

The Elgar Society

Journal



NOVEMBER 2008 Vol. 15, No. 6

The Elgar Society

Founded 1951

President

Richard Hickox, CBE

Vice-Presidents

Ian Parrott

Sir David Willcocks, CBE, MC

Diana McVeagh

Michael Kennedy, CBE

Andrew Neill

Michael Pope

Sir Colin Davis, CH, CBE

Sir Charles Mackerras, CH, AC, CBE

June, Marchioness of Aberdeen, CBE

Dame Janet Baker, CH, DBE

Leonard Slatkin

Sir Andrew Davis, CBE

Donald Hunt, OBE

Christopher Robinson, CVO, CBE

Chairman

Steven Halls

Vice-Chairman

David Morris

Treasurer

Margot Pearmund

Secretary

Helen Petchey

The Elgar Society Journal

362 Leymoor Road, Golcar, Huddersfield, HD7 4QF

Telephone: 01484 649108

Email: journal@elgar.org

November 2008 Vol. 15, No. 6

Editorial	3
The A.T. Shaw Lecture 2008 <i>Anthony Payne talks to Geoffrey Hodgkins</i>	9
Tales from the Complete Edition: or what did Elgar write? <i>John Norris</i>	16
The People and Places behind Elgar's Violin Concerto <i>Lucy Nolan</i>	18
Elgar's Cello Concerto: a personal response <i>Emily Riddle</i>	25
Picturing Elgar and his contemporaries as conductors: Elgar conducts at Leeds <i>Lewis Foreman</i>	31
Reviews:	
Book Review: Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination <i>Charles Edward McGuire</i>	47
CD Reviews <i>Aidan Thomson, Barry Collett, David Cairns, Michael Plant, Julian Rushton, Paul Adrian Rooke</i>	51
Letters to the Editor <i>Denis Bloodworth, David Bury, Christopher Kent, R.P. Taylor, Brian Stocks, Hans Westgeest</i>	61
100 Years ago ...	65

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

Front Cover: The Coliseum, St Martin's Lane (detail from poster; see p. 8)

Notes for Contributors. Please adhere to these as far as possible if you deliver writing (as is much preferred) in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format. A longer version is available in case you are prepared to do the formatting, but for the present the editor is content to do this.

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

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

Presentation of written text:

Subheadings: longer articles benefit from judicious use of these.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Editorial

Readers of the Journal may be interested in the developing fortunes of one of our recently founded British periodicals, *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, published by Ashgate and now in its fifth year.¹ The tendency of scholarly periodicals and conferences to concentrate on relatively restricted periods is characteristic of our times. Quite recently Cambridge University Press added to its list both *Eighteenth-Century Music* and *Twentieth-Century Music*. Fortunately the eighteenth and nineteenth century periodicals take the long view – that is, the view that things apparently quintessential to our understanding of a century may be rooted in the nineties of the previous century, and that an age can flow over into the next century; the 'long nineteenth century' is roughly from the fall of the Bastille to the First World War, 1789–1914.

Thus 1900 is no barrier to considering composers who were mature by 1900, but much of whose best work was composed in the twentieth century. Elgar is such a one, along with (for instance) Janáček, Mahler, and Sibelius. Although one of the editors of *Twentieth-Century Music*, Christopher Mark, has contributed to Elgar studies, it is rather more likely that *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* will pay attention to him, as has its American near namesake from the University of California, *Nineteenth-Century Music*. The fourth volume of the British journal included a major review article of Elgar material by Byron Adams.² One year on comes another fine review, by the American musicologist Eric Saylor, of the Bärenreiter edition of the Cello Concerto (already reviewed in this Journal by John Pickard).³ In the same issue there is an important article by Simon Trezise on Elgar's recordings, containing some intriguing comparative information on recordings of the Variations and the Second Symphony.⁴

On the principle that any publicity is good publicity, we should welcome Elgar's situation within renewed controversy about performing practice, specifically Sir Roger Norrington's dislike of vibrato. The fuss was generated by the notion that the Last Night of the Proms might be played without vibrato: it was as silly as that. For much of *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 1, the notes are too short for vibrato to be used. In fact, of course, it was Norrington's First Symphony, rather than his

1 This periodical is a successor to the *Music Review*, and not to be confused with *Nineteenth-Century Music*, published by University of California Press.

2 Byron Adams, 'Elgar Studies', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 4/1 (2007), 121-130.

3 This Journal, 15/3 (July 2007), 54-6; Eric Saylor, 'Edward Elgar: Concerto in E minor for Violoncello and Orchestra', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 5/1 (2008), 170-174.

4 Simon Trezise, CD Review Article, 'Elgar's Recordings', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 5/1 (2008), 111-131.

Last Night, that either benefited or suffered (according to your point of view) from his preferences, ably supported by his own orchestra. For the most part, the BBC Symphony Orchestra on the Last Night seemed to be playing normally, and the conductor invited the promenaders to add their own vibrato in the traditional reprise of 'Land of Hope and Glory'. The hushed first playing of that tune – without voices – was remarkably lovely, and at that point the violins did seem to lay off the vibrato.

Well before a no more than usually controversial Last Night, however, the media fuss had spread on 12 August as far as the *New York Times*. Perhaps out of respect for the Republic, the author stuck to 'Mr' Norrington throughout, adding the obligatory snigger about troubles in the ex-Imperial Kingdom. Otherwise it was a tolerably balanced article, citing delightfully wild opposition as well as Sir Nicholas Kenyon's measured support for experimentation. Some of the epithets the performance attracted are too impolite to repeat, and it is a pleasure to reproduce by permission the following comment from Tom Kelly: 'I am not upset at all by the absence of vibrato. There is a loss of warmth and depth of sound but the more lucid texture, and reduced blare of brass, open up Elgar's inner parts and dialogue between instruments in a fascinating way'.

Curiously, not everyone agrees what vibrato is. The journalists of the *Observer* (3 August) and the *New York Times* confidently define it as variation in pitch. But Philip Hensher, the novelist and *Independent* columnist, announced with equal assurance that 'it isn't, contrary to common belief, a variation in pitch, but only in pressure' – which if true would invalidate Sir Malcolm Sargent's quip as his orchestra prepared to take the A from the oboe of Leon Goossens: 'gentlemen, take your choice'.⁵ *The New Grove* defines vibrato concisely as a 'fluctuation of pitch or intensity (or both)', and this is surely correct.

Another valiant musical knight, Sir Mark Elder, was quoted in the *Observer* as saying 'I don't think a total ban on vibrato is based on historical accuracy. Vibrato has always been there'. But nobody denies that vibrato has been widespread at least since the sixteenth century; and nobody has suggested a total ban. The point Elder's formulation obscures is that what is usually called 'continuous vibrato' – perhaps better expressed as routine vibrato, vibrato as the default for strings and solo singers – has certainly *not* always been there. This is known not only from past writings of critics and the authors of instrumental treatises, but from early recordings. In the orchestra, vibrato has been applied in different ways in different countries, with vibrato for horns and woodwind generally frowned upon in Britain, though not necessarily on the Continent; international tours and the circulation of recordings may have served somewhat to homogenize techniques. Elgar wrote 'vibrato' on a chord played by clarinets in 'The Swimmer' (*Sea Pictures* No. 5), so he clearly did not expect these instruments routinely to vibrate; it is a special effect. More importantly, Elgar surely did not assume vibrato as routine from orchestral strings, at least until his seventh decade; here Norrington is on reasonably secure historical ground. Probably if we could hear Elgar play the violin, he would have

5 Philip Hensher, 'My take on the great vibrato debate', *The Independent*, Friday 8 August 2008. See also note 6.

used no more vibrato than Joachim, who used it as an ornament, not all the time. Still, Elgar admired the playing of Fritz Kreisler, dedicatee of the Violin Concerto and one of those who moved towards adopting vibrato as the default position for a soloist. In emulation, probably, young violinists took to it and it gradually became normal in the orchestra.

Contra Norrington, it has been pointed out that quite a bit of vibrato is apparent in Elgar's recordings of the 1920s. If he didn't like it, he apparently took no steps to eliminate it. Thus Norrington presumes too much in saying that playing with little or no vibrato enables us to hear the music 'as its composer intended'. 'As its composer might have heard it in the 1900s' is as far as one can go. Philip Hensher is right (following a now well established dictum strongly articulated several years ago by the American musicologist Richard Taruskin) to identify Norrington's endeavours as typically modern. That, of course, makes them neither better nor worse. Many aspects of musical performance can be identified as right or wrong: notes and rhythms, hopelessly wrong tempi (how right Norman Lebrecht was, in a Radio 3 programme during the summer, to include Bernstein's 'Enigma' Variations among recordings that ought not to have been made). But this leaves ample room for variation elsewhere, and many elements of musical performance accommodate differences which may repel some listeners, and attract others. Hearing a great work – such as Elgar's First Symphony – should as often as possible be a vital experience. Differences from previous hearings – the position of one's seat in the auditorium, the layout of the orchestra, sensitive handling of tempo, portamento, vibrato – help refresh our responses. And Norrington, whom Elder called a great musician, deserves respect in his endeavours. A violinist and tenor singer before he took up conducting, he grounds his work not in theories but in practice. Like it or not, we should admit that he may be right, and for many listeners, and in many instances (I wish to make no comment on this particular one) his performances are their own best advocate.

In this issue

This year's A.T. Shaw lecture was given by the eminent Elgar practitioner Anthony Payne, who is following his Herculean endeavour in 'realising' (as a compositional act) the Third Symphony and Sixth *Pomp and Circumstance* March by orchestrating those parts of *The Crown of India* which survive only in a piano reduction. Since this took the form of a dialogue, I am grateful to Geoffrey Hodgkins and Andrew Neill for the text. It seemed right to follow this with an intriguing communication from John Norris about other late works of Elgar that survive with some question marks over their completeness.

Controversy stalks those, like Franz Xaver Süssmayr with Mozart, Deryck Cooke with Mahler, and Anthony Payne with Elgar, who have had the temerity to 'complete' the unfinished work of those composers and bring them before the public – who would otherwise be unable to read, never mind hear, a certain Requiem, Tenth Symphony, and Third Symphony. Now a cutting has been sent to me by an eminent Elgarian, who asked that it be described as 'found in a Worcestershire lay-by'. It purports to describe Payne's completion from suspiciously overlooked sketches of a

second oratorio in Elgar's 'oratorio trilogy based on the Gerontius story': *Gerontius in Purgatory*. Elgarians worried about low blood-pressure may obtain a higher reading after consulting this painfully elaborate spoof on the internet.⁶

Emily Riddle and Lucy Nolan wrote prize-winning essays on Elgar's concertos.⁷ Their approaches are refreshingly different but both reveal an acute sensitivity to the music.

The endeavours of Lewis Foreman on behalf of British music and musical life may well become legendary; and his trawl of images of Elgar and his contemporaries conducting – even if it conveys no direct information on their preferences with respect to vibrato – has outstanding documentary value. Dr Foreman has laboured mightily to produce his fascinating article, evoking Elgar the charismatic conductor. The article is replete with striking images, some little known; some earlier figures are also represented, such as the great Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901), and the 'British conductor and composer of Italian birth', Michael Costa (1808–84). Now almost forgotten as a composer, Costa as a conductor was a dominant figure in London's orchestral life for many years, and conducted at various festivals with which Elgar was later associated, including Birmingham and Leeds. A cartoon of Costa by 'Spy', reproduced in *Grove*, shows him baton in hand, apparently learning a score which is propped up on a small keyboard instrument.⁸

Among reviewers, I am delighted to welcome back Charles Edward McGuire with his thoughts on one of the more substantial Elgar publications from 2007. Matthew Riley's book was among Hugh Wood's targets in his *Times Literary Supplement* review, along with J.P.E. Harper-Scott's *Edward Elgar: Modernist*, reviewed earlier in this Journal in a more positive light by Relf Clark.⁹ The American scholar Richard Taruskin wrote to the *TLS* to protest at the tone of the review, and wrote again (23 April) when his contribution was itself, if I may resort to American usage, 'protested'. He was right to object to the heading 'Defence of Elgar'. Taruskin said nothing against Elgar; as he observed, the letters in response to his own (from Hugh Wood and Peter Williams) were a 'defence of Wood'. Wood's review expressed his dislike of certain analytical and contextual approaches that do not happen to interest him by rubbishing them. Taruskin seemed to take it as a piece of anti-Americanism ('Wood and Williams are irked by American musicology ...'); but in fact much of what Wood criticized is by British authors (and there would surely be no shame in admitting to American influence anyway).

The flood of Elgar recordings in 2007 has abated somewhat, and readers are cordially invited to inform the editor of what hasn't been covered, but should have been, and indeed to offer a review. Some things are worth more than one review, and

it is a pleasure to include a second look at the German *Gerontius* from the eminent critic, and definitive biographer of Berlioz, David Cairns.

The 'national' quality of Elgar's music arouses one of our more pertinacious correspondents. Readers are invited to note the caution at the foot of the contents page: Mr Taylor's views are his own, But I do wonder exactly what makes him proud of the Empire – the Opium War? Imperial contempt for indigenous history and culture, as exemplified in *The Crown of India* (in the words more than the music)? One could go on ... Father Brian Stocks raises an interesting point concerning the funding by the Society of work towards a PhD, and regretting that the finished product is likely to be difficult of access for most members of the Society, unless the thesis is turned into a book, a procedure which would entail a good deal more expense. In this country we have not adopted the German requirement that work be published before the PhD is awarded. Perhaps the internet will come to our rescue. Meanwhile the thesis is in Durham University Library where it can be consulted; and if we hear of proposals to make it more widely available, they will certainly be broadcast to the Society.

Congratulations to Michael Byde, as well as thanks for his patient setting of the Journal. Michael recently completed his PhD at the University of Leeds; his thesis is on the unjustly denigrated later orchestral music of William Walton. In the summer Michael read a paper at the annual conference of the North American British Music Studies Association, whose establishment a few years ago marks an epoch in American interest in British music; among its leading lights are of course such eminent Elgarians as Charles Edward McGuire and Byron Adams, and it is heartening to see the growing number of younger scholars who take an interest in this, our *Land mit Musik*.

Julian Rushton

6 On <http://www.classicstoday.com/> - a site which also has a good deal about the vibrato controversy by the same author, David Hurwitz. Finding it took two stages: once in the site add the rest of the address which is [review.asp?ReviewNum=7535](http://www.classicstoday.com/review.asp?ReviewNum=7535). The question mark seems well chosen.

7 See the list of prize-winners in the News, No. 34 (March 2008), p. 14.

8 Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (eds.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. 6, 524–5.

9 This Journal, 15/2 (March 2007), 53–5.

Miss Edna Lyle, *the Australian Nightingale*; Gus Elen, the Cockney comedian; and the bioscope of the Oxford and Cambridge boat race.

AP – If you think about it that must have been one hell of an evening! There was also a one-act play by James Barrie in that programme, and if you count everything up it must have lasted well over three hours, but I think Elgar rather relished his situation conducting amidst the great farrago of stars. The person who actually commissioned it, Oswald Stoll, just ran music hall events, and Elgar knew what he was in for.

GH – How did this come about? How did it start?

AP - It isn't easy to contemplate Elgar's position at that time. On New Year's Day of 1912 he moved into Severn House. With all the problems associated with the move, he was very short of cash. Some time late in 1911 he was contemplating starting proper compositional work on *The Music Makers*, which had to be completed for performance in Birmingham [1 October 1912]. Then, in about the first week [of January] as far as I can make out, he was approached by Stoll to contribute this *Crown of India*, a Masque which was meant to celebrate the Durbar, which had happened in the previous year when George V and Queen Mary had gone to Delhi to be crowned Emperor and Empress of India. It was to be a celebration of that event, and reflected the move of the seat of Government from Calcutta to Delhi: all this was to be dramatised in the Masque. So Stoll approached Elgar and asked him whether he would be interested, and I think he made a handsome financial offer which Elgar could not refuse.

We all know that Elgar composed very, very quickly when he got down to it. I only discovered a few years ago how quick he was when I looked at the way he turned out the movements of the Second Symphony. He seems to have written a movement out every ten days into full score. It was all in his mind, but I could never think of copying it out at that speed – and he was *composing*! In the case of *The Crown of India* he was facing a deadline of the beginning of March. He knew his own speed of composition, but there is another handicap – he started falling over and having ear problems, and dizziness, and I think he must have been seriously worried about his health. He had conducting engagements as well. How he ever got down to it, I don't know!

Every now and again there is an entry in Alice Elgar's diary saying 'E at work all day long' – and he must have been, hour after hour after hour. I know that all the main ideas came from his notebooks, but that's not the point. There was the sheer labour of turning out such a big thing; and also it was something that he had never done before: a big dramatic work with melodramas. We know that towards the end of February he was sending music to the publishers already, and rehearsals were beginning – it is the most astonishing thing that he managed to do all of that in so short a time.

GH – How was all this managed by the librettist?

AP – First you have the introduction and overture – incidentally another 'Mood of Dan' is drawn upon for the overture – Dan's 'sinful youth'. Then there is local colour,

the 'Dance of the Nautch Girls', and then you get India: all the cities and places are personalised, more often by ladies than men, interestingly. India welcomes all her cities to this great gathering, but Delhi and Calcutta have not yet arrived. It's a kind of dramatic conceit, and Calcutta comes and says 'where on earth is Delhi, tut tut'. Then Delhi comes puffing on and they each plead their cause to be the new capital of India. 'It should come to Delhi', Delhi says, because Delhi is the guardian of tradition. Each city draws upon witnesses including four of the great Emperors of the past, hence 'the March of the Mogul Emperors'. They come on as witnesses to Delhi's pre-eminence, and Calcutta says, 'no, it should be Calcutta because Calcutta brought trade', which came to India through the East India Company which had its main bases at Calcutta. So there were two motives set against each other which is an interesting sociological observation.

All this is alluded to in the libretto which is by Henry Hamilton. Hamilton was a hack writer for Stoll and the Coliseum, and he turned out all sorts of things for them. He did pantomimes, for instance. I don't know whether he actually translated foreign plays but he sort of arranged them and re-wrote them for performance. He turned out this jaw-cracking libretto for Elgar which is absolutely staggering if you read it. No wonder a lot of it was cut.

Hamilton wrote most of the text in blank verse. This was desperately old-fashioned even in 1912. When I read through the complete text in the Elgar Society Edition of the work, I, who at school was a classicist, was unable to understand many a sentence. Some of them go on for about five or six lines with the verb withheld until the last line. Elgar, I think, just thought 'enough is enough'.

I have seen suggestions about the length *The Crown of India* was meant to be, because people keep on asking me, as well they might. Apparently Elgar originally wrote to his publishers, after Stoll had visited him, that he was writing something lasting only 30 minutes.¹ Well: the suite by itself lasts about 25 minutes, so the whole thing was much longer than that. When it started to go into rehearsal people said it was an hour long, but then things kept on getting cut. The book of the libretto was on sale at the first performance and already it said that the words in the final version would change because Sir Edward would cut it again. So the first performance was cut and everybody complained about the great length of it so he cut more: savage cuts, and whole pages, reams of the stuff went. Elgar said that he understood at the beginning that this was basically going to be like a pantomime with some speech, and he said he could not stand 'all this political stuff'.

GH – Before we leave Henry Hamilton – and we'll do that very quickly – you said it was written in blank verse; but there weren't there also rhyming couplets?² When they bring on as arbiter the 'Spirit of English chivalry compact':

1 Letter to Littleton, 8 January 1912, in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 760. Elgar said the masque would be 'very gorgeous and patriotic ... and it will not interfere with other things' [ed.].

2 In fact, to pre-empt letters to the editor, much of the libretto is in rhyming couplets (iambic pentameters), assuming one can accept that 'coronal' rhymes with 'Taj Mahal' [ed.].

Thou that in Cappadocia's gloomy gorge
Didst beat the Dragon down – Appear, St George!

Bearing in mind that this comes towards the end of Elgar's most fruitful period of composition, how would you describe the music in terms of contemporaneous works – Second Symphony, *The Music Makers*, *Falstaff*?

AP – Well, it comes from that period; and you can hear all sorts of relationships with other pieces. Some of the musing kind of intermezzos and interludes remind me of parts of the Violin Concerto's slow movement. I also think of the two dream interludes in *Falstaff*, and of *In Smyrna*, which is actually used as a kind of leitmotif.

GH – So, although he drew on music that he'd already written, there was a good deal of original music too. Is there any indication that he was writing it in haste, or is it of high quality?

AP – Well, those two things don't cancel each other, because Elgar wrote in haste anyway. He had a mind that worked quickly. But is it grade A Elgar? Some of it maybe is not; but the big set pieces are, and there are one or two things in it which are extraordinary; I heard no parallel with any of his other pieces. When he made the suite from it, he used what one imagines he thought were the best pieces, among them the 'March of the Mogul Emperors', which is an astonishing piece with heavy percussion. He shortened it for the suite, and cut the whole of the middle section. There's about a page and a half of music which doesn't get into the suite, and this is a shame because it is the most astonishing section. It's really odd, and it caused me real problems of orchestration because I couldn't hear in my inner ear how it was going to sound.

The piano score from which I am working has instrumental indications every now and again, which are usually a help. But in this case they aren't really a help at all, because there is a line right at the top going up which says piccolo over it in the piano score. There are chords going along in between where it says horns, so it is a four-part chord in the horns and at the bottom there is a line that is marked bassoon, which is playing the same tune as the piccolo, four octaves below it; that is an astonishing texture, and I know of nothing else quite like it in Elgar. You sometimes get these wide stretches; there's one in *Falstaff* when the bassoon plays Falstaff's theme and the piccolo picks it out about three octaves above, which is an Elgarian sound, but it's not pitted against this kind of vigorous motion in the middle, and I thought: what is he doing and what did the piano arranger, who was Hugh Blair, mean by putting 'bassoon' and 'piccolo'? Did he mean there were strings there but they were doubled with the bassoon?

I agonised over those kind of decisions, and I'm not sure that I've got that section right. I might even have to change it after I hear it in rehearsal. I think Elgar's aiming at an exotic effect, and some of the figuration of the tune reminds me of the scherzo of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony. Did Elgar know Bruckner's Ninth? Does anybody know?

GH – Can we consider the 'Dance of the Nautch Girls' [No. 2]?

AP – It doesn't really sound like Eastern music but it goes into a different dreamy sort of world rather like *Falstaff*: fey and exquisite.

This reminds me of the problem of the size of orchestra that Elgar would have used. I agonised over this because he might have used a pit orchestra: the sort of orchestra he used for the *Arthur* music, for instance, from which the Third Symphony took some material. That had just strings, piano, cornet and some wind instruments – a true pit orchestra. Now I asked myself: 'did Elgar use a pit orchestra and then elaborate it considerably when he produced the suite, or was it all written for large orchestra and he just extracted the suite?' I think that's actually what happened, because in looking through Robert Anderson's wonderful notes for the Elgar Society Edition of the score, there is a mention from the critic of the *Times* who talked about the 'augmented orchestra'.³ Obviously the Coliseum had a pit orchestra when needed for other items on the bill, but apparently they brought in the extra instruments for Elgar. He wrote for this big orchestra, and it would have actually sounded like that from the pit, which must have been really something.

GH – And in some places it says 'instruments on the stage'.

AP – Yes, for instance, drums and trumpets on the stage, especially in the 'Crown of India' March. The March is not in the Suite. Elgar put the 'March of the Mogul Emperors' in the Suite as a finale, not the 'Crown of India' March, which maybe he thought was not appropriate. I don't think it is such a good piece anyway, for it doesn't seem to me to be quite up to the level of the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches and the other big processional pieces like the *Coronation March* and *Imperial March*, or indeed the Funeral March from *Grania and Diarmid*, which is magnificent. So I went ahead and did my work; all the music that isn't in the suite I scored for the same orchestra.

GH – I'm going to quote your book on the 'Third Symphony' which says 'I was consciously avoiding the elaboration of Elgar's middle-period style'. Presumably with this you didn't have that problem, because this is his middle period isn't it?

AP – Well, it is at the end of his middle period. But being a practical man he wouldn't have done that massive elaboration for a theatrical work when half the attention of the audience is on the stage. He went in for bolder gestures, like he did in the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches. This is that kind of orchestration used in *The Crown of India*, not the massively delicate things like the Second Symphony and *Enigma Variations*.

GH – How do you approach orchestration with nothing else to go on apart from your knowledge of Elgar's music?

AP – Well, it's exactly like what the old RAF pilots used to say: 'flying by the seat of your pants'. It really is the feeling that goes down the back of your spine! You know when you've got it right. However it is largely done by intuition. And at the same

³ Elgar, *The Crown of India*, edited by Robert Anderson (Elgar Society Edition in association with Novello, 2004); see the Foreword, x.

time in the back of my mind there is the library of Elgar's other pieces. It's a very complicated thing and, at the beginning, in the Third Symphony, I found myself getting very self-conscious, dashing around searching through scores for a certain spacing I thought I could hear in my head, to find out precisely how the instruments were laid out. In the end I thought 'life's too short', and I started to go ahead and work and not bother to keep checking. Here you do have the additional benefit of being able to check against the actual music as it appears in the Suite.

This was a help, especially as some of those ideas are motives that appear later on in the piece and have a meaning attached to, say, a city. After Calcutta and Delhi have argued their cause, they say 'let St George be brought on', because St George stands for chivalry, fair play – good old British virtues. He says 'no' – he's too polite to say he favours one or the other – and 'let's leave it to their majesties'. He then sings his St George song, a tub-thumping song of the Empire, and then there is the interval. In the second half their majesties arrive amidst toe-curling images in the speech about the Queen representing the 'fragrant freshness of the Northern Spring'; and then the King decides and India speaks:

The Majesty of Ind his will proclaims:
Delhi to be his Capital he names:
And of his Empire, further makes decree,
Calcutta shall the Premier City be.

GH – The other interesting point you made to me was a difficulty is how you fit the music to the parts of the libretto that are spoken with the music [melodrama].

AP – This really was technically the most difficult problem. For those who haven't seen the piano score, I should say that there are a lot of words in the melodramas. It is clear where speech begins, but the rest is just a row of dots. Towards the end of that section the words of the particular speech are shown and you think, well, nothing could be easier – you give the speech and then you get to that bit, and you reach the end of the music. But then you read through the speech and find it takes three minutes; but there are only one and a half minutes of music, or something like that. Now that causes real problems, and my mind began to reel! Chunks of text have been cut out; but when Elgar cut the text, did he then cut the music that supported that text, or did he tell the actor to stretch it out, leaving gaps in the speech so that the text used up the available music? This is what I had to work out. I am not entirely sure that I got it right, because in some places I get the speech to be read fast in order to get finished before the music Elgar provided runs out.

GH – So on the recording the libretto will be spoken in the appropriate places. Will it be the cut version or the full version?

AP – We'll use the cut version which was what was used for all the later performances in the run. Originally Elgar was commissioned to write a piece that would be given a run of six weeks, but elsewhere I read that it apparently stopped when he stopped conducting, which was after two weeks.

GH – To come back to the orchestration of the short score, in your book on the

Third Symphony you mention Elgar's linear style, where he gives the tune to one instrumental section and then moves it on to another. Is that a feature of this work as well?

AP – It's a feature of all his music, but in *The Crown of India* there is much less filigree, and it's less finicky.

GH – So it's more obvious to an orchestrator?

AP – Yes it is. You get very little of that kind of filigree in the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches, for instance, whereas it's very common in the symphonies. Even if you don't read music, you have only got to look at the score of the first two or three pages of the Second Symphony to see how the ideas are scattered around the orchestra, all joining in the same line but handing over to another group of instruments and back again with the actual tune continuing. It's not nearly so elaborate in the *Crown of India*. The style I adopted came from the Suite, which is similar to the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches.

GH – But in the quieter sections, for instance, if you look at the two staves in the short score, what tells you that this should be for strings or for woodwind?

AP – Ah that really is a secret!

GH – But you could tell us, we're all friends together!

AP – I get a feeling – I think: ah yes that's going to be wonderful if I do that with strings, for example. It jumps off the page at me. In the 'March of the Mogul Emperors' I think Elgar judged the atmosphere really rather well, but it is a little bit thick: this great big orchestra, everybody doubling and with everybody playing all the time. However you lose something through dropping that very odd trio section in the middle with the horns, piccolo and bassoon. I think for a real success it needed that lightness which comes in the middle section, and I am really looking forward to hearing what it sounds like when it is put back. There are about 30-40 bars of music which prepare the way for the final thunderous assault of the full orchestra.

GH – But given that the text is risible, is there any possibility that it could be staged as a one-off?

AP – I think it *could* be. I hope that if it was staged it wouldn't actually induce laughter - maybe an affectionate smile, but not laughter.

Tales from the Complete Edition: or what *did* Elgar write?

John Norris

The story of Elgar's composition of the *Severn Suite* is now well known, and it has been admirably recorded by Philip Maund in two articles in the *Elgar Society Journal*.¹ In brief, according to Henry Geehl writing many years after the event, having been commissioned to write a test piece for the 1930 National Brass Band Championship at Crystal Palace, Elgar had produced only a short score of the *Severn Suite*, leaving Henry Geehl to complete the task of 'orchestrating' it for the various instruments of a brass band. It was only with the re-emergence of Elgar's own full autograph score of the work in the 1990s that Geehl's claim could finally be laid to rest.

The story of Elgar's composition of *With Proud Thanksgiving* is similarly well recorded. Eager to have a piece performed at the ceremony for the unveiling of the Whitehall Cenotaph in November 1920, Novello suggested to Elgar that he should produce an abridged version of 'For the Fallen' with an accompaniment capable of being performed by the military band forces present at the unveiling ceremony. Elgar complied with his publisher's wishes, giving the abridged version the name *With Proud Thanksgiving*. But in the event it was not performed at the ceremony. Undeterred, Novello notified Elgar of an Albert Hall concert scheduled for the following May to 'celebrate the Jubilee of The Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Choral Society'.² For this occasion, a full orchestra would be available, so Elgar re-orchestrated *With Proud Thanksgiving* and, in this form, the abridged work received its premiere performance. It received a further performance in 'A Pageant of Heroes', the final musical event of the Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924, and then disappeared from view for over 60 years. The work was eventually recorded in 2002, in its orchestral arrangement, by the Royal Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra under Douglas Bostock. It was issued on the Classico label as the first work in 'The British Symphonic Collection', Vol. 12.

But what of Elgar's original military band arrangement? Has it ever been performed or is this another Elgarian work still awaiting an elusive world premiere?

A little over a year ago, following a performance of *The Spirit of England* by the Bristol University Senior Orchestra, I was engaged in discussion by a member of the orchestra who is also active in military band circles, and who expressed an interest in stimulating a performance of *With Proud Thanksgiving* if I could point him in the direction of the score and parts. I made enquiries but was faced with a general consensus that, in this arrangement, it was another 'lost' work.

In the light of a recent discovery at the British Library, however, I now believe this is not the case. In fact, within the strict terms defined, it would be more accurate to describe it as a work which never existed.

The purpose of my visit to the British Library was to track down orchestral arrangements of two Elgar songs – *The Pipes of Pan* and *Is she not passing fair?* – to see if the orchestration was Elgar's own or had been delegated to a house arranger. The search led me to a box – H. 3930 – which the library's integrated catalogue suggests contains an orchestral score of *The Pipes of Pan*.

H. 3930 is a delight, containing numerous arrangements of works by Elgar for unusual forces, mainly brass or military band. And there among the scores are separate arrangements for brass and military band of *With Proud Thanksgiving*. Like most of the arrangements in the box, these are not by Elgar – both are by one Frank Winterbottom – and yet both were published by Novello in 1920. It seems inconceivable that, having prodded Elgar into making an abridged military band arrangement of 'For the Fallen', Novello would then, in the same year, commission a competing arrangement from Mr Winterbottom. Surely in this case 'Geehl's rules' do apply: Elgar must have responded to Novello's request by providing *With Proud Thanksgiving* with only a short score accompaniment, leaving it to his publishers to farm out the task of arranging it for military band.

Unfortunately, box H. 3930 did not contain that other lost score for military band, *So many true princesses*. Although first performed in this form at the unveiling of the Queen Alexandra statue at Windsor in 1932, the work seems to have survived only in an arrangement with piano accompaniment, until Tony Payne was commissioned to provide an orchestral accompaniment in 2004. If any readers know otherwise, we would naturally be delighted to hear from them.

1 Philip Maund, 'Elgar's "Brass Band Thing"', this *Journal* 10/2 (July 1997), 46–61; 'Elgar's "Brass Band Thing" – a Postscript', this *Journal* 12/1 (March 2001), 24–9.

2 Letter of 5 March 1920 signed by Henry R. Clayton. See Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 813.

ELGAR SOCIETY PRIZE

People and Places behind Elgar's Violin Concerto

Lucy Nolan

Elgar's Violin Concerto in B minor was composed between April 1909 and August 1910, and was first performed on 10 November 1910 by Fritz Kreisler with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by the composer. The concerto received an ecstatic initial reception, the last of Elgar's works to achieve such acclaim. Kreisler went on to perform the concerto throughout Europe, as did other virtuosi such as Eugene Ysaÿe and Jascha Heifetz, who gave a notable performance in New York. Perhaps the performer most associated with Elgar's Violin Concerto was Yehudi Menuhin, who made a now legendary recording with Elgar and the London Symphony Orchestra at the age of sixteen. Considering what a huge success the Violin Concerto was, it is unsurprising that Elgar composed it amidst an array of stimulating influences. This article examines the various people and places that influenced Elgar in the composition of his Violin Concerto, and the importance of their inspiration and assistance.

People

Elgar thrived on companionship. He had a close circle of friends whom he valued greatly. They would meet frequently at various musical and social gatherings and these evenings meant a great deal to him. Elgar's friends' support, encouragement and guidance were invaluable in the composition of his Violin Concerto. Alice Stuart-Wortley is widely considered to be the single most important influence on Elgar's Violin Concerto. Alice was married to Charles Stuart-Wortley, a conservative MP to whom Elgar was also close. Elgar first encountered the Stuart-Wortleys in 1897, but it was not until around 1906 that Elgar and Alice's friendship blossomed. Alice was deeply appreciative of Elgar's music and this intensified their friendship. A deeply insecure man, Elgar was warmed by Alice's praise and encouragement, and she became his trusted confidante. The Elgars frequently visited the Stuart-Wortleys at their home in Chelsea. Here Alice, an accomplished amateur pianist, would play for Elgar. The composer loved her playing and praised her profusely in his letters, stating 'I never ask anyone to play unless it gives me pleasure. I do not like piano solo player's playing but I love yours – you will understand the difference ... but you must play when I ask and I would not think of asking you to play to ordinary people who would not understand what poetical playing really is.' This letter is one

of hundreds exchanged between the pair over a period of thirty years, and their content reveals what a huge influence Alice Stuart-Wortley had on the composition of Elgar's Violin Concerto.

Their close bond may have been strengthened by the love of nature that they shared. Indeed, Elgar referred to the second subject of the Allegro as a "Windflower" theme'. His next letter to Alice Stuart-Wortley opened 'Dear "Windflower"', and he affectionately used this name for her from then on. Furthermore, Elgar later wrote informing her that 'I have been working hard at 'Windflower' themes – but all stands still until you come and approve!'. Here we see that as well as composing themes to represent 'Windflower', Elgar also waited for her approval before finalising certain sections of the piece.

In February 1910, Elgar began to feel doubtful about the second movement of the concerto. He wrote to 'Windflower' expressing his concerns: 'I am not sure about that *Andante*, and I shall put it away for a long time before I decide it's [sic] fate'. 'Windflower' replied immediately, urging him to continue with his work and complimenting him on the effort he had made so far. After this, Elgar and



Fritz Kreisler, the dedicatee of the Violin Concerto. Grateful thanks to Lewis Foreman for the image.

'Windflower' kept the seventh of February – the date on which Alice wrote her letter – as an anniversary, celebrating how she 'saved' the concerto.

In the early part of 1910, Elgar wrote to his friend Frank Schuster; 'I want to end that concerto but I do not see my way clearly to the end so you had best invite it's [sic] stepmother'. Here we see that Elgar believed that Alice Stuart-Wortley's mere presence would inspire his creativity, and also that he now also refers to her as the concerto's 'stepmother'. There are a number of incidents relating to the first performances of the concerto that further support the theory that 'Windflower' was the core inspiration behind the work. Elgar wrote to her as soon as the dates of the first concerts were confirmed: 'Our Concerto is fixed for Nov. 10 (& 30th) Kreisler – Philharmonic Society, Queen's Hall.' Referring to the work as 'Our Concerto' implies that Alice Stuart-Wortley was partially responsible for its creation. Furthermore, on the morning of the second concert, after rehearsing at the venue, Elgar wrote to 'Windflower': 'The Concerto at 9am in the dark was divine – all the seats were empty but a spirit hovering in block A. Block A was where Alice Stuart-Wortley regularly sat and the spirit that Elgar imagined hovering there during the rehearsal was hers. Finally, referring to an extra ticket he had for the first performance, Elgar wrote: 'I wish I could use it and you might conduct – but you *will* be conducting the concerto wherever you are'.

Perhaps the most revealing piece of evidence that points toward 'Windflower' as the essence behind Elgar's Violin Concerto is the Spanish inscription that heads the work: 'Aquí está encerrada el alma de.....' This quotation translates as: 'Here is enshrined the soul of.....' and it is widely believed that the soul Elgar is referring to is that of Alice Stuart-Wortley. The five dots could either represent the five letters of her first name or her initials; A.S.C.S.-W. The same Spanish inscription was found written on a sheet of paper belonging to 'Windflower', dated 22nd September 1910 and the handwriting was that of Edward Elgar.

A second person who influenced Elgar's Violin Concerto is William Henry Reed. A violinist in the London Symphony Orchestra from its formation in 1904, Reed was one of Elgar's dearest friends and an influential figure in his life from the time of the Violin Concerto until the composer's death in 1934. Reed's involvement with the Violin Concerto began in the spring of 1910 when Elgar invited him to his flat to work on some of its technical aspects including fingerings, bowings, and the arrangement of fiendish passagework. Elgar also asked Reed to play through his sketches, trying out many different effects so that he could be sure to achieve exactly what he imagined and notate everything accurately. Reed describes his first visit to Elgar's flat:

The first visit was a unique experience. There was the composer, striding about, arranging scraps of manuscript in different parts of the room, pinning them to the backs of chairs and placing them on the mantelpiece with photograph frames to hold them in position. It was wonderful to note the speed at which he scribbled out another passage or made an alteration or scrapped a sketch altogether as being redundant.¹

1 Reed, *Elgar*, 101; see also Reed, *Elgar as I knew him* (London: Gollancz, 1936), 22–3.

After this initial encounter, Elgar frequently turned to Reed for advice on his concerto, and indeed many of his other works. When Elgar became disheartened with the last movement of the concerto ('I am appalled at the last movement & cannot get on'), it was Reed who assisted in its amendment. Furthermore, Reed was the first person to play through the completed concerto, accompanied by Elgar who played the orchestral reduction on the piano. This event took place at Schuster's home, and only a handful of Elgar's firm friends were fortunate enough to be present.

Another person who greatly influenced the composition of Elgar's Violin Concerto was its dedicatee, Fritz Kreisler. In November 1909, Kreisler said: 'Sir Edward Elgar promised me a concerto three years ago. When he writes one it will be a labour of love rather than profit. But I can't get the first note of him.' This shows that the concerto was always meant for Kreisler. Elgar would most likely have had Kreisler's profound interpretative skills and remarkable technical ability in the forefront of his mind while he composed the work and these virtues must surely have been an inspiration. However, it was not just the thought of Kreisler's musical qualities that influenced Elgar. Correspondence between the two men show that although Kreisler was delighted with the finished work, he had a number of suggestions regarding bowing and passagework. Elgar accepted Kreisler's suggestions and this demonstrates that he, like Reed, played a small but significant role in the compositional input.

'Windflower', Reed and Kreisler are the three most obvious names to discuss in relation to the composition of his Violin Concerto, but a number of other people cannot go unmentioned. The first of these is the composer's wife, whose unyielding love and support for Elgar influenced everything he did. The very fact that she had no qualms regarding her husband's close bond with Alice Stuart-Wortley must have indirectly contributed to the work and also shows that she was an understanding woman. Elgar's career as a composer only truly begun after he married Alice in 1889 and this same career almost ceased after her death in 1920, with the composer admitting: 'I have gone out'.

Frank Schuster was another person who influenced Elgar's Violin Concerto. A committed patron of the arts and utterly devoted to music, Schuster befriended Elgar and this friendship was crucial to the creation of the concerto. Elgar spent a great deal of time composing at 'The Hut'.² 'The Hut' was also central to Elgar's social life, as musical evenings and intimate gatherings regularly took place there.

Julia Worthington, a cherished American friend of the Elgars, is another person who must be alluded to in relation to the Violin Concerto. Alice Elgar was convinced that it was Julia Worthington's soul that was enshrined in the concerto, although there is no other documentation to suggest that this was the case. However, what is documented is that Julia invited the Elgars to come and stay with her in a villa near Florence in April 1909. Elgar had composed no music so far that year but was inspired to write the Violin Concerto after his visit to Italy.

2 See David Bury, 'A Visit to "The Hut"', this Journal, 15/2 (July 2007), 7–18.

Places

The natural world was a huge inspiration to Elgar throughout his life. A love of nature was instilled in him as a child by his mother, Ann Greening. Elgar's surroundings greatly affected his creative output, and this perhaps explains the restlessness that caused him to move home so often. Some of his greatest works were inspired by the environment he was in at the time, for example the works he composed at Brinkwells.

In the first part of 1909, Elgar's musical productivity was nonexistent. Instead he focused on the study of chemistry, one of his favourite pastimes. As the year progressed, Elgar grew increasingly miserable, and he went to Llandrindod Wells in an attempt to lift his spirits and enhance his creativity. Unfortunately, the visit failed to cheer him up, and so Alice Elgar decided a trip abroad was in order. It is interesting that both Elgar and his wife both instinctively knew that a change of scenery was precisely the remedy necessary to treat the composer's bleak moods.

Julia Worthington's invitation to the couple, requesting that they join her in a rented villa in Italy came at just the right time. On their way to the Villa Silli, the Elgars stopped off in Paris. Elgar enjoyed his time in the city, and wrote in a letter to a friend: 'Paris is alive & in a curious way, inspiring'. Elgar's musical creativity was reawakened in the Italian village of Careggi where Julia had taken the villa and it was here that he began to compose for the first time that year. Elgar was suddenly brimming with ideas for the Violin Concerto and began to work with ease. The stay at Villa Silli brought the early sketches of the slow movement, the opening of the Second Symphony, and a number of vocal works. After a six-week-long stay, the Elgars eventually left at the end of May. However, they did not return to England straightaway. Instead they visited Pisa, which had a further positive bearing on the composer, and then travelled to Venice. The city reinforced Elgar's renewed zest for composition, with St Mark's Square being the inspiration behind the middle movements of the Second Symphony.

Once back in England, Elgar recommenced his work on the Violin Concerto with renewed enthusiasm. His base was, for the moment, Plas Gwyn, his rented home in Hereford. However, Elgar soon moved to London and his new residence was a flat on New Cavendish Street. The flat had a wonderful library which proved to be the perfect setting for him to work on the Violin Concerto. When Elgar's lease expired at New Cavendish Street he went straight to 'The Hut', where he composed most of the Concerto's *Andante*. The peaceful and idyllic location was the chief inspiration for the slow movement, which contains some of the most glorious music ever composed by Elgar.

Elgar's return to Plas Gwyn proved difficult. The third movement of the Concerto did not come easily and he struggled to complete it away from the beautiful setting of 'The Hut'. However, he gradually settled back into his life in Hereford, and with the enormous help of William Reed, the Concerto was eventually completed there.

Plas Gwyn, or 'White House', was a large, stately home on Hampton Park Road in Hereford. It had a large garden and an orchard, and was situated in the middle of the countryside. Elgar was generally very happy at Plas Gwyn, enjoying activities such as fishing, cycling and walking. He even took the opportunity to conduct chemistry

experiments in the large house. Soon after moving in, Alice Elgar commented: 'I think great music can be written here', and she was not wrong as Plas Gwyn proved to be hugely inspirational to Elgar during the composition of his Violin Concerto.

Elgar's flat at number 58 New Cavendish Street, London, was another place where a great deal of the work was done on the Violin Concerto, and indeed considerable progress was made during the three months he lived there. Perhaps Elgar worked well in the city, because he was away from the pleasurable distractions of his beloved countryside. Elgar had moved to London from Hereford on his wife's suggestion, owing to his increasing number of commitments in the capital. It was at the flat on New Cavendish Street that Elgar and Reed first worked together.

It is no wonder that 'The Hut', Frank Schuster's home near Maidenhead, was an inspiration to Elgar as it was 'a meeting place for musicians, writers and painters', and had been an influence in the work of numerous well-known artistic figures. Perhaps the most notable of these people was Gabriel Fauré, who composed many of his songs at 'The Hut'. It is little wonder that Elgar asked Schuster if he could pay him a visit at 'The Hut' when he was feeling uninspired during work on his Violin Concerto. Schuster was delighted to have Elgar compose at his home, and 'The Hut' was the aptly chosen venue for the first play-through of the completed Concerto.

The purpose of this essay was to show that Elgar's Violin Concerto was influenced by a range of different people and places. Although all of the people and places I have mentioned are connected in that they all inspired the composition of the work, the way in which they did so varied greatly. Elgar was deeply satisfied with his Violin Concerto, telling Schuster: 'It's good! Awfully emotional! Too emotional, but I love it!'. The emotion and expressiveness of this wonderful work can be largely attributed to the many people and places that influenced Elgar during the course of its composition.

Bibliography:

- Robert Anderson, *Elgar* (The Master Musicians: London: Dent, 1993)
Pauline Collett, *Elgar Lived Here* (London: Thames Publishing, 1981)
Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar* (third edition; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
Michael Kennedy, *The Life of Elgar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
Yehudi Menuhin, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: Elgar Society, 1976)
W.H. Reed, *Elgar* (The Master Musicians: London: Dent, 1939)
Jerrold Northrop Moore (ed.), *Edward Elgar, the Windflower Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

Lucy Nolan graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music in 2008 with a first class honours degree. She is currently a postgraduate student there, studying under Louise Lansdown. During her time at the RNCM, Lucy has been awarded the Thomas Barrett prize for viola and the Leonard Hirsch, *Musicales*, and John Barbiroli/Lawrence Turner prizes for chamber music. A keen chamber musician, she has performed throughout her native Ireland and the UK. She has had master-classes and lessons with many distinguished musicians including Mstislav Rostropovich, Hugh Maguire, Dora Schwartzberg, and Christopher Rowland as well as members of the Endellion, Danel, Chilingirian, and Sorrel quartets. She is currently a member of the Proctor Quartet and the Eblana String Trio at the RNCM. Lucy is the secretary of the English Viola Society and has been invited to give a performance at the 2009 International Viola Congress in South Africa.

ELGAR SOCIETY PRIZE

Elgar's Cello Concerto: a personal response

Emily Riddle

Elgar's Cello Concerto is music that cannot be put into words; it holds too much profound beauty and sadness. In using those words, I realise their inadequacy. I do not even begin to imagine that I have grasped all the emotion that this music holds. To communicate that would be impossible – and yet I shall try.

Visualise for a moment *The Scream* by Edvard Munch. The acute heartache of the figure resonates through the entire landscape. From its genderless head comes a howl of terror, so grief-stricken, so loud, yet so internalised that it may not even be uttering a sound. This feeling has gained complete control over the person, whose whole external world is pulsating violently. Enraged crimson streaks cross the sky; the surroundings writhe around the skeletal head. Now put that image, with its intense emotion and colour, into sounds and silences. The result...? Naturally, the opening of the Elgar Concerto ... Or perhaps we could liken it to Shakespeare:

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
Or close the wall up with our English dead!

Imagine if Shakespeare had started *Henry V* thus, with no explanation, no background, no introduction. Thrown suddenly into the scene and its unknown world, the audience knows nothing about the story or about the context of the words spoken. So it is with the opening of Elgar's Cello Concerto. From the silence that has descended upon the eagerly awaiting audience, the four anguished chords from the solo cello plunge us straight into its world of intense grief and despair.

Writing in the aftermath of the First World War, Elgar alludes throughout the music of this period to all that the terrible conflict had cost – the millions of wasted lives, the futility of all that had happened. Seeing the destruction that the war had brought to Europe, he realised that not only lives had been destroyed, but with them a whole way of life. The sombre mood of these opening bars pervades the entire first movement, and indeed much of the whole. This is Elgar's elegy for a lost world.

The cry of torment from the solo cello is answered by a gentle imitation from the horn, lower winds and strings. From here the cello plays an ascending passage, as if searching or at least yearning for something once lost, which, as it progresses, seems to promise some more definite statement. What we hear is quite different: from the cello's pianissimo 'F#', the violas introduce the first main theme – Elgar's

original impetus for the work – which is somewhat reminiscent of a melody in Elgar's *Serenade for Strings* (1892). In a swaying 9/8 time, the theme winds its way through shifting keys, expressing so much yet in so simple a line that it allows for the numbness that surely only the deepest kind of grief can bring. The theme is passed between the orchestra and the solo cello, developing and becoming more meaningful each time it is reiterated. An E minor semiquaver scale from the cello leads into the climactic statement of this first theme, where Elgar finally uses the large-scale orchestral sound. It is a measure of his supreme skill that he manages to create music, which although lightly scored never sounds lightweight or insubstantial. His instrumentation also reveals his assured handling of solo instrument and orchestra – always ensuring that the cello does not get lost in the texture. The great cellist Mstislav Rostropovich was known to say that, alongside the Saint-Saëns Concerto, the Elgar is the best example of a well-balanced, well-orchestrated concerto for cello, always allowing it to project over the orchestra without forcing and distorting the sound.

Following the orchestral tutti, the cello plays the main theme in only a slightly less subdued fashion, with a cadence this time into the tonic E minor, and leading into a perhaps more hopeful, or at least warmer, middle section. Clarinets and bassoons initiate the 12/8 theme, which gives way to a dialogue between the woodwind and strings. Although the lyrical swaying of this middle section is like a breath of fresh-air following the heart-break of the first theme, over it floats an air of decided nostalgia: perhaps Elgar comments here also upon the change of scene in Britain since his childhood. The first theme returns, a little decorated and changed in orchestration, but really as an echo of its first presentation.

The second movement begins with a brief introduction in which we hear the three opening chords of the first movement, this time pizzicato, alternating with a fast, cheeky motif based upon a repeated semiquaver pattern reminiscent perhaps of birds in flight. The most part of the concerto was composed during the summer of 1919 at Brinkwells, and it is this movement in particular that reflects this country setting, with the glories of nature at its heart. The running semiquaver passages initiate a 'catch me if you can' game with the second theme. The latter has a wisdom and maturity in comparison to the flitting semiquavers. It is like a mother telling a child who is playing in the fields that it's time to come in, becoming a little more frustrated each time her suggestion is ignored. Needless to say, she never wins, and the cheeky theme continues right to a final pizzicato flourish where the movement ends.

Three slowly rising phrases and a three-note descent introduce the only subject of the slow movement, a broad song-like melody which is first given by the soloist supported by the strings, with just a chords from a reduced woodwind section. In the key of B flat, lush chromatic harmonies in the orchestra give the basis for this glorious adagio.

The fourth movement is the most complex movement in terms of form, perhaps modelled upon the finale of Dvořák's cello Concerto, written 25 years previously. The orchestral introduction and cello recitative begin in anger, before launching into a march-like rondo. Though embittered, the episodes of the rondo do allow glimpses of hope, however briefly. As the movement seems to approach a final climax, there

is a sudden transformation in tempo and mood, and an extended coda follows. The cello again pours out the elegy of the third movement over astringent chromatic harmonies; these chords bear somewhat significant resemblance to those which Elgar used to accompany the Angel of the Agony in *Gerontius*. But, as if too much emotion has been shown, the mood is broken, the cello restates the concerto's opening anguished chords before the main theme of the movement is reiterated, bringing the work to a brusque conclusion.

To play music so great, so powerful, one must extend one's mind, and reach far beyond the somewhat confining practicalities of playing an instrument. For what *is* an 'instrument' without a soul behind it? To play this concerto, so much more than merely a cello and an 'instrumentalist' is surely necessary. A musician must aspire while playing to be a singer, a dancer, actor, lover, artist, philosopher.

In playing this, and indeed any music, it is vital to have some understanding of what the composer was trying to convey, before deciding how it is possible to bring this across in one's own way. It is difficult, I believe, to play this concerto not having any real conception of the Great War. To see a world before such destruction, and then to live in its aftermath, must inspire such a feeling that would be impossible for any soul, inexperienced in such a feeling, to comprehend.

For this reason, Beatrice Harrison's recording is probably one of the truer interpretations of this concerto. Not only did she have to live through the difficulties of war-time life, but the recording was conducted by Elgar himself. Since this recording, the work has been through a great period of change (mainly, although not exclusively, as a result of Sir John Barbirolli's and Jacqueline du Pré's legendary recording), particularly in terms of tempo choices. Certain places in the Harrison-Elgar interpretation seem a little strange to those of us better acquainted with du Pré's performance, for example in the climax of the first movement, where the notorious semiquaver scale seems almost manic in acceleration. But the published scores – Novello and Bärenreiter – follow the autograph, showing that Elgar did distinguish between the two versions of this run (leading into figs 5 and 16) by marking them *poco allargando* and *in tempo* respectively. It is surprising that more modern cellists do not make more of this direction. Another place is in the third movement (after fig. 37) where Elgar wrote *stringendo molto* and *appassionato*; unsurprisingly, Harrison and Elgar's recording observes these directions, but at this point du Pré and Barbirolli indulge themselves somewhat in the glorious harmonies, as if the passage were marked *allargando* rather than the intended *stringendo*.

Nevertheless, after Barbirolli and du Pré's performance in the Royal Festival Hall (7 April 1965), Bernard Jacobsen wrote in *High Fidelity* that 'the performance realised an ideal which the composer himself would have blessed'. Whether this would indeed have been the case is of no real importance – the du Pré-Barbirolli recording is a stunning interpretation in its own right. Sir John Barbirolli has been described by Carol Easton (in *Jacqueline du Pré – a Biography*) as having had 'Elgar's music in his bones', and in fact he was present at the Salmond-Elgar premiere of the concerto. The premiere itself was near-disastrous and the work was described by some critics as 'sub-standard Elgar'. But although the orchestra

was said to have ‘made a public exhibition of its lamentable self’, a seemingly more open-minded critic did appreciate the music, describing its ‘profound wisdom and beauty underlying its simplicity ... a fine spirit’s lifelong wistful brooding upon the loveliness of earth’. After Elgar’s death, Barbirolli took it upon himself to increase public appreciation of his work, which had recently been described as ‘overly emotional’ and ‘vulgar’. Barbirolli was of course successful in his aim to revive public admiration for Elgar’s music, particularly in his partnership with du Pré, whose genius surely no one can deny. The biographer Elizabeth Wilson wrote of du Pré that her ‘insights into the complex world of Elgar’s late music displayed a maturity and depth of vision extraordinary for her youth’ and one critic, after a performance in Montreal with the Canadian Broadcasting Symphony, compared her with Glenn Gould: ‘there is the same irrational intensity to every note, the same conviction, the same feeling of communication with the Gods ... she breathes fire into the music, and she makes the [Elgar Concerto] vibrate with an intensity I did not know this music to have’. Apart from anything else, it is a mark of du Pré’s genius just how prominent Elgar’s cello Concerto has become in every cellist’s standard repertoire.

And yet over four decades later, in October of this year, Natalie Clein became the first British female cellist to have recorded the concerto since the du Pré-Barbirolli version. At the age of sixteen, Natalie Clein won the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition with her performance of Elgar’s Concerto, and over a decade later she released a recording of the same work – her first concerto disc – with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Vernon Handley. Interestingly, Clein considers her favourite recording to be the Harrison-Elgar performance – the ‘greater inspiration to have’ she said in an interview for the *BBC Music magazine*, is ‘the one made by the composer himself, whether it’s Elgar, or Rachmaninov or Shostakovich playing their own works’. Despite this inspiration, which becomes evident when one compares the interpretations closely, Natalie Clein has often been likened Jacqueline du Pré herself – due, she suggests, to the ‘emotional quality’ of her approach. But almost any cellist brave enough to record the concerto – especially a woman, and a British woman at that – is likely to have similar comparisons made. This is yet another measure of du Pré’s unique talent.

Having said that, it would not do to glorify only the performers and forget the composer himself. The journey of Elgar’s Cello Concerto has been long – from the evident disappointment of its premiere, through its early Harrison-Elgar, Squire-Harty, Pini-van Beinum interpretations and the later accounts of Navarra-Barbirolli, Fournier-Wallenstein and Casals-Boult, to the du Pré-Barbirolli recording and beyond. But as well as being a long journey, the history of this work is evidently a mark of Elgar’s mastery – through every interpretation shines that poignant simplicity, that beauty, lying far beyond the confines of spoken language, reaching the soul.

Emily Riddle is sixteen years old and comes from Wakefield in West Yorkshire. She is currently studying cello with Nicholas Jones at Chetham’s School of Music in Manchester, where she has been a pupil for four years. Besides music, Emily is interested in theatre, literature, art, travelling, and learning French and German.



Beatrice Harrison with Elgar, 1919

How times change!

The New York Times on 12 December 1913 reported as follows:

PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.

Miss Beatrice Harrison, ‘Cellist, Appears for First Time In New York.

The Philharmonic Society’s concert last evening introduced to New York a new violoncellist, Miss Beatrice Harrison, an Englishwoman who has played with success in various parts of Europe. The violoncello seems to be rather more adapted to masculine use than feminine; and yet Miss Harrison’s playing showed, as has been shown before, that women can play it with distinguished success and even with a grace that is not ordinarily associated with the instrument.

She was not, of course, yet playing Elgar’s concerto. One could hardly write about the cello and its executants in such terms nowadays, even if one believed it – which would be impossible in the era of Jacqueline du Pré, Natalie Clein, and others.



RECEPTION AT THE ARMS MUSICAL FESTIVAL.

Fig. 1 Sullivan at the heart of the 1886 Leeds Festival (*Illustrated London News*, 23 October 1886)

Picturing Elgar and his contemporaries as conductors: Elgar conducts at Leeds

Lewis Foreman

The only illustrations we have of Elgar conducting in his prime, at the beginning of the twentieth century, are sketches reproduced in local newspapers, notably those made at the Leeds Festivals. However, viewed together, and against the background of earlier illustrations of conductors, they give us a vivid appreciation of what his contemporaries found so charismatic in his performances.

Although by the last years of the nineteenth century photography had been an acknowledged feature of life for half a century, it was surprisingly long in establishing a technology by which it could conveniently be used in illustrated magazines and newspapers. In the United Kingdom the tax on newspapers was cut from 4d to 1d in 1836 and abolished in 1855; advertisement tax was abolished in 1853; and the first of W.H. Smith's railway bookstalls opened in 1848. These were all potent milestones in the rapid growth of journalism, and with that came a rise in the status of musical criticism, and – germane to my topic here – an appetite for illustration – a desire to see what people and events were like – driven to a considerable degree by the market for images of royalty. The best-known of the many new periodical titles launched in the 1840s and 50s was *The Illustrated London News*, founded in 1842, and it was the *ILN* which in its illustrations – initially wood engravings, later steel – gave the most extensive pictorial coverage of music by popular journals over the next half century. Without it and the many competitors which soon sprang up a significant source of our documentation of the time would be lost.¹

The nineteenth century was a time of major technical developments in printing. During the second half of the century the speedy growth of popular journalism, and the rise of literacy which it fed, exactly matched the emergence of a substantial public appetite for photography exemplified by the rise of the *carte de visite* and later of the cabinet photograph, both paralleling popular illustrated journalism. They were succeeded before the First World War by the craze for photographic picture postcards, and the success of popular European illustrated musical journals featuring photographs, such as the Brussels *Musica* and the Paris journal *Comœdia Illustré*.

All these provide us with a vivid, albeit sometimes idealised, window on

¹ For musical illustrations, other journals of particular interest are *The Graphic*, *The Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News*, *The Sketch*, *The Daily Graphic*, *St Paul's*, and later *Black and White*, *The Tatler*, and *The Gentlewoman*.

nineteenth- and early twentieth-century music, the composers and performers, halls and great events, theatrical productions and festivals, not forgetting the occasional fire or disaster. Until the 80s and 90s, when photographs began to appear in the periodical press, engraving in one form or another was the usual technique; in fact, engraved portraits would often be captioned 'after a photograph'. During the forty or fifty years when engraving provided the principal medium for illustrations, what were actually presented were imaginative reconstructions of places and events from sketches made on the spot; and, even more than photography, they reflect their artist's view of the subject. Later lithography enabled much more informal sketches to be published. All imply objectivity, but they cannot, in fact, ever have been very detached.

In parallel with the rise of illustrated journals was the craze for photography, as early as the 1850s and 60s. The journal *The Photographic News* noted in its issue of 18 June 1869:

The window of a large photographic shop affords a capital means of judging of the tone of the public mind at any given time. From the popular photographs it is easy to discern what sort of books are being read, what sort of plays are being acted, what sort of frivolity is for the time being fashionable.

We might add 'which musical names were in town, which operas and concerts were in the news'. *The Photographic News* continued:

An experienced Londoner, long absent from home, and with but an intermittent supply of newspapers, might say with some certainty, from an inspection of the cartes de visite in the shop windows, what should be the prominent subjects of conversation at his first dinner party.

Cartes de visite were introduced in 1859. They were made possible by the introduction of the collodian process and were more robust than what went before. They gave a more focused image and were more easily made in quantity, so they were sold at a price that guaranteed popularity. According to the censuses of England and Wales of 1851 and 1861, the numbers of establishments in retail photography rose from 51 to 2543 over these ten years. So the young Edward Elgar, living in Worcester and with occasional trips to Birmingham, must have had firmly established in his mind that a person who had 'made it' appeared in the images on sale in the photographers. *Cartes de visite* could be made in very considerable quantities; for example the souvenir rehearsal passes to the Crystal Palace for the 1865 Handel Festival consisted of *cartes* illustrating the choir in the hall.

The treatment of illustrations in journals such as the *ILN* was long based on set-piece engravings. Even when various wars were being reported, action pictures are still artists' accounts, with very little possibility of verifying how close to actuality they may have been, or what agendas may have been being put over consciously or unconsciously by the artist. From the 1880s onwards reports from occasions such as concerts or musical festivals are often made in the form of a variety of quick sketches, sometimes of remarkable crudity; we are left wondering how far



Fig. 2 Hans Richter at London's St James's Hall (Illustrated London News, 1 September 1883)

such illustrations give us an objective view of what really went on. What did the platform and the audience look like, where did the soloists stand (or sit) and, more important, how far can we assess the conductors and their technique from such images? How far are they reliable in documenting the minutiae of musical performance? Remembering Elgar's identification of the admirable features of Hans Richter's style as 'absolute dignity in gesticulation, no exuberance of gesture', does a sketch of the conductor's striking gesture (fig. 2) give us a true impression of his style on the podium in 1883 (more accurately seen in fig 6)? And surely Elgar's problems as a conductor are highlighted by the conflict between his stated admiration of Richter and his own temperamental affinity to the dramatic gesture, the emotional moment.

It was quickly realised that striking illustrations, whether in the *Illustrated London News* and its contemporaries, in the photographic shop, or (increasingly in the 1890s) in concert programmes themselves, were potent in promoting musical performers. It is a sign of Victorian sensibilities that they are almost always portraits. Only in scenes from the opera and in set-piece illustrations in the *ILN* and its contemporaries of performances at the festivals do we see conductors in action. Violinists hold their violins, pianists sit at their keyboards, but the only exception to this rule as far as conductors were concerned were musical silhouettes. Perhaps

because they often included an element of caricature, these could be powerful in suggesting to us a conductor's actual manner on the podium and his stick technique. Silhouettes also depicted Wagner and Liszt, both in their time exuberant and demonstrative conductors, and Siegfried Wagner (fig. 3); to these I add drawings in similar vein of Brahms and Oscar Nedball, more phlegmatic in their conducting



Fig. 3 Silhouettes. Above, Wagner and Liszt. Below, Mahler and Siegfried Wagner by Otto Böhler.



Fig. 4 Above: Oscar Nedbal, Anton Rubinstein. Below: Brahms by Willy von Beckerath

(fig. 4). Drawings or paintings of the time showing Verdi (fig. 7), Sullivan (see fig. 1) and Anton Rubinstein (fig. 4) confirm the varied depiction of stick technique on the podium.

What has all this to do with Elgar? As well as showing the accuracy of the artists of the time in documenting something so specialised as a conductor's style with his baton, I think it establishes a way for us (seen in conjunction with contemporary descriptions of him) to assess Elgar as a conductor; and as a conductor far ahead of his time in the immediacy he brought to his direction of music, whether his own or from the classical repertoire. Of course, Elgar would eventually record his own music, but that came later.

But, looking back, before Elgar took the baton we can see a tradition of rather four-square readings. We have few illustrative clues of Costa, long the principal British festival conductor (fig. 5, the gesture curiously similar to a later image of Richter, fig. 6), and even fewer of his successor Arthur Sullivan (see the illustration facing the first



Fig. 5 Michael Costa (Mayfair, 6 February 1877)



Fig. 8 Costa Carte de visite



Fig. 9 Elgar conducts at Leeds, 1913 (caricature)



Fig. 6 Richter



Fig. 7 Verdi conducting Aida in 1880 (postcard, postmarked 1901)

page of this article). One gains an impression of a certain ponderousness and self-satisfaction, which contrasts strongly with the drawings we have of a later generation – for example of the prickly Irishman Stanford, long used to conducting student concerts at the Royal College of Music, and subsequently of the dynamic Elgar in his prime (fig. 9: see also figs. 13 and 14). From the sketches in the Leeds papers in Elgar's case closer comparisons of the style depicted are surely with the Mahler of Böhler's silhouettes (fig. 7).

Postcards became the particular pictorial medium for promoting composers and performers and for announcing concerts and performances. On occasion they are the only surviving image of a given figure more celebrated then than now. They were also issued in various series published by the musical organisations of the day, of which the biggest was undoubtedly the series issued by the publishers Breitkopf & Härtel, who had offices in all the principal capital cities of the world and who by 1909 had some 950 postcard portraits in print. There were many series of portraits of musicians issued in the 1900s, and Elgar was among those most frequently depicted (Fig. 17 shows a montage of Elgar postcards). But they were almost all portraits, and very few showed any sort of musical pose or action.

Thus it was mainly after the Great War that conductors were to be seen posing with the baton. For example, Arthur Nikisch, with whom Elgar shared the



Fig. 10 (above) Arthur Nikisch at Leeds (Yorkshire Evening News, 3 October 1913)

Fig. 11 (left) Arthur Nikisch: a montage of postcards

conducting at the 1913 Leeds Festival, was widely seen in postcards (of which a selection is shown here, fig. 11), though even in a drawing the baton is little in evidence (fig 10).

The ever-thorough Stephen Lloyd documented Elgar's reception as a conductor more than a quarter-century ago.² But apart from that very late film of him conducting *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 1, we have no visual impression of him on the podium, or of how he may have changed over the years. If he started as the somewhat nervous figure suggested by Rosa Burley at the time of the first performance of *Caractacus* (1898: 'His wide vague beat would sometimes baffle the best of us and in matters of interpretation he seemed incapable of explaining exactly what he wanted'),³ by the time he came to conduct his later works he had clearly developed into a more charismatic figure. Even at the time of *Caractacus*, W.H. Reed could write of Elgar at a rehearsal:

2 Stephen Lloyd: 'Elgar as Conductor', in Christopher Redwood (ed.), *An Elgar Companion* (Ashbourne, Sequoia Publishing in association with Moorland Publishing, 1982), 291-306.

3 Rosa Burley and Frank C. Carruthers: *Edward Elgar the record of a friendship* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 108.

He was practical to a degree, he wasted no time making unnecessary speeches and when he did speak it was always to the point, with few words used to convey his meaning. He obtained all he wanted from his executants by the movement of his delicate and well-shaped hands, by his eyes, which expressed the whole gamut of emotions, and by his whole facial expression, which lit up in an amazing manner when he got the response he desired.⁴

Having toured with the LSO presenting music other than his own in 1905 and 1909, Elgar's orchestral experience was considerable by the time he was appointed by the LSO as their Principal Conductor in the 1911-12 season (fig. 12).

And when he came to conduct Brahms's Third Symphony at Leeds in 1913, it was the tenth time he had conducted the work in public with the LSO. So by then this was no tyro conductor, but a charismatic and thrilling director who generated electricity with his exacting demands for the nuances of performance; from the sketches of him with the baton he would appear to have had a demonstrative stick technique (see figs 9, 14).

Although photography was increasingly used from the 1890s in journalism, especially in theatrical and sports reporting, it was a long time before it was possible to take action photographs and successfully reproduce them in the press. Therefore before photography took over in the 1920s the artists of the quick sketch developed

4 W.H. Reed: *Elgar* (London: Dent, 1939), 51.

Fig. 12 Elgar on the podium at Queen's Hall with the London Symphony orchestra, 1911 (detail)



considerable skill, notably in the work of those drawing for Leeds newspapers (especially the *Yorkshire Evening Post*) in the Edwardian period. We can get a very good flavour of the personalities in the detailed illustrated accounts of the Leeds Festivals of 1901, 1904, 1907, 1910 and 1913. Although social historians will tell you this was a movement showing signs of impending decline because the financial outcomes were reducing, in fact the arrival of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford in 1901 as the musical director in succession to Sullivan gave them a new vigour in choice of repertoire and new works, and also in standards of performance (see figs 13 and 18).

When Elgar had first appeared at the Leeds Festival in 1898 conducting *Caractacus* he was still a somewhat tentative conductor. But only three years later, when he returned to conduct his then still new 'Enigma' Variations, he had begun to develop into a dynamic figure, as illustrated in the *Leeds Evening Echo*. Commissioned to produce a new work for the following Leeds Festival, he was foolish enough to let slip that he was contemplating a symphony, which he failed to deliver. He returned in 1904 with *In the South* and in 1907 with *The Kingdom*. He then produced the long awaited symphony, but not at Leeds, and he fell out with the Festival Committee over his continuing inability to produce a new work for them. In 1910 he did not attend. However, Stanford then left the Festival and in 1913 Elgar not only shared the podium with Nikisch, but also delivered the long awaited commission, *Falstaff*. In 1913 Elgar conducted *Falstaff* and *Gerontius* as well as two mixed programmes, including Brahms's Third Symphony and a Bantock premiere, the tone poem *Dante and Beatrice*.

In 1913 the festival orchestra was the LSO. A regular feature of the triennial festival movement before the First World War was that the performances would be preceded by public rehearsals that were regularly the subject of extensive press coverage. Where London orchestras were involved – which was often the case – these rehearsals were held in London, and their detailed press coverage makes reconstructing a history of them a fascinating task. When *Falstaff* received its first performance at Leeds it was by the LSO conducted by Elgar himself. It had two rehearsals in London, thus giving London critics the opportunity to hear and absorb it before the formal first performance.

As for the rehearsals themselves to-day, the people who filled the hall both morning and afternoon certainly got their money's worth. In the morning we had a departure in that we saw no-one but Sir Edward Elgar wielding the baton. It was a rehearsal too in every sense of the word. Sir Edward evidently intends to make this Festival a success if it lays in his power. No detail was too small to explain, and if he did not get just the right shade here or a crisp enough attack there – well, he rehearsed it until he did. Generally speaking though, the second time sufficed.⁵

The critics travelled from across the country to be there. Herbert Thompson in *The Yorkshire Post* reported at greater length:

⁵ Unidentified cutting dated 22 September 1913.

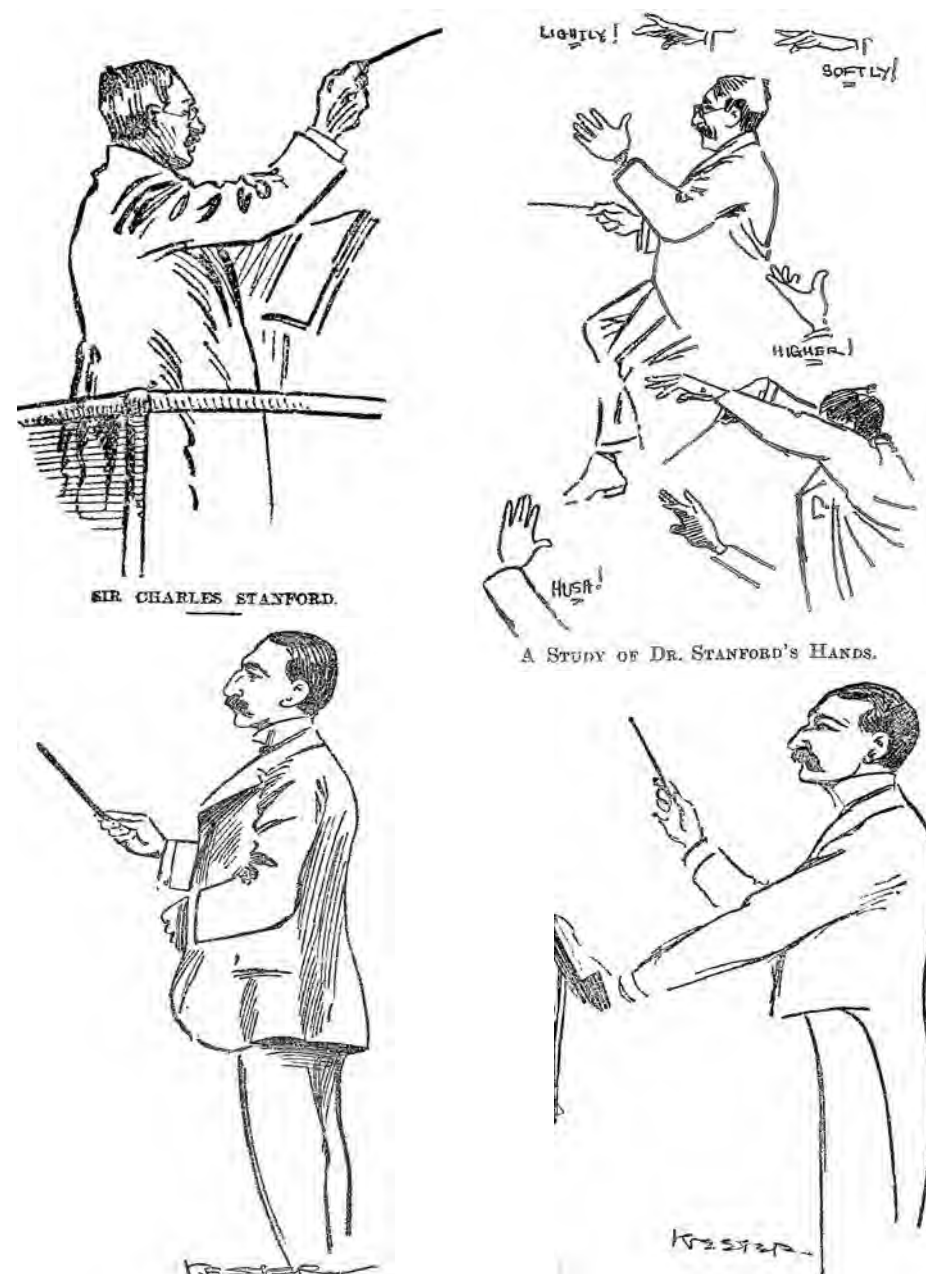


Fig. 13 Stanford (top) and Elgar (bottom) conduct at Leeds, Elgar in 1901 and 1904



Fig. 14 Elgar at Leeds (top and bottom left); Nikisch at Leeds (bottom right)

St Andrews Hall,⁶ a small and comparatively unknown building situated in the heart of the West End of London, resounded to-day to the call of one hundred instruments – and, incidentally, the warning voice of Sir Edward Elgar.

It was the occasion of the first full rehearsal for the Leeds Musical Festival, which opens its doors to the critical public of Yorkshire in Leeds Town Hall on October 1st.

To judge by today's work the critics will find little to criticise, for Sir Edward, the most exacting of conductors, seldom raised his voice in reproof. A little Advice now and again, a little choral effort such as 'Da Dee Da' to an erring trombone, and the rehearsal proceeded quite merrily on its way, unheedful of the music of motor-car and taxi horns as fair shoppers passed into the shopping centre.

The hall itself was one of strange contrasts, its bare walls and broken gas lamps seemed mid-Victorian, but there as cheering sunlight pouring through the glass roof, so the privileged company present forgot the inartistic nature of the building as the violins sighed and shrieked, and the wind instruments lent power or gentleness – as the occasion required – to the new works in hand.

It was a strenuous session for the orchestra of over one hundred – the London Symphony Orchestra slightly augmented. When the rehearsals begin in Leeds on Friday – and until then instrumentalists and soloists are working hard in London – some Yorkshire artists will assist. It will be the first visit of the symphony orchestra to the West Riding. They are coming with a world-wide reputation . . .

To-day's work began with Beethoven's overture 'Leonore' [Leonora No 3] which was played with exquisite exactness and sympathy. The real test was Sir Edward Elgar's symphonic study 'Falstaff'.

This was played twice and occupied nearly two hours in the playing with a breathing space for cigarettes and pipes. 'Falstaff' is a work full of vigour in which every instrument is called into active service. Not one of the instrumentalists had seen the music until they entered the hall this morning, in fact the copies came direct from the printer – so wet with printer's ink that one could have obliterated a B flat.

One suspects that something of the kind did occur, for suddenly Sir Edward held up the rehearsal with the remark to a bassoon player, 'You've dropped a note'.

'Then my part must be wrong, sir', returned the player, and an interval for examination showed that this was so.

This incident and a few others of a like kind were all to disturb the playing. By the time the orchestra had been through 'Falstaff' once they were fully conversant with the sympathies and aspirations of its illustrious composer, who, without praise or blame, calmly supervised from his dais.⁷

6 In Newman Street, Oxford Street. Curiously, St Andrew's Hall was also the location for that shadowy Elgarian occasion, the 'unofficial' London premiere of Part 1 of *The Dream of Gerontius*, presumably with organ accompaniment, with Miss Holland's Choir, on 8 May 1902. Thirty years before, on 24 February 1881 at the same hall, an eleven-year old Henry Wood was the pianist in a concert given by an ensemble in which his father was cellist.

7 *Yorkshire Post*, 22 September 1913.

Another commentator adds to the exactness of the description of the scene, unfortunately also from an unidentified cutting:

The London Symphony Orchestra occupied the area of the hall, the conductor's seat being placed on the platform, and the gallery running round the hall being reserved for a few privileged listeners. The rehearsal commenced at 10 a.m., and Sir Edward Elgar devoted the first half-hour to particular points which he desired emphasised in Beethoven's immortal overture.

Another quarter of an hour was spent trying certain parts of 'Falstaff', which presented exceptional difficulties, the brilliant violin triplet passages in the 'Gadshill' section being one of those selected. Sir Edward Elgar took this quite up to time, and afterwards smilingly asked, 'Any wrong notes?' Another tried-over part was the important theme given to the 'cellos, suggestive of Falstaff's cajoling and persuasive tactics.

After these nibbles at the score, Sir Edward said he would take the work straight through without stopping, but in spite of the wonderful sight-reading of the orchestra, the exceptional difficulties of the part-writing made many stoppages necessary, and it was an hour before Sir Edward shut the score. The work is down again for rehearsal on Thursday morning . . .

To set Elgar's time in Leeds in context it is worth seeing what Alice Elgar wrote in her diary (see overleaf p.44).

The Leeds artists were notably successful in suggesting the feeling of what the musicians looked like on the Leeds platform, and to put our conductors in context I would like to end with sketches of those two quintessentially Elgarian musicians, Muriel Foster (fig. 15) and Fritz Kreisler (fig.16).

Because they largely published in provincial newspapers, the Yorkshire depictions of Elgar and his contemporaries have tended to be overlooked. All too soon those same artists would find themselves documenting an unthinkable war. Their remarkable success for a very few years ensured that, all too fleetingly, they captured the reality of Elgar and the musicians of his time, while at the same time signalling the end of a tradition of journalistic illustration that had lasted for over seventy years.



Fig 15 Muriel Foster (Yorkshire Evening News, 2 October 1913)

Fig. 16 Fritz Kreisler (Yorkshire Evening Post, 6 October 1904)

Fig. 17 Montage of Elgar postcards



September

22 Orchestral parts only arrived this very morning from Germany – Orchestra played straight from them – Very few mistakes & they read wonderfully – Falstaff sounded magnificent & wonderful - audience greatly impressed –

E. jappy about his work - D.G -

23-25 No entries

26 E. to Leeds & John – Started in good spirits – & had good journey – Short rehearsal in Evening.

27 E. had some rehearsal at Leeds – A. busy preparing for Leeds, settling everything in house &c.

28 E. at Leeds – Went out his souse to Ilkley – Lovely sunny day – A. to Dominican Priory Preparing to start next day –

E. pweaked to her on the telephone – very dear –

29 E. at Leeds & had a rehearsal of Gerontius –

A. & C. to Leeds at 11.30 – C. from Hereford. Found E. well. Gott sei Dank. Rooms all nice. E. up to the Rehearsal in the Evening.

30 E.'s rehearsal was to be at 11 – but Nikisch had a cold & E. let him finish first. So E. had only a short time & tired Orchestra. – A. drefful nerves about it -

October

01 The most beautiful performance of 'Gerontius'. Soloists sang as if inspired – E. conducted as if inspired too – Chorus fine most of the time – It a great remembrance – E. to dine with the Professional Musicians – Quite amused. Prof. took A. & C. to Theatre 'Every Woman' Dreadfully dull – came away soon –

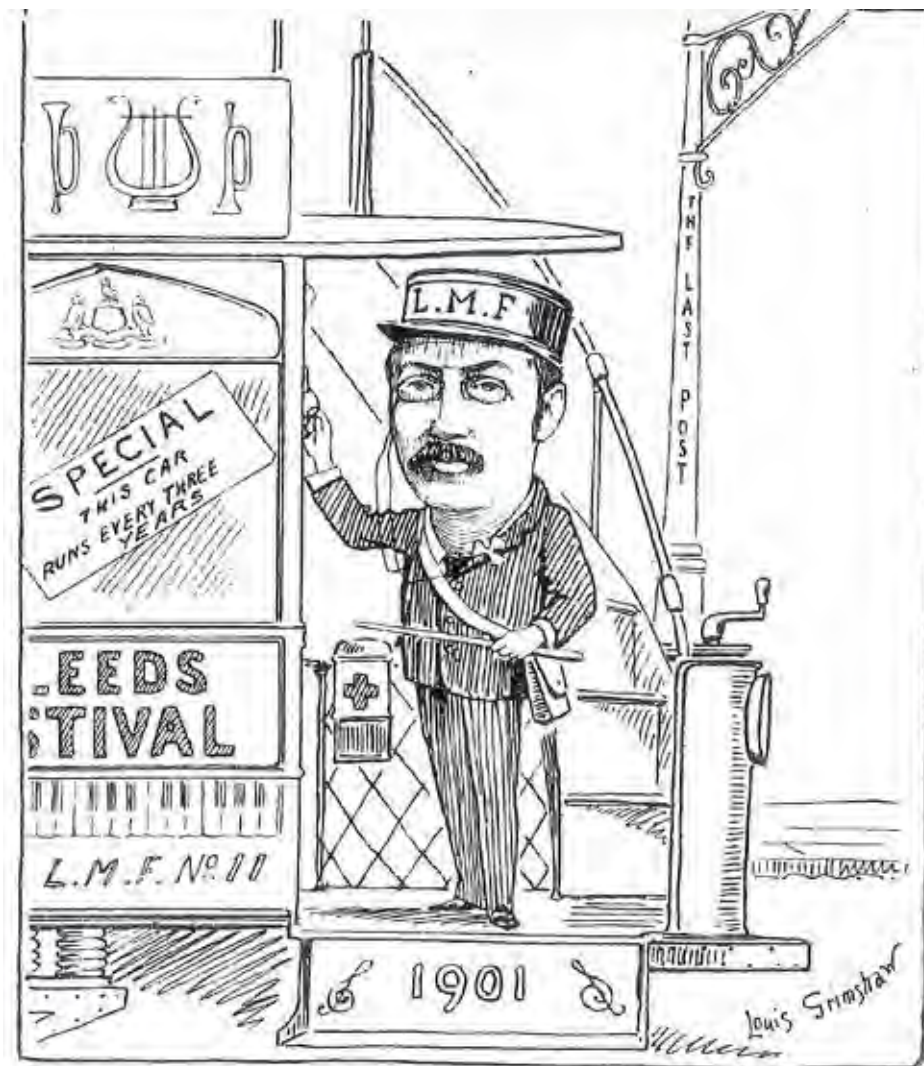
02 A. & C. & Prof. to hear Verdi – Requiem. Very fine – E. & C. & A.S.W. & Clare to Fountains Abbey. lovely. Tea party Miss Donne & friends very nice Dr. Hadow. Ivor. Mr. Reed &c. – L. Ronald sat with A. & C. Mr. Streatfd. to high tea very nice – Then to Concert. E. conducted the Bantock splendidly but it seemed long & dreary. A. had drefful fits of nerve – Then Falstaff. E. rather hurried it & some of the lovely melodies were a little smothered but it made its mark & place. E. changed very depressed after – then to pleasant supper Muriel

03 E. & Muriel to Fountains Abbey, want of Petrol kept them out longer than intended – E. not too tired – A. & C. & Prof. to the Mass – Bach – Falstaff seemed to have made a profound & 'wake-up' impression. Some splendid notices of it, placing it in its right plane as one of the great things. A. & C. to tea with Alice S. W. Alice came in Evening to Metropole - & sat with us –

04 Left Leeds at 2 – Wonderful train & very comserferble journey. Nice talk with Kilburns before starting. I told the Saint some one sd. Falstaff was like turning over a new page in the Hist. of Music. A page. he sd. a whole book!

House very delicious & lovely –

E. decided he would not go for cruise.



THE NEW CONDUCTOR ON THE LEEDS MUSICAL FESTIVAL ROUTE.

With Apologies to Councillor Smithson.

Fig. 18 Stanford took over running the Leeds Festival in 1901; or was it a tram? From the *Souvenir and Guide to the Leeds Musical Festival* (Leeds: John Waddington, 1901)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For the illustrations of the Leeds Festivals 1901-1913 I have to thank Leeds Reference Library and the Leeds Festival scrapbooks which are in their collection. All other photographs and illustrations including those from the Illustrated London News are from the author's collection.

I am most grateful to John Norris for processing some of the pictures from faded originals, and to Martin Bird for the extract from his transcription of Lady Elgar's diary.

LEWIS FOREMAN retired from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in 1997 where he was Chief Librarian. He has published widely on music and musicians. From 1969-1985 he was associated with Leslie Head and the Kensington Symphony Orchestra and Choir, with whom he researched their modern revivals of The Black Knight, King Olaf, and in 1975 'The Imperial Elgar', a concert including the Coronation Ode and, with Alvar Lidell, all three recitations. Dr Foreman devised and edited Oh My Horses! Elgar and the Great War (Elgar Editions, 2001), and he has published a major biography of Bax (Bax: a Composer and his Times, 1983), reissued in 2007 by the Boydell Press. He advises the record companies Dutton Epoch, Classico, Chandos and Hyperion. He is Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the University of Southampton. In 2003 he was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of Trinity College of Music and in 2005 a doctorate by Cardiff University.

BOOK REVIEW

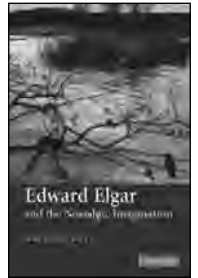
Matthew Riley: *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination*

A recent review of books about Elgar by Hugh Wood castigated many of the musicologists and theorists currently at work studying the music, life, and significance of the composer.¹ One of Wood's complaints was that current books on Elgar do not spend enough time directly discussing the music. At issue here seems to be one of the central arguments within the discipline of musicology itself, whether

music has its own meaning, independent of the context in which it is created, performed and heard, or whether it is inevitably socially embedded and cannot be fully understood outside these contexts; whether its meaning results from a certain kind of intentionality mutually understood by the creator and perceiver, and whether it is principally an attribute of the mind, a product of cognitive responses to sound and/or bodily ones.²

What is the point of musicological study? Is it to bear down upon the notes and life of the individual in the belief that anything else is distracting and not relevant, or is it to use social, cultural and historical context to suggest why the composer and music might be relevant not only in his own time, but still today?

Matthew Riley clearly walks this second path, and within *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* he examines the major interpretative issues surrounding Elgar's reception both within his own time and today, all through the lens of nostalgia. Riley discusses issues by now entirely familiar to the reader of recent Elgar literature, including how and whether to apply the rubric 'imperialism' to Elgar's music, what explicit connection (if any) Elgar's music has to the landscape, whether or not Elgar and his music were somehow ineffably English, and so on. Like J.P.E. Harper-Scott's recent *Edward Elgar: Modernist*, Riley's monograph provides fresh insight into these issues; it is a mature work, a book that could only have been written after a great deal of



Cambridge:
Cambridge
University Press,
2007; ISBN
9780521863612
£50

1 Hugh Wood, 'The Hopes and Glories of Edward Elgar: How Historians, Philosophers, Modernists, Musicologists – and Musicians – Have Celebrated Elgar's Work', in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 March 2008. [See also the Editorial. Ed.]

2 Vincent Duckles, et al. 'Musicology', in *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/46710pg1> (accessed September 20, 2008).

fruitful biographical and analytical discussion on Elgar had already taken place. Through a dialogue with this previous body of work, Riley wants us to understand how we as listeners, enthusiasts, and scholars have constructed Elgar over the last century. Within this grand endeavour is an attempt, like Harper-Scott's, to lift Elgar out of insular discussion and place his music, his life, and reaction to both onto a wider plane of importance. Riley wants us to discover why Elgar's music still has the power to 'move and compel' (p. 198). He clearly loves Elgar's music – but fears not a little what society has done with Elgar in the process.

Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination is a volume that only a British author could have written. With several more decades of work, a non-British writer might have been able to muster the many high-, low-, and middle-brow cultural references to Elgar Riley unpacks for his reader here, but I doubt it would have come off as fluently. The great amount of cultural response to Elgar that Riley identifies includes paintings, novels, plays, heritage tourism, popular history, and the Elgar Society. Throughout, his critical lens spares no idea or archetype, even those by the current group of music theorists and musicologists. He is fully aware of all the recent discussions on Elgar by figures familiar to readers of this Journal, but he is quick to acknowledge the work of other scholars, even when he does not agree with their views.

By no means, though, is the book entirely about context: Riley starts from the stylistic and rhetorical methods at work inside Elgar's music, and moves forward to reveal how these devices have been interpreted and reinterpreted so that others may use Elgar for their own ends, be they positive and affirming or castigating. In most cases, Riley presents multiple viewpoints, and while it can be difficult at times to tease out his own opinions and interpretation, the journey itself is always rewarding. Typical is Chapter 5, where Riley discusses the idea of 'childhood' in relation to Elgar. Riley's starting point is the trope of the Romantic Child, which Elgar would have known, including the idea that the 'child possesses a keen imaginative faculty and a special affinity with nature' (p. 118), and that before coming to success as an adult, the child has to suffer hardships (p. 120). Riley shows how such ideas of childhood detrimentally suffuse Jerrold Northrop Moore's *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* and the more recent *Edward Elgar: Child of Dreams* (because they lead to over-simplification of the composer's work and biography), as well as how these ideas have crept into the discourse about Jacqueline du Pré as an eternal child. Riley notes that Elgar used this construction to create biographical myths of the old wanderer always seeking a way back to an idealized childhood, and identifies specific passages within the first symphony and *The Dream of Gerontius* that rhetorically present ideas of childhood. Each chapter is as rich and wide-ranging.

There are times, though, within *Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination* when the informational overload moves from engaging to an avalanche. In his larger arguments about imperialism and English identity within chapter 6, Riley discusses passages from both *King Olaf* and *Caractacus* that show use of what he identifies as the 'grand' imperial idiom, but that do so for entirely differing ends within the plot: in *King Olaf*, the idiom is employed not for the hero of the story, but the wraith of Odin; in *Caractacus*, it is used to draw a parallel between the Roman Empire and the British Empire. Within this description, he begins a nuanced discussion of the Boer War and how some British writers applied 'traditional' English values such as 'independence, fortitude, simplicity of living, a love of home and liberty, an obstinate resistance to outside interference, a small community ethos, and above all, ties to the land' (p. 165) to the Boers, in an attempt to protest against the war and its associated costs. At first, this seems to be leading up to a direct response to Bernard Porter's 'Elgar and Empire: Music Nationalism and the War', which used the Boer War as an attempt to refute any imperialistic taint in Elgar.³ Instead, Riley's link back to Elgar is by noting that '... the sympathizers' discourse shows clearly how at the turn of the century an imperialist venture could be appropriated as the stage for a conceptual confrontation between two aspects of Englishness', following immediately with a note that a similar 'confrontation' occurs at the end of *Caractacus* (p. 165). This is a tenuous connection at best, and though the information on various responses to the Boers seen through the lens of English identity is interesting, the rhetoric here is not as strong as one might like.

Finally, is this book for everyone? For the reader with a background in musical analysis, Riley's book is a welcome relief to the typical separation of context or biography from the musical notes themselves. He seamlessly moves from his discussions about art, literature, and aesthetics into the meat of how Elgar's musical-rhetorical gestures work, be they evocations of nobility, memory, ghosts, or nature. This he holds in common with Harper-Scott. Both begin within the music, and work from it to its broader contexts. For readers unschooled in musical analysis, however, Riley's work – especially in the earlier chapters, which include more hard analysis than the later ones – will present some difficulties. What I read as a closely integrated discussion may seem to others like a whipsaw from elegant prose into dense technicalities. There are moments when the seemingly offhand presentation of technical assumptions without explanation (e.g. the comment on p. 158 that G minor was 'Elgar's key of mystery') may baffle. But Riley obviously meant this

3 Bernard Porter, 'Elgar and Empire: Music Nationalism and the War.' In Lewis Foreman (ed.), *Oh, My Horses! Elgar and the Great War* (Rickmansworth: Elgar Editions, 2001), 133-173.

book to appeal beyond musicologists, and most of his analytical passages are presented in a narrative format, fluidly illuminated by a generous use of musical examples. Those who look for a discussion of Elgar's music as simply 'great' and worthy of discussion for that reason alone will not find it here. Instead, Riley presents a thorough, provocative, and ultimately satisfying volume for those who believe music to be something beyond mere notes – something at turns nostalgic and complicated, but wonderful indeed.

Charles Edward McGuire

Charles Edward McGuire is an Associate Professor of Musicology at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music in the United States. He is the author of Elgar's Oratorios: The Creation of an Epic Narrative, and his articles on Elgar and reviews of Elgar events have been published in this Journal, as well as 19th-Century Music, The Best of Me, The Cambridge Companion to Elgar, Elgar Studies, and Elgar and His World. Aside from Elgar, he has published on Vaughan Williams, has a book forthcoming from Cambridge University Press on the Tonic Sol-fa Movement entitled Music and Philanthropy, and is currently at work on a history of music festivals – charity, civic, and competitive – in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

CD REVIEWS

Part-Songs

Cambridge University Chamber Choir, Iain Farrington (piano),
conducted by Christopher Robinson



Naxos 8.570541

Contents: 1-4: Four Part-songs, Op. 53 ('There is Sweet Music', 'Deep in my Soul', 'O wild West Wind', and 'Owls'); 5: 'As Torrents in Summer' (*King Olaf*); 6: 'The Prince of Sleep'; 7-8: Two Part-songs, Op. 71 ('The Shower' and 'The Fountain'); 9: 'My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land'; 10: 'Death on the Hills'; 11-12: Two Part-songs, Op. 73 ('Love's Tempest' and 'Serenade'); 13: 'Evening Scene'; 14: 'Go, Song of Mine'; 15-20: *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*

Elgar's part-songs have long been recognized as among his finest writing for voices, so it is nothing short of scandalous that there are so few commercial recordings of them. A quick search on Amazon reveals only one disc devoted entirely to these works (the fine recording made by the Finzi Singers for Chandos) and only a handful of others that feature any of the songs (usually 'Go, Song of Mine' or 'My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land'). The Cambridge University Chamber Choir's new disc is thus a most welcome addition to the market. There are some omissions, notably the five Greek Anthology songs ('The Reveille' and 'Weary Wind of the West'), while 'My Love' is the only song included from the Op. 18 set. But Elgar's most significant contributions to the genre are all present, and almost without exception they are very well sung. Beautifully balanced, and capable, when required, of evoking both grandeur and intimacy, this is a most impressive disc.

The recording begins with the four Op. 53 songs, pieces which in different ways explore the process of artistic creativity. The choir captures the intensity and urgency of this process with singing that is rich (both in 'There is Sweet Music' and in 'Deep in my Soul', especially its opening bars), well-balanced – countermelodies, such as those for soprano and tenor at the words 'If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?' in 'O Wild West Wind!', are brought out clearly – and full of timbral variety. Particularly fine is the performance of 'Owls', Elgar's setting of his own poetry; impressively eerie throughout, and the dying away of the final 'Nothing' is very well controlled. Good dynamic control is also a feature of the two songs that follow the Op. 53 set: 'As Torrents in Summer' from *King Olaf*, and 'The Prince of Sleep'. The reprise of the latter's opening stanza has, in this performance, a veiled, almost elusive quality that recalls the end of *Dream Children*. Once again, interesting melodic lines

among the inner parts are brought out clearly.

The two settings of Henry Vaughan poems, 'The Shower' and 'The Fountain', are less successful, although only marginally so. The former occasionally feels slightly fast (a fact perhaps exacerbated by the sibilant consonants of the text); the latter has no shortage of shades of colour, but doesn't capture the poignancy of the closing couplet ('And on the dumb shades language spent / The music of her tears') quite as effectively as the Finzis do. But 'My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land', which follows the Vaughan songs, is very fine; the accompaniment of the second stanza throbs hypnotically, and the relatively restrained use of vibrato conjures up the sense of distance, both geographical and temporal, implicit in the text. Similarly excellent is 'Death on the Hills', where the contrast between the virtually vibrato-less old folk and the vibratissimo Death is suitably chilling (although, as with 'The Fountain', perhaps not quite as intense as in the Finzi Singers' recording).

A feature of many of the songs on this disc is the strength of the male singing, particularly in very low registers. Elgar's occasional sub-bass-clef writing provides no difficulties for the basses of the Cambridge choir. A good example is the opening of the first of the two Op. 73 songs, 'Love's Tempest', whose low E-flat minor and G-flat major chords are particularly well-suited to the echoing acoustic of Jesus College chapel, where the recording took place. Unfortunately, this wonderfully atmospheric start isn't complemented by the 'roaring, seething billows' that follow; the tempo isn't fast enough to convey the necessary sense of danger. But the other Op. 73 song, 'Serenade', contains some nice changes of colour, as does 'Evening Scene', though here again I felt that the tempo wasn't quite right; a slightly faster speed would have allowed the music to flow more easily.

The unaccompanied part-songs on the disc end with 'Go, Song of Mine', arguably Elgar's greatest work in the genre. If not quite as dramatic as the Finzis' ecstatic interpretation of the piece, particularly in the central 'To seek its Maker at the heav'nly shrine', this is still a very fine performance: the tenors' solos ('Go, song of mine' and 'Say how his life began'), are wonderfully mournful, especially when they are sung in the reprise against the thick background web of sound created by the choir's female voices and basses. Listening to the song again, I was struck by how it contains so many of the tensions found within Elgar's oeuvre as a whole. The world-weary nihilism that becomes a feature of the later works here frames the idealistic, world-transcending language of the great oratorios in the central section; is it mere coincidence that 'To seek its Maker at the heav'nly shrine' should be in the same D major key that ends *Gerontius*?

The disc ends with the six songs that comprise *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands*, on this occasion with the original piano

accompaniment (played by Iain Farrington) rather than Elgar's orchestral version. There is very little that can be faulted here: the singing is crisp and (where appropriate) elegant, the diction is always clear, and Farrington's accompaniment is excellent. Yet, insofar as these things still matter in the age of the iPod, I wonder whether it might have made more sense to begin, rather than end, with these songs; they are light, early works, and their appearance immediately after 'Go, Song of Mine' feels like too sudden a shift in mood.

This recording has very few weaknesses. Occasionally, especially in the early tracks, the words aren't always as clear as they might be, and, as noted above, some of the most dramatic songs could have had more vitality. But the singing is always atmospheric, the phrases well crafted, and the changes of colour most apposite. For an introduction to Elgar's part-songs, at budget price, this disc will be very hard to beat.

Aidan Thomson

Der Traum des Gerontius

Julius Patzak, Ira Malaniuk, Ludwig Welter, Austrian Radio Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by Hans Swarowsky

The reason for rejoicing in this new addition to the Elgar discography is also, paradoxically, a serious obstacle to enjoying it: the German language. Germany was where *Gerontius* had its first success, after the trauma of Birmingham, and where Richard Strauss made his famous declaration. But when you have had the English words in your head most of your life, and Elgar's setting of them, with that wonderful ear for English speech-rhythms that he had, is embedded in your inmost being, how can you reconcile yourself to hearing not 'It is a member of that family of wondrous beings', but 'Ein Glied wohl ist's aus jener sel'gen Schaar von Wunderwesen', however eloquent that may be in its own right?

That said, the issue of this 1960 recording is a reason for rejoicing. Julius Patzak, 62 years old at the time, may not be one's ideal *Gerontius*, but he and his colleagues, Ira Malaniuk, and Ludwig Welter (a very fine Angel of the Agony), and the Austrian Radio Chorus and Orchestra, sing and play with what is manifestly a complete belief in the work. Their conviction, transcending the stumbling-block (for an English listener) of the language, shows that there is surely no intrinsic cause why Elgar's music shouldn't be understood and adopted in German-speaking countries. It only needs conductors with the desire and the will to promote it, conductors who respond to it – as Hans Swarowsky evidently did.

Michael Kennedy remarks in the booklet that Swarowsky was no champion of Elgar during the time he spent with the Scottish National Orchestra, just before he made this recording. Yet, from the Prelude onwards, he conducts *Gerontius* with the sympathy



EECD 006-7

and flair of a true Elgarian. The intricate and constantly changing dynamic markings are scrupulously observed, within a strong natural flow. His handling of the long build-up to the final climax of the great 'Praise to the Holiest' double chorus – particularly difficult to get right – seems to me masterly. May this welcome issue lead to others and revive Elgar's fortunes in the lands where he was once celebrated.

David Cairns



The Apostles

Bibi Heal, Julia Batchelor, Robert Carlin, Michael Bundy, Peter Savidge, Graeme Danby, Hertfordshire Chorus, Girls from Hertfordshire County Youth Choir, Forest Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by David Temple. (2 CDs)¹

Last February 'Elgar in Performance' sponsored this rendering of *The Apostles* in St Albans Abbey. As I was unable to go, the Chorus Chairman very kindly sent me this CD recording. I was not over-enthusiastic about this gesture, as I have heard several live recordings that I do not wish to hear again. But this is very different. Within a minute of the opening, the rich orchestral sonorities, with the added depth of the organ, had me sitting up in pleasurable amazement. This is a fully professional sound quality, and soloists, choir and orchestra are caught in a totally natural ambience. A few bronchial coughers are all that point to it being a live recording. The performance is splendid, although a minor quibble is that the oboes and cor anglais are obviously within the orchestra in the opening 'In the Mountain' section, instead of at a distance, as specified by Elgar. No doubt logistical problems of movement in the Abbey precluded following his instructions. But the following Dawn, which 'reacheth even unto Hebron', is magnificent, with the chorus tenors singing out exultantly. In fact the tenor section is splendid throughout, and how often can one say that nowadays? The chorus is generally very fine, with clear diction and crisp attack, and the sound is quite overwhelming in the great climaxes, as for example in the lead up to Fig. 117.

The soloists acquit themselves well, and I particularly liked the clear, radiant tone of the soprano, Bibi Heal, who sings with great understanding of Elgar's demands. The mezzo Julia Batchelor has a firmly focused tone with no plummy quality, and brings off the difficult part of Mary Magdalene well. Even the strenuous demands of the 'Tempest' scene are well captured by the recording, with the soloist never submerged in the welter of sound. I am afraid I did not like the quality of the tenor soloist's voice, although Robert Carlin does sing musically. Of the three baritones/basses I liked Jesus and

1 The CDs are available from the Chorus Chairman; please send an e-mail to chairman@hertfordshirechorus.org.uk

St Peter (the sleeve information does not identify which singer takes which part). The Judas does not have a black enough voice for my liking, although his great final monologue is dramatically given. David Temple, the conductor, obviously loves and believes in the work, and it shows. The score is paced to perfection, and he has clearly inspired his chorus and orchestra to give of their best.

This is a fine complement to the recordings by Boult and Hickox, and where it gains is in the sense of being a live performance, with the added *frisson* that gives. The build-up to the final Ascension scene, Elgar's most complex and elaborate ensemble, is one of the finest I have heard. For contractual reasons this recording is not available commercially, but Elgarians can obtain it from the email address given in the footnote. I strongly recommend those who love this mighty work to hear it.

Barry Collett

Elgar/Payne Third Symphony; Pomp & Circumstance March No. 6

Sapporo Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Tadaaki Otaka



As I write, the railway world is celebrating the completion of 'Tornado', the first large express-passenger steam locomotive (full-size) to be built in Britain for more than 50 years. An exercise in nostalgia? A quixotic gesture of defiance towards the march of progress? Yet 'Tornado' is not a toy. It may have been designed 60 years ago, but it will (given the chance) pull twelve carriages at 90 m.p.h. In the same way, ten years on from its memorable premiere – I was there – 'Elgar's Third' has proved itself no mere act of homage or respectful performing edition, but a living, vital piece of musical machinery, overflowing with excitement, surprises, memorable themes and haunting Elgarian moments.

Now it has been recorded again, by the Sapporo Symphony orchestra, which gave the Japanese premiere in 2004 under its distinguished Japanese conductor, Tadaaki Otaka. He is well known in this country and round the world; he has long been associated with the orchestra; and he is a particular friend of ours, for he holds the Elgar Society Medal for championing Elgar's music. Sapporo itself is the principal city of Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan. Its orchestra is a fully professional body, founded in 1961. It plays and records in its own modern concert hall, where the acoustics are said to be ideal: clear but not dry, warm but not over-reverberant. The orchestra toured the United Kingdom in 2001, and it maintains a busy schedule at home. Western 'classical' music has long been honoured in Japan, right back to the pre-war days when it was Japanese subscribers who made it possible for HMV to embark on a series of first recordings of the songs of Hugo Wolf.

This new recording has been carefully prepared and balanced. It is beautifully played in authentic Elgarian style, complete with the growling brass I always enjoy. Its particular strength is Otaka's attention

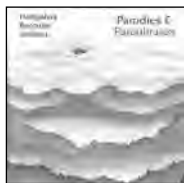
Signum Classics
SIGCD 118

to the architecture of the movements; the material is presented with inevitability and logic, and the conductor does not, like some, make heavy weather of the Adagio. 'Elgar's Third' is made up (according to Elgar's own methods) from sketches and other works from a variety of periods; after compiling three substantial movements, I understand that Anthony Payne took the decision to foreshorten the Scherzo. Otaka, like the other conductors I have heard, does not really succeed here; the movement seems too lightweight in its context and peters out, but that is really down to Payne. How would Sir Adrian Boult have conducted the symphony, I wonder? Something like this, I fancy, though I doubt he would have approved of the 'elaboration' in the first place. Otaka's reading may lack the absolute last ounce of excitement, but he does not miss his climaxes and the chances for telling, idiomatic rubato where they occur, so that the overall picture emerges with satisfying clarity and grandeur.

The CD is furnished with helpful notes, some of them in 'Japanese English'. It is nicely presented and the programme is usefully completed with Anthony Payne's version of the sketches for the *Sixth Pomp and Circumstance* March. When I heard the broadcast premiere in 2006 I found it diffuse and hard to follow. This might, however, have something to do with an ailment of certain Elgar premieres, where things could have gone better if those concerned (despite rehearsal) had had a better idea of how the music should 'go'; I am thinking of the *Gerontius* fiasco, *Falstaff* ('I couldn't make head nor tail of it', said Landon Ronald, the dedicatee), and the Cello Concerto, the very first recording of which (by Beatrice Harrison, conducted by Elgar, but abridged) betrays a certain unfamiliarity among all concerned – which is not the same as not knowing the notes. No such problems here: Otaka secures an idiomatic and exciting performance. I would add that the music now seems a very good fit with the other marches and, like the Second and Third, it offers a useful contrast, should anyone propose to perform Op. 39 as a set.

All praise then to the enterprise and achievement of Tadaaki Otaka and his fine orchestra, together with Signum Classics: however, the real hero is once again Anthony Payne, who revealed a complete, new, late-romantic symphony and made it possible for me to attend a real, sold-out Elgar premiere. I wonder if he likes trains ...

Michael Plant



Dinmore records
DRD 098

'Parodies and Paraphrases'

Hampshire Recorder Sinfonia, conducted by Christopher Burgess and Helen Hooker

Contents include: Elgar ('Nimrod' (arr. Denis Bloodworth), *Une Idylle* Op. 4 no. 1 (arr. Helen Hooker), *Contrasts: the Gavotte AD 1700 and 1900* (arr. Denis Bloodworth); other works by Giuseppe Sammartini; James Paisible (paraphrased by David Gordon); Ian Schofield; Colin Hand; Dennis Bamforth; Glenn Miller (arr. Bloodworth); Paul Clark

Transcriptions are in vogue, even though they no longer serve the practical purpose they had in an earlier era that lacked recordings. Nowadays, they may have another no less laudable intent: to supply music to those who want to play the stuff. Of course we all like playing music as originally conceived, but sometimes there simply isn't enough, or not enough that feels good enough to make it worth while to gather players together – not to mention, where necessary, a conductor. Thus I have played with pleasure transcriptions for wind ensemble of Elgar's *Serenade* and his *Organ Sonata*, the latter something of a revelation. In part this is because Elgar's richly textured music benefits from being heard on a heterogeneous ensemble (I do not apologise for preferring the orchestral to the brass band *Severn Suite*). An endearing element of the present recording is that its entertaining, and informative insert notes admit that the transcriptions, like Karg-Elert's or indeed Elgar's own for piano, are for a homogeneous ensemble, making no spurious claims for authenticity.

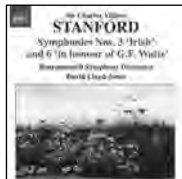
The recorder ensemble may be an acquired taste. Undoubtedly there is a lot of skilful playing here, and a fair balance; I was expecting the bass register to sound weaker than in fact it does. If all this pure tone leaves you sighing for oboes and bassoons, however, this CD may not be for you. What does it do for Elgar – and for the Elgar Society, which contributed funds, gratefully acknowledged, to support this recording?

Christopher Burgess's note alludes to 'a paraphrase of [Elgar's] characteristic orchestral timbres, freely rendered into the monochromatic texture of the late twentieth-century medium of an orchestra of recorders'. The sound is not far from the flute stops of a baroque organ, but with more capacity to breathe musically, bounce rhythmically, and bend the pitch to improve intonation (though there are moments on this recording where this isn't done enough, bending being mainly confined to the jazzier pieces in the selection). It works best in the early 18th-century music (Sammartini) and, where Elgar is concerned, in the 'Gavotte: 1700'. Regrettably the 1900 Gavotte, chronologically near the Dolmetsch recorder revival, sounds a bit of a scramble in the middle parts; and if the bounce is more than an organ's would be, it is a lot less than an orchestra's. *Une Idylle*, arranged and directed by Helen Hooker who is the soloist in the Sammartini concerto, works neatly enough because the original is relatively homogeneous anyway.

That was the sugar; now for the pill. The first time I recall hearing 'Nimrod' was at a school concert, played on the piano by a boy whom I won't name, as he subsequently became a distinguished arts administrator. For some reason I still remember what the critic (and fellow student) said about this performance in the school magazine: he played it too much like a series of chords rather than – and here I am on my own – an unfolding structure with a melody atop the chords, and directional flow of harmony. That's not quite

the problem here; the recorder is after all a melodic instrument. But this version serves mainly to emphasize that certain musical elements, notably tempo and dynamics, including dynamic range, are integral to Elgar's thought, and to the glorious effect of his music on an orchestra. These elements the recorder ensemble, through no fault of its own, simply cannot reproduce. It is hardly unfair to say that the dynamics range from *p* to *mp*, although a lovely *pp* is obtained at the end of *Une Idylle*. Thus it's a miniaturized 'Nimrod', further reduced by a tempo faster than Elgar's marking (which in turn is faster than his recordings). The ensemble continues to sound somewhat like a Baroque organ, but this is not the Elgarian pseudo-baroque of the Gavotte, c. 1700. With instruments that (unlike the organ) actually can breathe, it is perhaps a mistake to pretend they don't need to; there is space for a good deal more musical articulation. Such things as *sforzando* and *rinforzando* simply don't exist and the pulse in 'Nimrod' is monotonously regular. I entirely agree with Christopher Burgess's observation that 'The late English romanticism of Sir Edward Elgar does not immediately spring to mind as material for recorder players'. And I still wonder why it sprang there at all. I can recommend this CD for the recorder buff, but only for the most masochistic Elgarian.

Julian Rushton



Naxos
8.570355

Stanford: Symphony No. 3 (Irish) and Symphony No. 6 (In honour of the life-work of a great artist: George Frederick Watts)

It has been my privilege during the past year to review most of Stanford's seven symphonies in the series released on the Naxos label, with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by David Lloyd-Jones. This latest CD contains, in my view, the best of the seven Stanford symphonies; and this is not the very well known *Irish Symphony* (No. 3) but the much less known *Symphony No. 6 – In honour of the life-work of a great artist: George Frederick Watts*. Ignoring, for a moment, the cumbersome if touching subtitle, I regard this symphony – which, unsurprisingly, I had not heard before – as a very fine piece indeed. I say 'unsurprisingly' because the symphony, composed quickly in the spring of 1905, had its premiere in London on 18 January 1906, and then only one more performance before succumbing to an eighty-year oblivion. With this fine recording, it may be hoped that it will obtain a more secure place in the repertoire. Certainly I am so impressed with the work that I shall be conducting a performance of it next year with my symphony orchestra.

The subtitle is important: George Frederick Watts (1817-1904) was among the most popular of British artists of the Victorian era, becoming famous in his lifetime for a series of allegorical works,

such as *Hope*. Stanford's work was influenced by Watt's legacy, though it is not programmatic.

The first movement begins with a rhythmically ingenious and energetic theme. There is no relaxation for the second theme, though it is more expressive. The music fairly bustles along in its celebratory exuberance. Lower brass are prominent at the start of development and are followed by a sweetly dissonant climax. A softer passage follows, featuring wind soloists and then a striking violin solo passage which leads to the recapitulation. From here the music heads energetically to an emphatic close. Stanford, renowned for his irascibility, here appears in a most genial guise, almost likable! The second movement has the kind of melody which is redolent of English landscape, summer and nostalgia. Played by the cor anglais, with echo phrases on the clarinet, it is beautifully haunting and recommends the symphony for this reason alone, were there not so many other joys. It is taken up by the strings and then returned to the cor anglais. The central section begins with a rather more menacing passage for brass, whose main motif is aggressively developed and imitated. Woodwind and harp then return to a calmer mood. The brass will not let go, however, and their menace returns from time to time, eventually leading to a powerful climax and a change of key which enables the opening theme to return, this time played by the strings. The movement winds its way to a peaceful close. This movement has already become one of my favourite slow movements. After its fourteen minutes of lyrical outpouring, the third movement is relatively brief. Scherzo and trio are interlinked by using the same thematic material, the scherzo emphasising its more rhythmical aspects, the trio its more lyrical ones. It is also linked to the last movement by way of a transition passage which gradually gains in strength and solidity until the main theme of this movement is ushered in by brass and timpani. It has the air of a march, not unheroic in mood. A brief reference to the main theme of the slow movement leads to a quickening of the pace, a triumphant return of the march theme, and a strenuous and exciting development. After calming down, the music reintroduces the march theme, with a passing reference to the menacing theme from the slow movement. A triumphant ending is apparently on its way. But Stanford has a surprise up his compositional sleeve: the movement winds down to a solemn close, with the slow movement music ending the work in subdued, though affirmative, manner.

This is a fine work – and a fine tribute. It has distinctive themes which are well handled and strikingly orchestrated, a mood of quiet optimism infused with some joy and some regret. Its disappearance from the repertory for 80 years is inexplicable but demonstrates how fickle is musical fashion.

Stanford's Third Symphony is much better known. Completed in 1887 and given its premiere in London on 27 June 1887, it enjoyed

immediate and widespread success. The *Irish* subtitle indicates its frequent use of folk-tunes as musical material. Beginning ruminatively, the first movement soon rises to a stern climax. A second theme is equally ruminative, and is marked by some delicate woodwind solos. It is only with the development that the air of somnolence gives way to something more positive. Indeed, parts of this section strike a note of urgency not found in the exposition. Things now become more vital before calming down and leading into the recapitulation. Here the two subjects are less introverted in scoring than before. A brief surge of excitement in the coda leads to an ending of calm fulfilment. With the arrival of the second movement, the music gets up and dances: an ebullient jig leads us all in a merry caper. The trio section is more overtly melodic, indicating a point of repose, but references to the jig rhythm (listen out for the timpani here!) imply that the dance is still going on even if some of us are resting. After a time we join in the caper again, the movement ending with a feeling of self-congratulation at the energy expended. A harp cadenza, with woodwind comments, starts the slow movement in reflective mood. It is redolent of Wagner's *Forest Murmurs* (though I am not sure that Stanford would thank me for saying so). A very Brahmsian (that's better!) melody then unfolds at some length. Rising eventually to a climax, the music becomes more rhythmic and strenuous before returning to the earlier mood and finally the initial harp cadenza. It is a beautiful movement. The finale, after some preparatory music, sets off with a dogged first theme. This is followed by a chorale-like melody as second subject. The development starts quietly with the first theme before the chorale is sounded on the trumpets, to an accompaniment of strings and timpani. This section is deliciously scored. The recapitulation begins emphatically with the first subject followed by a rather quieter repeat of the chorale melody, the latter stages of which are, however, interspersed with horn calls which lead to a lengthy coda section. The chorale now appears in full brass attire taking the music to a proud and victorious conclusion.

With only one symphony – the first – to go, this series of Stanford's symphonies is now nearly complete.² These works are all beautifully crafted, skilfully orchestrated and show a secure control of the classical structures. I shall listen to them often – and to Symphony No. 6 very often. The performances are very fine, with many solos beautifully played by members of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. David Lloyd-Jones's direction is secure, the CD notes informative. Our congratulations go to Naxos for yet again resurrecting music which has unfortunately gone somewhat out of fashion but which will bear repeated listening.

Paul Adrian Rooke

2 The First Symphony has just been published (Naxos 8.570356), and a review should appear in the next issue of the Journal [ed.].

LETTERS

From Denis Bloodworth

May I congratulate the Society on the publication of *2007: The Year of Elgar?* It is a most interesting and well produced compilation and deserves to be in every Elgarian's library. I have only one observation, on p. 59, concerning the performances by the German Amateur Orchestra. The Vaughan Williams *Folk Song Suite* was originally for wind band, and this performance must have been of the orchestral version by Gordon Jacob. I am not quite sure what they mean by the Holst Suite in A flat. I assume this the *Moorside Suite* originally for Brass Band, and it too must be in an orchestral arrangement, which I believe was also by Gordon Jacob.

From David Bury

I was interested in your observations (Editorial, July 2008) about Elgar and hymn tunes. I have a letter from Elgar to Arthur Poyser, which I have never seen published nor referred to at any time. It reads:

Severn House
42, Netherhall Gardens
Hampstead, N.W.

April 21: 1913

I am sorry for the delay in replying to your letter of March 29th.

I fear I have no knowledge – that is to say in any way useful knowledge – of Hymns any practical connection with them ceased long ago & I can be of no service to you in compiling your book for the Scouts. I do hope you will proceed & the book will be a great success.

A clear enough rejoinder to an approach made by Poyser, who, perhaps, was fortunate to receive a direct answer from Edward rather than Alice to whom such chores were often delegated. I have never engaged in research into this correspondence and cannot say, therefore, if Elgar had been asked to provide a tune or, Vaughan Williams-like, to edit the book! I have, however, long felt that Elgar should have been much in favour of scouting for boys, whereas, in fact, the name of his great and exact (born 1857) contemporary Robert Baden-Powell appears quite absent from Elgarian literature.

Julian Rushton responds:

I am grateful for this information. In the editorial I alluded to Elgar's professed dislike of hymn tunes, and his probably actual, but distant and unwelcome, memory of having worked with them (a 'practical connection') in his violin teaching days. Without actually confirming these points, I am relieved that his letter does nothing

to contradict them! Presumably this is the Arthur Poyser who had already published *The Scout Song Book: A Collection of one hundred Songs of the Open Air* (London: C.A. Pearson, 1912). If so he may himself have been a composer, but was he the Arthur T. Poyser who wrote about cycling and the roads of Britain – books that might have interested Elgar more?¹

From Christopher Kent

Nalini Ghuman is right in saying that *Elgar: An Anniversary Portrait* (Continuum, 2007) shows signs of being ‘an editorless volume’. As a contributor, I received no proofs, nor was I informed of the publication of the volume. However, your reviewer is wrong in her assumption that my chapter ‘may have been cut up from a larger piece of work’. It is significant that Dr Ghuman fails to mention materials from my recent research which relate to the *Serenade for Strings* (MS recently acquired by the Elgar Birthplace Museum) and *The Kingdom* (from an unpublished lecture to the London Branch of the Elgar Society in 2006). For an alternative view of this chapter I refer your readers to Hugh Wood’s assessment: ‘This is genuine musicology inhabiting its proper province’ (*Times Literary Supplement*, 21 March 2008, No.5477, p. 3).

From R.P. Taylor

I do not understand why there are arguments about whether Elgar was a nationalist composer (or whether he sounds English). I was taught that nationalist composers are those whose style was inspired chiefly by the folk-music of their own country: Borodin, not Chaikovsky; Vaughan Williams, not Elgar. That seems simple enough; useful too. Composers come in all shapes and sizes. Some lean on five-bar gates; some drink vodka. Some are happily married; others would like to be. They may be well-read (which cuts out Haydn). They may be modest (which cuts out Wagner). They are ill-tempered and embittered; sociable and mad about country dancing. It may be that the majority are cosmopolitan. A fair number have strong views about justice, and very likely die disappointed. One or two may have lived logically, but no-one will have heard of them.

It happens that Dvořák, whom I shall call an insular cosmopolitan, is one of my favourite composers, especially his Sixth and Seventh Symphonies. Not long ago in the interval of a concert, looking forward to the Seventh, somebody who must have though I looked sympathetic (how wrong can you get?) drew me into conversation at informed me, rightly or wrongly, that it was inspired, at least in part, by Czech nationalism. What was I supposed to do? Go off it because I am not a Czech? Most definitely not. For one thing, politics, interesting though they may be, cannot be expressed in music; for another, I like a bit of aspiration and triumph, and music does them very well.

So although I have not a smidgeon of faith in the Common Man, I do not see why that should deter me from listening to Copland. And whereas Elgar does not

¹ Information from Google and the British Library Catalogue which, however, does not contain any Scouts’ Hymn Book.

seem to have though about the British Empire from one month’s end to the next, I am proud of it and I can get quite heated about it (not to mention those whose brains cannot grasp that it has vanished). Meanwhile among writers I most admire are George Orwell and George Bernard Shaw, and I was very taken by the only opera by Alan Bush I ever had the chance to see (Bush was a communist). Too many people are eager to cast a man into oblivion because he does not subscribe to the prejudices of the latest prophets (themselves).

Readers will remember that in 1912 Elgar was commissioned by Oswald Stoll to compose music for *The Crown of India* at the Coliseum. He was offered a large fee, and I am always annoyed that authors do not say how much. Elgar made his living by composing music, as others make theirs by being navvies or solicitors. I quote from his letter to Frances Colvin, one of his most moving (which is saying a lot):

The real man is only a very shy student and now I can buy books – Ha! ha! I found a lovely old volume ‘Tracts against Popery’ – I appeased Alice by saying I bought it to prevent other people seeing it – but it would make a cat laugh ... my labour will soon be over and then for the country lanes and the wind sighing in the reeds by Severn side ...

Does Elgar – I mean the body of his music – sound English? Does Chaikovsky sound Russian? Does Puccini, who was as eclectic as Elgar, sounds Italian? Does a dog bark? Yet how can I tell, since I cannot read music? For much the same reason that I can tell the difference between a lamb chop and pork chop. I do not need a chemical analysis. I chew.

From Father Brian Stocks

Being a devotee of both Wagner and Elgar in equal measure, I was interested to read Diana McVeagh’s comment that Elgar’s ‘technique owes much to Wagner’, quoted at the bottom of page 69 of Michael Trott’s excellent review of the events in 2007 to mark ‘The Year of Elgar’.

I was also interested to read in the *Elgar Society News* (No. 34, March 2008), two thirds of the way down page 14, that Dr Laura Meadows of Durham University had completed a PhD thesis entitled ‘Elgar as Post Wagnerian: A Study of Elgar’s Assimilation of Wagner’s Music and Methodology’, and that she had been financially supported in this by the Elgar Society (*News*, No. 35, July 2008, p. 23).

When I emailed the Music Department of Durham University they replied that I should consult the library webpage of the University website and check that the thesis is in the catalogue. If so, it would be available for consultation only. Though Durham is not as far away for me as it would be for the majority of Society members, I am not a particularly fast reader and the option of reading the work at my leisure would appear to be closed. If copies of this work were to become available to purchase, might they not be advertised in both the Elgar and the Wagner Society journals? Moreover what was the point of the Elgar Society financing Dr Meadows’s work if it is not to be made easily available for Society members to read?

From Dr Hans Westgeest

Dominic Guyver's review of my booklet on Elgar's enigma (this Journal, July 2008) does not make clear what in my opinion is the theme which "goes" ... through and over the whole set ... but is not played'.

As I found out, the first nine notes of *Nimrod* (in 4/4-time, with an added crotchet rest on the first beat of every bar) is the seed from which the entire work has grown. This melodic phrase, which I call the 'Elgar-theme' because it is based on the rhythm of the name 'Edward Elgar', appears throughout the work, in different shapes: the extended melody of *Nimrod* itself, the theme at the beginning of the work (on which the variations are based) and the theme of the *Finale*: these are all derived from it.

This 'Elgar-theme' is composed as a countermelody to the theme of the second movement of Beethoven's *Sonata pathétique*. But it is a *peculiar* countermelody: it also contains its notes, so it follows the Beethoven theme closely. The combination of the two melodies expresses musically what August Jaeger had pressed upon Elgar when he was depressed: to do what Beethoven did, who, like Elgar, also had a lot of worries but never gave up. So the 'hidden theme' is the one from Beethoven's *Pathétique*, which is present in the themes derived from the 'Elgar-theme', but which itself 'never appears' in the work. This also disposes of Guyver's counterargument: 'I am not sure that the theme he has found can be claimed as being *quite familiar*': Beethoven's theme of course is.

100 YEARS AGO ...

The first four days of September were taken up with Three Choirs Festival rehearsals in London. The Dutch contralto Tilly Koenen was to sing in both *Gerontius* and *The Kingdom*, but clearly did not know her music: this led to Elgar giving her an extra practice on the morning of the 4th. However he wrote to Atkins: 'I saw the terrible woman this a.m. & worked hard – but – she is impossible. She knows nothing & is unteachable'. The Elgars had taken the King's School Headmaster's house for the Festival and the party included Schuster, Julia Worthington, Prof. Sanford Terry, and Lady Maud Warrender. The new work – the second *Wand of Youth* suite – was a great success: 'all mad over bears & singing & acting them!' Alice wrote in her diary.

Back in Hereford on 19 September, Elgar was 'working hard' on the Symphony: on the 25th it was completed – 'noble & beautiful' according to Alice – and Edward took it to London four days later. During the first week in October he completed a song, *Pleading*. The weather was unusually warm and fine and there was a good deal of cycling with May Grafton and Troyte Griffith. Elgar was back in London on 12 October for rehearsals for the Norwich Festival and for the London premiere of the *Wand of Youth* suite. Back in Hereford he checked proofs of the Symphony with John Austin, before leaving on the 27th for Norwich, where *Gerontius* and *King Olaf* were given. More Symphony proofs awaited him on his return on 2 November, and four days later Richter arrived. Elgar played through the work, and the conductor 'seemed much impressed'. Lady Maud Warrender – the dedicatee of *Pleading* – gave the first performance in Hereford on the 7th. At this time Elgar was very busy in the Ark, as he heard that his invention, the Sulphuretted Hydrogen Apparatus, was to go into production. But the forthcoming Symphony premiere was occupying the Elgars' attention. They were at the Queen's Hall on 23 November for a first rehearsal: 'Beautiful & poetical & wonderful', Alice wrote, 'all much excited'. Richter was present and took the score away, so as 'to be able to enter into the Spirit of this great masterpiece'.

Despite a eulogistic letter from Jaeger – addressed to 'my dear, great Edward' – Elgar was nervous about how the new work would be received. On 2 December, the day before the premiere, he was 'very porsley towards evening. Rather fearing for next day'. In the morning he was 'so porsley, doubtful if going till last minute'. But he needn't have worried. The *Daily Mail* reviewer wrote: 'Here we have perhaps the finest masterpiece of its type that ever came from the pen of an English composer'. In the audience that evening was the 19-year-old Neville Cardus, who wrote nearly 40 years later: 'Those of us who were students were excited to hear at last an English composer addressing us in a spacious way, speaking a language which was European and not provincial ... I cannot hope, at this time of day, to describe the pride taken in Elgar by young English students of that far-away epoch'.

Four days later came the equally successful London premiere, attended by the ailing Jaeger, who told Dora Penny: 'I never in all my experience saw the like ... After that superb Coda (Finale) the audience seemed to rise at E. when he appeared. I *never* heard such frantic applause after any novelty nor such shouting'. On 9 December Alice commented: 'All papers with scarce an exception pronouncing it The Masterwork'. They returned home on the 11th; but despite this great success, Elgar slipped back into something of a depressed state, particularly over the Christmas period, when he had a bad cold. Alice's summary of the year reads: 'Deo Gratias for much – Symphony – Part Songs – Dear friends still spared – & our own love – & some great moments. Much worry & depression occasionally'.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

ISSN 0143-1269

*Printed by
Westpoint Printing Co. Ltd,
113 Fazeley Street,
Birmingham B5 5RX*