

The Last Late-Romantics: Edward Elgar and John Singer Sargent

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Although they were distinguished artistic contemporaries, the paths of Elgar and the painter John Singer Sargent crossed on very few occasions, and then only as dinner guests of a mutual friend. And yet they may have had more in common than their passing acquaintance suggests. This article draws parallels between their respective careers and temperaments, and finds much in both of their lives that casts an informative light on the other.

March 1905 was a busy time in the life of Sir Edward Elgar. The month began in Birmingham, where Elgar had gone to supervise preparations for the inaugural lecture he was to give on 16 March as Birmingham University's first Peyton Professor of Music. By 4 March he was back at 'Plâs Gwyn' to collect Alice for an urgent London train journey to rehearse the London Symphony Orchestra for a concert at Queen's Hall on 8 March. The programme would include two premières: Elgar's new march, *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 3, and his 'string thing', the Introduction and Allegro for String Quartet and String Orchestra.

As usual on important London occasions, the Elgars stayed with Frank Schuster at his house in Old Queen Street, Westminster. Schuster celebrated the performances of the new works with a *grand dîner* on 12 March. Among the guests was John Singer Sargent, by common consent the finest portrait painter then living.

This was the third time the two titans of their respective art forms had encountered one another in Frank Schuster's dining room. A year and a day previously, Sargent had joined the dinner party given by the dedicatee of *In the South* on 13 March 1904 to celebrate the start of the three-day Elgar Festival at Covent Garden. Alice's diary tells us Schuster proposed Elgar's health 'with his heart in his voice'. (See my article in the JOURNAL, March 2004 for details.)

Frank Schuster had brought Elgar and Sargent together for the first time at an earlier dinner party he gave on 20 November 1902. Edward and Alice had come up to town to hear Fritz Steinbach conduct the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen's private orchestra in a performance of the 'Enigma' Variations at St James's Hall, one of a series of concerts sponsored by their friend Edward Speyer. Sargent took the opportunity to talk to Elgar about a friend's arrangement of the Variations for piano duet.

Their first meeting had come at a time of triumph for both artists. Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations, as well as his *Dream of Gerontius* and *Coronation Ode*, were being performed to ovations from capacity audiences. Sargent has just finished his magisterial portrait of Lord Ribblesdale (see Plate 1), the picture subsequently chosen by London's National Gallery as its representative example of his work.

Despite their fresh successes, the prevailing response between them appears to have been reciprocal diffidence. Five days later Elgar sent Sargent this letter—the only known correspondence between them:

Craeg Lea, Wells Road, Malvern
Nov 26. 02

Dear Mr. Sargent:

We are now, happily, at home in the quiet country.

Will you ask your friend to send the 4-hand arrgt of the Variations to me here & I will gladly look through it & advise the publishers—if he has already sent it to Novellos it will come to me in time.

May I say that it was the greatest possible pleasure to meet you at Schuster's: I appreciate *your* art very much, but I thought you would not want to hear an ignoramus discourse on it, so I was tongue-tied—nervously, in your presence.

My wife joins me in kind regards.

Believe me

Yours most truly

Edward Elgar¹

Although Sargent's admiration for Elgar's music appears to have matched Elgar's esteem for Sargent's painting, their acquaintance failed to ripen into friendship. We know this because the only encounters between them found in Alice's comprehensive diary are those three formal dinner engagements *chez* Schuster. Sargent appears to have been as ill-at-ease as Elgar on such occasions. A substantial portion of his voluminous correspondence consists of refusals to dinner-party invitations from eager hostesses and hosts like Frank Schuster. Sargent shared with Elgar a fastidious gift for friendship accompanied by a longing to evade the society of non-intimates. Why did they not become friends when their circumstances appeared to cast them as kindred spirits?

Certainly the times that shaped the one shaped the other. The arcs of their respective lifespans began fifteen months apart. John Singer Sargent was born in January 1856; Edward William Elgar came into this world in June 1857. Both arrived in circumstances unlikely to incubate genius. Much has been written about Edward Elgar the piano tuner's son who rose from provincial obscurity to achieve international greatness. John Sargent grew up in circumstances equally unlikely to produce a great artist. Born in Italy to nomadic American parents, Sargent spent his boyhood roaming aimlessly across continental Europe, moving with his father, mother and sisters from one displaced American community to another. Sargent's adult energy and artistic output were prodigious; yet he grew up among people whose primary personal trait was lassitude. Biographer Stanley Olson summed them up this way:

...for all their forlorn passivity, the Sargents were not unique. Their style of life was not even original. Their shadowy expatriate world was populated with people who were ill at ease at home, and no more comfortable abroad. They seemed unequal to the challenge of finding a place on the map and staying there. They had no stability. They had no occupation. They lived a sort of partial life, intimately acquainted with the superficial...²

Both Elgar and Sargent were born into families headed by talented but taciturn fathers. William Elgar was well known locally to have 'the finest touch on a keyed instrument'. Lord Dudley, one of Elgar *père's* piano-tuning clients, was so convinced that W. H. Elgar could become 'the finest player in England' that he offered to pay whatever costs might be incurred to develop that talent.³ Dudley's offer was refused; Elgar's father evidenced no interest in living a life other than an inconsequential tradesman's existence. As a young physician, Dr Fitzwilliam Sargent published *On Bandaging and Other Operations of Minor Surgery*, the text of which he illustrated with drawings that demonstrate brilliant draughtsmanship—a brilliance he jettisoned in the service of his wife's desire for a *dolce far niente* life abroad.

If the fathers supplied the prospective talent, both formidable, fantasy-inclined mothers nourished that talent with tales of romance told to stimulate a state of wonder based on what Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore terms Ann Elgar's 'recapitulation of life through the hours and seasons of symbolic cycle.'⁴ Olson put it this way with respect to the Sargent children: 'They learnt to negotiate loneliness; it was neither odd nor an enemy but, rather, the basic element of their childhood.'⁵ Theirs was a form of Eden akin to what Dr Moore terms Elgar's 'Eden of innocence kept within him as his inheritance from his mother's faith'.⁶

Is it any wonder then that in later life both artists centred their primary female relationships on a need for maternal love? Alice Elgar fulfilled that function impeccably; so did Sargent's sister. Olsen writes: 'Sargent's relationship with Emily was as close as he ever got to matrimonial companionship: she was his *soi-disant* wife. It was a perfect match, for both of them, uncluttered by the ferocity of sex, easily confined within the narrow limits of conventionality, and in no way peculiar.'⁷

One possible explanation of the distance that prevailed between Edward Elgar and John Sargent was the fact that the former's upbringing bestowed a settled nature whilst the latter was perforce a wanderer. Much has been made of the fortunate inadequacies of Edward Elgar's musical training. We delight in describing our hero's struggle to prune his genius to florescence as he makes his own way toward his own art in his own time. But at least young Edward enjoyed a conventional general education rooted in the West Midlands communities and countryside he never left for long.

Not so young John. Sargent's parents moved so often that their son and his sisters never spent more than a few months in any one schoolroom. In fact the first formal education Sargent experienced took place at the Paris atelier of Charles-Émile-Auguste Duran, a.k.a. Carolus-Duran. The training young Sargent received there was by no means conventional.

At the time, the plastic arts equivalent of the forcing-houses of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music in London was the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. This was a government institution staffed by well-established painter-teachers. Carolus-Duran was that rare bird, a convention-taunting independent patron-painter. There was no formal enrolment in his studio; he simply took in those he thought talented, 'leaving pupils to work out their salvation'. Here is Olson's view of Carolus-Duran:

He blithely waved his arm, dismissing old aesthetic theories and practices that had corseted all training, that carried the heavy blessing of Ingres and that ordered the declension of a young artist's career... John's choice of Carolus-Duran was one of the happiest moments [and perhaps the only happy moment] in an education aggrieved with miscalculation.⁸

Later in life, both Elgar and Sargent would each claim their most formative learning experience came as creative copyists sitting at the figurative feet of their respective masters: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velázquez. Mozart's scores showed Elgar how themes could be developed within a symphonic structure.

I... ruled a score for the same instruments and with the same number of bars as Mozart's G minor Symphony, and in that framework I wrote a symphony, following as far as possible the same outline in the themes and the same modulation. I did this on my own initiative, as I was groping in the dark after light... I don't know any discipline from which I learned so much.⁹

Young Sargent spent a month in Madrid groping in darkness after light by making his own renderings of Velázquez's paintings and drawings, repeating the exercise over and over again.

No inadequacies of formal instruction could hold back the floodtide of either Elgar's or Sargent's artistry. Brilliant musicianship should have formed a bond between them, for Sargent's talent was not limited to painting. As a musician, he was so gifted that according to Evan Charteris, Sargent's first biographer, 'Joachim is credited with the remark that, "had Sargent taken to music instead of painting he would have been as great a musician as he was a painter."' The composer Percy Grainger wrote,

John Singer Sargent was one of the most outstanding musicians I have ever met... he had that rarest of all aesthetic gifts—individualistic, balanced critical judgement... [that] welled up out of his rich musical inner nature... To hear Sargent play the piano was indeed a treat, for his pianism had the manliness and richness of his painting...¹⁰

Music was Sargent's liberator. If Elgar confessed to being tongue-tied in Sargent's presence, Sargent proved to be tongue-tied in everyone's presence—until he sat down at the piano. Olson again:

John's reaction to music was a foil to his shyness, throwing into relief those aspects of his character obscured by his reticence: spontaneity, his sense of fun, and his generosity... He could reel off jokes at the keyboard he stammered through elsewhere. His morbid fear of getting up before any number of people, even friends, evaporated when he was called on to play in a crowded drawing-room. His love of music was so great that inhibition disappeared in its favour...¹¹

Sometimes Sargent's painting gave visual expression to his love of music. One of his earliest substantial works in oil, painted when he was only twenty-two, is entitled, *Rehearsal of the Padeloup Orchestra at the Cirque d'hiver* (see Plate 2). During the 1870s and 80s, the Cirque d'hiver was Paris's equivalent of the Crystal Palace, and Padeloup was the Cirque's August Manns. Sargent attended Padeloup's Sunday afternoon concerts with the enthusiasm Elgar brought to Manns's Crystal Palace performances. In this picture we see and feel his delight expressed via abrupt brushstrokes that create an effect of dissolved focus, sweeping the players into a swirling arc to convey the listener's excitement at a moment of soaring melody. Sargent's friend William Coffin leaves us this description:

Sargent, who dearly loved music, was struck by an odd picturesqueness of the orchestra... the musicians' figures foreshortened from the high point of view on the rising benches, the necks of the bass-violis sticking up above their heads, the white sheets of music illuminated by little lamps on the racks... While he listened he looked, and one day he took a canvas and painted his impression.¹²

The sensation music can produce to captivate the listener/onlooker is also the subject of *El Jaleo* (see Plate 3), the picture that catapulted Sargent to fame in his mid-twenties. A 'jaleo' is a feature of flamenco where the audience joins forces with the instrumentalists in an uproar of clapping and shouting to encourage the dancers. Sargent's scene is a gypsy tavern in Spain. Against the wall in the shadowed background, *gitano* guitarists strum their instruments furiously, while others wave their arms with abandon. The female performers, led by a magnificent foreground figure bathed in dazzling light, strike a split-second pose from a frenzied flamenco dance sequence.

Success came early to Sargent, but so did failure. In the 1880s, the painter's equivalent of the Birmingham Triennial Festival was the Salon, Paris's annual showcase of painting and sculpture. After nearly ten years of delighting his audience with subject pictures like *El Jaleo* as well as with portraits that attracted praise from the severest critics, Sargent scandalised the 1884 Salon with *Portrait of Madame X* (see Plate 4), a picture that caused an outcry of such proportions that it provided the catalytic excuse he needed to quit France for England.

Amélie Gautreau, the subject of the portrait, was what was known at that time as a 'professional beauty'. Married to a wealthy banker and ship owner, Madame Gautreau took pains to startle Paris society with her colouring and her clothes. Her ghostly white complexion, set off with mahogany-tinted hair and bare-shouldered gowns falling to a daring décolletage provoked controversy. It was rumoured that she took arsenic to turn her flesh the colour and texture of off-white blotting paper tintured with deathly mauve. Having painted her as he found her, Sargent unintentionally transformed Amélie Gautreau from an object of curiosity into an object of ridicule. 'Quelle horreur!' the critics concluded with virtually one voice.

Sargent was mortified. One afternoon during the exhibition, he sought to escape the barrage by returning to his studio. On the doorstep he found Madame Gautreau's mother 'bathed in tears'. "Ma fille est perdue," she cried, "tout Paris se moque d'elle."¹³ For some time Henry James and other friends had been entreating Sargent to leave Paris and live in England. Henceforward his home and studio would be located in London.

Before he settled into Tite Street, Chelsea, Sargent sought temporary refuge in Elgar's 'quiet country'. His self-confidence momentarily shattered, Sargent arrived in Broadway, Worcestershire in the summer of 1885 for what he had intended to be a short holiday at the house of his friend and fellow painter Edwin Austin Abbey. The planned visit of a few weeks became a stay of months with a return the following year. The countryside that

held Edward Elgar in its thrall clearly cast its spell on John Sargent. In Olson's words, 'For Sargent, Broadway was an unexpected holiday-turned-pastoral-idyll, pastoral-idyll-turned-symbol.'¹⁴ The Paris-based first act of his life had ended; the London-located second act was about to begin. During his Worcestershire interlude, Sargent abandoned Velázquez for Monet and developed his own form of impressionism.

The masterpiece he produced during this period, called *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* after a popular song, depicts two small children lighting Japanese lanterns at dusk in a grassy space strewn with late-flowering blossoms (see Plate 5). Such was Sargent's preoccupation with light that the painting took two years to complete because he would only work on it during twenty-minute periods of twilight on summer evenings. The picture's exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1887 proved to be a show-stopper; *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* was immediately purchased for what became London's Tate Gallery, where it hangs to this day.

The towering musical artistry of Richard Wagner provided another common thread of influence. As young men, Elgar and Sargent paid formative visits to Bayreuth to absorb Wagner's music dramas. The precise nature of the influence of Wagner's music on *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Apostles* is a subject of ongoing debate among Elgarians. With respect to *Gerontius*, in 1900 Elgar told F. G. Edwards, editor of the *Musical Times*, 'The poem has been soaking in my mind for at least eight years'. It cannot be a coincidence that Elgar chose to say 'eight years', harking back to 1892, the year he heard *Parsifal* for the first time.¹⁵ Sargent must have taken seriously Mark Twain's remark, 'Wagner's music is better than it sounds', because he spent thirty years creating two visual Wagnerian dramas in the form of the murals he painted in London to decorate the Boston Public Library and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (see Plate 6).

Sargent's musical responses to life were not limited to the pleasures of concert-going and drawing-room music-making. He actively used his prestige to bring hitherto obscure musicians to the attention of prospective patrons. One of the beneficiaries was Percy Grainger, who wrote:

He had only to announce his approval of any musician for hostesses to spring up ready to engage these protégés, hoping that the performance of these musicians at their 'At Homes' would guarantee them Sargent's coveted presence—which it usually did, for Sargent was untiring and self-effacing in all that pertained to the support of those he considered true artists.¹⁶

Perhaps one of the reasons Elgar and Sargent did not become better acquainted was that by the time they met, Edward Elgar needed no one's patronage. Among the 'true artists' who cited Sargent's support as decisive were Gabriel Fauré, Leone Defosse, Cyril Scott and Isaac Albéniz, as well as the Alsatian violinist, pianist and composer Charles Martin Loeffler, with whom Sargent often played piano duets. Loeffler was Sargent's friend, referred to in Elgar's letter, who had arranged a piano version of the Variations for four hands—Loeffler's and Sargent's.

Sargent's esteem for outstanding musicianship sometimes overrode conflicting concerns about the personal characteristics of his fellow artists. Much as he admired the musical gifts of the singer and composer Ethel Smyth, Sargent distanced himself from the volcanic Miss Smyth's actions as a militant feminist. She wrote a march entitled *Shoulder to Shoulder* for the suffragette movement and went to jail for the cause in 1911. Three years later, one of her cohorts made manifest her protest for women's suffrage by slashing Sargent's portrait of Henry James (see Plate 7). In 1901 Sargent sketched Ethel Smyth in the act of singing, but felt unequal to an attempt to capture her in oils despite the entreaties of admirers led by her closest male friend Henry Bennet Brewster. Sargent wrote:

Brewster, for some time, has wanted me to do a head of her, a painting, and they say he wants her in a calm mood. Miss Smyth in a calm mood! It reminds me of Mr Dooley's description of a fiery American general: after describing his tremendous and furious rages he says: 'He was a man who could be calm when there was anything to be calm about.'

Dame Ethel (she was made a dame of the British Empire in 1922—one of the first women to be so elevated) made no secret of her intense dislike of Elgar and all his works. Her biographer reports that Smyth's longstanding friendship with Sargent ended abruptly when he suggested that she 'pretend to admire Elgar's music, as her disparaging remarks about it were attributed to jealousy.'¹⁸

Evidently, Sargent never considered doing a portrait of Elgar. Why not? Elgar's visage seems to have been a popular subject for contemporary portraitists and sculptors. In February 1905 alone Elgar sat for two well-known painters, Talbot Hughes and Percy Anderson. Percival Hedley's 1904 portrait medal was in circulation, and his bronze bust of Elgar would win praise in the forthcoming 1905 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition that functioned as London's answer to the Paris Salon. Afterward, Frank Schuster would purchase the bust and bequeath it to the nation on his death in 1927. Today it shares space with numerous examples of Sargent's work in the nineteenth century wing of the National Portrait Gallery. One of the glories of the NPG is Sargent's portrait of Coventry Patmore (see Plate 8) whose poetry provided the setting for *Evening Scene*, the part-song Elgar wrote not long after the two artists met for what appears to have been the last time in 1905.

My surmise is that Sargent never painted Elgar because he had determined to give up portraiture by the time of their March 1904 encounter. Edward Speyer found this out when he headed a committee that organised a dinner in May 1904 to celebrate the diamond jubilee of Joseph Joachim's first performance in England. The event's programme book included a subscription request for a portrait of the honoured guest by John Singer Sargent. Now Sargent happened to be in Italy at the time and knew nothing of the prospective commission. When 500 subscribers produced the sum sufficient for his fee, Speyer called on him:

On learning the object of my errand, he looked much disturbed and exclaimed most ferociously, "Good heavens I am sick of portrait painting. I have just returned from Italy, where I buried myself for six weeks to escape the cursed business, and now you come and ask me to do another one, and that too when I have a large number of old commissions still awaiting me here!" He finally quieted down and remarked: "Well, if it's Joachim, I must do it."¹⁹

By then Sargent had come to misunderstand his genius. He had decided that his bid for immortality required him to relinquish the role of grand-manner society portraitist and embrace more solemn art, chiefly in the forms of *plein-air* painting and mural decoration. Having produced more than forty portraits in oils during the first nine months of 1890 alone, he painted fewer than thirty from 1907 to 1925.

Seekers after the painted image of England's greatest composer had to make do with lesser-light portraitists. The rather feeble example that hangs in Worcester Guildhall is by Sir Philip Burne-Jones, who, as Jerrold Northrop Moore points out, 'inherited his father's baronetcy and brushes but only a little of his fragile genius'.²⁰ Elgar burned the Talbot Hughes portrait and begged Worcester's mayor Hubert Leicester not to acquire the Burne-Jones picture for the Guildhall.

Elgar fared better in front of the camera because his lifespan happened to correspond to the golden age of portrait photography. Consider the masterful tinted bromide image produced in 1903 by Malvern photographer Dr Charles Grindrod. Sargent famously defined a portrait as a likeness of someone with something not quite right around the mouth. Grindrod was a follower of Julia Margaret Cameron who addressed this dilemma with a technical process that required more than a minute of exposure time. During the long exposure period the sitter's facial muscles would move very slightly; and this movement, imperceptible to the eye, registered on the glass-plate negative giving the face a depth rarely found in either painted likenesses or rapid-exposure snapshots.

Mutual shyness defeated friendship between Edward Elgar and John Sargent, shyness that deepened as they shared the misfortune of outliving the cycles of art in which they flourished. Reaching maturity at the end of the nineteenth century placed them in the final stage of a period whose dominant aesthetic was Romanticism. Both artists were approaching middle age by the time Queen Victoria died in January 1901, after which their



*Sketch of Ethel Smyth (1901).
Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London.*

public gave them less than a decade of unalloyed admiration. Why? Because, as Dr Percy Young pointed out, 'the broad truth is that Elgar accepted the spiritual design of his age and formulated his music within that design ... he possessed little or no interest in the presentation of reforming philosophies through the medium of Art...' ²¹ The same could be said for Sargent. For the generation of artists that succeeded them, the definition of art's purpose as 'the gradual, lifelong construction of a state of wonder and serenity' ²² would no longer suffice. Velázquez gave way to Goya, about whose portraits of the Spanish royal family Ernest Hemingway remarked: 'You can see the spittle in every brushstroke'. ²³

The tide had turned. Elgar felt the sea change at the première of his Second Symphony on 24 May 1911. The applause proved to be a polite trickle compared with the tidal wave of enthusiasm that had greeted the first performance of his Violin Concerto the previous November.

November 1910 also brought the beginning of the decline in Sargent's public standing as a painter. On 8 November, critic and curator Roger Fry opened an exhibition at London's Grafton Gallery entitled 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists'. On display were works by artists new to most Londoners: Manet, Cézanne, Picasso, Signac, Gauguin, Derain and others of that ilk. After viewing the pictures on exhibition Sargent wrote to the editor of the *Nation* that he was 'absolutely skeptical as to their having any claim whatever to being works of art.' ²⁴ He was mistaken. As works of art, these pictures would eclipse Sargent's painting in the eyes of art lovers just as works by Stravinsky, Schoenberg and others would eclipse the music of Elgar in the ears of the music-going public.

But not completely, not yet. World War I brought forth from each artist another masterpiece: Elgar gave us *The Spirit of England* whilst Sargent produced *Gassed*, an epic frieze of stumbling soldiers blinded from exposure to mustard gas. There followed the late works of consummate delicacy: Elgar's chamber music and Sargent's watercolours. But to the generation that came of age during and after the Great War, these two practitioners of late-Romantic art forms had become fossils. The long dominion of the diatonic scale and its visual equivalent had ended. Dissonance was the order of the day.

By 1920, the greatest works of Sir Edward Elgar and John Singer Sargent lay behind them. In the final years before his death in 1925, Sargent worked chiefly on subject pictures and on murals for his Boston clientele. He was lucky not to live to learn what the critics had to say about his Wagnerian fantasies. Bernard Berenson, arguably the most highly regarded American art critic of the time, dismissed Sargent's Boston Museum of Fine Arts mural series with two sneering words: 'How ladylike'. Elgar outlived Sargent by nine years, surviving to see his choral and orchestral compositions performing to half-empty houses. It is said that when Beethoven died, ten thousand mourners followed his casket to its final resting place. A *Times* photographer was on hand on 26 February 1934 to record the little procession that conveyed Elgar's coffin from the church of St Wulstan's, Little Malvern to its burial site in the churchyard. I counted eleven participants including the professional pall bearers.

Nonetheless, the deaths of Sargent and Elgar brought tributes from countless contemporaries whose lives had been made immeasurably richer for their art. Much that was said about the one could have been said about the other. Charles Loeffler's summation of John Singer Sargent could have described Edward Elgar:

It is unusual to meet so marvellously endowed a man possessing such simplicity of manner... He had the innate bearing and dignity of a noble man. To have known so great, so loveable, so delightful a man has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. ²⁵

Equally, the Dean's prayer for the soul of Edward Elgar spoken at the composer's memorial service in Worcester Cathedral on 1 March 1934 could have been said for Sargent *mutatis mutandis*:

We give Thee humble and hearty thanks that it pleased Thee to endow our fellow citizen Edward Elgar with that singular mastery of music... whereby he being dead yet speaketh; now filling our minds with visions of the mystery and beauty of Nature; now by the concert of sweet and solemn sounds telling our hearts secrets of life and death

that lie too deep for words...²⁶

Edward Elgar came to us, in Michael Kennedy's words, as 'an unexpected, unheralded phenomenon'.²⁷ So did John Singer Sargent. Eventually, new generations followed the nay-sayers with new appreciation of the inimitable mastery Elgar and Sargent had achieved in their spheres of art. Lovers of late-Romantic painting and music once again flock in great numbers to exhibitions of Sargent's pictures and to performances of Elgar's compositions.

It is one measure of Sargent's rehabilitation that, when the Queen Mother died in 2002, numerous obituaries saw fit to mention that she was the last living person to have sat for Sargent. Will they one day say of the present Queen that she was the last living dedicatee of an Elgar work? May the time be distant, O Lord...

1. Manuscript in the possession of the author. Published by Jerrold Northrop Moore in *Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 123.
2. Stanley Olson, *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 83.
3. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 4.
4. Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 454.
5. Olson, *John Singer Sargent*, p. 23.
6. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar: Child of Dreams* (London: Faber, 2004), p. 131.
7. Olson, *John Singer Sargent*, p. 198.
8. Olson, *John Singer Sargent*, pp. 38–40.
9. *The Strand Magazine*, May 1904, p. 539, quoted in Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 80.
10. Letter from Percy Grainger to Evan Charteris dated 6 May 1926, quoted in Evan Charteris, *John Sargent* (London: Heinemann, 1927), p. 149.
11. Olson, *John Singer Sargent*, p. 248.
12. William Coffin, 'Sargent and his painting, with special reference to his decorations in the Boston Public Library', *Century Magazine*, 2 (June 1896), p. 172, quoted in Olson, *John Singer Sargent*, p. 54.
13. Olson, *John Singer Sargent*, p. 104.
14. Stanley Olson, *Sargent at Broadway: The Impressionist Years* (London: Murray, 1986), p. 11.
15. I am indebted to Geoffrey Hodgkins for this perception from his lecture entitled 'Not Since Parsifal...':
16. Letter from Percy Grainger quoted in Charteris, *Sargent*, pp. 149–50.
17. Letter from John S. Sargent quoted in Charteris, *Sargent*, p. 152.
18. Christopher Saint John, *Ethel Smyth: A Biography* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1959), p. 176n.
19. Edward Speyer, *My Life and Friends* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1937), p. 191.
20. Moore, *A Creative Life*, p. 456.
21. Percy M. Young, *Vaughan Williams* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1953), p. 68.
22. Glenn Gould in the course of a radio broadcast, 1958.
23. Aaron E. Hotchner, *Papa Hemingway: A Personal Memoir* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1966), p. 47.
24. Letter dated December 1910, published in the *Nation*, 7 January 1911, p. 610.
25. Letter from Charles Martin Loeffler to Evan Charteris dated 20 January 1926, quoted in Charteris, *Sargent*, pp. 146–7.
26. *Musical Times*, April 1934, p. 313.
27. Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 272.

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The College Hall, Worcester. This photograph was probably taken in the late 1920s or early 1930s, about the time Elgar was writing about it. Courtesy of the King's School, Worcester.