the society of the artistic, the retired, or the elite and aristocratic families that made up the social background of Elgar's Malvern. His sojourns in London, his conducting life, all go to make a rich mix for this Worcestershire man who became part of a far wider landscape, a composer of Western European significance.

As well as composing music, Elgar had to build a career. As well as finding helpful social and artistic contacts, building a career for this young Worcestershire man must have seemed to him to be not unlike the heavy labour of the navies of Malvern. To have progressed from being in charge of the band of Powick Lunatic Asylum to being accepted in London's musical world must have needed an explosive charge similar to that he heard at one o'clock at 'Forli'. Readers may find early successes in launching new works or conducting performances that might be judged to mark, with parallel emphasis, the steps onward in Elgar's career.

Married to Alice Roberts on 9 May 1889, they were to seek out a house in Malvern. The lease of 'Saetermo', built in 1888 (and now part of No. 7 House, Malvern College) had been purchased by Elgar's bride; but they were not domiciled there for long. Moving to 'Forli', Alexandra Road, they came nearer to the North Hill. 'Forli' is a pleasant house placed sideways to the road, and in this way is approached across a wide lawn. At many houses here a steep flight of steps confronts the visitor. 'Forli' has a welcoming entrance to greet 'my friends pictured within', the subjects of the *Enigma Variations* on which he was working in this house.

*Facing page, below: Inside the Brick Kiln (pastel by the author, c.1939 when the brick works was derelict and the clay pit full of water). The tunnel of the kiln interior was where the bricks were fired. Here it is seen empty, the sunlight streaming inwards through the kiln openings. Ron Hammond recently recalled how, as a lad, he used to see the glare of the furnace gleaming outwards from these openings. Even without fire, a static mysteriousness remained on a quiet summer day when the artist was tempted to creep in and record its rich encaustic colours.*



Looking North (oil painting by the author). The summit of the North Hill. The contour lines crowd together between a benchmark of 476 feet near 'Forli' to 1,307 feet at the summit.

Not far from Alexandra Road the gentle slope changes to the sudden steepness of the North Hill. On the map the contour lines crowd together and the most impressive wall of hill rears up. Here the North Hill Quarry began to bite into the hard granite mass.

The water cure had attracted many to Malvern, and the population of 819 in 1801 had by 1861 risen to 6,049 (see Cross's *Handbook of Malvern*, p. 166). The coming of the railway with its phenomenally grand and decorative stations must have unleashed an avalanche of visitors during the 1860s, trippers from Birmingham and the Black Country at Malvern Link, and the elite and famous at Great Malvern station. Soon a new town of bricks, mortar and Malvern rock was established. New roads were laid out, many denoting their dates by the events they marked. Alexandra Road probably celebrated the marriage in 1863 of the Prince of Wales (later to become King Edward VII) to Alexandra, the Danish princess. All these roads were lined with Malvern stone walls. These walls along the roads are still a keynote of Great Malvern's townscape. Great exertions were needed by the quarrymen to supply the demand for stone. Gravel too was needed for the roads, paths and the drives to the new houses.

The impetus to build seems to have gone on, even though there was a slackening in the water cure enthusiasm. By 1872, the leading doctors of hydropathy had left (see *The Malvern Water Cure* by John Winsor Harcup, p. 74) and the fashion showed signs of decline, but education seems to have been a natural development, for the healthy reputation of the town was linked with the educational and ethical qualities valued for the young (see advertisement for Malvern College in Cross's *Handbook of Malvern*, p. 7). Music lessons

were the 'extra' which provided Edward Elgar with almost the only income available before his power as a composer was established.

With this background in mind, the refuge of a cottage at Birchwood takes on a more realistic form. Elgar must have enjoyed being able to break away from the demands of teaching and from the noises of heavy labour. The road past the brick kiln and Cowleigh Bank to Cowleigh Woods, and on to Birchwood, Storrige, led the Elgar family to Birchwood Cottage, not just a refuge, but perhaps an opening to a wider conception of the composer's life.

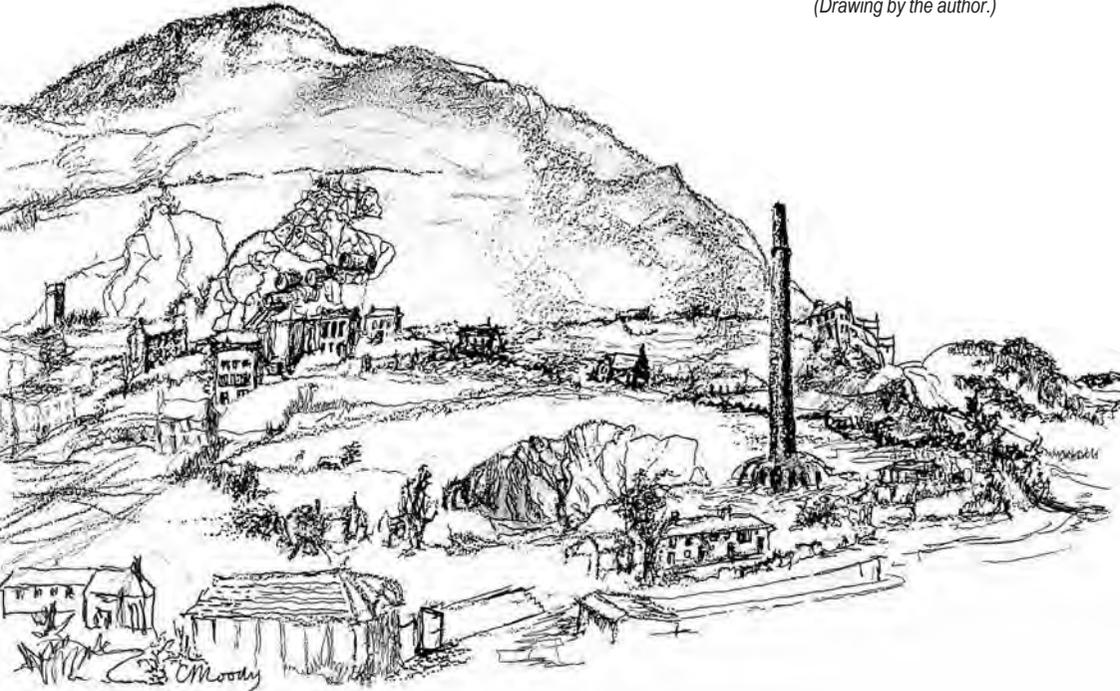
To the south, Alice Elgar's home at Redmarley topographically balances this Birchwood orchard clad extension of the hills to the north. It seems that Alice may have found fertile ground for her own special talents in musical terms with the Norbury family at nearby Sherridge. The significance of Birchwood needs exploring. Meanwhile, listening to the compositions evolved in this setting, one feels it is life as it goes on from day to day that is the artist's source material. As Elgar understood the world around him, so his creativity enriches our appreciation of life. The Great Fault and the acidic granite of the Malvern Hills may have a lot to answer for.

*Acknowledgements*

My warmest thanks are due to: Mrs Mary Beattie, Mrs Pat Griffith, Mr and Mrs Ron Hammond, Mr and Mrs Mason, Mr Derrick Tudge for remembering and recalling what their grandparents told them about the brick kiln and the North Hill quarry; and to Mrs Sarah Merrill for joining in the research.

*A bird hovering high over the roof of 'Forli' would have in view the eastern scarp of the North Hill and the dramatic outline of the end of the range. On the left, the way up to the quarry by Belvoir Bank can be seen. Along the road to the right, the North Malvern School and workers' houses on the way to West Malvern would be passed. Below this, the clay pit—not so wide and deep as it was to become—was bordered by the brick works and the brick kiln with its tall chimney silhouetted against the line of the hill. Cowleigh Bank, next to the kiln, led to Cowleigh Woods and the road to Leigh and Birchwood, where the Elgars had their rustic retreat. Next to the chimney of the brick kiln were houses built of Malvern brick and the terraces of Belmont, which are still standing and the houses of families long associated with the district. Today this scene is transformed—the clay pit drained and filled in, it is the site of a residential district off St Peters Road.*

*(Drawing by the author.)*





*Haze over Malvern (oil painting by the author, 1997). The weather, the light and the sky are ever-changing, and Elgar a century earlier must have seen how each day is different, though many things are the same—the congregational church spire, the white facades of Worcester Road. This is the view seen halfway between 'Saetermo' and 'Forli', the south side of the North Hill, the little peak of the Sugar Loaf (almost always sunlit), and Broad Down which leads up to the mass of the Beacon, the largest summit. This cleft is the Happy Valley, which leads up from the centre of town, had a stable and was the route for the donkeys which carried Victorian ladies to the top. The donkeys were still around in 1941.*

CATHERINE OLIVE MOODY was initiated at a very early age to the scientific approach to art of the Renaissance tradition. With an exhibition scholarship to the Royal College of Art she continued the study which had begun at Malvern School of Art with her father V. H. Moody. There the analytical atmosphere of the life studio and the practice of drawing and painting was joined by the study of crafts, bookbinding, pottery and silversmithing which gave an understanding of natural materials and function in design. Musically she claims only to be an 'ignoramus' but craftsmanship and listening to music led her to the conservation of her Phillips square piano of 1818 with the first Broadwood action and the Additional Notes, as well as her interest—as an inhabitant of Malvern—in Edward and Alice Elgar. Catherine Moody paints, draws and writes on art, design and architecture.



## BOOK REVIEWS



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### The Life of Elgar

by Michael Kennedy

Is a new biography of Elgar actually necessary; and can one which is only a quarter of the size of Moore's lapidary *Creative Life* hope to say anything genuinely new? These are tough questions, and when the author of a new study is set in competition with his own acute *Portrait of Elgar*, his problems are compounded. But Michael Kennedy's new study, *The Life of Elgar*, makes mincemeat of cavils.

Cambridge University Press's series of intentionally compact Musical Lives books, for which this was commissioned, is well established. The emphasis of the studies is on the public and private life of each composer, although as the blurb says, 'discussion of the music is integral to the narrative'. But the biographical focus explains Kennedy's total lack of musical examples. His biography maintains the standard set by distinguished contributions on Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Berlioz, Verdi, and others—including Elgar's early modernist contemporaries Debussy, Strauss, and Mahler.

In his preface Kennedy suggests that the mind of a man nearing eighty might shed different light than a man in his forties (the decade when he wrote *Portrait*). And it is true that he can now offer a man's attitude to another man's life with the even greater assurance that extra years bring. But really he does not—he does not need to—penetrate any deeper than he did in *Portrait*: he just sticks his fork into different parts of the meat.

Perhaps the most striking difference about this new biography is that the women in Elgar's life receive more attention, partly but not only as a result of recent researches by Brian Trowell and Kevin Allen. The most significant of them, the 'Windflower', Alice Stuart-Wortley, rightly takes up almost as much space in this book as Elgar's wife. They both have a chapter named after them (as do Helen Weaver and Vera Hockman), although the one on 'Windflower' spends more time discussing Elgar's deeply moving relationship with her than Lady Elgar's chapter says about his marriage. 'Alice's help was practical' (p. 46) about sums it up. And although, as Kennedy notes, Elgar's attachment to Vera Hockman, who was passed over quickly in *Portrait*, was certainly more than 'a little flutter' (p. 187; she inspired a marvellous theme in the Third Symphony), it was not so intense as his fascination with 'Windflower' (which still had no rouéism about it), perhaps because he knew that now not only custom but also the limitations of the human life-span were against him dreaming too much.

As a whole the book makes one feel a deeper attachment to 'Windflower' than to any other woman in Elgar's life, and this is at least partly because of the pictures in it. The photos of Alice Elgar all show a woman 'very short, dumpy and pleasant-looking rather than attractive' (p. 32), but the seraphic portrait by her father of Alice Stuart-Wortley on p. 118 sears itself into the visual cortex. The fact that it is a painting rather than a photograph adds a mesmerizing unreality to her beauty which is impossible to

dislodge from memory. This single most powerful image in the book is very well chosen, and it reinforces Kennedy's sentiments. Their long and probably unconsummated love affair is a strong theme, and after following it through half of the narrative, the final sentence inevitably puts a lump in the throat. Kennedy's prose is, when necessary, exactly appropriate to the often bleak and melancholy life of his study—but he is also refreshingly quick to ridicule Elgar's most indulgently self-pitying outbursts when they don't fit the facts.

One noticeable feature of the book's style might have less to do with Kennedy's age than his position at the beginning of a century which has set itself in a kidney as fervently anti-imperial as the beginning of the last century's was pro-imperial. The result is that he is less defensive than he once was about Elgar's views on Empire. The finale of *Caractacus*, for instance, prompts Kennedy to hedge his bets. In his liner notes for the Charles Groves recording, which he paraphrases here, Kennedy speculates that there may be ironic intent at the end of the work. The final chorus, which lauds the empire on which the sun did not presume to set, recalls music from the Arch-Druid's prophecy at the beginning. Now Kennedy wonders only parenthetically whether this might be ironic, but a few pages later he says that 'efforts to claim Elgar for liberalism are in this instance doomed to failure. He went fox-hunting, too' (p. 58).

One wonders how much this slight (and untypical) vacillation is a sign of the times. The present climate is sometimes drunkenly PC (in this case, 'postcolonially correct'), and such 'imperialist' moments in Elgar must now properly be regarded as pap for the hubristic. But such propriety—as problematic in some ways as Victorian or Edwardian proprieties now disdained (that its basis is obviously right *almost* excuses it)—disguises the fact that even if such moments in Elgar are pap, they are generally *delicious* pap. We should not be ashamed to enjoy this music, even if we find the sentiments of its text laughable. And 'laughable' is as bad as Elgar's imperialism gets. He reflected no more than the average patriotic views of his generation. He was born during the Indian Mutiny, but that was scarcely his fault.

The new studies which have led Kennedy to be more open than before about Elgar's extra-marital affections further substantiate his criticism of Byron Adams's recent challenging and controversial work on homoerotic signifiers in Elgar's life and work. These arguments will never become orthodox, but Adams's voice is one of the most powerful among the broadly biographical studies currently being written about Elgar. *In nuce*, Adams suggests that Elgar's relationships with Jaeger, Schuster, Atkins, Reed, and Rodewald (whose death greatly upset Elgar, probably as much for financial as amicable reasons), were so passionate and intimate that they might be considered latently homosexual. Kennedy gives him short shrift. 'In some cases, no doubt, [such friendships] suppressed homoerotic tendencies. We can have no idea if this applied to Elgar. We know nothing of his views on homosexuality. ...[A]ny attempt to claim him as a thwarted homosexual is doomed to failure, not least because of his known susceptibility to women' (pp. 93–4).

His impatience with Adams is balanced by warm appreciation of Julian Rushton's excellent work on the Variations, but he curiously does not mention Charles McGuire's book on the oratorios. Matthew Riley's searching recent essay (to be followed up by a book) on Elgar's nature mysticism probably appeared too late to be included, and in the context of a biography Kennedy may be excused for omitting it. But most of the material in the suggestions for 'further reading' at the back of the book will already be well

known to Elgarians, and although they will certainly be of use to readers approaching Elgar criticism for the first time through this book—and it would be an admirable starting-point—it might still have been useful to point to recent work in out of the way places, like Michael Allis's on Elgar and nostalgia (it would be too late to mention the new one on the Piano Quintet).

But when the only flaws worth mentioning are in the bibliography, it is clear that the reviewer can do little but recommend the work basically without reservation. It is a book which consolidates significant advances in the understanding of Elgar over the last generation, and stamps them with the imprimatur of one of the most subtle and empathetic biographers currently writing on British music.

J. P. E. Harper-Scott

### **Elgar: The Erotic Variations**

a novel biography by Ken and Lisi Russell

All Elgarians—not just those who were privileged to see it at the time or have been equally privileged later to watch it on VHS or DVD—are irretrievably indebted to Ken Russell and to his *Monitor* film on Elgar. Whether you saw it then or later, or have somehow missed it, it was a film that re-established Elgar as a composer of the front rank. Oh, yes, it has some errors and some stretches of the imagination, but its overall tone is accurate and has the ring of truth. There have been other contributions since then, but none has been such an epoch-making event as that black-and-white film, which I first saw some forty-two years ago as a boy of seventeen in my housemaster's study at boarding school (what a memorable evening!). Ken Russell later went on, of course, to make some other remarkable films, and I freely admit that I am a fan of his. I think particularly of other 'musical' films on Delius, Mahler and Strauss, of *The Music Lovers* (1969), *Women in Love* (1970) and *The Devils* (1971) based on Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun*. I remember particularly emerging from a London cinema one day having just watched (endured?) *The Music Lovers*. A curious American visitor enquired whether it was a film worth seeing, to which I replied—with the opening scene still fresh in my memory—"If you've got a strong stomach, go for it!" Well, I don't think one could ever say that Russell has been one for the faint-hearted. And if your love for Elgar is a sweet and tender affection, then maybe this book—by Ken and his wife Lisi—is not the book for you...

For a start, the price is a bit stiff. Indeed, it could drive you to drink—£15.00 for 215 pages flimsily held together with a spiral binding and transparent plastic covers. And it's not as if each page is chock full of words. Consider page six, for instance: after two short paragraphs, each five lines long, the rest of the page is filled with this:

He was "socially inferior".

He was “a Catholic, stinking of incense”.  
He was “after her money!” they chimed.  
She’d show them.  
She’d win him a knighthood.  
She’d convert to Catholicism herself.  
She’d make him rich.

It is billed as ‘a novel biography’. Well, ‘novel’ it certainly is; ‘biography’, I doubt. As a biography, it is a little unusual, beginning as it does with Elgar (as our hero is named *passim*) and Alice (as our heroine is named equally *passim*) on their honeymoon. Bang go his first thirty-one years and eleven months, and forty-one years of hers! And it ends not with death but with—ah, but that would give the game away! All I will say is that it is a jolly ‘novel’ idea to have ‘Nimrod’ replace St Peter at the pearly gates.

The half-century or so that the book does cover is largely centred on Elgar’s relationships with women: Alice Roberts, Helen Weaver, Rosa Burley (‘Do you think my bum looks big in bloomers?’), Dora Penny (‘cheap at double the price’), Alice Stuart-Wortley, Vera Hockman, and his daughter Carice (‘the Anagram’), and is riddled with comments and asides about Elgar’s humble beginnings, Alice’s more elevated origins, and the class-ridden Victorian age in which they both grew up. Much of his music gets a mention and the basic facts of the biography are true enough. What the Russells cannot base on fact, of course, they readily invent, especially with regard to Elgar’s (alleged) sexual proclivities. Their imaginations run riot with regard to some of these matters, but I will let you read the book and discover the ‘truth’ for yourselves!

The book is full of clichés. Indeed, I calculate that it has an average CPSP (clichés per square page) factor of ten or more! How about the following (my italics)?

Then, just as preparations for *the big event* were underway, Elgar was *upstaged* by another event—the arrival of *the cuckoo in the nest*. Yes, on the 14th of August, 1890 Caroline Alice gave birth to a baby daughter that Elgar nicknamed ‘the Anagram’, on the occasion of her being christened Carice. Both parents were *as proud as peacocks*, with Elgar dangling *the little fledgling* on his knee—until an *unfortunate accident*, after which he cheerfully changed her name to ‘the Peahen’.

Six clichés in nine lines—a CPSP factor of twenty-one! In addition, there are quite a few juicily split infinitives—the kind of grammatical solecism I find it hard to meekly put up with—and the usual number of errors and misspellings. My favourites are ‘Garmish’ (p. 67) and, best of all, ‘Lebersgruss’ (p. 29 and elsewhere, instead of ‘Liebesgrüss’)—which I can only take to mean ‘Greeting from the Liver’—and also, on p. 92, ‘Elgar penned the last note of *Gerontius* on the same day. It was the 3rd August 1891...’ But it is really unproductive to pick holes in this way. You will either find the book great fun or you will want to throw it in the bin. I quite enjoyed it, actually, though I soon realised I was reading a Ken Russell film script rather than a serious piece of research! I shall not be throwing my copy away. I shall generously donate it to the London Branch library so that anyone who wants to read it may do so for a fraction of the cover price. And if you do enjoy it and want to read more in similar vein, you can always log on to Ken Russell’s web site and get his other composer ‘novel biography’ *Brahms Gets Laid*. At least, you’ll be able to do so when it has been uploaded!

Paul Adrian Rooke



Ken Russell  
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£15.00

## CD REVIEWS

### **O Perfect Love**

Music for choir and organ including: Three motets, op. 2 nos. 1–3 (Offertory: *Ave verum*; Alleluia verse: *Ave Maria*; Hymn: *Ave maris stella*); *Te deum*, op. 34 no. 1; *Credo* on themes from Beethoven's symphonies; *Gloria* on Mozart's Sonata in F for violin and pianoforte, K.547; hymn tunes from the Leicester Collection.

Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital Chelsea conducted by Ian Curror  
Noel Charles (organist)

Manfred Mann was the leader and keyboard player of the eponymous Sixties pop group, with such hits as 'Ha! Ha! Said the Clown', 'Mighty Quinn', 'Pretty Flamingo' and many others. He is a South African (real name Manfred Liebowitz) who, almost alone among his chart contemporaries, was classically trained (at the Vienna State Academy and the Juilliard in New York). At about that time, Mann bought at auction a package of music manuscripts allegedly in Elgar's own hand. They were found to be twelve of the original part-books from St George's church, Worcester dating from 1878. Three of the hymns were written by the young Elgar: the complete versions can be found in the British Library (Add. MS 63146), and there are a few minor differences between the two sources, suggesting that Mann's manuscript is a later revision. Christopher Kent tells us in the booklet notes that two other hymns contain Elgar's harmonisations of traditional tunes. Now Mann has used these hymns as the basis for this new recording on his own label of some of Elgar's sacred music.

Elgarians will know two of his three hymn tunes, as the composer used them in other works towards the end of his life. The first, 'Drakes Broughton' in F, is the chief melody in the first movement of the *Nursery Suite* of 1930. The second, in C, to the words 'Praise ye the Lord on ev'ry height' was revised slightly and put to George Gascoigne's words as *Good Morrow*, written by the Master of the King's Music to celebrate George V's recovery from illness in 1929. The third, in G, is an evening hymn, Edward Caswall's (not 'Caswell' as in the booklet) translation of 'Te lucis ante terminum'. It is a pleasant tune of no great pretensions, with one or two interesting chromatic phrases for altos and tenors (altos usually get a raw deal in hymn tunes, but this part is more interesting than most!).

The two harmonisations Dr Kent believes to be Elgar's are in E flat, 'Hail Queen of Heaven the Ocean Star', and in G, 'Jesus my Lord, my God, my All'. However, the first is a traditional English tune, still popular among Catholics, entitled 'Stella', after the place near Newcastle-on-Tyne where Henri Hemy (compiler of *Easy Music for Church Choirs* in 1851) heard it. The version sung on the recording differs only slightly, at the end of the third and fifth lines, so can not really be counted an Elgar arrangement.

'Jesus, my Lord, my God, my All' is a hymn found in many Protestant hymnals (e.g. *Ancient & Modern Revised*, no. 202), but the original words—sung here—are more specifically Catholic and were written by a Cistercian, Father Austin Henry Collins (1825–1919). The recurring refrain, 'Sweet Sacrament, we thee adore, / O make us

love Thee more and more', is substituted by 'Jesus, my Lord, I Thee adore...' in Protestant hymnals. I managed to find the tune (but not its name) on a Catholic website, and again the only changes are very minor and the arrangement can hardly be accredited to Elgar.

Much more interesting are Elgar's settings of Latin texts to music by the great composers. The *Credo* of 1873, set to themes from Beethoven symphonies, works very well and is an impressive achievement by a sixteen-year-old boy. There are passages for four soloists as well as for choir. The opening uses the famous slow movement of the Seventh Symphony. The Adagio from the 'Choral' Symphony is wonderfully appropriate for the 'Et Incarnatus', and the second subject from the first movement of the Fifth also plays a large part in the proceedings. The St George's congregation must have been impressed by the skill of Bernhard Pappenheim (the name Elgar substituted for his own).

Seven years later Mozart's F major Violin Sonata (K.547) was used for a setting of the *Gloria*. This was more straightforward, with the piano part played on the organ, and the choral parts mostly using the violin line. Once again there are sections given over to soloists. According to Dr Kent's catalogue, the only version of this piece is to be found in a British Library manuscript, and as this is incomplete, some degree of editing has clearly been necessary to undertake the recording.

The other novelty is Elgar's emendation of a hymn-tune to 'O Perfect Love' written by Alice Stuart Wortley for her niece's wedding in 1914. He called it 'your beautiful tune', and later told her, 'I am sure no one could help loving it—perhaps not so much as I do'. The beginning is not promising: a falling seventh in the first bar with an accompanying appoggiatura in the alto gives it a real Victorian feel. But it improves, and anyway at three verses is not too long. I thought it ironic that the title of the record is a piece that Elgar did not write!

The rest of the disc contains more familiar music. The *Te Deum* (without the accompanying *Benedictus*) is given as rousing a performance as a small choir and organ can give. The 1911 coronation offertory 'O hearken thou' gets a rare outing in its Latin version (*Intende voci orationis meae*). The two E flat settings of *O Salutaris Hostia* are nicely sung, as are *Ecce sacerdos magnus* and *Angelus*, the latest of the pieces on the disc (1909). The three Latin motets, opus 2, are well-shaped by the conductor and given heartfelt performances.

The Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital Chelsea comprises just thirteen voices. They acquit themselves very well with some lovely expressive singing and full-blooded attack where necessary, although one longs for more power in bigger works like the *Te Deum*. However, for the hymns the size of the choir must be very similar to that of St George's in the 1870s, although one doubts whether the singing then was as good as this. There is a slightly prominent soprano in the louder passages, but it's not too distracting and the listener adjusts to it. Ian Curror conducts with a sure touch; and Noel Charles's organ accompaniment is masterly throughout. Definitely a must for Elgar enthusiasts.

Geoffrey Hodgkins



Creature Classics  
ELGAR1

## Elgar and Barber: Cello Concertos; *Smoking Cantata*

Anne Gastinel (cello)  
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra conducted by Justin Brown

### Hallé Elgar

*Falstaff*, op. 68; *Romance* for bassoon and orchestra, op. 62; Cello Concerto in E minor, op. 85; *Smoking Cantata* (world première recording)

Heinrich Schiff (cello), Graham Salvage (bassoon), Andrew Shore (baritone), Hallé Orchestra conducted by Mark Elder

First things first! As I am sure any other reviewer or purchaser of the Hallé CD will do, I homed in immediately on the final track to listen to the *Smoking Cantata*. Billed at fifty-one seconds (in fact one is shortchanged as it's actually thirty-nine), this is an Elgar jape targeted at his friend Edward Speyer who objected to smoking either in the hall or on the stairs of his home at Shenley in Hertfordshire. There's a nice link to one of the other works featured, the Cello Concerto, because Elgar was putting the finishing touches to it (July 1919) when, together with Maurice Kufferath (opera director of Brussels' Théâtre de la Monnaie), he stayed with Speyer and ran foul of this house-rule. He decided to write a five-movement cantata which would be 'a specimen of an edifying, allegorical, improving, expostulatory, educational, persuasive, hortatory, instructive, dictatorial, magisterial, mandatory work for solo (E. Speyer), chorus of unintelligent smokers, etc., etc.' Unfortunately Elgar wrote just the central third movement, this nine-bar recitative in a Wagnerian setting of the words 'Kindly, kindly, kindly do not SMOKE in the hall or on the staircase!'. The baritone Andrew Shore makes the most of his brief encounter with the Hallé, milking every note for all its worth and following Elgar's colourful instructions *lusingando* (tenderly), *minacciando* (menacing), *feroce* (fiercely) and *deciso* (firmly) to the letter. Over the capitalized word 'SMOKE' in the score (a flourish of exhaled cigarette smoke depicted by upward and downward glissandos on the harp), the composer drew a medieval hell's mouth belching smoke. It comes as no surprise that this is a world première recording.

Mark Elder continues to prove himself a masterly exponent of Elgar's music, starting his disc with a clean-cut performance of *Falstaff*, every tiny detail crisp and clear, the dynamics impeccably accurate, the *piano* playing of the strings and unity of ensemble particularly impressive. Graham Salvage characterises Falstaff wonderfully on his bassoon, while orchestra leader Lyn Fletcher produces beautifully refined playing in the first chamber music-like central dream-interlude in which the hero recalls his youth as a page to the Duke of Norfolk. It's hard to understand how the work was a failure at its first performance at Leeds in 1913; it clearly needed a rendition such as this one. Salvage, now over twenty years in the orchestra's principal chair, returns with a polished account of the 1909–10 *Romance* for his instrument, in a performance full of lyricism and charm in this wistful music, recalling that Elgar himself was a bassoonist in his youth.

Both this CD and the other under discussion have the Cello Concerto in common, their respective soloists bringing a distinctly non-British approach to the work. That both love the music is abundantly clear, while its technical hurdles hold no fear for

either. The German Schiff's muscular approach never coarsens but expands the tonal colour, brings lightness of touch to the scampering *Allegro molto*, dwells but never indulges in the Adagio, and is always pin-point accurate in the focus of intonation; in short, he makes a glorious sound. Elder accompanies with sympathetic discretion, letting the Hallé have their head whenever the opportunity arises (throughout the disc never afraid of allowing the strings to make the most of Elgar's style of *portamento*), all participants at their best during reminiscences of motifs from the preceding movements, before the headlong dash of the coda to the finale. The French cellist Anne Gastinel on the other hand, while equally enthused in her playing, does not match the sheer force of Schiff's sound, nor is always quite able to ride the accompaniment provided by the CBSO under Justin Brown. Just when a phrase needs to peak, there are moments when she is drowned because her sound on a Testore of 1690 has a narrower focus and smaller tone. Nonetheless the playing is sweet, the phrasing subtle, some lovely touches in style here and there, and, but for an over-fast *accelerando* two minutes into the Adagio, the mood captured by the intensity of the music's romanticism.

Value for money, you get sixteen minutes more music with the Hallé disc than Naïve's (sixty-nine *vis-à-vis* fifty-three minutes), including (literally) a whiff of a novelty, as they used to call them a century and more ago. However, while the Gastinel/Brown combination does not match that of Schiff/Elder, it does provide a relative rarity in the other work featured, Barber's Cello Concerto of 1945, a work deserving of a secured place in the cello concerto repertoire. Gastinel's committed and technically assured account will do that cause no harm, especially as its fiercely difficult first movement cadenza and the lively finale are dispatched with consummate ease. Both discs have a brightly forward sound, the Manchester venues (Bridgewater Hall and Studio 7 at New Broadcasting House) having a slight edge over Birmingham's Symphony Hall in the Elgar, though a far more satisfactory result is achieved there in Barber's concerto.

Christopher Fifield

### Symphony No. 2 and Sea Pictures

Larisa Avdeyeva (soprano)

USSR State Symphony Orchestra conducted by Evgeny Svetlanov

One of the most memorable performances that I have attended of *The Dream of Gerontius*, with Ronald Dowd in the name part, was conducted, rather unexpectedly, by the great Soviet maestro Evgeny Svetlanov, who then went on to give it its Moscow première. I also remember a fine Cello Concerto (with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra) and an *Enigma Variations*, so the music of Elgar was more than just a casual occurrence in Svetlanov's repertoire. Now this CD appears, recorded live at a public concert in Moscow in 1977. *Sea Pictures* is sung in Russian, although the English words are in the booklet. Larisa Avdeyeva sings with affection, and Russian certainly adds a different flavour to the work. The second song 'In Haven' is rather brusque and indelicate, and there are some rather alarming tempo changes in 'Sabbath Morning at Sea'. The ending of the final song is also rather scrambled. The Moscow audience obviously liked it because we have an encore of 'Where Corals Lie'.

The Second Symphony is a 'swings and roundabouts' affair, too. The opening



Naïve  
V4961



Hallé  
CD HLL 7505

movement swings along with great exhilaration for much of the time, but there is insufficient repose where necessary, and some passages are rushed over without being allowed to breathe properly. The second movement is very slow, and the first of the great climaxes suddenly sounds as though the sound engineer had miked it up, with rather raucous brass dominating the texture. The Rondo third movement goes at a whirlwind pace and one has to admire the skill of the USSR State Symphony Orchestra in meeting Elgar's demands at this speed. I could have done with more prominent percussion, but there is no denying the virtuosity on show. I liked the Finale almost without quibble—it moves with a dignified and spacious tread, and the sunset ending is nicely managed.

So, recommended or not? Well, yes, but not as first choices. I suppose we should be grateful that Soviet musicians were performing Elgar at that time, when not many other foreign orchestras were. If you have other more mainstream versions of these works on CD then you can rest content, but I might suggest you down two or three vodkas and then listen to these performances, which often have more than just curiosity value.

Barry Collett

### ***Salut d'amour***

Music by Elgar, Turina, Albeniz, Garner, Galperine, Poltoratsky, Bock, Kern and Frolov.

Christine Icart (harp), Dominique and Tatiana Probst (percussion)  
Ensemble Ricercata de Paris directed by Alexandre Brussilovsky (violin)

Alexandre Brussilovsky is a very distinguished violinist and teacher, now living in Paris. A couple of years ago I heard him lead a masterly performance of the Elgar Piano Quintet (with the Beckova Trio) in London's Purcell Room, and I understand he hopes to gain some performances of that work in France. Now this CD arrives with Brussilovsky leading an excellent team of French string players in a mixed programme of music by Turina, Albeniz, Erroll Garner, and Frolov's wonderful *Fantaisie on Themes of Gershwin*. But the CD is called *Salut d'amour*, and a flowing performance of that piece starts the programme, in a free arrangement by Victor Koniaev for string ensemble. The recorded sound is rich and warm in the abbey of Pontlevoy (just south of Blois), and the string playing virtuosic and full-toned. All in all a delightful programme, and it's good to see Elgar appearing in this company.

Barry Collett

### **Hallé Tradition**

*Variations on an Original Theme ('Enigma')*, op. 36; *Dream Children*, op. 43; *The Dream of Gerontius* (excerpts); *The Apostles* (excerpt); *Salut d'amour*, op. 12.

Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir Hamilton Harty, Sir Malcolm Sargent and Leslie Heward

The Hallé are currently mining their archives, and of three CDs currently available (the others feature music by Brahms, Bruch, Dvořák, etc.) this one is devoted solely to Elgar. It is conducted by men closely associated with the orchestra in the inter-war years, Harty (permanent conductor, 1920–33), Sargent (principal conductor, initially with Beecham 1933–9, then alone until 1942), and the brilliant Heward, who was doing sterling work in Birmingham and who would surely have taken over instead of Barbirolli had illness then death not intervened in 1943. Taken from original 78rpm records from private collections, these performances provide a portrait of the Hallé at their peak during the last century (if only Richter had recorded during the first decade), and achieving a standard which had plummeted by 1943 when poor Barbirolli faced the monumental uphill task of rebuilding a band depleted by the bulk of its men being called away to war. Harty began recording with them in the acoustic era (1920) and throughout his thirteen years in post, after which the orchestra did not record again until 1941. (While the *Gerontius* excerpt dates from 1935, it is taken from a radio broadcast rather than a commercial recording.) The *Enigma Variations* and *Dream Children* were recorded for Columbia at Westminster Central Hall on 30 November 1930, though not released until March 1932. The extract from *The Apostles* ('By the Wayside') was made on 21 January 1927 at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester and released by Columbia in May that year, while *Salut d'amour* was recorded on 13 January 1942 and released six months later in July.

Harty was a magnificent musician and a fine conductor, particularly of Berlioz and Elgar. His *Enigma* is a highly detailed account, packed with nuance in its *rubato* and



Detail from the autograph manuscript of the Smoking Cantata.

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SC032

providing a vivid testimony to the style of string playing of the day. Unrestrained *portamenti* litter the account from the outset, unsurprisingly in a superbly fluent, unsentimental 'Nimrod', and in the cello and viola solos of 'B.J.N.' and 'Ysobel' respectively. Wind playing comes off rather less well, either in terms of intonation, which occasionally slips, or in the sound of the double reeds—rather too narrow and taut for comfort, though suiting 'Dorabella'. Clarinets and flutes fare better. On the other hand the percussion (bass drum and cymbals) in the finale sounds worryingly like the distant clatter of a weekly call by the dustmen. Also one occasionally senses that the limited time available on a side of a 78rpm record has resulted in rushed tempi (rather like that speeded-up film of a train journey from London to Brighton in four minutes). On the other hand, those character depictions which are meant to be fast ('H.D.S-P.', 'W.M.B.', 'TroYTE' and 'G.R.S.') are, not to put too fine a point upon it, P.D.Q.! The other Harty takes under review include the two *Dream Children* miniatures in which clarinet intonation fares better in the second than the first.

Fine choral conductor though he was, Sargent's view of *Gerontius* may not be to everyone's taste, for his sense of drama is at times elusive in its timing and weak in impact. But the vocal contributions of Keith Falkner and Heddle Nash are striking. Falkner, an accomplished Bach singer, may be somewhat too lightweight and lacking in dark bass hues, but there's certainly a feeling of 'shuddering dread' coupled with wonderfully clear diction in his Angel of the Agony. On the other hand, Nash is exemplary, his 'Take me away' as searingly intense as one could wish for. Much the same can be said of Harold Williams' rendition of one of the Beatitudes in *The Apostles*, 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. He heads a wonderful line-up of British and Commonwealth singers for this quintet: Dora Labbette, Hubert Eisdell, Dennis Noble and Robert Easton were all fine singers with impeccable diction, and like Falkner and Nash were for years part of the vast stable of singers fielded by the London agents Ibbs and Tillett. The unaccredited chorus is presumably a section of the Hallé Choir (it sounds too small to be the full chorus), all of whom Harty conducts with loving care. Another revelation is Heward's *Salut d'amour*, delightfully played, beautifully judged in its phrasing and *rubato*, the Hallé strings glowing at climaxes, and the winds and horns (a little distant by comparison) delicately discreet. Heward's early death was a sore loss to music judging by this brief three and a quarter minutes.

Though the acoustics may lack resonance and bloom, and though those unaccustomed to the distinctive style of the day may find the experience a strange one, this disc remains a fine testimony to an era all too easily called 'golden'. All too easy, that is, because one cannot deny that description to Barbirolli at his peak, or today to Mark Elder, who is proving himself to be a masterly Elgarian, judging by recent discs reviewed in these pages. For those who do not have it, this recording is a must.

Christopher Fifield

### ***The Wand of Youth & Nursery Suite***

*The Wand of Youth*, Suites Nos. 1 and 2, op. 1a and 1b; *Dream Children*, op. 43;

## Nursery Suite.

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra conducted by James Judd

As international co-ordinator of the Elgar Society, I welcome a CD of Elgar's music performed by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, especially since it is composed entirely—dare I say it?—of lesser known and less often performed pieces of orchestral music, namely the two *Wand of Youth* suites, *Dream Children* and the *Nursery Suite*. Recorded on the Naxos label—and therefore available at a reasonable price—this is certainly a CD that I would recommend.

There is some lovely playing by the principal woodwinds: the clarinet solo in the 'Serenade' (*The Wand of Youth*, Suite No. 1) and the flute solo in 'The Serious Doll' (*Nursery Suite*) are played ravishingly. Unfortunately, the latter player remains unnamed and is therefore unable to receive the credit that can be given to Gordon Walker (LSO/Elgar/1932) and Atarah Ben-Tovim (RLPO/Groves/1969). All four woodwind principals shine sparkingly in 'The Little Bells' (*The Wand of Youth*, Suite No. 2). The violin cadenza in the 'Envoy' to the *Nursery Suite* is passionately and idiomatically—and equally anonymously—played (W. H. Reed, of course, for Elgar, and Clifford Knowles for Groves). The orchestral execution is very polished and the overall ensemble excellent, betokening an orchestra which has a developing reputation. I did find some aspects of the engineering balance rather strange, though: in the ensembles the wind section tends to be rather distant, with the woodwind subdued and the brass rather tame. Otherwise, the acoustic is resonant but clear and the recording clean and unfussy. James Judd seems to have studied Elgar's own recordings of these pieces and is wise not to attempt the printed metronome speed for 'Wild Bears', but to adopt Elgar's more cautionary speed. Unfortunately, he does not quite capture Elgar's exuberant and passionate spirit and his bears are only mildly more wild than the previous tame ones! I do like very much the string *portamenti* which are used in some of the playing, for example in the 'Serenade' (*The Wand of Youth*, Suite No. 1). It is stylish and idiomatic and personally I would have preferred more. And he also manages some well judged *rubati*. I do have some reservations over some of the speeds. In particular I feel that Judd tries to wring too much emotion out of the slower pieces. I was even at one point reminded of a notorious Bernstein version of a rather famous piece! It is the modern way, of course, but I did feel that the performance of 'Fairy Pipers' almost merited the title of the succeeding piece, 'Slumber Scene', and the first piece from *Dream Children* almost merited a renaming to *Dreary Children*. Judd takes 4' 26" for this piece, whereas Boult takes 2' 59" (fifty percent longer!). Also, for 'The Sad Doll' (*Nursery Suite*) Judd takes 2' 21", being fifty-five percent longer than Boult (1' 31") and seventy-four percent longer than Elgar (1' 21")! Slight differences of timing are, of course, neither here nor there, but such big disparities completely change the nature of a piece and cannot be condoned (*pace* Bernstein).

Though I have reservations about some aspects of this CD (and the accompanying booklet is rather prosaic, adding nothing to the sum of human knowledge either about Elgar or about these pieces), I would still recommend it, especially considering the price. To have all four child-centred sets of pieces on one disc is an added bonus. It is a performance in the modern manner, very cultured, sometimes rather indulgent, sometimes rather too careful (in a way that I find Elgar himself never to have been) and occasionally even soulless. But the playing is never untidy or sloppy. On the contrary, it



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is beautifully crafted, and I would pay the money not only for that (and the delightful solos mentioned above), but also for the wonderful ricochet violin bowing in 'Busyness' (*Nursery Suite*)—a really exhilarating moment!

Paul Adrian Rooke

P.S. I had not noticed before the distinct echoes of Grieg in some of this music. Try, for instance, 'Slumber Scene' (*The Wand of Youth*, Suite No. 1).



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# LETTERS

From: Arthur D. Walker

From 1955—the earliest date I have so far traced—up to the recent book by Michael Kennedy, it is stated that Elgar arranged the overture to Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* for the Worcester Glee Club.

The programme for the concert which took place on 23 October 1876 is in the Elgar Birthplace Museum (EBM Glee Club Concert Programmes), also the report of the concert in Berrow's Worcester Journal, 28 October.

Elgar in fact arranged the accompaniment to John Orlando Parry's setting of the poem *The Flying Dutchman* by Richard Ryan. In the British Library there are two issues of the song: *D'Almaine & Co. [1845]*, plate number 7741; *Brewer & Co. [c.1876]*. In my own music library there is a different issue: *Brewer & Co. [c.185–]* (WM.3750). The copy has the stamp of the Bradford Moor Musical Union; their programmes were similar to those of the Worcester Glee Club, and included both solo songs and glees.

From: Philip Scowcroft

I recently acquired on a visit to Sheffield (though from that city's HMV shop, not the cathedral) a CD of Elgar interest performed by the Girls and Men of Sheffield Cathedral Choir, directed by Neil Taylor, organist and master of the music since 1997. The disc is more or less equally divided between Elgar's church music and that of Robert Walker (b. 1946), Northampton-born and now resident in Bali, who lived for some years at 'Brinkwells'.

Walker's music is accessible if not without astringency here and there, and includes a *Missa Brevis*, a hymn, *Psalm 2* to his own chant, three anthem-length pieces to more or less sacred words, and a brief, very jaunty setting of 'Adam lay y bounden'.

They contrast effectively with the Elgar items, some of which, like *Ave verum corpus*, *Ave Maria* and perhaps the majestically expansive *Give unto the Lord*, are now well known, others less so: the early motets *Ecce sacerdos* and *Intende voci orationis meae*, *Psalm 1* to his own chant, and two anthems extracted from the oratorio *The Light of Life*. We are all familiar with 'The Spirit of the Lord', extracted from *The Apostles* as an anthem, but I was not previously aware that the earlier, less well-known oratorio had been similarly mined; the extracts are 'Seek Him that Maketh the Seven Stars' (male voices) and 'Light of the World', and they work well in this form though the former seems a trifle long for the purpose.

The choir, even if their sound—with a female upper line—is not quite 'traditional', sings very well generally, with nice tone and well judged balance. Peter Heginbotham is the organ accompanist. The disc (LAMM 133D) from Lammas Records was recorded as far back as May 2001 but I cannot see that the JOURNAL has ever noted it. Even though there are other CDs of Elgar church music, perhaps it should do so.

The relative rarity of some of the pieces on the disc prompts the question: what further Elgar remains to achieve a *première* recording? In recent months we have had, for example, the *Smoking Cantata*, the *Credo* on themes from Beethoven symphonies, and Elgar's clarinet and piano version of *Canto popolare*. One novelty previously unrecorded, I believe, is *Carillon* with the 1940s recitation by Laurence Binyon (I may be biased in referring to this as I once performed it, live and with orchestra, in Doncaster in 1989). It is admittedly no more than a curiosity; Cammaerts' original recitation, whether in French or in English translation, is not the greatest poetry, but Binyon's is much worse—dire in fact! (It arose out of the fact that church bells could not be rung during the last war except as an invasion warning.)

From: Mike Smith

Geoffrey Hodgkins's excellent and heartening "“Watchmen”—But What of the Knight?: Elgar and the musical press" (JOURNAL, November 2003) assembles an impressive array of evidence against the findings of Meirion Hughes's *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850–1914: Watchmen of Music* (Ashgate, 2002). May I add a bit more, from one of the 'watchmen' themselves?

Eric Blom, music critic of the Birmingham Post and author of 'cool-hearted additions'<sup>1</sup> to W. H. Reed's *Elgar*, was not one to give credit where it was not due. After Elgar's death he wrote as follows:

No doubt he suffered from adverse criticism as much as any one else, though he professed to ignore it, but his attitude to those critics whom he though capable and honest was always one of the most scrupulous integrity. Indeed, it was almost comic at times to see how crusty his manner could be towards those whose duty it was to discuss his work in print, lest they should suspect him of wishing to secure their goodwill by anything but the quality of that work itself. Comic, yes, but also very endearing, in spite of an outward appearance of disdainful rudeness.<sup>2</sup>

No doubt Dr Hughes, whose sneers and insinuations would look better in cheap journalism or popular biography than in serious history, knows better than to take such testimony at face value. But even if Hughes were right, and Blom wrong, about Elgar's attitude to the press, one could not possibly credit the supposed extent of Sir Edward's sycophancy. If he had spent that much time courting the press he could never have written the music; but he did, and even Hughes doesn't suggest he didn't. Has Dr Hughes tried writing down, never mind making up, a symphony of fifty-five minutes, or an oratorio of one hundred? His Elgar is a charlatan; but composing is hard and very time-consuming work—not the way of making a living that a charlatan would choose. As Percy Young has remarked, 'There are few professions so arduous as that of music'.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps writing deconstructionist criticism is one of them; perhaps not. It is tempting to apply the methods of that discipline to Dr Hughes's own work, a procedure to which, logically, he should have no objection. But he might; and unlike Elgar, he would have the opportunity to answer back.

1. Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (London, 1993), p. xiii.
2. Eric Blom, 'Elgar', Birmingham Post, 26 February 1934, reprinted in *A Musical Postbag* (London, 1941), pp. 64–8 (p. 67).
3. Percy Young, *Elgar O.M.: a study of a musician* (London, 1955), p. 257.

## 100 YEARS AGO...

On 19 May 1904 the Elgars went to Cologne for the German première of *The Apostles* on the 22nd. Elgar told Alfred Littleton it was a 'splendid performance... we have had a glorious time'. On their return they began preparing to move to Hereford. Leaving Malvern was a wrench for the whole family: on 5 June Elgar, Troyte and Carice '...took aquaria back to pond. Sorry to part with the Taddies'. Before the move, the American conductor Frank Damrosch visited 'Craeg Lea'; and Elgar went to Durham to receive an honorary degree, staying with the Kilburns at Bishop Auckland. On his return on the 22nd, he found a letter offering him a knighthood. 'D.G. Both vesy peased... & hugged one anosser vesy often', wrote Alice. Letters and telegrams arrived in shoals as preparations for the move continued.

The Elgars moved into 'Plas Gwyn' on 1 July: 'Trust all may prosper there. D.V.', Alice wrote. Four days later came the investiture. 'The King smiled charmingly & said "Very pleased to see you here Sir Edward".' He and Alice lunched at Paganini's with Frank Schuster, and returned to Hereford the same day, as there was still much to do. Elgar began exploring the area on his bicycle almost immediately, in company with his niece May Grafton and George Sinclair. But they were in London once again on the 14th for a dinner party at Marlborough House given by the Prince and Princess of Wales. The following week Edward went to Morecambe to address a meeting of choral conductors.

This social whirl did nothing for Elgar's creativity. On 9 August Alice commented: 'E. in vesy bad spirits'. He had written nothing since completing *In the South* in February, and on the 15th wrote sadly to Richter: 'Work has not yet commenced here and I sometimes wonder if I shall ever invent any more music... at present too many worries seem to oppress me and nothing comes, musically, to relieve them.' He did manage to arrange the 'Canto Popolare' from the overture as a solo song, *In Moonlight*. In London at the end of the month for rehearsals for the Gloucester Festival, Edward met Professor Samuel Sanford of Yale University, who wanted to present him with a Steinway piano for the music room at 'Plas Gwyn'. Jaeger advised: 'Do him the kindness to accept it. He admires you tremendously & is an awfully good sort... His old Father died some months ago & left him about 7 million dollars. He chucks his money about now in his generosity.'

The Gloucester Three Choirs Festival began on 5 September: the Elgars as usual stayed at Hasfield Court with the Bakers. On the Tuesday evening Elgar conducted the 'Prelude' and 'Angel's Farewell' from *The Dream of Gerontius* (the dean having forbidden performance of the complete work). The following day C. H. Lloyd's Organ Concerto was performed, with a cadenza written by Elgar. In the evening he conducted *In the South*: Alice wrote, 'E had a great ovation when he appeared'. On the 8th he conducted *The Apostles*—'simply wonderful', according to Alice. At lunch Elgar talked with Charles Beale of the Birmingham Festival, who asked whether Elgar wanted '2 or 3 performances at the next Festival all being well'. (When *The Apostles* was premiered in 1903 there had been an enormous demand for tickets. Beale was obviously wondering if the next work in 1906 should take account of Elgar's increased reputation and be given more than once.) It was Elgar's decision: 'He is far too great a man for us to dictate anything', Beale told Alice.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

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