

The Elgar Society

Journal



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The Elgar Society

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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: Grave of 'Dot' (Mother Mary Reginald Elgar)

Editorial

Someone asked me, following the July issue, if I had banned correspondence from these pages. Far from it, as this issue makes clear. Perhaps the March contents were uncontroversial, or perfectly complete; no-one wrote to correct, dispute, or supplement them. But July 2006 has moved several correspondents to share their thoughts and, in some cases, objections. I have, as is proper, offered the right to reply to contributors. And the proliferation of letters suggested to me that they be given sub-headings, to assist navigation. My thanks to our distinguished correspondents.

As to editorial content, readers will surely welcome the second instalment of Richard Smith's account of 'Dot', and look forward to the completion of Sylvia Bennett's adventures in search of the legacy of 'Dorabella'. My own contribution was, as many members will know, given as the A.T. Shaw Lecture following the AGM at Worcester in June. I was grateful for the invitation to address the Society, and I was given to understand that the lecture is expected to appear in the Journal. So here, despite the editor's natural modesty, it is – and in the centenary year of its principal focus, *The Kingdom*.

Brian Newbould recently published three probing articles on Elgar's self-education in *The Musical Times*. Here he writes on a specific source of some of Elgar's ideas. Elgar encouraged the idea that he drew music 'from the air', which is usually interpreted to mean that his inspiration lay in landscape. But, except in the quality of his genius and his unusual education, Elgar was a normal composer: his music was conceived, like every other composer's, however personal the resultant sound-world, in relation to other music. Elgar's debts to Wagner and Brahms are often noted, but it was Schumann to whom he applied the words 'my ideal'. It is to be hoped that more contributions may be offered on these lines, perhaps with Dvořák, or Chaikovsky

A sensation of *déjà vu* may affect some readers, as of J.B. Priestley's comments on Elgar appeared in the Journal under the rubric 'Elgar and Englishness', a few years ago; I didn't spot it in time to deter Michael Plant, whose commentary refreshes these remarks, stimulating not least when disputable (as in the remarks on foreign conductors). Priestley's Cardus-like peroration will surely be appreciated on re-reading, and his view of Elgar the man is also strikingly modern; perhaps he had read Michael Kennedy.

We also have a fine crop of CD and book reviews. Cordial thanks are due to all our contributors; to Michael Byde for setting; and to Dominic Guyver for reading the proofs.

JulianRushton
October 2006

A tribute to Wendy Hillary

When I first met Wendy at her home near Oxford, she was unknown to me as she was to most members of the Society. How things change: ten years later, as she gives up being our Secretary, there cannot be many in the Society with whom she has not communicated in some form or another.

I met her because it had been suggested by Geoffrey Hodgkins that she might be interested in becoming Secretary in succession to John Kelly. During our discussion it became clear that she was the sort of person with whom I could work, and that her energy and imagination could add much to the management of the Society.

Wendy took over from John Kelly who held the fort after the death of Carol Holt. She had much to live up to and she succeeded handsomely. She and her partner, Bernard Hill, contributed enormously to the Society during 'their' time in office. Their organisation of the Society's jaunts will always be remembered by members who kept on coming back for more! These events were the result of months of careful thought, research and management: they did not just happen. I did not manage to attend every one, but I enjoyed all those I joined, learning much on the way from Bernard's scrupulously researched and often amusing notes.

However, there was much more to Wendy than organising Elgarian tours. We would talk often and I cannot recall disagreeing over many issues. We would agree what should be done and Wendy would get on and do it! Many members will know of Wendy's willingness to speak at meetings of organisations such as Women's Institutes, Town Women's Guilds, and Adult Education classes. There she sold books, CDs, and memorabilia, and collected new members on the way, raising well over £1,000 for the Society. This sort of work is vitally important and her work is an example to us all. What is more, for visually impaired members of the Society, Wendy still found the time to record on tape the six issues of the News and Journal published annually. I understand that she has every intention of continuing this service.

Wendy's organisational skills became apparent in other areas, and much of the success of the 2001 Jubilee Weekend can be laid at her feet. In 1999 she arranged the unveiling, by Wulstan Atkins, of the plaque commemorating the time A.J. Jaeger lived in Muswell Hill; and her inspiration was the force behind the establishment of the Thames Valley Branch. During our time as colleagues Wendy gave me complete support (although at times she was justifiably critical), as we worked out how to deal with some of the more contentious issues that challenge us all from time to time in a Society such as ours.

Wendy and Bernard have befriended many of us. I count myself among this number and thank them both for their contribution to this Society and the cause of Elgar's music.

Andrew Neill

Elgar, Dot and the Stroud Connection — Part Two

Richard Smith

In Part 1 (Journal, July 2006), Richard Smith traced the biography of Elgar's youngest sister Ellen (sometimes Helen) Agnes, known in the family as Dot (or Dott), as far as 1902 when, with the death of her mother, she became free to enter an order of nuns. Part Two concludes her story.

The Convent of St Rose of Lima – Sisters of the Third Order of St Dominic – Beeches Green, Stroud, was established in 1862 through the generosity of Mrs Sandys, a lady of the neighbourhood. Further additions to the building were made in 1867 and 1882, and the foundation stone for a new chapel was laid in 1888 by the Rt Rev. Dr Clifford, Bishop of Clifton. The convent included a large girls' boarding school and an orphanage for what was described as 'the working classes'. Two branch houses were opened later, one at Clifton and the other at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, credit for much of this work being attributed to the Superioress, Mother Mary Teresa Matthews.¹

After her arrival in Stroud, correspondence between Dot and her brother Edward continued, with Dot now almost 39, humble and self-effacing, revealing the trepidation in which she held her future:

My dear Edward,

... I hope you keep well & Alice too. I suppose you have not a spare copy of 'Coronation Ode' or any other odd ! things (not that the 'Ode' is odd). If at any time you are turning out like you did some time ago – when you sent so many music things home for the girls, you might save me a few things: you would, I know, have a few.

I do think of my wanting to be able to teach music but such is the case – if only I knew how to go about it, but I know too well my own want of knowledge & I shrink from the idea of an attempt to teach others.

Do you think I could ever play the organ? I believe I am going to try some day. There is a nice organ here.

I am very well & happy, but get on slowly. You ask what I am. I can only say I am in every way plain Dott as of old. I do not know if I shall ever be anything else. Perhaps in two or three months I may develop into what is called a simple novice - & then you might come to see me, but I don't want you before, as at present I look like a much distressed

widow – (but I don't feel like one). Stroud is not far from Gloucester – so some day do come and see one. It would be such a real pleasure for me & I think you would say the Convent is pretty. I ought to be happy here.

I should like a nice real nice photo of you. ? Is there one about. Don't say I'm always asking for something. If it is the slightest trouble just forget I asked.

Hope your oratorio is getting on. Someday write me a very simple & very melodious tiny tune for the organ. Something I can learn to play. No pedal part because I could not do it.

Good bye
Ever your old
Dott.²

On 3 March 1903 Dot entered the Dominican order, the 'clothing' ceremony taking place at St Rose's. From then on she was to be known as Sister Mary Reginald.³ Shortly afterwards she wrote to Alice Elgar:



St. Rose's school in Stroud still plays an important role in the life of the community.

Very many thanks for your letter & the photo of the dear one – it is so nice & I am more than pleased to see him once more –

It was so good of him to write on it too for one, bless him –

I have not thanked you for the second lovely lot of music. I do so now, if only I could play it, but its all far too difficult, & it makes me sad – I find I can only play simple things & slow – so I must wait, & hope someday to land on something more simple – E's music is too difficult I should only spoil it.

I am very well & happy & have no possible wish to leave here. Do you think E. will ever come to see me – I should not frighten him & I think, after all, he would like the dress of the nuns – I hope to be clothed in this dress in about a month's time – it will be a very happy time for me, & I am much looking forward to it – do send or bring him someday.

Thank you both again for your kindness

With love to both & Carice.⁴

On 3 November 1903 Elgar paid his first visit to Dot in Stroud, Alice's diary recording:

E[dward] to Stroud to see Dott by 10.10 train. Arrd. all safely & had quite a long day there & sd. she looked beautiful in her white robes. Home at 8.30 - Cross.

Just after Christmas Edward wrote to Dot from the Villa San Giovanni in Alassio, sending her a small gift and telling her of the Mass which they had attended there:

... We went to midnight mass here on Xmas eve – very tough, the music was awful to the most appalling extent!!! They have an ancient and very beautiful custom peculiar to Alassio – In the middle of mass - which was sung (they gave communion to the people after the credo) – thru the big doors an old shepherd carrying a tiny lamb walks up the church to the sanctuary & the lamb is blessed & remains till the end: the old shepherd then returns to the mountains & the blessing is for the whole of the flocks: it was quite beautiful & touching & I am so glad we were there...⁵

After the couple returned from Italy Dot wrote:

My dear E. & Alice

It is such a joy to me to feel you are back in England, though I don't suppose for a moment that you wanted to come – I do hope you are better for the lovely change – of course I am longing to know all about everything –

Thank you both for the letters you sent while away – they were so interesting - & I thoroughly enjoyed them – also the pretty post cards. I was going to write to thank you for the stamps when a P.C. came saying 'on the way home' – so I did not write, but I thank you now.

How I shall think about you on the 14th 15th 16th of next month [the Elgar Festival at Convent Garden] – do tell me all about it after.

And now I will tell you my news, though I think I hear you say 'I don't know anything

about it or what it means' – but never mind – it is just this – on Thursday March 3, I am to be professed, or in other words take the vows for three years – at the end of that time they are taken for life – it is a very great day for me, & so I am hoping you will think of me then – I don't ask you to write, for I know you have enough to do – but just think of me – & some day send me a wee pious picture to put in my prayer book – but be sure write on the back, & then I shall always have something to remember you by – not that I am likely to forget – but other things I may give away – that I could keep.

Good bye,
I do hope you are well.
Ever your loving
(Dot)
(S. M. Reginald)⁶

Following the publication of the news of Elgar's knighthood on 24 June 1904, Dot wrote to him and Alice again:

My dearest ones,

Oh! I am so pleased at the good things you tell me about. Every day I think so much about you – but this Knighthood was quite out of my way – I am not one little bit surprised – but so very, very pleased. How good of you to go and tell Dad – if only dear old mother could have heard this – her joy & pride in 'her boy' would have been complete – I do with all my heart congratulate you both ...

... The Mother General here [Sister Rose Imelda] & Sr. M. Wilfred (The Mistress of Novices) send their most hearty congratulations – The former is a great admirer of your music – being a musician herself – as for the latter – I don't like to tell you what she thinks about you. You might be vain...⁷

It will be remembered that Dot had requested a 'a very simple & very melodious tiny tune for the organ' from Edward, and this finally emerged in June 1906 under the logical title of *For Dot's Nuns*. Comprising only 20 bars, this simple, and not particularly attractive, piece had two alternative endings. A pencil sketch is in the British Library, and is dedicated to 'Helen Agnes Elgar'.⁸ It is possible that Edward gave a fair copy of the manuscript to his sister during the visit he made to Stroud on 16 October 1906, but it has subsequently been lost. Alice Elgar's diary records that they went to Cheltenham by train, with Edward going on to Stroud to see Dot. 'Then went to lunch & then back to see Dott. Then back to Gloucester. Met E[dward], but only at the last moment so A[lice], was on the platform going mis...'

Dot took her final vows on 3 March 1907. Following this she was sent to St Catherine's Convent at Shieldfield Green near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where she taught music to pupils of the convent school until 1909. After returning to Stroud she was appointed Sacristan, Organist, and Music Mistress. She had a mellow voice and her singing of the *In pace* and the Prayer of Jeremiah in Holy Week was long remembered. She was also a great lover of flowers, taking charge of the greenhouse, where the plants seemed to respond wonderfully to her care. When asked how she managed it, she replied: 'Oh, I just speak to them nicely'.

Occasional correspondence between the Elgars and Dot continued, the latter



St. Rose's school, originally for physically handicapped girls, photographed in 1935. The taller figure in the background, centre, may be Elgar's sister Dot.

writing on 20 June 1911 following the award of his Order of Merit:

My dearest Edward

Just a line now for I am going to write a longer letter to you in a few days – Oh! how delighted I am about the great honour its too lovely for words – I wish I could give you a kiss –

I do hope all will be delightful during the next few days – take care of yourself – you must be very tired & longing for rest –

Give my love to dear Alice & Carice – & with heaps to your dear self.

Only four days later, while in London for the Coronation of King George V which he refused to attend, the Elgars heard that Dot, never physically strong, was very ill. Alice's diary recorded that 'E[dward] heard his sister Dot was suffering again & his advice was wanted – He went down to Stroud & found her so cheerful & brave & overjoyed to see him. Operation decided on'. The operation, which was extremely serious, was duly carried out at the convent. She later recalled that: 'I sat upon the table and tried to be afraid, but fear would not come'. After she had begun to recover Elgar visited her again on 26 July, on his return to Plas Gwyn in Hereford. Alice wrote that he 'Saw Dott on way home found her wonderfully better. D.G. E. looked well & peased to be home'.

Next year, still looking white and transparent as a result of her illness, the nature of which never seems to have been recorded, she adopted St Lewis Bertrand as her Patron Saint, who had also suffered formidably, ending his life with the phrase: 'Here cut, here burn, here never spare...'

Her devotion to God and her hard work had already resulted in her being elected Sub-prioress, and on 17 May 1913 she was appointed Prioress of St Rose's in succession to Mother Rose Columba Hawkins. Fr Charles Halpin OP, Confessor to the Community, commented:

In my humble opinion Mother Mary Reginald Elgar was in the front rank of those who aimed at perfection. She was ambitious in the right sense of the word; in God's sight she wanted to be the first of the community in sanctity. She wanted her affection for God to be so pure, that she put aside any person, place or thing that might dim its lustre.

In addition to these virtues, Dot had a keen sense of humour and her own infectious laughter often added to the fun. One day following a funeral, for example,



The grave of Mother Mary Reginald in the grounds of Woodchester Priory as it appears today.

a novice tripped over a bucket, making a clatter and not knowing that the Prioress was behind her, heard the comment: 'Don't kick the bucket, I can't afford another funeral at present!'

After serving a second three-year term as Prioress at Stroud, Dot wrote to Elgar, informing him that on 19 May 1919 she had been elected Mother General of the five linked convents of St Rose of Lima:

My dear Edward,

I thought I would just write & tell you what has happened – so far I have not said a word to any others of the family – I feel shy so to do.

I finished my six years of Office at St Rose's as Prioress on May 10th & was much looking forward to a rest from anxiety – but at the General Chapter held on 10th at which the Bishop presides, I was elected Mother General of the whole Congregation – which just means, in simple words, head of everything – I leave you to think what my feelings were & still are.

Yet about this I could not make any fuss, (you know my way is usually very quiet) but just accepted the Office with its serious burden & cases & simply do my best.

I am tired & have come to this little quiet Convent for a rest of 3 weeks – I should love to see you. I hope you are all well – give my love to Alice & Carice – & sometimes think of me your one loving old Dot.⁹

PS (Perhaps I will write to the girls later on –)

There is no doubt that Dot viewed her appointment with trepidation, the prospect of periodically travelling round the houses being particularly distasteful. However, during her term of office, three properties were acquired despite limited funds, and this laid the foundations of the community's future prosperity. These were the fields and buildings next to St Rose's in Stroud, a property at Brewood, in Staffordshire, and a new Catholic nursing home at Jesmond Road in Newcastle-upon-Tyne to replace that at Shieldfield Green.

Following Edward's permanent return to Worcester at the end of March 1923 he began to make plans for the disposal of two of the pianos which had been in storage following the sale of Severn House some two years previously. As he wrote to Carice in December 1924:

I have offered the Steinway to Perryfield. As to zu darling mother's old piano – I have written to zu aunt Dot, to ask if one of her very poor schools, or missions, or something of that sort wd find the poor tinkly dear old thing useful. I feel sure this way of ending its days wd. be what your dearest mother wd. have liked – anyhow it shall be in the catholic fold to the end.¹⁰

The piano was duly sent to Brewood and a few days later Dot wrote a letter of thanks to her brother from there:

I came here a few days ago & found the piano had just arrived; it was unpacked yesterday & all is quite safe. It was well packed. It is a little beauty & of course we are delighted to have it – we do not think it at all what you suggested, thin and worn etc – every care will be taken of it I assure you – & I am very grateful indeed to you for

sending it to us – perhaps some day you will come to see it – it is quite an easy run & good roads –

The case is being returned as requested –

On Wednesday I expect to leave for Stroud –

Very much love, & also much gratitude from myself & the Sisters.

Always your loving

Dot¹¹

Not long afterwards when Dot fell ill again, Frank and Edward Elgar visited her in hospital, on 27 March 1925. Four days later she was relieved of the office of Mother General. As a newly appointed prioress put it: 'I have supposed that Mother Mary Reginald accepted the office of Mother General in obedience to the wishes of others, but I am inclined to think that when her term of office was over, she hurried quickly to the Chapel, and in her heart sang the sweetest *Te Deum* of her lifetime'. Mother Mary Teresa Lamburn took her place and in August 1929 the five English Dominican Congregations were united under the title of The English Dominican Congregation of St Catherine of Siena. On 19 October Carice recorded in her diary that she 'Went to Perryfield to fetch Clare [Grafton] – Saw Aunt Dot who was lunching there with the Mother Superior on their way to Edrington. Got back with Clare about 5. Lovely day'.

From then until her death, Dot served as secretary and chief accountant for the Physically Handicapped School at Badbrooke House adjoining St Rose's. Meanwhile her own spiritual life was deepening, Cardinal Newman becoming one of her heroes, and any striking act of humility always aroused her admiration. Newman's acts of complete self-abandonment to God formed some of her favourite prayers. Unfortunately Dot never managed to hear any of her brother's oratorios, despite them being regularly performed at Gloucester Cathedral some ten miles from Stroud. It came as a great sadness to her when Edward drew away from the church but when she heard from his niece,¹² who was with him during his last illness at the South Bank Nursing Home, that he begged her to recite to him the prayers of his childhood, she was much comforted.

As Britain drew towards war with Germany in 1939, Dot became more and more troubled about the future. Her physical strength too was slowly ebbing. Her fellow nuns remarked on more than one occasion that she had to support herself by the wall to get as far as the Chapel, but that she would not accept any dispensation for her weakness. When the end came it was with some suddenness. She managed to attend Mass for the feast of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December but next day was too ill to leave her bed. On Sunday, 10 December she received the last Sacraments, and in the evening, with Mother Prioress and several sisters lovingly attending her, she passed peacefully away. She was laid to rest in the cemetery at Woodchester Priory, two miles from Stroud, on 13 December 1939 with Carice and May Grafton present at the Requiem and Funeral.

Notes

1. Hulbert, E and Smith, P.L.: *Churches and views of Stroud and Neighbourhood* (Stroud, 1889).
2. EBML 1160 (exact date uncertain, but sometime in December 1902).
3. At this time it was common for Dominican nuns to adopt both a new female and male name. The first was usually 'Mary' for obvious reasons, but why Dot chose 'Reginald' is unknown.
4. WRO microfilm BA 5184.
5. EBML 4589 (26 December 1903).
6. EBML 1115 (21 February 1904).
7. EBML 1131 (25 June 1904).
8. BL Add.MS.63160 f.44 (sk.). The piece is published in the Elgar Complete Edition Vol. 36.
9. EBML 4685 (18 May 1919) from St Joseph's Convent, Cheadle, Stoke on Trent.
10. WRO microfilm BA 5184.
11. EBML 6814 (3 January 1925).
12. Presumably May Grafton.

RICHARD SMITH is a retired telecommunications engineer who, initially as a hobby, and latterly as a part time business, has written over 20 books on historical aviation. His retirement allowed him the time needed to research into his other consuming passion, the life and music of Elgar. He became an active member of the Elgar Society in 1999 and published his first article, 'Why Americans graduate to Elgar', on the Society's website. This was followed by a piece for the Society's Journal on the American reaction to Elgar's oratorio The Apostles, and a book, Elgar in America, published by Elgar Editions in 2005. He is a currently a member of the West Midlands Branch Committee and lives in Gloucestershire with his American wife, Joan, and several cats, one of whom is named 'Marco'.

The writer is greatly indebted to Fr Piers Linley, OP, Parish Priest of Woodchester, Sr Mary Quentin OP, Sr M. Cecily Boulding OP, Archivist of the Dominican Sisters (who supplied the official necrology of Dot and a memoir of her by Sr Agnes Teresa Mayo from which some of this article has been abstracted), Margaret Sanders, the previous archivist at the Elgar Birthplace Museum, and fellow Elgarians Martin Bird and Canon John Forryan.

THE KINGDOM

AN ORATORIO

BY

EDWARD ELGAR.

ANALYTICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE NOTES BY A. J. JAEGER.

JERUSALEM.

PRELUDE.

"The Kingdom" is the second in a cycle of oratorios, and a continuation of "The Apostles," produced at the Birmingham Musical Festival of 1909. It deals with the Church in Jerusalem; a third section, having for its theme the Church of the Gentiles, being contemplated by the composer. The present oratorio will be found in some respects simpler than "The Apostles." The mystic atmosphere pervading the pages of that work surrounds us less frequently in "The Kingdom." In its place we find a vigour and directness which form an admirable contrast. Structurally the new work is also less elaborate than "The Apostles," such complex movements as the *Finale* to the earlier oratorio being outside the scope of "The Kingdom."

With arpeggi in contrary motion the full orchestra, including doubled wood-wind and horns, plunges after a two-bar *crescendo molto* on the tonic pedal (E flat) into the twin motives symbolizing the GOSPEL, and the Apostles as PREACHERS of the Gospel:—



The music, as here shown, and including the two-note phrase pressing eagerly forward in bars 3 and 4, was first heard in "The Apostles," where Christ utters his command, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." It is also identical with the accompaniment to the

The opening of *The Kingdom* as it appears in the original 'Book of Words' (Novello, 1906)

The A.T. Shaw Lecture 2006: Elgar, Kingdom, and Empire

Julian Rushton

I still recall my shock on noticing, long ago, the bilingual title of Elgar's 1906 oratorio: *The Kingdom: Das Reich*. 'Reich' is usually translated 'Empire'; Hitler's gangster regime called itself the 'Third Reich'. Words and signs appropriated by evil can be tarnished for generations, perhaps for ever: a harmless and agreeable geometrical pattern, the swastika, once a peaceful symbol, now signifies loathing and intolerance. The same can happen with music: some wince at 'Nimrod', tarnished with imperialism despite its thoroughly European inspiration.

The first Reich was Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire, ramshackle but not always malign. The second was the German Empire founded after the Franco-Prussian war. It lasted under fifty years, entirely within Elgar's lifetime; this was the Germany he visited in his youth and in the early years of his marriage, and the Germany that feted *The Dream of Gerontius*.

What distinguishes 'empire' from 'kingdom'? A kingdom is geographically limited and relatively homogeneous: the erstwhile Kingdom of France, the historic Kingdoms of Scotland or England. An empire is named for a nation, sometimes a republic, that rules over subject nations, like the Romans in Britain, or the British in India. The second German Reich was less an empire less by virtue of its scattered possessions in Africa and Asia – easily forgotten because lost in 1918 – than by its unification of independent states within the geographical expression 'Germany'.

Thus the word 'Reich' illustrates the old truism, that translation is betrayal. The German for a secular kingdom is *Königsreich*; Elgar himself would have preferred his oratorio to be *Das Reich Gottes*.¹ 'God's Empire' might seem odd in English, but need not; the kingdom of Elgar's oratorio is a metaphorical one, just as God is only metaphorically a king or, indeed, an old man with a beard. A prohibition on sacred images equivalent to that commanded by Moses, and by Islam, would deprive us of such metaphors, intended as an aid to understanding;² and thus not only of much great visual art, but also of *The Apostles*, not to mention Bach's Passions, in which Christ sings, a matter that aroused controversy in the nineteenth century.³

These works end with, or soon after, the death of Christ. From a Christian viewpoint, this story can be treated as a drama, but hardly as tragedy. This world may be a vale of tears, but the next – the Kingdom of God – transcends it, and consoles. What intrigues me is Elgar's way of putting across this sense of a wonderful future – and, maybe, subverting it. The action of *The Kingdom* takes place entirely on earth,

within the city of Jerusalem, whereas *The Apostles* ventured outside. *The Apostles* begins in the world of Judaism, which Elgar evokes by local colour – the shofar and the ‘ancient Hebrew melody ... on page 21’,⁴ and by sunrise reaching ‘even unto Hebron’. Such specifics reflect the dying genre of *Grand Opéra*, with its historical subjects, scenery based on exact representations of identifiable buildings (such as Notre-Dame de Paris), and its carefully researched period costumes. This operatic world was shot through with religious references, as in Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* and *Le Prophète*, Halévy’s *La Juive*, or Verdi’s *Don Carlos*. In some respects, Elgar took his lead from the principal architect of Grand Opera’s overthrow, Wagner. But Wagner too was influenced by specifics; there is nothing abstract about the Nürnberg of *Die Meistersinger*, nothing metaphorical about his meticulous stage-directions in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

The Kingdom begins and ends in the ‘upper room’, where the disciples and holy women gather; and it is there, too, in the third scene, that they receive the gift of tongues. Despite its crowd scenes, most of the oratorio unfolds in a small world of intimate discipleship. The plainsong ‘O sacrum convivium’ is not local colour, but an apposite anachronism. As for action, the imprisonment of Peter and John, who on release vow to break their conditions of bail, is the merest blip in the progress of the gospel, and instead of a harrowing prison-scene, we witness a sunset: ‘The sun goeth down’, passionate, inward, nostalgic, feminine: diametrically opposite to the dawn that approached Jerusalem from the East, and the assertively masculine shofar.

The reason for this internalisation is a change of emphasis concerning the nature of the kingdom and the likelihood of it actually happening in any sense identifiable to mere earthlings. The title, *The Kingdom*, clearly does not represent reality for the apostles in these months after the Ascension. It is more the promise, whether of a future reality, or of a metaphorical kingdom. In *The Apostles* all the disciples – not only Judas – suppose that it is an imminent reality, an earthly kingdom: as they sing just before they learn of the Resurrection, ‘We trusted that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel’. But their charismatic leader has been betrayed and executed.

Elgar’s version of the resurrection and ascension appears unambiguous. Although he apparently read the intelligently sceptical Ernest Renan, we cannot readily attribute the beliefs of the disciples and the women to mental aberration of minds disorientated by the disaster of the crucifixion. In oratorio, as in opera, we trust most what is musical.⁵ Jesus sings again before his ascension, and in a dramatic context we accept his corporeal reality. In Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*, we may believe the ghosts to be a figment of a neurotic governess’s imagination, but in Britten’s opera such doubt is impossible, for they sing, and the children also hear them. We leave the 1903 oratorio with a glow; a sense of progression achieved, symbolised by the rapturous combinations of Leitmotifs, resembling the end of Wagner’s *Parsifal* when the life-giving properties of the grail are restored. This music is transcendent, as befits its subject.

Perhaps Elgar would have done well to leave it there. Nevertheless the disciples, except for Judas, are still on earth, and believe in the imminence of a second coming, and an earthly kingdom. They must learn the hard lesson that ‘kingdom’ is

indeed a metaphor, an aid to understanding the transcendently incomprehensible: the kingdom that is not of this world. When the glow fades, as is the way of glows, what are they to do?

The opening of *The Kingdom* packs a glorious punch. But if pressed to sum up that splendid Prelude in one musical term, one would have to pick ‘*diminuendo*’. It moves through many stages, never returning to its opening. Through changing metres, it swells and ennobles each successive idea, but each dies back; the beautiful closing bars are mainly based on a falling motive of curiously uncertain modality. The archetypal Wagner prelude, like those of *Lohengrin* and *Tristan*, builds a crescendo out of silence, before a shorter *diminuendo*. Elgar’s prelude recalls rather the long interlude within Act I of *Götterdämmerung*, known as ‘Siegfried’s Rhine journey’. This too begins with splendid ebullience; as the hero descends the mountain, it fades; and the interlude ends quietly, with recollections of sinister Leitmotifs like the curse, meanwhile modulating to an alien tonality in preparation for the introduction of new characters, the Gibichungs. In this operatic tetralogy of giants, gods, and heroes, the Gibichungs represent ordinary, venal humanity; and they seduce, betray, and murder the hero.

In *The Kingdom*, the prelude could have concluded in its opening key, but in fact it ends with a strange twist into a fresh key, C major, necessitating recomposition for concert performance. And *The Kingdom*, too, enters a purely human world, albeit one not overtly sinister, and lit by a sense of the numinous. *The Kingdom* opens with the disciples in a difficult situation, and this is reflected in Elgar’s well documented struggle to complete its composition. Was he losing faith in the idea, or losing faith in faith? His inability to realise his grand plan, which would have necessitated a third oratorio, reminds one of his more radical younger contemporary Arnold Schoenberg, whose great religious projects, *Die Jakobsleiter* and *Moses und Aron*, were also unfinished. But there is a significant difference: Schoenberg was formally reconverted to Judaism *after* composing these stupendous fragments, and one might argue that his new certainty in religion made their completion at some level unnecessary. The wavering of Elgar’s faith is usually recognised is at least part of the cause for the eventual abandonment of a third oratorio; but were doubts already beginning to gnaw in 1906, when his ill-health could well have been partly psychosomatic?

A source for Elgar’s dramatic problem – an oratorio without Jesus or Judas, without hero or villain – lay in the very origins of the work. His (Catholic) teacher Francis Reeve said that the disciples ‘before the descent of the Holy Ghost [were perhaps] not cleverer than some of you here’. Did Elgar come to realise that these words were not ideally chosen? For at no time, even after Pentecost, are the disciples shown as *clever*. They are inspired, and they speak with eloquence, but it is gift from the spirit; on their own initiative, they do nothing ingenious or smart, rather resembling soldiers obeying orders.

Practical considerations undoubtedly constrained Elgar here. He could not write for twelve male soloists, and he could not omit the women, in the interests of contrast – and box-office – as well as their intrinsic interest as persons close to Jesus. The oratorio tradition is in any case not prone to realism, thanks to the necessary presence of the chorus: how could an upper room hold so many people?

The chorus is there to suggest the wider community, anticipating the disciples' later achievement in spreading the gospel outside Jerusalem. The conventions of concert performance, rather than those of the theatre, allow us to understand these framing choral scenes metaphorically, even though we are among ordinary human beings, rather than Wagnerian gods or Elgarian angels.

Ordinary people do not necessarily inspire extraordinary music. Before Pentecost – before the transformation of the ordinary into the eloquent – what fired the composer's imagination? Here I touch on Elgar's metaphorical realism: his profound understanding of what that 'morning after' must have *felt* like. Elgar's music in the opening scene seems deliberately weak in teleology, by which I mean that it is frequently ambiguous, and subject to continual changes of direction. Towards the end, he finally recovers the key of E flat, and eventually he returns to the opening motif of the prelude. This makes the prelude and first scene into a musically ordered structure, on Wagnerian lines. But by the time theme and key are recovered, we are well launched into the chorus 'O ye priests': and that is not sung by the disciples in the upper room, but by a quasi-Greek chorus: a commentator, outside the drama. Accessing this convention traditionally differentiates oratorio from opera, and makes problematic the many worthy attempts to stage Handel's oratorios, let alone Bach's passions. The chorus stands both for the crowd contemporary with the action and for our modern selves. Thus the eventual completion of the musical design occurs outside the realistic action in the upper room, where the entirely silent Matthias has been appointed Judas's replacement.

During the realistic scene itself, we could not predict this musically rounded outcome. The scene is set by unaccompanied choral singing, as at a ritual.⁶ The Prelude ends by turning to a C major chord, but the music that follows is strongly flavoured with ancient modalities – Ionian melded with Aeolian, Dorian and Lydian, especially at the 'Amen'.⁶ These diatonic 'church' modes are by their nature pre-tonal, and not as susceptible to harmonic drive, and hence large-scale musical structuring, as the tonal system. Here Elgar breaks free of Wagnerian influence, coming fortuitously closer to Debussy – the Dresden Amen in *Parsifal* notwithstanding. Of course other passages enter a nearly Wagnerian tonal world of chromatic harmony, but the main key relationships are not based on the fifths of the tonal system, but on minor thirds.

I infer from this music, more than the words, that the disciples are uncertain in their situation and their aims. Mid-way through the scene, Peter rallies the troops: 'Men and brethren, it was needful that the scripture be fulfilled' – a line Elgar amusingly marks 'Con dignità'. A first return to the Prelude's E flat does occur during the election of Matthias, mitigated by mixture with C minor, and quickly abandoned. The closing words, 'the Lord hath chosen you to serve him', are musically open-ended, and prepare with considerable power for the opening of the chorus 'O ye priests'; but this actually begins in D minor. The chorus – ourselves – addresses its too often fallible priesthood, even as it draws the music back to a definitive recovery of the confident E flat major and the opening motifs of the prelude.

The crucial moment in the establishment of the disciples as an evangelising force is the third scene. Elgar met a problem in reconciling the excitement of Pentecost – the mighty rushing wind, the incredulous chorus, and the soaring tenor of John

– with the didactic nature of the enterprise. For the aftermath of that tremendous representation of the descent of the spirit is, alas, a sermon. And as in the Bach passions, the music of the puzzled and angry crowd is more modern, more exciting, than anything Peter can say.

Elgar's skill in alternating public and private scenes, apparent in *The Apostles*, does not desert him, but the framing scenes of *The Kingdom* partake of both private and public. The closing scene refers back to the music of the opening scene; and in this, as in other respects, it has a marked kinship with the ending of Elgar's Second Symphony. After the dark visitations of the central movements of the symphony, its ebullient opening motive returns, subdued, in a dying fall: autumnal, the leaves rustling. Rhetorically this is not Wagnerian, but rather a tribute to the ending of Brahms's Third, perhaps the first great symphony to end quietly. *The Apostles*, of course, has already ended quietly and, like *The Kingdom*, in E flat major. But the ending of *The Kingdom* is not a wonderfully woven skein of motifs. Instead it is based on the closing section of the Prelude, but without the unexpected final turn to C major. Indeed, the grinding C flat eight bars from the end – pointed by trombones, and the last pitch we hear that is not part of diatonic E flat major – is particularly well fitted to exclude that possibility.

But what does it *include*? There is a return to what Diana McVeagh has called 'the gentle, drooping chords of acceptance'.⁸ To me they breathe a spirit of resignation. The last thematic gesture, as Jaeger noted in his analysis, is a fragment derived from the Prelude at fig. 13, already a metrical transformation of the material at fig. 6 (see Ex. 1). In the last bars Elgar chooses the third iteration, where the motive rises to the dominant, rather than curling back on itself ('X' in Ex. 1; see also Ex. 2).⁹ At the end of *The Kingdom*, Elgar characteristically avoids any hint of the security of a Perfect Authentic Cadence. The drooping melody is taken by high violas and cellos, and while the bass swings from E flat to C and back, it merges into 'X', with the violins rising to B flat; then the E flat harmony settles with its swelling crescendo-diminuendo, aided by string syncopation. The markings – *pp*, *f*, *p* – are less extreme than in the symphony, which goes from *pp* to *ff* and back, with a 'lunga' on the final chord. But the rhetoric is virtually identical.

Here again there is an interesting contrast with Wagner. In *Parsifal*, the opening motive of the prelude normally falls into a more disturbed harmony (C minor replaces A flat – see Ex. 3). At the end, the motive ascends, aspiring towards a better future under the new king. By contrast, Elgar's ascending motive, in outline so similar to Wagner's, is not a transformation of the Prelude, but a curtailment. The melodic fragment appears wistful: aspiration is suppressed, completion withheld. Undoubtedly the end of *The Kingdom* glows, but it is not the glow of dawn, but a Mediterranean sunset – or one over the Western Isles (Britain).

* * * * *

'Great is the art of beginning, greater the art is of ending', as Elgar wrote – significantly on the *revised* ending of his Variations. He could not appropriate the typical dramatic rhythm of Wagner, where music of redemption is coloured by the flat sixth degree of the scale – corresponding to the C flat at the end of *The Kingdom* – to remind us of

Ex. 1 *The Kingdom*, Prelude

6 Andante

dolce e solenne

etc.

Ex. 2 *The Kingdom* Final scene

210 + 1

[Molto tranquillo] *pp*

Largamente

dim. *pp* *rit.*

Ex. 3 Wagner, *Parsifal*

Prelude: *Sehr Langsam*

p espress. molto *f* *p più p*

Final scene

p espress. molto

pain, but in a well-earned tranquillity.¹⁰

Like Wagner, Elgar started his career in dramatic music with tragedy, in *The Black Knight* and *King Olaf*. Caractacus is a tragic figure, destroyed by overconfidence in a corrupt priesthood, but *Caractacus* the cantata is not tragic: the king and his family live on, albeit in exile, but the chorus who bayed for their blood steps out of character and proclaims the fall of the Roman Empire – which really was a thousand-year Reich – and the rise of the British. The spiritual opposite of this is *The Dream of Gerontius*. Gerontius is no hero, but we are never in doubt of the outcome. What Gerontius experiences feels particular to himself, but we are to infer that countless other *ordinary* souls, of those in life, perhaps, 'not cleverer than some of you', take the same journey. In a sense, therefore, Elgar had already written the third oratorio of the cycle, for in *Gerontius*, the kingdom of heaven is fully operational; the demons fume bootlessly; the voices of the living rise up from earth like incense.

Thus there is no 'last judgement'. The doctrines behind *Gerontius* are those evolved by theologians frustrated by the failure of the millennium, or any other apocalyptic deadline, to deliver the end of the world. So when Elgar finally embarked on the older operatic project, *The Apostles*, he had subverted his possible goal of an oratorio based on the last judgement. In reality, the third oratorio would have been about the diffusion of the gospel beyond Jerusalem; a matter of earthly powers and the foundation of the apostolic succession.

Anglican bishops, of course, claim a place in that succession, as no doubt did Elgar's adviser Canon Gorton and other clergy he consulted. Indeed, given the tendency of Roman Catholics (noted by Dora Penny) not to read the bible, one could argue that the concept and realisation of *The Apostles* is essentially protestant in nature; from which one may wish to consider the possibility that Elgar's eventual disillusionment with the Roman church may partly have resulted from an inward recognition that he himself – exploratory in his thinking, marked as a romantic but modern artist, concerned, as his interpretation of Mary Magdalene and Judas particularly shows, with the individual's relation to the deity – was essentially protestant by temperament while remaining Catholic in culture.¹¹

In *The Apostles*, it is the treatment of Judas, rather than the crucifixion, that offers a tragic dimension, and relates to interpretations of Judas, recently denounced by the Pope, that surfaced in a second-century Gnostic 'gospel', probably unknown to Elgar. *The Kingdom*, lacking Christ, lacking Judas, and with the Magdalene no longer tempted by visions of luxury, places doubt and uncertainty in a different realm, that of the mind rather than that of action. Again, in musical drama we should trust what is most strongly articulated by the music. And the music, confident in its technical assurance and inspiration, nevertheless raises doubts. Throughout, the disciples affirm their belief; but from time to time the music, without irony, questions their certainties. Had Elgar proceeded with the rest of the Acts of the Apostles – Antioch, Rome, and beyond – he might have had to unravel that subtlety and replace it with confidence, for how else could he have ended his vast trilogy?

But how to present such confidence? He could not repeat the close of *Gerontius*, where the triumph of true religion is never open to question. Could he instead have invoked the Empire? His music for the Church militant here on earth, and

triumphant within the Roman Empire, could hardly have been very different from the music that evokes the equally Christian – in theory – and, it might seem, equally triumphant British Empire, as at the end of *Caractacus*. The project of the apostles was evangelisation of Jewry, and then of the known world. A similar project, not only of religion, but of the British way of life, was promulgated as the justification for empire.

The end of *The Kingdom*, like that of the Second Symphony, questions such triumphalism. And if Elgar paid attention to international politics, his faith in empire might have been subject to an erosion parallel with his faith in the church. One does not need to exercise hindsight and invoke the barbarism of the First World War to see that the imperial project of quelling of barbarism outside Europe was corrupted from the outset; the sacrifices demanded, like the sacrifice on the Cross, had no certainty of outcome. I would like to think that Elgar's gentle let-down, in *The Kingdom* and the Second Symphony, of the optimism of *The Apostles* and the qualified optimism of the first symphony, represented a recognition of the inevitable failure of such evangelising projects. Today we can look back on the Empire as a reckless adventure, doomed to failure; we may consider General Gordon, on whom, mercifully, Elgar did not base a symphony, to have been at least half mad; and in the light of ghastly events unfolding in 2006, we can only lament the arbitrary imperial decision to administer 'Sudan' as if it constituted a single nation. If we can't blame ourselves for the intolerance and fanaticism that have led to the Darfur disaster, the Empire cannot escape responsibility for creating the conditions in which such horrors continue to flourish.¹²

Elgar was not a born imperialist; rather, as J.P.E. Harper-Scott points out in a closely-reasoned essay, he married into imperialism.¹³ The end of *Caractacus*, often cited in this context, is also a celebration of British freedom. *The Crown of India* is hardly evidence of Imperialism – more evidence of a shrewd eye for public appeal, to make a bit of money. As the marriage with Imperialism wore on, it may have become stale, to be replaced by national feelings aroused by the outbreak of war with Germany. I do not suggest that Elgar anticipated the end of Imperial Europe in the atrocities of Flanders, and the legacy of Empire in Sudan, Iraq, and elsewhere. But I do suggest that his mental world was subject to cyclic growth and decay, exuberance and depression; and that the intuition of the artist will have conveyed to him that nothing in this world is for ever. By the time of *The Kingdom*, the imperial mood of 'no apology' applied at the end of *Caractacus* was no longer tenable. If nothing else, the Boer war had intervened, in which the British were in conflict not with an alien people perceived as ripe for evangelisation (or extinction), but with fellow-Protestant-Christians of European origin; the thinking classes in Britain were divided about the justice of this war, rather as today with Iraq. Moreover rival imperialisms threatened British hegemony – German, American, Japanese; in 1905 the Japanese defeated Christian Russia in war. The civilizing and religious mission of empire was subsumed to lust for power and control.¹⁴ And anyone with half an eye on history could see that the resources of Europe, never mind Britain, were near breaking point.

Thus I shall take the risk of suggesting that the intuition, if not the conscious reasoning, of the artist wisely decided that *The Kingdom* must be the end of the

project, because in this world 'Reich' is transitory: the kingdom of Christ on earth is no longer theologically tenable. Hence any sense of resignation in the final bars of *The Kingdom* is more suitable to Elgar, his situation, and the situation of his beloved country, than a renewal of the false optimism of the opening of the Prelude.

The ending is thus a beautifully worked out piece of dramatic realism. The disciples are still in their upper room, and not much has changed since the first scene. They have survived difficulties, and been inspired to eloquence, believing themselves in receipt of powers from their departed Master and the entity later personalised by theology as the holy ghost. They are still seeking the Kingdom. They have not found it. Will they ever? Or are they at that point in the formation of a religious movement where its adherents begin to codify what they believe they have witnessed, and what they think must be truth? In the first scene, they *reminisce*: they reconstruct, and prepare a coherent answer to jesting Pilate. Following the death of their charismatic leader, they conclude that his kingdom is not of this world. Of course he may have said this himself, but until the crucifixion they apparently did not believe him. Thus at the end of the oratorio they establish something that was already shaping in the first scene: the rituals upon which the outer observance of a religious faith can manifest itself. For manifestation is their duty, and ritual is a support to evangelisation. Thus Elgar closes his oratorio intimately, introvertedly, with more reminiscence: a reconstruction of the Last Supper – which he wisely did not include in *The Apostles* – and the Lord's Prayer.

To the sceptic, this conclusion might be heard as complacent; and this may account in part for the ambiguous reception of *The Kingdom*, even from some of Elgar's knowledgeable admirers.¹⁵ Such hearings reflect a hostility to things Elgar is alleged to stand for – Jingo, Empire, Toryism, and so forth. A more considered response will not suppress his political orientation and his justifiable pride in the beauty and cultural, industrial, and scientific achievements of his country. But a considered hearing of this music should also lead to recognition of the complexity of the mind behind it, and the uncertainties that, indeed, are a vital generative force in its creation, and paradoxically in its artistic wholeness.

The serene endings of *The Kingdom* and the Second Symphony, if serene they are, honourably resist any temptation to milk applause. But both can, and in my view, should, be heard less as serene, than as resigned – resigned to the closing of possibilities, the dying of certain lights. And in the oratorio, this resignation is also realism. The followers of a charismatic leader, having convinced themselves that they possess a unique truth, are to go out armed with bodily weakness and words, and with subtlety and persuasion – and not, like the early followers of Islam, and in riposte the Crusaders, with the sword.

With what may appear a good deal of luck, the faith promulgated by Peter in his baritone sermon, and the mysticism that fires the soaring tenor lines of John, conquered the Roman Empire through the conversion of the Emperor himself. And there lies the rub. For the Christianisation of the Empire was imposed not by eloquence, nor, it would appear, by the holy spirit changing the hearts and minds of millions of citizens. It was imposed from the top. The religion of the Emperor must perforce become the religion of the Reich. The worst thing that ever happened to a pure Christian faith was the conversion of Constantine. For it became the religion of

an Empire, 'precarious, porous, multicultural and multilingual',¹⁶ open to a myriad of interpretations including the urge to impose conformity, and the legitimization of violence. Elgar's oratorio does not reflect the failure of Christianity to prevent the appalling consequences of a religious sense of absolute rectitude: persecution of heretics, crusades, and the arrogation by a priesthood of control over people's lives.

In common with other fine art, the ending of *The Kingdom* is susceptible to different readings; but we are not obliged to accept them all, and complacency is one I reject. Elgar composed it when approaching the age of 50. After a few years of fame he was already full of honours. Yet, as we know, he found *The Kingdom* difficult to write. And in the following years, he scaled new creative peaks by eschewing oratorio and, emphatically, by eschewing complacency. In the first symphony, parts of the orchestra strive against the imposition of the motto theme: if this is victory, then it is Pyrrhic. Elgar could have composed an ending as unequivocally grandiose as that of *Caractacus*; more subtly, he allows that interpretation, but others as well. Elgar prolonged a violin concerto of exceptional dimensions with a cadenza that meditates on the past; as later in the cello concerto, this introspection is only briefly dismissed by reasserting the brilliance normally associated with concerto endings. The second symphony, like *The Kingdom*, ends without that overt brilliance; and *Falstaff* may be interpreted as a tragedy.

Elgar in mid-career was a thoroughly modern citizen. He was interested in science, he relished new forms of transport, he took holidays abroad. But acceptance of modernity can coexist with a wistful desire to halt the march of progress.¹⁷ The sun goes down; we are no longer young; parents are dead and friends are dying – Rodewald was gone and Jaeger seriously ill. To produce a third oratorio, Elgar would have had to overcome doubts – about faith, about the future, about himself. He might have found a way round the tonal problem – the potential exhaustion of E flat major coupled with already familiar themes or Leitmotifs – but he could not find a way round the existential problem. It is clear from the compositions he continued to produce that his musical imagination was as fertile as ever. What was exhausted was a particular seam in the coalface from which he mined his work; or, to use his own metaphor, we might say the air from which he had taken this particular music was growing dangerously stale.

A loss of religious faith may have given the oratorio project its *coup de grace*.¹⁸ For me, it is a wider loss of faith in the institutions of the church, the Empire, and the Kingdom. But – in case this seems heretical – let me invoke that most admirable heretic, Galileo Galilei: 'all the same, it moves'. Few things in late romantic and early modernist music move us more than Elgar's resignation.

Notes

1. Jerrold Northrop Moore, preface to *The Kingdom* (Elgar Complete Edition), xiv.
2. John Ruskin, in *The Bible of Amiens*, discerned in the magnificent statuary a way of teaching the illiterate.
3. I am grateful to Rachel Cowgill for this observation, and for other suggestions.
4. Elgar's note refers to p. 21 of the vocal score. The melody is acknowledged as being taken from a modern edition with harmony by Ernst Pauer.
5. See Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama*, (New and Revised Edition, London: Faber & Faber, 1988).
6. The modal pairings are an example, as is the chromatic music between figs. 21 and 22 using F, D, A flat, and B, proposing an axis-relationship on the notes of a diminished seventh, a system with 19th-century roots used by several modernist 20th-century composers.
7. Where the Ionian/Aeolian complex consists of natural major and minor (all 'white notes') the Lydian/Dorian combination here has F sharp; see for instance the lovely 'Amen' at fig. 33, concluding the first half of the scene.
8. Diana M. McVeagh, *Edward Elgar. His Life and Music* (London: Dent, 1955), 128.
9. This is the motive Jaeger christens 'New Faith' (*The Kingdom, by Edward Elgar, Analytical and Descriptive Notes* (London: Novello, 1906), 6; Ex. 8).
10. Wagner uses this flattened sixth in *Der Fliegende Holländer* (revised version), *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Götterdämmerung*.
11. For a searching account of Elgar's cultural Catholicism see Charles Edward McGuire's forthcoming article, 'Measure of a Man: Catechizing Elgar's Catholic Avatars', to appear in Byron Adams (ed.), *Elgar and his World* (Princeton University Press, expected 2007). I am grateful to Charles McGuire for allowing me to see a copy in advance, as I was unable to attend the conference in Vermont at which he delivered the paper.
12. Brian Thompson *Imperial Vanities. The Imperial Adventures of the Baker Brothers and Gordon of Khartoum* (London, Harper Collins, 2002).
13. J.P.E. Harper-Scott – to whom I am also grateful for looking over this essay – 'Elgar's deconstruction of the belle époque: interlace structures and the Second Symphony', in J.P.E. Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton (ed.), *Elgar Studies* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). See also the argument in Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), and his essay on Elgar reproduced in Lewis Foreman (ed.), *Oh, my horses! Elgar and the Great War* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2001), 133–173.
14. The Raj, or Indian empire, for more than half its duration was no empire but an activity of an armed trading company.
15. Reservations are expressed by Diana McVeagh (*Edward Elgar*, 125–8), Michael Kennedy (*Portrait of Elgar*, 3rd edition, Oxford University Press, 1987, 207–9), and the summary of early reactions (including Elgar's own), in Byron Adams ('Elgar's later oratorios: Roman Catholicism, decadence and the Wagnerian dialectic of shame and grace', in Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 100–4).
16. Anthony Pagden, reviewing Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Conquest and Collecting in the East 1750–1850*, *London Review of Books*, 11 May 2006, 30.
17. Consider a work Elgar admired, Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ*, written at an age similar to Elgar's when he wrote *The Apostles*, and evoking the simple faith of his childhood without recapturing it.

18. Unbelievers can still write wonderful music on religious themes: one need only think of Verdi and Berlioz. Both composers were culturally Catholic, but it seems more certain than with Elgar

that they had lost conviction well before embarking on their finest sacred works. Unlike Elgar, they approached liturgical and biblical texts with the confidence of experienced dramatists.

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The Enigma of a Variation: The Story of the 'Dorabella Bequest'

Part One — The Sheffield Elgar Society and the Royal College of Music

Sylvia Bennett

It began on a dark November evening with a call from Wendy Hillary. Wendy had given one of her talks to Henley Townswomen's Guild, and had obviously 'wrought a flame in another (wo)man's heart'. When living in Sheffield some years ago, this lady had heard that 'Dorabella' (Variation X) of the 'Enigma' Variations had had some kind of association with the city, and she determined to track it down. With the help of an old school friend living in Grenoside (a village near Sheffield), she discovered that an 'Elgar Society' with around 70 members had flourished in the region from 1950 until the 1980s.

One founder member was Stanley Thompson, who remained an officer until his death in 1982. He was made Life Vice-President in 1976. In 1952 the 'Sheffield & District Elgar Society' had Carice Elgar-Blake as its President; the Vice-Presidents were Mrs Richard Powell (Dorabella) and Sir John Barbirolli. Other well-known Elgarians associated with the Society were Dr Percy Young, Wulstan Atkins, and Alan Webb, then curator of the Birthplace Museum. Wulstan Atkins was a particularly frequent visitor and attended most of the AGMs including the final one in 1983. 'Dorabella' made several visits to Sheffield, delighting members with her illustrated talks and reminiscences. On more than one occasion she was accompanied by Elgar's niece May Grafton. However, by the late 1950s she was prevented by age and infirmity from making further visits. She went into a nursing home and died in 1962, leaving to Stanley Thompson (then Secretary) a collection of 'Elgariana' (scores, manuscripts, letters and documents) for the use of Society members while the Society should last.

It was here that the trail went cold for the lady from Henley. All she could find out was that the 'Dorabella Bequest', or 'DB' as it became known, had been moved to 'an address in Sheffield'; and that in 1982, when Stanley Thompson died, and in 1983, when the Society folded, it was – as far as is known – still there and 'the responsibility of Stanley Thompson's executors'. She wrote to Wendy Hillary with the information. Intrigued, Wendy phoned me (as the only member in Sheffield),

and asked whether I knew anything more. I knew that there had been a Sheffield Elgar Society in the past, but had always assumed it was a now-folded branch of the national Society. I had no idea that, under my nose, as it were, Dorabella, Carice and May Grafton had paid regular visits to the city. Dorabella has always been my favourite character from the 'Variations' because, like me, she sang in a large choir and therefore experienced Elgar's music from the inside. How I wish I could have met her!

I promised Wendy I would try and find out more about it and, next day, went to the Sheffield Archives. Here, indexed under M (for Music), I eventually found eleven volumes containing the history of the 'Sheffield & District Elgar Society'. Choosing the latest one, I was at length presented with a battered folder containing over 200 documents (letters, minutes of meetings, programmes and other documents) pertaining to the years 1973-1983, fastened with what looked like shoe laces! On opening the file, I entered a world of greed and intrigue to rival any Dan Brown 'novel'. Everyone, it seemed, wanted to get their hands on the 'DB'; and several did, probably depleting it by doing so, though it is impossible to be sure as no inventory was made until 1975, when its then keeper and treasurer was persuaded, under duress, to provide the Society with one. This 'inventory' gives no real indication of the contents of the Bequest. Typical entries are:

<u>Sundries</u>	1 Box file containing letters
	1 Carton containing letters
	7 Pictures [apparently at one time including original watercolours by Troyte]

Under the heading 'Music' are entries such as:

	One copy of Enigma Variations
	12 sets of words to ditto [sic]
	2 copies of Intermezzo from ditto
	Nimrode [sic] analysis to ditto

The Treasurer had already raided the funds, plunging the Society deep into the red. Styling himself an 'antique dealer', he may well have depleted the DB considerably before the 'inventory' was made.

Following the making of the inventory in 1975, the DB was transferred to the attic of a more trustworthy member, a Mrs Vera Plant, with whom the VIPs stayed when they visited Sheffield. Here I reached the end of the file and the trail went cold for me also. Stanley Thompson died in 1982, the Society folded in 1983 due to dwindling membership (only five members were left by this time), and the DB was still in Vera Plant's attic and 'the responsibility of Stanley Thompson's executors'.

The Sheffield Archives closed for Christmas, so I went to find the house, remarkably still much as it would have been 20 or even 100 years ago: a large Victorian detached house. I gazed up at the attic under its pointy roof and wondered if the DB could still be tucked away in a box somewhere. But Vera Plant, like all the other characters, would be long dead; and I could hardly go to the door and ask

'Please can I look in your attic?'.

From the correspondence in the Archive, it was evident that, should the Sheffield Society disband, Mrs Powell wanted the DB to go to the Parry Library at the Royal College of Music (RCM). Stanley Thompson's widow, however, was reluctant to comply and insisted that Dorabella had willed the DB to her husband for his own use. Here the correspondence ended and the records had been placed in the Archive in 1986.

The RCM was also closed for Christmas and it seemed like stalemate as all the characters were dead. But I remembered seeing some letters in the file from Dennis Clark, now Secretary of the Yorkshire Branch. Dennis, along with 16 members from Leeds, had been invited to an open evening to view the DB. A phone call to Dennis established that the DB was (or had been) something of value to historians and Elgarians, and not just detritus from an old lady's attic. Mrs Thompson, however, had been determined to hang on to it; and the last Dennis had heard (in about 1985) was that Dorabella's elder son Claud Powell had had a 'most unpleasant altercation' with her when he visited Sheffield to retrieve it. 'Did he get it?'. Dennis didn't know but assumed he must have, as Mrs Thompson didn't have a leg to stand on. I asked if Claud was still alive and, again, Dennis wasn't sure, though if he had died it was fairly recently.

At last after Christmas I telephoned the RCM. Yes, they did indeed have the DB, and they had 'new additions' as well, although these weren't catalogued as yet. It appeared that Claud Powell had indeed died recently, and more items had been received including Dorabella's diaries. I was told I could view it at any time, though I was warned that some items had been removed for restoration. I phoned Wendy to give her the news and ask if she would like to come with me to look at it. Unfortunately, she was working, but Bernard Hill would love to come in her place; so I arranged to spend a couple of nights in London and meet Bernard at the RCM. On the journey south I re-read Dorabella's book and pondered on the enigma of why she was so insistent that the material should go to the RCM and not to the Birthplace Museum. She had, after all, helped Carice set up the Museum and had been present at its opening; and Carice had written the preface to the 1937 edition of her book, *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation*. Was there, I wondered some more personal reason hidden away in the Bequest – something she might want to keep from Carice and other members of the Trust? It was, I told myself, useless to speculate as Claud would have removed any such material long ago.

As the train reached St Pancras (on time!), I experienced the familiar thrill of arriving in the capital. From my hotel I walked briskly through the park (it's quicker) to the RCM, keeping the dome of the Albert Hall in sight for most of the way. I came out almost opposite it and gazed in wonder (as Elgar might have done) at the Albert Memorial, newly-gilded, before crossing the road under Albert's watchful eye. After collecting my visitor's pass from Reception, I was directed to the Library.

Here the librarians (Peter Horton and Pam Thompson) were most helpful. But, as I suspected, very little of the material deposited in 1986 seemed to tie in with the items on the 'inventory'. Peter Horton pointed out, however, that any scores not marked by the composer would have been put into general circulation. He promised to look through the new material and put out anything of interest for tomorrow.

Meanwhile, I was free to examine any of the catalogued material from 1986. I chose a file of documents and cuttings concerned with the 'Enigma' Variations, a grey file in which I was soon immersed. There is much of interest here but, so far as I could tell (there are a great many documents in the file), all the material is post-1937, i.e. after the publication of Dorabella's book. A great deal in fact dates from the 1970s and, as Dorabella gave the DB to Sheffield in 1962, it must have been added by Claud Powell. What else, I wonder, did he add and, more to the point, what (if anything) did he remove? Alas, we may never know.

Next morning Bernard arrived; and waiting for us as promised were some scores and folders, and a red shoe box. We carried our booty to the reading room and opened the box, to find Dorabella's diaries from 1894 to 1914. These provide a wonderful insight into her life although, as Claud Powell points out in his introduction to the 1994 edition of his mother's book, most of her entries are concerned with the weather.¹ The amount of money she spent on her bicycle, including accessories and appropriate clothing (noted in the accounts pages) is also illuminating. She must have had a generous allowance from her father, and perhaps Elgar sometimes found it hard to keep up with her. Scattered in the bottom of the box, underneath the diaries, we found some 35mm slides which Dorabella presumably used to illustrate her talks. These we had to view with the naked eye as no other facilities were available. We decided that they are photographs of her family (one being, almost certainly, the Rev. Alfred Penny) and Dora as a child. I carefully put them in numerical order according to their labels and replaced them in their container.

Turning to the musical items, we perused a proof copy of the vocal score of *Gerontius* (in German and English), and we concluded that this is probably the one mentioned by Jaeger in his letter to Dora Penny of 9 June 1900:

The Chorus Parts will not be in the hands of the B'ham singers for another 3 weeks or more I'll send you an advance copy of the Vocal Score for your very private use (mind you! Private!!) as soon as I possibly can.²

In her book, Dorabella describes how Jaeger sent her several proof-copies of Elgar's works with the strictest injunctions to secrecy. She obviously prized them greatly, but '... hoped most fervently that he would not get into trouble for sending them, perhaps depriving some Important Person of a copy which I hugged to myself at a first performance'.³

Next we turned our attention to a proof-copy of the piano score of *In the South*. Across the front cover is scrawled in crayon 'Proof Copy Very Rare'. Dorabella would never have written this, and I strongly suspect the Antique Dealer/Treasurer of trying to sell it. If only it could speak, this score probably has a story of its own to tell, for it may well be the one Dorabella found on 15 June 1904 in Elgar's rubbish basket and 'took home to add to (her) treasures'.⁴ We spent a long time poring over this, as it is annotated in pencil (we think by Jaeger), with titles above the different sections.

After lunch Bernard had to leave, but I could return to Dorabella's diaries. After some two hours I had to concede that I was not going to find the answer to any of the riddles posed by the DB. Reluctantly I put the lid on the box and left it to future researchers, for time was running out and there was one thing I had to see – the

manuscript of *The Shepherd's Song*. As I open the folder, my fingers tingle. I know I am touching the past. The clock measures the hours but, for me, time stands still. I am surrounded by scholars and students and the sound of a hundred instruments playing scales and exercises; but I I am alone with Edward Elgar, and past and present have merged. I turn the pages, finding the music surprisingly easy to read. Another surprise is that the key of the MS is E and so the music is littered with double sharps. My own copy (low key) published by Ascherberg is in E flat. Inside, the pages are clean and the ink (red has been used for some of the directions) as fresh as the day it was written over 100 years ago. The marks of the pen-nib are clearly visible, as are the places where he used his penknife to make corrections.

Turning back to the title page, I find much that puzzles me. In the bottom left-hand corner Elgar has written 'Forli Malvern' but no date, while in the top right-hand corner we see 'opus 16.1 P [published] 1895'. Opus 16 would seem to date it much earlier than 1895. *Songs from the Bavarian Highlands* (written in 1895) bears the opus number 27. Opus 14 (*Vesper Voluntaries*) and Opus 18 (*Oh Happy Eyes*) take us back to 1889, and it must be remembered that Elgar did not move to Forli until June 1891.⁵ But Elgar's opus numbers seem to bear little relation to the order of composition, so he must have been filling in the gaps for some reason. (I should mention here that part of *Rondel*, also Opus 16, is in the same file – the end, not the beginning. This is listed by Michael Kennedy under 1894.)⁶

I now turn my attention to the top centre dedication (see illustration). The letters M.F.B. are strange and seem to be based on Js, unless they are shepherds' crooks upside down. And what on earth is scribbled out underneath? Most puzzling of all: why was the manuscript in Dorabella's possession in the first place? There is no mention of the song in her book and it must have been written before she knew Elgar. Surely she did not retrieve *this* from Elgar's rubbish basket! But my last 15 minutes are ticking away. Beyond the high windows 'the sun goeth down'. The students have left the library, and I never noticed. Only a lone flute breaks the silence. I run my fingers over the manuscript one last time before closing the file and, reluctantly, returning it to the desk.

I now begin to understand the hold that the DB had on Stanley Thompson and other Sheffield Society members. Without much hope, I ask if the manuscript can be photocopied. To my surprise and joy the answer is 'yes'; but (Peter Horton looks meaningfully at the clock) not tonight. He agrees to post it to me and, with a lighter heart and humming *The Shepherd's Song*, I join the students leaving college for the weekend.

To be continued in the next issue of the Journal

Notes

- 1 Mrs Richard Powell, *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation* (Fourth edition, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994).
- 2 *ibid.*, 40.
- 3 *ibid.*, 38
- 4 *ibid.*, 81.
- 5 Pauline Collett, *Elgar Lived Here* (London: Thames Publishing, 1981), 41. [The date of composition of *The Shepherd's Song* is usually given as 1892, which seems to fit the facts. Ed.]
- 6 Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (Third edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 340.

Sylvia Bennett is a native of Sheffield and a retired nurse. She has been a member of the Elgar Society since 1996, having discovered Elgar by accident many years before after listening to the Third programme while searching for Radio Luxemburg. She started singing lessons at the age of eleven and attended her first Philharmonic Concert at 15, becoming a regular as a 'Barbirolli Platform Kid', sitting in the 1/6d (7½p) seats on the Sheffield City Hall platform. In Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus ('the best choir in the world' according to Elgar), she has taken part in most of Elgar's later choral works including The Spirit of England and the recording of The Dream of Gerontius with Sir John Barbirolli and Dame Janet Baker. Sylvia has a special interest in Elgar's songs, solo and choral, believing they contain much autobiographical material which she hopes to research at a future date.

Elgar and 'his ideal', Schumann

Brian Newbould

Elgar is reported to have proclaimed that Schumann was 'his ideal'.¹ This being so, and since Elgar learned his craft not through any formal academic training but largely by the study of other composers' music, we might expect his music itself to bear out this admiration. So what do his scores tell us on the matter?

We may, of course, conjecture that the memory of those sequential chains of falling sevenths in the slow movements of Schumann's Piano Quartet and Second Symphony was a critical part of the background to the 'Enigma' Variations. We know, too, that Elgar was especially enthusiastic about Schumann's *Overture, Scherzo and Finale*, Op.52.² While some may find its first six notes strangely prophetic of those of Elgar's Violin Concerto, any other influences appear to be of a more generalised kind.³ The two composers have been observed to share a common interest in ciphers and cryptograms.⁴ Perhaps Schumann's partiality for sequences, found everywhere in his oeuvre, was one feature that attracted the like-minded Elgar.

There are, however, two cases of peculiarly Schumannesque thought in Elgar that demand attention. Schumann's tendency to build a theme by multiplying a tiny rhythmic cell, usually of one bar, may be illustrated from two of the German composer's symphonies. In the first movement of the Second Symphony a one-bar cell dominates seventeen bars of music, the rhythmic unison of the whole orchestra enforcing the domination (Ex. 1). In the finale of the same work we find similar obsession with the initial rhythm of the first theme. In the first section of fourteen bars, only two display a slightly different rhythm: over a 45-bar span, 37 bars are faithful to the initial rhythm, almost always in rhythmic unison. In the First

Ex. 1

Allegro, ma non troppo

The musical score consists of three staves of music in 3/4 time. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *cresc.* marking. The second staff continues with a *sempre cresc.* marking. The third staff concludes with a forte (*f*) and sforzando (*sf*) marking.

Symphony, the theme of the trio of the third movement is a chain of some 24 short-long-shorts. Another familiar example is the second subject in the finale of the Piano Concerto, where the one-bar rhythm applies to the larger 'hemiola' bar (two bars of 3/4 sound as one bar of 3/2). Indeed, a similar situation obtains in the Scherzo of the aforementioned *Overture, Scherzo and Finale*; here Schumann hardly ever lets go of the initial rhythm, which revives the jauntily dotted six-eight of the first movement Allegro of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Could such instances have left their impression on Elgar?

Consider some of the Englishman's symphonic themes. In the finale of the First Symphony, a half-bar rhythmic module – comprising a bass staggered against the top part – initiates the Allegro theme (Ex. 2), and continues 40 times without a break. The finale of the Second Symphony has a first theme whose first segment, having the same one-bar rhythm for seven of its eight bars, is immediately repeated, thus achieving fourteen uses in sixteen bars (Ex. 3). These are symphonic first themes, like most of the Schumann instances referred to. All these pointedly mono-rhythmic examples should be seen against a background of the traditional inclination towards a modicum of rhythmic variety in symphonic and sonata themes. It is relevant to note that, according to W.H. Reed, Elgar 'loved Schumann, and would discuss his

Ex. 2

Allegro

f *risoluto* *sf* *simile* *sf* *mf* *ten.*
cresc. *f* *ff* *sf* *sf*
cresc.
sf

Ex. 3

Moderato e maestoso

pp con dignita *pp*
pp etc.

Ex. 4

pp *pp* *pp* *pp*
pp *con Ped.* *legatissimo*
 2

symphonies at great length'.⁵

Perhaps the most striking of all instances of Schumann's parlance permeating Elgar's is to be found in the later composer's Piano Quintet. The case is so arresting because it is so specific and localised, and involves several particularities in combination. Last in the varied procession of themes presented in Elgar's first movement is Ex. 4. The passage is remarkable enough in its context: solemn, withdrawn, devotional, chorale-like, it seizes our imagination and tends to stay in the mind as a lingering memento of the work. The following features are to be observed. An upper melody in even notes, smoothly articulated, and beginning at the half-bar, finds its rhythmic counterpart in the equally smooth bass line. Meanwhile, the moving inner parts set triplets against quadruplets.

This account could equally fit a passage in the slow movement of Schumann's Piano Quintet (Ex. 5). The only difference is that Schumann precedes the first two notes of his theme, and the last two, with a drawn-out version of the same. But the similarities go beyond what has so far been said. First, both composers immediately repeat their first phrase. And second, the repeat (marked '2' in the examples) begins by taking up the last two notes of the first statement. Indeed, Elgar seems to go out his way to achieve this literal 'echo', by sharpening the second note from A natural to A sharp at the second hearing.

When we add some biographical data, the case for taking the relationship seriously is made still more compelling. Elgar's work is a piano quintet, as is Schumann's; and Schumann's was one of the few possible 'models' of piano quintet writing to which Elgar would have had access. A copy of the score of Schumann's work was in his personal library, now housed at the Birthplace in Broadheath, and was presumably part of the legacy that led Elgar to regard Schumann as his ideal.⁶ And we have it from Rosa Burley that Elgar, as pianist, played the Schumann quintet with her and his other friends in the 1890s.⁷ There can be few comparable instances in the history of music where music analysis 'stacks up' with biographical information to support an argument for a specific work-on-work influence across the years.

After a first hearing of a work we may well find ourselves obsessively singing – mentally or aloud – one or two choice passages which have taken possession of us. The same may happen to a composer, whose mind becomes inhabited by another composer's inventive scrap. He may well guard against letting this scrap infiltrate his own composing, by determinedly avoiding any literal or near-literal replication of its surface features, such as its melodic contour or any distinctive rhythm. Although these extrinsic details may be suppressed, the intrinsic gesture or impulse may remain. The influence has thus 'gone underground'. Can this be what has happened here with Elgar's recollected Schumann?

Ex. 5

The musical score for Schumann's Piano Quintet, Example 5, is presented in two systems. The first system includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The second system includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex interplay of triplets and quadruplets. Performance markings include 'espress. ma sempre p' for the strings and 'sempre p e legato' for the piano. The piano part includes a 'pp' marking in the final measure of the second system.

2

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

p

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

pp

pp

pp

Brian Newbould is Emeritus Professor of Music in the University of Hull. He is best known for his books on Schubert including a major study of the life and works, and for his realisations of Schubert's fragmentary works including the Seventh and Tenth Symphonies. He has also published a study of the 'enigma' of Elgar's String Quartet in Music & Letters, and recently published a series of articles on the composer's self-education in The Musical Times.

1. Elgar wrote to Dr C.W. Buck on 1 July 1883 about music he heard at the Leipzig Gewandhaus: '...I got pretty well dosed with Schumann (my ideal!), Brahms, Rubinstein & Wagner, so had no cause to complain'. Elgar Birthplace Museum, Broadheath, published in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar. Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 7.
2. Peter Dennison, 'Elgar's Musical Apprenticeship', in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Elgar Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1990), 7-8.
3. Schumann's three-movement symphonic work, *Overture, Scherzo and Finale*, begins with the same six notes (or five intervals) as Elgar's violin concerto, though in E minor and with the last two in reverse order. However, Elgar's theme has a decided rhythmic character, whereas Schumann's version is in even notes. [Ed.]
4. See Julian Rushton, Elgar: 'Enigma' Variations (Cambridge Music Handbooks), Cambridge 1999, p.70; also Diana McVeagh, 'Elgar's Musical Language: the shorter Instrumental Works' in Daniel Grimley & Julian Rushton, *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 50.
5. See Dennison, in Monk, op. cit., 8.
6. Some aspects of the library and its relevance for Elgar's own self-education and compositions are discussed by the author in *The Musical Times (MT)* in a sequence of articles entitled 'Elgar and Academicism': 'I: The untutored genius', *MT* 146/1891 (Summer 2005), 71-84; 'II: Practice beyond Theory', *MT* 146/1892 (Autumn 2005), 25-41; 'III: Devices and Contrivances', *MT* 146/1893 (Winter 2005), 29-44.
7. See note 5.

A view of Elgar from the past: *The Edwardians*, by J.B. Priestley

Michael Plant

It is now over twenty years since J.B. Priestley died at his home, Kissing Tree House, near the site of Elgar's old home at Tiddington House, and just outside Stratford-upon-Avon. He was nearly 90. Like Delius, he came from Bradford, and he is buried in the Yorkshire Dales. Author, commentator, and playwright, his output was immense and distinguished but, like Vaughan Williams, he declined all honours other than the Order of Merit.

His view were free-thinking and radical, but he joined no political party. Determined to be a writer, he made his name with his picaresque novel, *The Good Companions*, the best-seller of 1929. It was filmed in 1932 by Gaumont-British, who cast John Gielgud alongside the Cheeky Chappie, the comedian Max Miller. Priestley himself wrote for films, notably *Sing As We Go* (1934), a vehicle for the Lancashire star Gracie Fields (whom Elgar once met at Abbey Road, where both were recording). Both films are thoroughly representative of their period and can still be recommended.

Towards the end of his career, Priestley produced a number of non-fiction works of the 'coffee-table' type: large-format, well illustrated volumes on wide-ranging themes with a readable but lightweight text. He published *The Edwardians* in 1970. Accusations that the book is superficial and incomplete would be beside the point. We are so familiar with Priestley, the lovable, pipe-smoking curmudgeon of his later years, that it is a shock to remember that he was born in 1894. He lived through the entire Edwardian period as a clever and observant boy; he only embarked on his life's work after serving in the trenches throughout the Great War and taking a degree at Cambridge under a scheme for demobilised officers (he had volunteered in 1914 as a private soldier). His thoughts therefore represent a first-hand, personal account of the period up to 1914, albeit recollected many years later.

The Edwardians can cordially be recommended to Elgarians as a useful account of the life of the nation when Elgar's powers were at their height, illustrated by much background detail and many striking examples of Edwardian art. Above all, it is a valuable corrective to a cliché-ridden view of Edwardian times as consisting of tranquil, golden afternoons, the idle hill of summer, and so on. Abroad in those years, the British army found it surprisingly hard to win the war in South Africa. At home, political, social, and constitutional reform, women's suffrage and the Irish question – by 1914 Ulster was on the brink of civil war – filled the papers.

The Labour Party was making progress and so were trade unions, to the horror of some. However, Edward VII in his short reign – he was only 68 when he died in 1910, although he looked older – proved a great success: a shrewd constitutional monarch, Priestley tells us, and not just a playboy king. He was the one man who might have talked the Kaiser (his nephew) out of launching and continuing the war.

Priestley also deals with social life, economics, and such major Edwardian events as the loss of the Titanic and Scott's last expedition. He is naturally at his best in subjects that interest him personally, such as music hall (more properly, 'variety theatre' by that time), literature, and the stage. He discusses the central place of Shakespeare in the drama and, as an accomplished amateur pianist, he writes with insight and enthusiasm on music and its place in national and provincial life as he saw it when a young man. Of course he celebrates Elgar – with perhaps a little hindsight – as the principal British composer of the day. He does not mention meeting him, but his thoughts are worth recalling.

Turning from remarks on Delius and others, he begins 'These years were Elgar's':

Both his detractors and his admirers, like me, see him as music's Edwardian. I am ready to accept the Edwardian label for him, but then I think people who sneer at him fail to understand either Elgar or the Edwardian age. They take his weaknesses – the brassy pomp, the too obvious *nobilmente* – then blow them up and attach them to a false picture of the age, which did not simply consist of the British Empire still untroubled, garden parties and champagne suppers, and the Guards on parade.

He turns to Elgar's feelings about the king:

... Elgar genuinely admired King Edward. It is easy to understand why ... Apart from his music and all that it involved, Elgar was a modest man, almost naïve; he was a self-made provincial musician, who married a woman a few years older than himself, a member of a socially superior family; and though he had the *Enigma* variations and *Gerontius* behind him, he could not help feeling delighted by King Edward's reception of him. (Elgar was deeply devoted to his wife, the daughter of a major-general, and it is more than likely that his tendency to be ultra-conservative and chauvinistic was the result of her influence.)

After remarking that the Second Symphony was partly sketched before the First, then dedicated to the king's memory, he continues:

Though the noble slow movement, which explores the depths of grief, is generally held to be an elegy for the late king, we know now that the loss of his friend, Rodewald, back in 1904 ... had distressed him terribly. 'O my god; it is too awful', he had written to a friend; and we can catch that cry in certain moments of the slow movement.

Priestley's responsiveness to the music shines through his further ruminations:

Elgar is essentially Edwardian, not because of his pomps and circumstances and his increasing enjoyment – though perhaps, better, his enjoyment of his wife's enjoyment

– of the society of important personages and a fine style of living; but because there is in him and his music all the rich confusion of the age, the deepening doubt, the melancholy whispers from the unconscious, as well as all that hope and glory. He is very English in this, just as he is in his characteristic rhythms and cadences. I have heard many great foreign conductors playing Elgar, but it has always seemed to me that they never quite reproduce the right shape and flow of him as conductors like Boult and Barbirolli have been able to do. Over and above his inventiveness and magnificent orchestration, and more important than they are, is something that never fails even now to ravish my ear and catch at my heart. It is the kind of passage, for ever recurring, when strings are quietened and the jagged thunder of his brass is gone, and like a purple-and-sepia sunset suddenly revealing patches of purest cerulean or fading apple-green, it is all different, strangely beautiful as music and catching at the heart because the man himself, no longer masterful, seems to be staring at us out of a sorrowful bewilderment. These moments when the *persona* is dropped are to me the secret of Elgar's lasting enchantment. The musicologists who shrug him away, because he added little or nothing to the formal development of the art, cannot want to find in music any communication from a great fellow man. His *Falstaff* is a glorious feast of sound, but it is not about Falstaff, better suggested by Verdi in his old age. It is a pity that Strauss did not tackle Falstaff, and Elgar Don Quixote. Clamped into his retired-colonel-off-to-the-races *persona*, he outlasted the Edwardian era by nearly twenty years, and his last major work, the 'cello concerto in 1919, is more or less a lament, in which we catch him looking back, not merely with nostalgia but often with anguish, at the Edwardian years ...

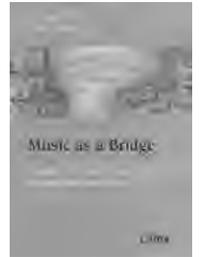
These are perceptive comments, especially as the appreciation of Elgar at the time *The Edwardians* was published was not nearly as widespread as it has since become. I much enjoy his swipe at the musicologists who used to dismiss Elgar because he was not a 'progressive' (as if that would stop him writing good music), and he rightly values Alice's contribution to her husband's success. How quickly she passed from 'poor Alice who married the genius' to Lady Elgar, wife of Sir Edward!

At the end of *The Edwardians*, Priestley discusses the impact of what was then called 'the Great War'; and, having disposed of the idea that it broke in abruptly and out of a clear blue sky upon some tranquil golden afternoon, he then reinvents the notion. The world in 1918, after the war, was not a better place. A certain stability had gone. In 1914, daughters expected to marry and have families. Sons generally followed their fathers into the same trade or employment. Most people spent their lives in the areas where they were born. New technologies, old empires, and dangerous ideas disrupted all this; when continents collide, some mad, senseless outcome is inevitable. Priestley wrote *The Edwardians* in old age, but he brings the era to life as only a true Edwardian could, and only someone who had lived through those times could even hint at what might have been, had the world avoided the cataclysm of 1914. His own hopes as a young man did not go unrealised when the war was over, but those of his generation were largely lost on the Somme.

BOOK REVIEWS

Music as a bridge: Musikalische Beziehungen zwischen England und Deutschland 1920-1950

edited by Christa Brüstle and Guido Heldt



Heidelberg:
Olms, 2005

'Music as a bridge' is both the title and the underlying principle of this volume, a collection of essays based on conference papers given at the Musicological Institute of the Freie Universität, Berlin, in July 2000. The bridges are between Britain and Germany; the result is an effective deconstruction of the myth that, for German musicians, Britain has only ever been 'Das Land ohne Musik'. There are fourteen essays, seven by German musicologists (but four of these are written in English), and seven by Anglophone scholars. They reveal how the period between the two world wars saw plenty of musical interaction between the two countries: British composers who were performed in Germany, German composers who influenced their British counterparts, German performers who played an important role in British society, and British and German composers who responded in similar ways to new media such as film. The result is a book that throws new light on composers as different as Sullivan and Eisler. A full list of contents is appended to this review.

The editors interpret the 1920-1950 timeframe liberally, with the result that the volume contains an essay (in English) by a German musicologist, Michael Gassmann, on the relationship between Elgar and Strauss ("Richard Cœur de Lion! Ein Held!"—Richard Strauss's Influence on Edward Elgar'). Gassmann begins his essay with an account of the 'personal and artistic relationship' between Elgar and Strauss: Elgar's first acquaintanceship with Strauss's music in December 1901, Strauss's famous speech following the Düsseldorf performance of *Gerontius* in May 1902, and the controversy that these remarks caused within Britain's musical establishment. This information serves as an introduction to Gassmann's main argument: that Strauss exerted considerable musical influence on Elgar, but that Elgar's response to Strauss was active and original, not passive and imitative. Gassmann illustrates this by comparing the first orchestral work that Elgar wrote after becoming acquainted with Strauss's music, *In the South*, with Strauss's *Don Juan* – a piece which in 1907 Elgar described as 'the greatest masterpiece of the present'. Gassmann notes several gestural and formal similarities between the two

pieces: their openings, both of them an arpeggiated string flourish and a fanfare, the presence of a 'large and central idyllic scene', in Elgar's case the 'canto popolare', and before the recapitulation 'a moment of introvert remembrance ... where all former themes are summed up'. These superficial similarities, however, mask more profound differences, for, as Gassmann points out, the two composers had radically different ideas about programme music and form. For Strauss, programmes provided a means to creating new (but still internally coherent) musical forms; for Elgar, who professed to be profoundly sceptical of programme music, form was, as Gassmann puts it, 'a vessel that can be filled with music'. Elgar's work should therefore not be seen as imitation Strauss, but as a stepping stone to the First Symphony, the work in which, Gassmann argues, Elgar freed himself from the influence of (and comparisons with) his illustrious German contemporary.

Gassmann's argument is fascinating and often persuasive, but not flawless. First, for all its similarities to *Don Juan*, the opening theme of *In the South* dates from a sketch of 1899 ('Dan triumphant – after a fight'), more than two years before Elgar first heard Strauss's music. Admittedly, Elgar's decision to use this theme may reflect his recently acquired familiarity with Strauss's work, and one wonders whether his decision to alter the key of the theme – originally E major, the key of *Don Juan* – reflected a desire to obscure his debt to Strauss's work. But, if so, why change it to E flat major, a key inviting comparisons with *Ein Heldenleben*, a work whose sound-world pervades so much of *In the South*? Secondly, Gassmann's analyses sometimes raise more questions than they answer. His analysis of *Don Juan* is by no means the only possible reading of the work, as such distinguished Strauss scholars as James Hepokoski and Charles Youmans have shown, but it is presented here without any caveats. Moreover, his claim that the sonata forms of both *In the South* and *Cockaigne* are 'very unadventurous' is surely unfair; think of the formal disruption caused by the 'Roman' episode of the former and the military march of the latter. Thirdly, *did* Elgar suffer when compared with Strauss, as Gassmann implies? He provides no evidence to that effect, but plenty to the contrary, and one is left with the (perhaps accurate) suspicion that the most likely source of an Elgarian inferiority complex might have been the composer himself. These qualifications aside, however, Gassmann's essay remains an interesting contribution both to Elgar scholarship and to the volume as a whole.

Most of the other essays in the collection are concerned with composers or performers of a slightly later period, but at least two intersect with Elgar's career. Alain Frogley's thoughtful discussion of the political background and personal motivations

behind Vaughan Williams's controversial decision to accept the 1937 Hamburg Shakespeare prize, despite his well documented objections to the Nazi regime, reveals the somewhat dubious role played in this affair by Elgar's quondam friend, Professor Hermann Fiedler, who – accidentally? on purpose? – failed to mention to the Hamburg authorities that RVW's acceptance of the prize was conditional on his being permitted publicly to denounce the Nazi regime. And Sophie Fuller's lively account of representations of British women composers considers, among other novels, Jessie Fothergill's *The First Violin* (1877), a book that Elgar gave as a present to Helen Weaver's friend Edith Groveham, when the two women were studying in Leipzig in 1883.

Three factors detract from this volume. An index would have been a helpful way of building bridges (as it were) *between* essays: there is none. Secondly, the musical examples, where they exist, are simply photocopies of printed scores or, in one case, of a semi-legible manuscript: music-processed examples would have been far easier to read. Finally, a number of the English-language essays are marred by poor punctuation and spelling, especially of names (the forenames of Elisabeth Lutyens and Elizabeth Maconchy caused particular problems); whether the fault lies with the volume's editors or the copy editor at Georg Olms Verlag is a moot point.

Aidan Thomson.

[Contents: Christa Brüstle and Guido Heldt, 'Vorwort', vii-xv; Jolyon Brettingham Smith, 'Musical Bridges: a few Home Thoughts from Abroad', 1-16; Megan Pricor, "Bach and Beethoven... are Gods": The Role of the German Composer in English Music Appreciation, 1919-1939', 17-31; Meinhard Saremba, "In the Purgatory of Tradition"—Arthur Sullivan and the English Musical Renaissance", 33-71; Michael Gassmann, "Richard Cœur de Lion! Ein Held!"—Richard Strauss's Influence on Edward Elgar', 73-91; Jürgen Schaarwächter, 'Zu Havergal Briens Gebrauch der deutschen Sprache in seinem Kompositionen', 93-111; Alain Frogley, 'Vaughan Williams and Nazi Germany: the 1937 Hamburg Shakespeare Prize', 113-32; Derek Watson, 'Alan Bush and Germany 1920-1950', 133-42; Jill Halstead, "She composes in the Kitchen..." Ruth Gipps 1921-1999: An English Reactionary and Radical', 143-55; Jutta Raab Hansen, 'Die Sängerin Elena Gerhardt—eine biographische Skizze im Spiegel der britisch-deutschen Musikbeziehungen', 157-71; Sophie Fuller, 'Representations of British Women Composers', 173-186; Antje Reineke, "Any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind": zu Benjamin Britten's Pazifismus in den Jahren 1945/1946', 187-203; Axel Klein, 'Mirror

Imagination. Cultural Reflections between Irish and German Music, 1930-1970', 205-224; Jenny Doctor, 'The Wonders of Industrial Britain: Coal Face, Night Mail and the British Documentary Film Movement', 225-36; Guido Heldt, 'Sound Sentiments: Hanns Eisler's Film Music in the 1930s', 237-58.]



Matador, 2006
£12.99

The Greenings and some of their relatives (including the Elgars)

by Michael Greening

This book is about the genealogy of the Greening family and, as such, is really for Greenings only. It barely mentions the most important 'Greening' of them all, Edward William Elgar. There is, however, a diversion when the claim is made that the grandmother of the husband of one Jane Greening, who now lives in Australia, was the illegitimate daughter of Elgar. This child, Dorothy, was adopted by the Weaver family and was brought up in their home in Lansdowne Crescent in Worcester. However, it would seem there is no connection between these Weavers and the family of Helen Weaver. As the author says, 'this story is a slender one and Elgar's involvement is based on a family legend'. All this begs many questions and answers none of them. There are those who remain convinced that Elgar fathered an illegitimate child, or even children. Unless and until further, conclusive evidence is brought to light, all this remains conjectural.

Disappointingly the opportunity is also missed to throw new light on the life and character of the composer's mother, Ann Greening. Even if the book is really intended only for readers who wish to know everything they can find out about the Greening family, they may be disappointed by this omission. It is also a great pity that no space was found for an index, something which would assist the casual researcher enormously.

Andrew Neill

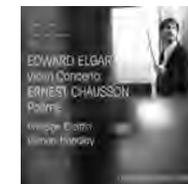
CD REVIEWS

Violin Concerto, Op. 61

with Chausson, *Poème* for Violin and Orchestra

Philippe Graffin (solo violin)

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Vernon Handley



AVIE AV2091

This recording of Elgar's violin concerto uses two complete manuscripts as its source, the first for piano and violin dated June 1910, and the other an orchestral version dated two months later. Both represent the strong input from W.H. Reed, Elgar's close friend and leader of the London Symphony Orchestra. The printed score reflects further input from the dedicatee, Fritz Kreisler. Composers often defer to their performing colleagues: Bruch with Ferdinand David, Otto von Königsloew, Joachim, Sarasate, and Willy Hess – but then Bruch, unlike Elgar, was no violinist. Elgar was a good player, and had once performed all the Beethoven sonatas, but a characteristic of Reed's contribution was his imagination, producing the harmonics in the *Andante* and the effective leap of a 12th up the G string after the *rapido* markings. Here are the differences between Reed and Kreisler (clearly a score will be required by the listener).

First movement: before fig. 12, the violin now ascends instead of descending as it does in the MSs. Before fig. 21, some octaves in the semiquavers were eliminated by Kreisler. Octaves were also eliminated before fig. 36. Equivalent alterations to the recapitulation were made, and simplification of the chords after fig. 42. A passage is elaborated towards fig. 44 and the melodic line is clarified at fig. 44. *Andante*: virtually unaltered except for one detail in the violin's opening phrase. Finale: the figuration at figs. 77 and 91 was unviolinistic and was changed – it seemed to have caused Reed some concern. In addition, octaves were deleted in the three bars leading to fig. 83. Considerable rewriting occurs after fig. 96 and chords are simplified at fig. 97. There are more double stops in the cadenza and alteration to the two bars before fig. 113. Finally the closing flourish is rewritten at fig. 116; this according to Philippe Graffin, we can attribute to the influence of Alice Elgar, who left a note on the piano suggesting that Elgar change it to something more interesting. Graffin points out that all the differences above have been incorporated into the recording save one (the octaves before fig. 22), for even Elgar got it right when he wondered if 'it could be played in

tempo'. It was Kreisler who supplied the solution, one octave over two. As to whether this recorded version would have been the final one had Kreisler not then stepped in, who knows?

Philippe Graffin is most fortunate to have the imprimatur of Vernon Handley and the RLPO as his sympathetic accompanist. He plays finely with a sweet tone and is utterly in tune with the English idiom. He is also a fine technician and a wonderful soloist to accompany, as I discovered in the Coleridge-Taylor concerto last season, and will no doubt experience again next May in a rare revival of the concerto by Elgar's exact contemporary, Frederic Cliffe. The Elgar is imaginatively coupled to an excellent account of Chausson's *Poème* – but Graffin loves British music, and it shows in this marvellous performance.

Christopher Fifield



Cello Concerto in E minor, op. 85

with Walton: Cello Concerto, op. 68

Daniel Müller-Schott (cello)

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, André Previn

This is a recording with a high pedigree. Previn, here conducting the orchestra of which he has been the Principal Conductor since 2002, was also, of course, a friend of Walton; and he had already shown himself a fine and sympathetic accompanist of both these works in the 1985 CBS recording with Yo-Yo Ma. Daniel Müller-Schott is the young cellist who won the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow at the age of 15; he now enjoys a glittering international career, and is a regular chamber music partner with Previn and Anne-Sophie Mutter.

From the first chords, Müller-Schott declaims in a style that presages the rapturous way he approaches the whole work. Presumably it is deliberate that the cello is placed forward, so the soloist sounds slightly apart from the orchestra. Readers may recall that I reviewed the Casals version of the Elgar concerto in a recent edition of the Journal, and there I remarked on my preferred intimate, chamber music-like interpretation. It is no surprise, therefore, that I admire the ravishing sound of Müller-Schott's Goffriller cello; and he really is a *terrific* cellist. But I regret the heroic balance of the recording. As a modern comparison, the Yo-Yo Ma version puts the soloist much more within the orchestra, even though he naturally still stands out.

While Previn and Müller-Schott perform the second movement faster than Casals, the cellist still gives the impression that he is

taking his time, to such an extent that he pulls the tempo around almost wilfully – although in this he is, needless to say, admirably matched by the Oslo Orchestra. Paradoxically, he sounds less impetuous than Ma, whose feather-light approach makes him seem impatient to get to the end of the movement, even though the timings are about the same. (Timings, however, can conflict with subjective measurements: having remarked on the relaxed tempi adopted by Casals, particularly in the second movement, I was surprised to find that the Yo-Yo Ma version of the complete work is longer by nearly two minutes, and Müller-Schott's is even longer.)

The sheer beauty of cello tone in the slow movement carries all before it. Less meditative than other versions, it is consistent with the rest of the interpretation, even though it fits less well with Müller-Schott's vision of the whole work as set out in the sleeve-notes; and it proceeds naturally to a tremendously exciting final movement. There, the orchestra at last seems a more equal partner, and soloist and ensemble together capture the boisterous jauntiness of some passages in a way unmatched by other versions. This makes the ending all the more beautiful, when the reference to the slow movement seems to make time stand still in the extraordinary way that Elgar intended, before the first movement's opening chords herald the rush to the finish.

This is a welcome addition to any collection, made more so by a splendid performance of the Walton. Here the orchestra produces a sumptuous accompaniment, and Müller-Schott's muscular and passionate approach ideally suits the music and brushes aside the technical demands made on the soloist, once more proving what a fine work this is, despite the problems of its gestation.

In comparing this disc with Previn's collaboration with Yo-Yo Ma, I would find it difficult to make a choice between the two recordings. Perhaps Ma shades matters in the Elgar, but slightly yields in the Walton. The only solution, therefore, is to buy both!

Steven Halls



The Spirit of England, Op. 80

with

Frederick Kelly: Elegy for Strings 'In Memoriam Rupert Brooke' (1915); Ivor Gurney: *War Elegy* (1920); Hubert Parry: *The Chivalry of the Sea* (1916); Lilian Elkington: *Out of the Mist* (1921)

Dutton Digital:
CDLX 7122

Susan Gritton (soprano), Andrew Kennedy (tenor)
BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Chorus, David Lloyd-Jones

Elgar's wartime choral masterpiece is emerging from the shadows at last. This recording throws new light on it, not only through its use of two soloists, but in the vigour of a fine performance conducted by David Lloyd-Jones. The first, pioneering, recording of *The Spirit of England* (Chandos 1977), conducted by Sir Alexander Gibson, was the standard for many years, with Teresa Cahill's soprano bringing a radiant melancholy to Binyon's words and Elgar's poignant music. Listening again to the performance (particularly *For the Fallen*), it now seems rather slow, with the beauty of the music seemingly all-important. This is challenging music, as Benjamin Britten realised when he wrote in 1969: '[It] has always seemed to me to have in its opening bars a personal tenderness and grief, in the grotesque march, an agony of distortion, and in the final sequences a ring of genuine splendour'. For me, possibly due to short rehearsal time, the other commercial recording (EMI, 1987) conducted by Richard Hickox with Dame Felicity Lott, missed out on some of these aspects.

So this new recording will be welcomed by all Elgarians not only for its rarity but because I feel it is what we have unconsciously been waiting for. Although economics mean that the use of two soloists will remain unusual, employing a tenor for *To Women* is in line with early practice: in May 1916, John Coates and Agnes Nicholls sang *To Women* and *For the Fallen* in Leeds, and John Booth with Agnes Nicholls sang the two settings a few days later in London. Elgar conducted the first London performance of the complete work, on 24 November 1917, with Gervase Elwes and Agnes Nicholls once again. So, joining Susan Gritton, Andrew Kennedy (fresh from his fine performance as Fenton in *Sir John in Love* at ENO) sings *To Women*, offering a refreshing tonal contrast within the three movements.

Lloyd-Jones's pacing in all three movements is much the same as Hickox's, except in *For the Fallen*, which is a little broader. Gibson takes a minute longer in *The Fourth of August* and two minutes longer in *For the Fallen*. The result is a meditative resigned

beauty rather than an angry look into the future, which is, to me, what Lloyd-Jones is trying to achieve – and where he succeeds.

The beginning of *The Fourth of August*, in this new recording, arrests one's attention immediately, with choral singing of even tone and of depth and clarity (something that is sustained throughout this recording), paving the way for Susan Gritton's octave rise on the words 'Spirit of England go before us'. She does not have the roundness of tone that made Teresa Cahill so impressive in this movement, but she seems more comfortable throughout *For the Fallen* where her voice is more in focus. In *The Fourth of August* I like the insouciant way Lloyd-Jones gives notice of the *Gerontius* demons at two bars before figure 10, and how the difficult bars that follow hint not just at the atrocities which prompted Elgar's music, but the sheer waste of what was to come. The unaccompanied *più lento* choral passage after figure 14 is particularly fine, providing the bridge to what now seems inevitable: the *nobilmente* conclusion.

For *To Women* Andrew Kennedy's light tenor produces the contrast that was obviously desired in those original performances. Kennedy sings the words which are directed at all those women directly affected by war which, by 1917, was nearly all those throughout the country. Binyon saw, even in 1914, the sacrifice that would be made by those who could not retaliate for their loss. His words are neither mawkish nor full of pity and therefore hit the mark. This can equally be said of Kennedy's singing, and I admired the mutual understanding he enjoyed with Lloyd-Jones as the tempo returns at fig 10. I am delighted that the extra expense involved in employing two soloists has more than been justified.

So to *For the Fallen*, equal in length to the other two movements combined. Susan Gritton pierces the heart with 'Death august and royal', to which Elgar applied the instruction *nobilmente*. This tells us much about his feelings at the time. This follows the *solenne* march which, as John Norris says in his notes, is 'redolent of armies and the tramping of thousands of aching men's feet'; but it is also the nation's march – almost to oblivion – that Elgar conveys in this music, and which Lloyd-Jones points up so well. This performance surely gainsays Jeremy Dibble (see below) as it moves towards its devastating conclusion: *fff grandioso*, a Valhalla of exceptional sweetness populated anew but remaining known, still, 'to the innermost heart of their own land'.

Once again Mike Dutton serves the cause of Elgar well. This CD should be in the collections of us all. If I have a cavil it is that the picture on the front of the booklet is exceptionally cheerful; civilian aircraft flying above a peaceful looking aerodrome towing the words *The Spirit of England* for all to see. Also in *For the Fallen* Elgar set 'They shall not grow old', rather than not 'grow

not old' (as written by Binyon and printed in the booklet).

Other than the Parry, the remaining music is lesser fare. Although Lewis Foreman, in his sleeve notes, makes a strong case for the Kelly piece (he suggests that Kelly's death 'was arguably of greater potential loss ... than the much better known Butterworth'), it is the Gurney which I find the more affecting. Here, uniquely, is a work written from the experience of trench warfare: a heart longing for England and a soul craving for peace. Foreman points out that Gurney's 'chaotic score' posed an enormous challenge for Mark Finch, its editor, who had to deal with 'many ambiguities and some clear mistakes'. The final version of *War Elegy*, which we hear on this recording, was edited by Philip Lancaster and Ian Venables. Despite what Foreman calls 'the clumsy second climax', this is deeply personal music. The opening plodding march takes us into the world of *Une Voix dans le désert*, the spare ending leaving us understanding more clearly Gurney's tragic fate.

The Australian-born Frederick Kelly, an officer in the Royal Naval Division, came from Eton and Oxford and developed into a typical Edwardian sporting hero, becoming an Olympic rowing gold-medallist in 1908. He also held the record for the Diamond Sculls at Henley. Kelly studied composition with Tovey at Balliol. At the outbreak of war, he was commissioned as a Sub-Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Division. He was posted to Gallipoli on board the troop ship *Grantully Castle* in the spring of 1915. He was at the burial of Rupert Brooke on the island of Skyros on 23 April 1915, and composed his elegy for the dead poet while in hospital in Alexandria. Kelly's modal music evokes an ancient world as it embraces Brooke's body beneath olive trees swaying in the breeze. At the beginning of 1916 the much depleted Royal Naval Division was incorporated into the British Army; and this *Elegy* became Kelly's own memorial, for, by now a Lieutenant-Commander, he was killed at the end of the Somme campaign on 12 November 1916.

It was Sir Hubert Parry in *The Chivalry of the Sea* who reminds us of the crucial role the Royal Navy played in the war. The piece was performed at a concert in December 1916 to commemorate the 6000 sailors and marines who had died at the Battle of Jutland six months earlier. It is a setting of a poem by Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate, who had in mind the death of Charles Fisher, 'late student of Christ Church, Oxford', who died when the battle-cruiser HMS *Invincible* blew-up at the height of the battle:

*And mid the blasting wrack, in the sudden death of the brave,
Ye are gone to return no more.*

Jeremy Dibble refers to the 'overwhelming despondency' of *The Chivalry of the Sea* – a fair enough comment, although at its end I

feel it comes to inhabit the same world of Elgar's heroic melancholy which manifests itself supremely in *For the Fallen*. However, I disagree strongly with Dibble when he refers to the 'seemingly brazen patriotic gestures of Elgar's trilogy' (Jeremy Dibble, *C. Hubert H. Parry, His Life and Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, 486).

Out of the Mist by Lilian Elkington completes a journey which Laurence Binyon began with his poems written within days of the outbreak of war. It is a musical evocation of the return of the Unknown Warrior to England on board the destroyer HMS *Verdun* on 10 November 1920: '...there was a thick mist over the Channel, out of which the warship slowly emerged as she drew near to Dover'. Elkington, a pupil of Bantock, gave up composition when she married, and this tone poem disappeared after a few performances, to be re-discovered a few years ago. *Out of the Mist* builds to a strong climax, reflecting again the emotions contained within *For the Fallen*. It is stylishly scored although not that memorable. In all these pieces, largely unknown to the musicians before this recording, the BBC Symphony Orchestra plays extremely well with fine support from the chorus.

We are all obliged to John Norris for his work for the Society over many years. His financial support for this recording, in memory of his mother, adds to our debt to him: he can be assured that his mother's memory is well served by this disc.

Andrew Neill

Cockaigne Overture, Op.40; Symphony No.1 in A flat, Op. 55
with Malcolm Arnold: Overture *Beckus the Dandipratt*, Op. 5;
Chaikovsky: Symphony No.2; Debussy: *Jeux*; Britten: 'Four Sea Interludes' from *Peter Grimes*; Enescu: *Romanian Rhapsody*, Op. 11 No. 1

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Constantin Silvestri
BBC Legends, recorded 1963–1968



BBCL 4182-2
(2 CDs)

I sang the praises of the BBC Legends series in the July issue of the *Journal* (Menuhin and Boult), and continue to do so having listened to this generous double set, of which the first two items will definitely be of interest to members, and indeed the wider public. It is always fascinating to listen to a non-English approach to Elgar, such as the interpretations by Solti, Haitink, Slatkin and Otaka; indeed it widens our perspective and enables us to get beyond the quintessential 'Englishness' with which we tend to overburden his reputation.

Silvestri was Romanian; he was born in 1913, took piano

lessons with the same teacher as his compatriot Dinu Lipatti, and became a champion of the music of his fellow-countryman and friend Georges Enescu. Having made an impressive debut in London with the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1957, Silvestri left Romania for good and conducted throughout Europe at the highest levels with orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic, Paris Conservatoire, and Chicago Symphony, before finding an unlikely musical home in Bournemouth in 1961 until his untimely death in 1969, aged 55: too old for death to be tragic like the youthful Cantelli or Heward, too young to be a grand old man, a Klemperer or Boult, Silvestri's reputation has undeservedly languished, although a ten-set box of his recordings called *Silvestri: The Collection* has appeared on the Dutch label Disky (707432), while his only recorded work by Elgar (a much praised *In the South* in 1967) came out from EMI (ADD 7243 5 68230 2 0). A dedicated group of admirers has formed a Silvestri Foundation (also for the performance and recording of the conductor's compositions), of which the author of the excellent CD booklet essay, Raymond Carpenter (former principal clarinettist of the Bournemouth orchestra) and John Gritten, author of the only biography (*A musician before his time*, London: Kitinger, 1998), are devoted leading lights. I lack space to review the five other works in the set; suffice to say that they are given the same high standard of performance as the Elgar.

Starting with *Cockaigne*, the recording quality (Winter Gardens, Bournemouth, 6 December 1966) has a rather attractive old-fashioned mono sound, as if Silvestri and Elgar were contemporaries. In many ways the conductor has a tendency to shadow the composer's conducting of his own music; and there's no harm in that. The fast passages tend to be quicker, the slower ones more indulgent. Silvestri clearly loves Elgar's lyrical moments; the second subject is lovingly shaped, delicately phrased, and given the warmest tone by the strings. He also has a pretty shrewd insight into Elgar's humour, which borders just short of the vulgar in those brash passages scored for the trombones and tuba.

The symphony was recorded at the same venue a year and a half later (25 July 1968), just six months before the conductor's death. Silvestri immediately elicits the nobility of the opening which heralds, as Richter put it at the first rehearsal, 'the greatest symphony of modern times'. Silvestri was a stickler for detail, demanding as much rehearsal time as he could get. This seems to have been easier for him in his native Romania, where dissent, even among orchestral players, was highly unlikely – one assumes that, at least in that respect, Bournemouth must have been markedly different from Bucharest. One senses a great deal of detail in Silvestri's reading. Often the tempo slows overly, not only

because he obviously wants (and wants *us*) to enjoy it for as long as possible, but also to ensure the playing has sufficient space to accommodate such passages, but it is never at the expense of the architectural line (the final three or four minutes of the first movement are a good example). The tempo of the joyful scherzo may hold no surprises, but do listen out for the occasional woodwind detail (clarinet) that emerges, while the contrasting lyrical trio sections are markedly steadier again, for the reasons given above. The transition to the slow movement via the reference to the symphony's opening is masterfully judged, but his reading now becomes a little too under-stated and inflexible for the first four or five minutes; a sense of restraint seems to get in the way, resulting in a measured tread. Having said that, the end of this amazing *Adagio* suddenly catches fire and passion is injected into the Bournemouth strings, spilling over fittingly into an exciting finale. Like this reviewer/conductor, Silvestri makes the most of the beautiful episode with its prominent pair of harps beginning at fig.129. But listening to the blistering last chord dominated by searing brass reminds us just how good the Bournemouth orchestra was in those days. It is too easy to dismiss it as merely a provincial band, nowhere near its present-day high standard under Marin Alsop (Rudolf Schwarz, a predecessor of Silvestri, was another underrated conductor at their helm). No, despite the dry recording acoustic, this is an interpretation worthy of a place among those great accounts of the 1960s and 1970s given by the usual (British) suspects, and a must for any Elgarian's shelves.

Christopher Fifield

Symphony No. 1 in A flat, Op. 55

BBC Symphony Orchestra, Sir Adrian Boult

In the South (Alassio) Op. 50

BBC Symphony Orchestra, Leonard Slatkin

Recording available with BBC Music Magazine, Vol. 14, no. 12 (August 2006)



BBCMM269

There are already two Boult recordings of Elgar's First Symphony, recorded in 1949 and 1976 respectively with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. With a gap of twenty-seven years, one would expect them to show more difference than between the latter and Boult's Proms broadcast with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, also of 1976, now released as a cover CD with the *BBC Music Magazine*. But this isn't quite so; there is a remarkable difference between the two performances by Boult in his eighties.

The new BBC offering is a live performance, with added tension and excitement, as well as some predictable tussiculation from off-stage larynxes, but the source of the performance doesn't fully explain the differences. With the BBC orchestra Boult has a firmer grip of the work's structure, which he does not allow to sag through unnecessary tempo changes. The whole performance drives on relentlessly to the conclusion, breathless for further development and an answer to the questions it throws up in its progress. Listening is a thrilling experience.

For comprehensiveness: the filler on the new CD, Leonard Slatkin conducting *In the South* at the Proms in 2002, is good without being engrossing, in fast tempi with an occasionally careless handling of detail (in Slatkin's workmanlike mood, the glossy effect is paramount). It is on Boult's performance of the symphony that I want to dwell, focusing particularly on its relation to the 1976 EMI recording.

Gramophone reviews of Boult's two previous recordings note that 'nobility is a keynote', with more 'warmth and freedom than the composer allowed himself' – this to contrast with Elgar's abundant nervous energy, followed by Solti. Perhaps chief among Boult's good qualities is what the review of the 1976 recording calls his 'architectural view'. That should not be underplayed. Elgar's First Symphony is a choppy work, bewildering in its structural complexity, and deliberately difficult. In a conductor as much as a critic, the interested listener requires a knowledgeable guide – someone who understands its idiosyncrasies and can relate them to familiar models. Conductors who (and this is the usual pattern) merely convey a general sense of a noble beginning and an eventual victory over struggle are no use: the tale they tell will be no more nuanced than a child whose story is 'It was a nice day but it got bad and horrid things happened but it was all right by tea time and I had scones and a story then bed'.

In both previous recordings Boult proves his usefulness as a guide, but the new release is markedly more successful than the EMI recording – and not just for this reason. The opening, though, is not promising. The big tune, Elgar's 'sort of ideal call', is ponderous – not as treacly as Colin Davis's recent LSO recording, but with similar stickiness. Boult's EMI recording has the upper hand here, its moderate tempo establishing the noble note without making it sound unenergetic. But its relative pallor here is probably intentional, and this live recording takes off just after the beginning of the Allegro, with its weirdly thrusting main idea (the opening is still rather sluggish, but this is perhaps just octogenarian nerves: its varied repeat is barnstorming).

Boult shows himself in surer control of the structure here; the joins in Elgar's thematic patchwork are smoothed out, whereas

in the EMI recording tempo fluctuation (almost always slowing) makes the music sound as if it has lost its way – cunningly imagined links sound messy. The great secondary idea of the first movement – amplifying a tune Elgar described as 'sad & delicate' but which brings the exposition to a thumping conclusion – is heavily accented and properly menacing. The BBC recording allows its preparation to emerge logically as an essential process. Such skilful handling of this complex movement is rare (one can imagine Simon Rattle giving a masterly performance, but there is, alas, no sign of one.)

The development section maintains momentum – no need to pull the tempo about here, as is often done (Boult himself is guilty of this in the EMI recording). The goal is the great climax on the brassy restatement of the theme that was first heard touchingly in the exposition, with ethereal violins underscored by efflorescent woodwind and harp accompaniment. In its boisterous guise the BBC brass show it no mercy. Here and throughout that section, the balancing ensures visceral thrills that are entirely in the spirit of this music.

The recapitulation opens at a higher tempo than the opening. One explanation is that this is caused by the thrill of live performance, but I think it more likely to have been a deliberate choice. Already in this performance the symphony has built up a propulsive energy. Now it will not let up. The close of the recapitulation – the theme that was once 'sad & delicate' – is catastrophic, with bone-rattling drums and brass. When it is remembered (and now is sad and delicate) in the closing bars, it chills. There is no lingering on the closing chord; more business presses.

The BBC performance knocks only ten seconds off the timing for the second movement on EMI, but those seconds are felt very strongly. The opening is brisk where the other is slightly slow, and in the strident march theme the timpanist seems to be playing directly on the listener's skull. The movement has rarely sounded so thrilling on record.

The third movement will disappoint only those who like their Elgar sugary. Boult won't descend into sentimentality: the 'slow' movement proceeds at a lick, and with its tenderest moments, usually made soggy by indulgent conductors, seeming more beautiful for their fleetingness. The only moment that Boult allows more space is the introduction of the great new theme in the coda, the one that Jaeger said takes us 'near Heaven'. It is the symphony's heart, but he will not allow us to luxuriate.

The finale's mysterious Fafnerish opening catches the bronchial audience off-guard. When it arrives, the exposition just about saves the rhythmically repetitive main theme from palling (a failing of the 1976 recording, which starves it of energy and vim). The martial secondary idea which ends the

exposition and recapitulation has a pleasing cumulative growth, with enthusiastic contributions from drums and brass (who must by now have felt confident that they could get away with making as much noise as possible). As in the first movement, the development section has none of the ill-judged studiousness of the EMI recording. We are dragged through its tonally uncertain nettling undergrowth with merciless urgency up to the point of the sweetening of the march tune at the end of the section – a moment where Elgar suggested that the most troubling themes are ‘well quashed’. Once more unlike the EMI recording, Boult allows the tempo to slacken here a little, to emphasize the lustrous new orchestration, yet still without degenerating into slushiness.

When the ‘ideal call’ returns in the recapitulation after a thrilling *accelerando*, its ruptures – the bold, frenetic bursts of energy that add worrisome wobbles to its steady progression – are very strongly articulated. The energy Boult has accumulated throughout the symphony, almost never allowing for breath, seems at last to have overwhelmed the matter. Many listeners hear disingenuous posturing in the symphony’s closing pages; few, I think, will consider that the almost drunken final presentation of the ‘ideal call’ offers us the ‘massive hope in the future’ that Elgar suggested to Walford Davies.

Background coughs, split notes, and other nuisances attendant on live performance will wear with repeated hearings, but this performance of the symphony should be counted among Boult’s most compelling additions to the Elgar discography. For a more polished reading in a similarly high-octane mould, Solti’s unjustly underloved Decca recording should be preferred; in a less wild-eyed vein, Andrew Davis’s performance with the BBC orchestra might be the library favourite. But as a performance eager to communicate the highly directed nature of the symphony’s form, and the ultimate ambiguity of its conclusion, I shall return to it often.

J.P.E. Harper-Scott

Orchestral Miniatures:

Overture: *Froissart*, Op. 19; May Song; Carissima; Romance for Bassoon Op. 62; Three Characteristic Pieces, Op.10; Minuet, Op.21; Chanson de Matin and Chanson de Nuit, Op. 15; Three Bavarian Dances

Preman Tilson (Bassoon)

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, James Judd



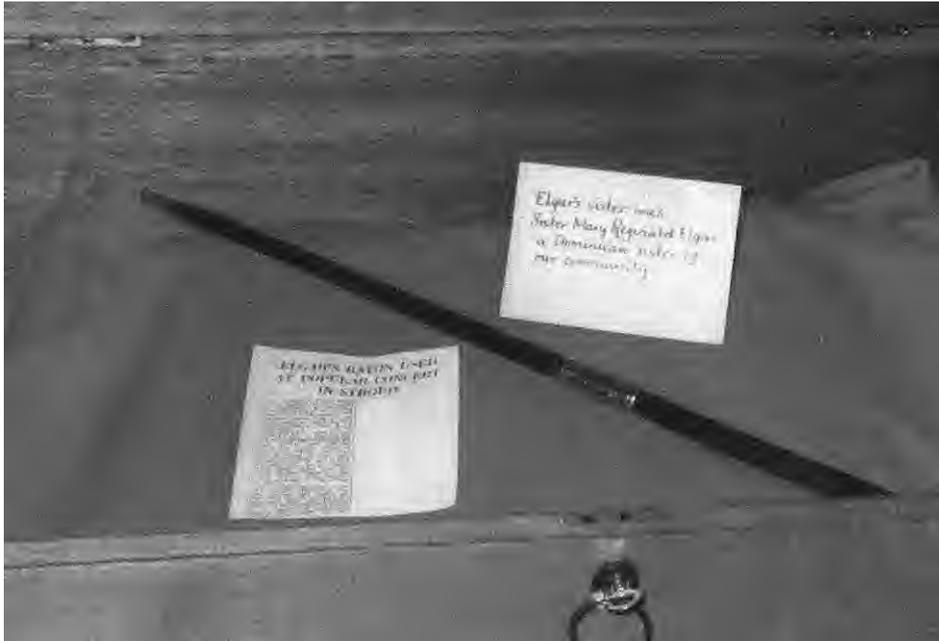
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Whether one would describe *Froissart* as an Orchestral Miniature is open to question. Its full-throated start, with blazing brass reminiscent of Strauss’ *Don Juan*, hardly calls such a diminutive to mind. Carping apart, the rest clearly fit the bill. All are familiar and idiomatically played by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra under proven Elgarian James Judd (they have already recorded a disc of Marches as well as the *Nursery* and *Wand of Youth* Suites for Naxos). Judd injects *Froissart* with fire and pace at its most exciting moments, but also encourages fine woodwind solos at those tender moments before the thrilling recapitulation and coda.

Until the final Bavarian Dances, the music is a selection of salon works, several of them orchestrated from violin and piano versions. Charm and lyricism are achieved with much exaggerated string *portamento*, but listening to playing from the 1920s is proof enough that this is the right way to do it; after all if we now insist on authenticity in the Baroque, so we may as well go for the same in music written in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The American bassoonist Preman Tilson, now the NZSO’s principal, gives a stylish account of the Romance, its warmth and rubato emphasising its close relationship to the violin concerto. The Minuet is curiously inserted between the first and second characteristic pieces, presumably to make a sort of four-movement *pastiche* suite. The highly familiar pair of *Chansons* will please, as will an invigorating performance of the three Bavarian Dances, removed from their choral context, and, like *Froissart*, not quite in the orchestral miniature repertoire. This is a pleasant disc as well as a useful exploration of Elgar’s shorter works which rarely get an airing in concert, more’s the pity.

Christopher Fifield



Elgar's baton, by courtesy of St Dominic's Convent, Stone, Staffordshire (see p. 65)

LETTERS

From the Chairman of the Elgar Society, Andrew Neill

Much as I welcome the Trustees Annual Report which has been and will be sent to all members in the future I realise, with some pain, that some of the more personal aspects of what this Society is about were overlooked through the formal nature of the report. This will have to be addressed for the future.

Consequently, I was neither able to draw to the attention of members the work performed by particular members during the year, nor did the Report permit a written tribute to the members of the Council who stood down: Sharron Bassett and Norman Arthur. In addition, Carl Newton has acted under the dry title of 'minutes secretary' bringing a wealth of experience to the management of the Society. He has now stood down from this role, but continues to serve the Society as a member of the Council.

I have written a separate tribute to Wendy Hillary who did not stand for re-election as Secretary this year. Helen Petchey, who is well known to members of the Society, has now replaced Wendy. I have, I believe, already established a good working relationship with Helen which is so important for the future as we turn our minds to Elgar's anniversary year and beyond.

Finally may I confirm to members who were not present at the AGM that I shall not be seeking re-election as Chairman in 2008?

The Elgar Birthplace

From Kevin Allen

I take it for granted that the most important long-term aim of the Birthplace is to foster and nurture research. I note from the Annual Report of the Elgar Society Trustees, enclosed with the Journal (July 2006), that the section on the Elgar Research Register contains the following: 'it is to some extent disappointing to note the limited and sometimes peripheral nature of the research, not to mention the heavy reliance on published sources. Only three respondents [out of 10] indicated consultation of original archive material as part of their project'. Bearing in mind that this year has seen a 400% increase in the research charges levied by the Birthplace, I can only say that I am saddened, but not surprised by this comment. With such charges more than doubled by transport and accommodation costs, any sustained archival research at Broadheath can now be available only to those with the deepest pockets. The Birthplace considers research to be a purely commercial matter, and has evidently no idea of the economics of scholarly publishing. From my own experience I can say that, under present conditions, my initial advance from Ashgate Press for *Portrait of Nimrod* would have lasted me less than a fortnight at Broadheath.

Not only are the new charges excessive, they are unfairly applied, *Elgar Editions* being exempt from them.

Such charges can only relate to the overall financial position of the Birthplace, which we know (News, July 2001) is in deficit. The size of this deficit, the reasons for it, and the arrangements made for dealing with it, are matters of mystery. In response to my enquiries the Birthplace will only say that it cannot discuss its financial affairs. As Society members, we are financially supporting the Birthplace and ought surely to be entitled to openness in return.

Some time ago I asked the Birthplace what financial information might be available under the Freedom of Information legislation, and was told that because the Museum is a registered charity, it is exempt from compliance with the terms of the legislation. What I was not told was that precisely because the Museum is a charity, full details of its financial affairs are by law available from the Charity Commission, to whose website I would refer interested members.

Elgar's sister Dot

From Mrs R. Angela Grafton

We were very interested to read the article in the July 2006 issue of the Journal concerning 'Dot' Elgar, sister of Sir Edward and my husband's great-aunt. It included a reference to Edward visiting his sister Polly 'and brother-in-law Martin Grafton'. Polly's husband Martin William was always known as Willie.

I have a hand-written journal written during 1880–84 by Willie's sister, Agnes Grafton, who later became the wife of Hubert Leicester, the lifelong friend of Sir Edward. During these early years, when Agnes was aged 20–24, her world was very simple and church activities seemed to be the main focus of her life. She joined with 'Dot' in membership of the church choir and 'The Children of Mary', the pious association for young Roman Catholic ladies to which Agnes usually referred in French as 'E. de M.' (Enfants de Marie). Dot's mother, Ann Elgar, was a regular caller (while 'Dot came this afternoon', more formally 'Mrs Elgar made a call').

One particularly noteworthy entry relates to Sunday 19 November 1883, when Agnes wrote:

'Dot and I were the only two in choir. Little did I think it would be the last time we should stand together in that choir. I did not go to Benediction, but there was a dreadful mess. I was told Mr. Elgar got cross.

Monday: We had a meeting. Fr. Foxwell presided.

Tuesday: Dot came down to tell us her Papa was turned out of the choir where he had been 37 years. Oh they are in trouble'.

Such were the proprieties of the age that, frustratingly, Agnes cannot even confide to her personal journal why old W.H. 'got cross', to the extent of being 'turned out of the choir'.

Later, on Sunday 26 November, Agnes records: 'No High Mass, how we miss Mr. Elgar in the choir'. There is no further comment until Good Friday, 11 April 1884: 'Singing went off very well, considering it was all fresh, Mr. Elgar having taken all

the old [music?]'.

It seems rather singular that Dot left the choir with her father, but her brother Edward was able to continue as organist. Perhaps this was because his friend Hubert Leicester later became the Choirmaster in place of W.H.?

The editor also received the following from R.A. Browning, reading in part:

With great interest I read Part One of Richard Smith's article on Elgar, Dot, and the Stroud connection. Elgar's sister Dot who became Sister Mary Reginald had connections with St Dominic's Convent at Stone in Staffordshire, and I thought he might like to see the enclosed copies of the photos I took there showing Elgar's baton, which his sister owned, and of the Pugin chapel within the grounds of the Convent in which can be seen the chair which Blessed Dominic Barberi (who received Cardinal Newman into the Roman Catholic Church) used when hearing confessions.

Richard Smith comments:

I was most interested to hear of the letters from Angela Grafton and Mr Browning in Staffordshire. I have checked with Sr Cecily Boulding (the Dominican sisters' archivist), and this is a summary of what she told me:

St Dominic's convent in Stone is the current mother house of the congregation. Brewood is near Cannock, some twenty miles from Stone. At the time of Dot it was a school run by the nuns but, about fifteen years ago, shortage of younger sisters meant that it had to be closed. Fortunately it was handed over to a Catholic Trust who continue to run it as a school. Sadly, however, no-one seems to know what happened to the piano!

See p. 62 for the illustration of Elgar's baton. Richard Smith adds 'I would guess that it found its way to St. Dominic's after her death in 1939'.

Elgar's theological library

From Geoffrey Hodgkins

I would be grateful if you would allow me to make two minor amendments to my article, on Elgar's theological library, that appeared in the July 2006 issue of the Journal. First, the comment on the hereafter made during Elgar's last illness (p. 32) was not to his surgeon, but to his consulting doctor, Arthur Thomson; and the word 'alleged' should be read in its original meaning of 'declared on oath' rather than its more common meaning today of 'affirmed without proof'.

My second amendment indicates a lack of lateral thinking on my part. 'Morris on the Apocalypse' (p. 29) must refer to Rev. Frederick Denison *Maurice* (1805–72), the early Christian Socialist reformer. His *Lectures on the Apocalypse* first appeared in 1861, with a second edition in 1885. Elgar's misspelling of his name suggests that the recommendation was made orally. Elgar appears never to have referred to

Maurice, although the latter was an influential and nationally-known figure. We can imagine how Elgar would have responded to his politics!

The first of these points was also drawn to our attention by Elgar's biographer:

From Jerrold Northrop Moore

Geoffrey Hodgkins's trawl through the deep waters of Elgar's sources for his *Apostles* libretto, in the last issue, seems to me masterly. It therefore causes regret to have to ask for space in your columns to correct one error of fact and one error of implication. Both occur on page 32, paragraph 4, lines 6–7:

And during his last illness he is alleged to have told his surgeon: 'I believe there is nothing [after life] but complete oblivion'.

The information is credited to my *Edward Elgar: a Creative Life*, page 818.

The error is to cite Elgar's interlocutor as his surgeon, Norman Duggan. Elgar and Duggan enjoyed no such intimacy (so far as I know) as to evoke such a remark. Elgar's remark was made, as stated in the *Creative Life*, to his consulting physician, Dr Arthur Thomson.

The questionable implication is in the word 'alleged'. The text and notes of my interview with Sir Arthur Thomson were submitted to him, and to an independent witness also present. Each made one or two small additions, but did not touch the words in question. I clearly recall the quiet emphasis Thomson gave to Elgar's words.

You readers may like to know, in addition, that Sir Arthur Thomson said that afternoon that he had in his career treated four great men: Einstein, Rutherford, Freud, and Elgar. Of these four, he considered Elgar the greatest man. His reasons may be found in the quotations on pages 818 and 819 of the *Creative Life*.

Angels

From Mr R.P. Taylor

I quote from the article by Norma Hollingsworth about gender and Gerontius [Journal, July 2006]: 'If Elgar had been looking for someone to care for him, to nurture and tend him, he would probably, like most Victorian men, instinctively turn to a woman'. I would have thought that any heterosexual man would do that, Victorian, Neolithic, or even silly twenty-first century.

I quote again: 'It is this pitching of the [mezzo-soprano] voice that prevents the duet sung by the Angel and Gerontius from sounding like the age-old operatic love-duet between the leading soprano and the tenor'. Readers may remember that Carmen and Delilah are mezzos.

Personally, I always take it for granted that the Guardian Angel in *Gerontius* is female. I do this because the performer standing in front of me is wearing a dress

and doesn't usually resemble the victim of an unfortunate operation. It seems to me that there is a time for being simple-minded and a time for being sophisticated, and that the trick is to be able to distinguish between the two.

The fact is that that mithering oneself about gender when one is listening to *Gerontius* (the gender of an *angel*, for God's sake!) is missing the point by the width of Asia. I am reminded of the girl I took to hear the 'Jupiter' symphony, and whose only comment at the end was that there were fourteen women in the orchestra! 'Oh really!' I thought.

Norma Hollingsworth replies:

It is difficult to respond to Mr Taylor, as I am not sure that I understand the point he is trying to make. Quiet reflection or in-depth study can only add to our enjoyment and appreciation of music, and in considering the determining factors behind Newman's and Elgar's selection of the gender of the angels in *Gerontius*, I hope I have added to our knowledge of the two authors and hence the appreciation of their work. The only other comment I would make is that neither Carmen nor Delilah are typical of operatic heroines; the dark tones of the 'mezzo' voices match the shadier side of their characters.

.. and other singers

From Michael Plant

I could not disagree more with Dominic Guyver (Journal, July 2006) when he dismisses poor Aled Jones and his efforts to present the cello concerto on television. 'It won't do at all', he says. So how, in an age of short attention spans, does he expect to catch the attention of all those potential Elgarians who are not accustomed to cello concertos? Serious music has to be learned. It does not yield its secrets at a first hearing. The inexperienced listener needs to be intrigued and coaxed, not educated and lectured. Mr Guyver can look down on popularisers if he likes, but half a loaf is better than no bread. I watched 'The Great Music Show with Aled Jones' myself and I was delighted to see Elgar get half an hour on national TV.

Dominic Guyver writes:

The Editor has kindly offered the opportunity of replying to Michael Plant's letter concerning my review of *The Great Music Show with Aled Jones*. I still say 'it won't do'. Although we are living in what generally seems to be an age of short attention spans (as Mr Plant rightly points out), should we just shrug our shoulders and accept a *fait accompli*, or should we try to redress the balance somehow? If we don't, then to my mind generations coming after us are going to be in trouble, as there is a risk that they will only be able to connect with music on a relatively superficial level.

If the Aled Jones effort had been a 'Programme for Schools', then it might have found a niche audience; but according to the BBC's website, *The Great Music Show* appears to be aimed at people who might find themselves at a loose end on a mid-week afternoon. As I pointed out in my review, such a time in the day is normally now reserved for breathless programmes about not very much; but here was a breathless programme about something very substantial – indeed, one of the great glories of English music. The Cello Concerto seems to me to deserve more than the sad treatment it received. The tone of the programme did not sit well with that achingly beautiful, profound masterpiece. Rustling a twenty pound-note at the camera – as Aled Jones did – in a sort of 'guess who?' competition, and then inviting us to make the connection between it and one man's elegy for a world that had passed into oblivion, does not seem to me a wholly or even partially commendable way of introducing 'great music' to intelligent people of any age.

The programme on the reconstructed Elgar Piano Concerto, which I reviewed at the same time, genuinely engaged the attention. The presenter in that instance seemed to know what he was talking about; there was no patronising the music, and there were hardly any bland statements; and it was entertaining *and* informative. What is more a whole 40 minutes or so of television was devoted after it to a performance of the concerto in its entirety.

Having watched that marvellous Elgarian, Mark Elder, making the customary conductor's speech at this year's Last Night of the Proms, I enthusiastically share his eloquently given view that this is not the time to be dumbing down the arts. I hope that *The Great Music Show's* 'take' on the Elgar Cello Concerto is not an indication of things to come, but merely a temporary misjudgement by the BBC in trying to set the fine jewel that is the Cello Concerto in the builders' putty of daytime television standards. I'm not sure in this case that 'half a loaf is better than no bread', as the loaf here was of poor quality, with so much artificial 'bulk' (provided by the presenter) that it offered no real nourishment for the soul.

100 YEARS AGO...

September was a busy time, with the Three Choirs Festival – this year at Hereford – plus correcting proofs for *The Kingdom*, which meant that Elgar missed the performance of *Gerontius* on the 11th. Julia Worthington, the Kilburns, and Canon Gorton were among the house guests. On the 19th and 20th Elgar rehearsed the Birmingham chorus in the new work. 'Chorus knew it well but needed more understanding & expression', wrote Alice. The following day's rehearsal of *The Apostles* was only 'fairly good'. On the 25th Elgar rehearsed the orchestra in the new work in Manchester, copies having only just arrived. 'They read it splendidly', wrote Alice, '& it sounded *gorgeous*. Wonderful to hear it & to think it was really there'. Elgar then took the overnight train to Aberdeen for the conferral of an honorary degree. The king and queen were present. He was back in Birmingham on the 28th for another rehearsal the following day. It was very successful: 'Everyone deep impressed', wrote Alice. *The Apostles* was given on the evening of Tuesday 2 October. 'E. took beginning faster than usual – very fine performance'.

The Kingdom followed on the Wednesday morning. 'Enormous audience. Some standing room (guinea each) allotted – a special train from London. E. looked most booful & conducted splendidly – no haste & much dignity. Work most wonderful ... Impression most profound & a great greeting to E. followed'. Some of the choristers noticed Elgar in tears while conducting, possibly due to frustration that he had been unable to complete the work as planned. They heard *Messiah*, and Bantock's *Omar Khayyam*: 'some fine things in it but so long', was Alice's comment. Before they left on the 5th they met the 15-year-old violin prodigy Mischa Elman, who was performing there: 'nice simple boy', wrote Alice. They left Birmingham for a couple of days at Wychnor Park, the home of Lady Margaret Levett, Maud Warrender's sister. But back home Edward was soon burdened by preparation for the next two Birmingham lectures: 'E. depressed' (28 October).

The first lecture on 'Orchestration' took place on 1 November, that on Mozart's G minor Symphony a week later. On the 3rd the Elgars enjoyed a visit to the Malvern Concert Club, where the crack Hanley Cauldon Choir included several of his part-songs in its programme. But on 9th: 'E. depressed after lecture'. They went to London – where Elgar was to conduct the LSO – on the 12th, staying with Schuster. Elgar also managed to see an eye specialist who told him to rest. On 17th Allen Gill conducted the London premiere of *The Kingdom*, but for whatever reason Elgar did not go, writing to Percy Pitt at Covent Garden: "'They' are all going to the Kingdom at Alex[and]r Palace so I am free. I...will turn up at your box during the evening'.

On 21 November another oculist recommended 'change & warm climate', so Elgar booked a passage to Naples for 28 December. Back home in Hereford his eyes deteriorated again, and he and Alice were advised to go to Llandrindod Wells for treatment. They left for there on 5 December in miserable weather, but Alice had had enough after five days and returned home. Edward remained on his own, and later described his treatment to Sidney Colvin: 'I was one of four or five others: we met like ghouls in the pumphouse at 7.30 am in the dark: mysterious & strange; hooded and cloaked we quaffed smoking brine & sulphur & walked thro' dim-lit woods, sometimes in snow. It did me good altho' the place – is hideous'. He returned home on the 15th with '...headache & very depressed', so much so that Alice thought they must cancel the trip: 'chances of Italy receding', she noted on the 16th. But financial problems may also have been a factor: on Boxing Day Elgar wrote to Alfred Littleton asking for £150 to be paid into his account. They sailed for Italy two days later.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

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