

The Elgar Society

# Journal



July 2010 Vol. 16, No. 5



# The Elgar Society Journal

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*Front Cover: Portrait photograph of King Edward VII.*

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

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*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*.

## Elgar's Will: further enigmas<sup>1</sup>

Brian Harvey

In the March 2010 Journal (p. 5), John Drysdale remarks that it is curious that the four wills he discusses, including, briefly, Elgar's own, have attracted 'no detailed analysis', despite their obvious importance in indicating the composer's cash-flow, royalties, expenditure patterns (including his lively interest in the turf) and capital position. Indeed there are many things which it would be revealing to peruse if only they were available, the most obvious being his inland revenue returns and his medical records. In their absence, as Dr Drysdale observes, certain assumptions seem to have been made, and these may be unreliable. This documentation, if it still physically exists, is held under strict confidentiality obligations, and so probably will never be seen – rightly, many would think.

As it happens, in the course of researching Elgar's financial position at Brinkwells as background for the book about Elgar in Sussex in the latter days of the First World War, I wrote primarily for my own benefit the following on Elgar's will.<sup>2</sup> Among other things, it seems to show the strangely contradictory nature of the man.

Clause 3 of this misanthropic document, dated 2 January 1932, recites that 'owing to the sudden collapse of everything artistic and commercial' Elgar the testator can no longer think of benefiting close friends or charities, and there is a straightforward gift to his daughter Carice of 'all my books, papers and manuscripts' and all personal chattels absolutely. Otherwise there is a complete absence of gifts to friends whom one might ordinarily suppose Elgar would feel deserved something to remember him by. This should be contrasted with Elgar's generous extra-testamentary gifts to selected villagers of Fittleworth on the death of his wife and in her memory (listed on p. 53 below). The 'sudden collapse' referred to by Elgar is not identified, and what he had in mind is another minor enigma.

By clauses 7–9, after a few small annuities and legacies, there is a bequest of all the net residue (freeholds or personal estate) to his duly appointed Executor/Trustee Company to hold on trust, first for Carice for life and subject thereto to the specified six nephews and nieces (or their issue if they predeceased) for life. So the Trustee had to divide the capital into six shares and pay the income of each share

1 My thanks to John Drysdale and Anthony Payne for reading this article in draft.

2 Carol Fitzgerald and Brian W. Harvey, *Elgar, Vicat Cole and the Ghosts of Brinkwells* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co., 2007), reviewed by Michael Allis, this Journal, 15/3 (November 2007), 62–6.

to the appropriate beneficiary for life, and after the death of such niece or nephew to pay over that share to his or her children on attaining 21. (One 'black sheep' nephew was apparently omitted.) The value of such shares was primarily in the continuing stream of royalties, expiring in 2004 (1934 + 70) for works published in Elgar's lifetime. (Unpublished work enjoys a longer period, measured from the actual publication date.) It also has to be borne in mind that it was only in 1988 that the relevant copyright period for published work was increased from 50 to 70 years from the composer's death. This EU-derived measure had the odd effect of causing Elgar's published work (in common with that of Delius, Holst, Kipling, etc.) to bounce back into copyright. The law applied from 1996, so in practice his work was in copyright again from then until the end of 2004.

By clause 12 there is a declaration by Elgar as to his 'literary and musical assets in which I include all my copyrights books and manuscripts', giving his Trustees various discretions such as power to 'publish or print any of my manuscripts or works', developing or selling all copyrights, and a declaration 'as between all persons entitled hereunder that all royalties profits emoluments and annual income' be treated as income, not capital.

Be it noted that by clause 3 (see above), all 'books papers and manuscripts' have been left to Carice *absolutely*, so property within the description 'books' and 'manuscripts' has in fact been bequeathed twice and, furthermore, inconsistently (see also clauses 7–9 above). The mind boggles at the implications of this.

What has happened to all Elgar's tangible movable property is not known in detail, at least to me, except that a few of his books and manuscripts of published works are in the Birthplace Museum, presumably via Carice, who was keen on and generous to this venture. After Elgar's death, the Birthplace Cottage was acquired by Worcester City Council in 1935, and it was thereafter set up as a museum by a public appeal (through the pages of the *Daily Telegraph*), chaired by Sir Landon Ronald. Carice must have donated her father's furniture, etc., on display there, this being unequivocally hers as part of her father's 'personal chattels' (clause 3: this is a frequently used and widely interpreted expression in law). She set up a tea-shop nearby with her companion, a cellist named Sybil Russell, which she ran for some years. The 'Elgar Foundation Trust', as it is now called, owns the whole enlarged development, but is almost inevitably short of resources to run its invaluable archive. Recent significant acquisitions have been with the aid of grants from national sources and generous private donations.

At his death in 1934 Elgar left a library of printed books, but he is not known to have left any material literary work (though there are lecture notes, many letters and a diary extant). Also he did leave of course (a) a number of increasingly valuable copyrights and (b) unfinished manuscripts and sketches, notably of the Third Symphony, and an opera *The Spanish Lady*, since edited, arranged, and orchestrated by the late Dr Percy Young, the vocal score stating that it is copyright Novello & Co. Ltd.<sup>3</sup> Elgar's estate was proved at £13,000 gross and £9000 (both figures approximate), with duty paid of £457.

Carice died in 1970 and left her property, £70,000, to Sybil Russell, her husband

3 See the Elgar Complete Edition vol. 41, published by Novello in 1991.

having predeceased her (in 1939) without children. I understand that from 1970 anyone needing copyright permission until the end of 2004 dealt with the great nephews/nieces claiming under clauses 7–9, technically 'the remaindermen'. They gave Anthony Payne the necessary permissions to elaborate the sketches and drafts for the Third Symphony.<sup>4</sup> The possibility of the completion of the Symphony by another composer was something that Elgar himself mentioned on his deathbed to his doctor Arthur Thomson.<sup>5</sup> There was a problem with the Symphony in that the BBC had commissioned it and paid in advance. In fact Lord Reith did a deal with Carice (who was thought to have been short of money) by taking the manuscripts and not asking for the money back. The manuscripts were subsequently donated to the British Museum.<sup>6</sup>

I have not been able to find any evidence that there was ever any express formal assignment in writing to the BBC of the copyright, as required by law for assignments, either by Elgar or Carice, even assuming she had the power to do this in the light of the conflicting provisions of the will. However, by arrangement with Carice, large manuscript chunks of the Third Symphony were published in *The Listener* in August 1934 by W.H. Reed.<sup>7</sup> Carice thought that this might deter others from purporting to finish the symphony when its copyright expired, since an undertaking had been given to the dying composer that no-one should be allowed to 'tinker with it'. There is also the question of the ownership of the copyright in the *unpublished* sections of the total manuscript material relating to the symphony, i.e. parts not in the *Listener* article or Reed's book, until Payne published them c. 1997.

My main concerns are: (1) since 'copyrights' are omitted from express mention in clause 3, is it safe to assume that Elgar's will, clause 3, did so exclude them – so that they fall into the residue, in the light of clause 12? and (2) is it safe to assume that 'manuscripts' do not include the copyrights and other intellectual property rights in the unfinished and unpublished work, so that they descend under the trusts of clauses 7–9 rather than going absolutely to Carice, and subsequently her estate, under clause 3?

### **Carice's position**

Carice's mother, Alice Elgar, died in 1920. Her will is dated 4 June 1890, but there are two codicils. In the material one, dated 13 February 1892, she leaves the major part of her property including the family estate at Hazeldine, Redmarley D'Abitot, or its proceeds of sale if sold, to Elgar absolutely. By the 1890 will it had been given to Elgar for life and then to any future children of the marriage on attaining 21. The Hazeldine estate was sold in 1892 and the income therefrom was paid to Alice. None

4 See also Michael De-la-Noy, *Elgar the Man* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), 209–10, and Colin Matthews's essay on the 1997 CD, NMC DO53.

5 See Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 819.

6 The British Library, formerly the library of the British Museum, holds the largest collection of Elgar manuscript scores and sketches.

7 These were reproduced in Reed's *Elgar as I knew him* (London: Gollancz, 1936).

of these testamentary documents in their lengthy clauses mentions the existence of a Marriage Settlement.

Elgar's will, clause 7, states: 'I declare that I have not otherwise provided for my daughter as she is provided for under the terms and provisions of a Settlement made on the occasion of my marriage'. The marriage took place in 1889 – Alice's family (particularly 'aunts', her parents having both died before the marriage) being very disapproving, since her father was Major-General Roberts and Elgar's a mere piano tuner, in 'trade', or 'organist', as Elgar later described him in his own *Who's Who* entry.

In the nineteenth century, the usual family settlement would (*inter alia*) have conferred property rights immediately, i.e. by an *inter vivos* trust rather than by will, on such future children of the spouses as attained 21, subject to a life interest in favour of the spouse. It was apt to deal with the situation where the husband was thought to be a boulder against whom the wife needed protection. The capital value of this alleged marriage settlement is not known, nor who the Settlor was: both Alice's parents had died and Alice was known to enjoy only a modest income from her family property and no capital. So the alleged existence of this settlement is another enigma! Was it a figment of Elgar's imagination? Or was Elgar wrongly remembering the provisions of Alice's long revoked will, a revocation from which, ironically, he benefited at the expense of his daughter?

As mentioned above, Carice died in 1970 leaving £70,000, and had enjoyed the prior life-interest in Elgar's increasingly valuable residue, in addition to the property mentioned in clause 3 absolutely, and perhaps the capital of the possibly notional marriage settlement. It appears, therefore, that those who thought she had been left without many resources, such as Landon Ronald who told Reith that this was the general opinion, were being too pessimistic. Ironically, and contrary to Elgar's predictions, the annual value of the copyrights, performing rights, and other intellectual property generated by his music must have proved a pleasant surprise to the beneficiaries over the years.

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## The King and the Troubadour: Edward VII & Edward Elgar

### Arthur Reynolds

'Intense feeling of sadness. E. feeling desolate'. So began Alice Elgar's diary entry for 7 May 1910, the day His Majesty King Edward VII died. 'A. & C. [Carice] to find dress for C. Nos and nos of people in black already – Papers with beautiful articles – & people saying King Edward's loss the greatest calamity wh. cd. befall the country'.<sup>1</sup> The next day Elgar wrote from London to Frank Schuster, citing contrasting sensations of sorrow at the king's death in the midst of delight at what he was achieving with his Violin Concerto.

My dear Frank

The times are too cruel & gloomy – it is awful to be here now – that dear sweet-tempered King-Man was always so 'pleasant' to me.

I have the Concerto well in hand & have played it thro' on the PF. & its *good!* awfully emotional! too emotional! but I love it: first movement finished & the IIIrd well on – these *are* times for composition.

... Alice Wortley came to tea today & had a dose of the Concerto which beseemingly she liketh well. Also Lady M [Maud Warrender] yesterday to a similar meal & *corrective*. We are dismally gay—walk like ghosts & eat like ghouls. Oh! it is terribly sad.

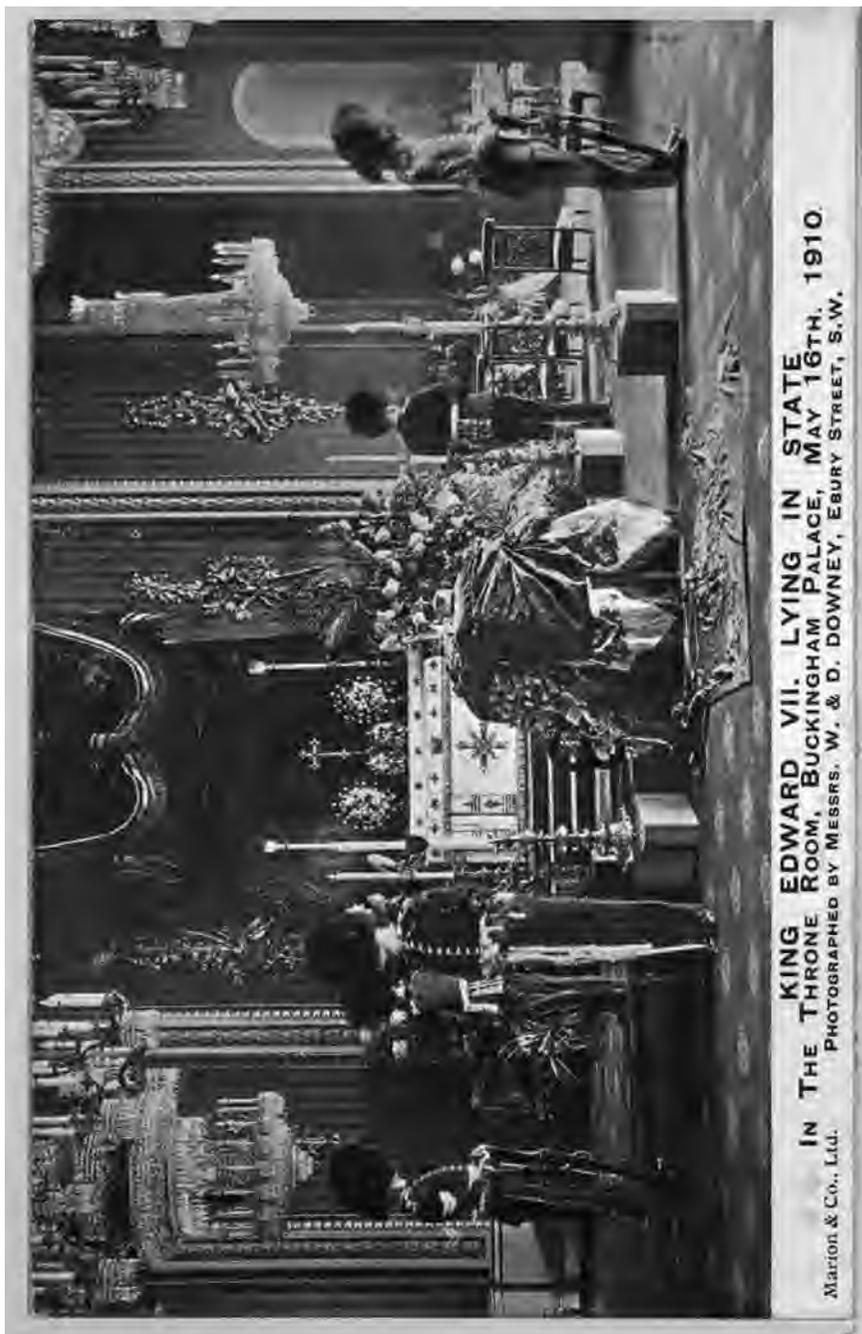
Your Edwd<sup>2</sup>

On 17 May the coffin bearing the remains of 'his late Majesty King Edward of blessed memory' was placed in Westminster Hall for the public lying-in-state (fig. 1), awaited by a line of mourners that stretched back for five miles. In three days more than a quarter of a million people braved hours of torrential rain to file past the king's catafalque.

What was it about the loss of King Edward VII that evoked such lamentation from the British public, and particularly from Edward Elgar? A latter-day Prince Hal, Queen Victoria's heir had come to the throne with the reputation of a reprobate.

1 Elgar Birthplace Museum. Alice Elgar's diary, MB transcript (further references are dated in the text without footnotes).

2 Elgar Birthplace Museum. MB transcript (hereafter EBM), Letter 7019 (further references to letters are given with the number in the text without footnotes).



**Fig. 1: King Edward VII lying in state at Buckingham Palace – May 1910**  
 The Royal Collection © 2010 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II by gracious permission.

Henry James spoke for many when he proclaimed his pessimism that the accession of 'that arch vulgarian' would 'let loose incalculable forces for possible ill'.<sup>3</sup> Rudyard Kipling dismissed the new king as a corpulent voluptuary. Arthur Benson, the *Coronation Ode* librettist, scorned the succession as 'like having Hamlet acted by a clown'.<sup>4</sup> Many of Elgar's contemporaries deplored what they perceived to be the His Majesty's unrefined materialistic preoccupations and louche amusements.

These included misperceptions concerning the king's tastes in music. Edward VII was a devotee of grand opera and actively supported music-making entities such as the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society and the Royal College of Music, of which he was the first president. His views on the power of music as a binding social force were considered radical at the time. Consider his speech (when he was HRH) to mark the opening of the Royal College on 7 May 1883:

The establishment of an institution such as I open today is not the mere creation of a new musical society. The time has come when class can no longer stand aloof from class, and that man does his duty best who works most earnestly in bridging over the gulf between different classes which it is the tendency of increased wealth and increased civilization to widen.

I claim for music the merit that it has a voice which speaks in different tones, perhaps, but with equal force to the cultivated and the ignorant, to the peer and the peasant. I claim for music a variety of expression which belongs to no other art, and therefore adapts it more than any other art to produce that union of feeling which I much desire to promote. Lastly, I claim for music the distinction which is awarded to it by Addison – that it is the only sensual pleasure to which excess cannot be injurious.

What more, gentlemen, can I say on behalf of the art for the promotion of which we are today opening this institution -- an institution which, I trust, will give to music a new impulse, a glorious future and a national life.<sup>5</sup>

When the prince became king, he did more than any predecessor to elevate the standing in Britain of those intellectual arbiters who had mocked him as a philistine. Braving fierce opposition led by Lord Salisbury, prime minister of the day, Edward VII established a new order of chivalry half of whose membership would be restricted to men and women who had risen by merit in the arts, literature and the sciences. The king modelled his Order of Merit on the Prussian order *Pour le Mérite*, founded in 1740 by Friedrich II ('Frederick the Great') to recognise serving military personnel. A century later, Friedrich Wilhelm IV established a civil class to honour artists, musicians and literary figures; recipients included Felix Mendelssohn, Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Edward VII followed Friedrich Wilhelm by dividing his order into two rosters, one for distinguished military officers, the other for eminent artists, writers, and scientists. OM membership would be limited to the sovereign plus 24 subjects. Foreigners could be added, but only as honorary members. Initial membership included the

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Hibbert, *The Royal Victorians* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1976), 191.

<sup>4</sup> E.F. Benson, *Diaries* (Magdalene College, Cambridge), vol. 14, 49–50.

<sup>5</sup> *The Musical Times* 51 (1 June 1910), 357.

artists George Frederick Watts, Lawrence Alma-Tadema and William Holman Hunt. The first musician to receive the OM was Elgar, in 1911.

The fathers of both Edwards were musicians. King Edward may have owed his very existence to the allure of music. His mother, who became Queen Regnant at the age of eighteen, began her reign firmly declaring her refusal to give any immediate thought to the prospect of marriage. Given her well-known strength of character in resisting what did not suit her, Queen Victoria might well have remained without a husband during the early years of her reign were it not for the appearance of a musical Prince Charming. The teenage queen's determination to defer her husband-hunting indefinitely did nothing to halt the relentless efforts of Europe's grandest families to place one of their sons at the head of the British royal household. A plethora of princes came calling almost immediately after her coronation. One of the least likely candidates was Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. The younger son of the ruler of a dukedom the size of Staffordshire, the Prince's rank hardly presented a consequential claim to the Queen's attention. It was music that placed the two youngsters on a path to love. While the competition went about Windsor displaying the plumage of their pedigrees, Albert successfully wooed Victoria with piano duets, nights at the opera, and amateur palace entertainments at which he and the queen sang duets such as 'Non funestar, crudele' ('Don't afflict me, cruel one') from Luigi Ricci's opera *Il disertore per amore*.

Music-making continued to form an important part of their daily lives after Victoria and Albert married in February 1840. Mendelssohn was astonished at their prowess when Albert invited the composer to Windsor, during his visit to Britain in June 1842 to conduct the British premiere of his 'Scottish' Symphony. Mendelssohn wrote to his mother that Albert had played a chorale on the palace organ 'by heart, with the pedals, so charmingly, clearly and correctly, that it would have done credit to any professional', while the Queen had sung Mendelssohn's 'Lass dich nur' with the composer at the piano, 'really quite faultlessly, and with charming feeling and expression'.<sup>6</sup> As well as being an accomplished organist, Albert could lay claim to serious status as a composer. His published works include five collections of 'Lieder und Romanzen', a Morning Service in C and A, an anthem entitled 'Out of the Deep', and numerous compositions for piano and organ – a body of work faintly praised by Yehudi Menuhin as 'pleasant music without presumption'.<sup>7</sup>

The Western Europe into which both Edwards arrived was ruled by royalty. By the mid-nineteenth century, crowned heads prevailed in virtually every state, their subjects having been persuaded by a series of failed flirtations with *Demos* that royal rule was a wiser alternative to republican governance. By the time Edward Elgar was born, Victoria had reigned for twenty years as the country's co-executive with the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of the day, while her heir had been Prince of Wales for sixteen years (fig. 2).

Edward Elgar's encounters with the Royal Family were engineered chiefly by Sir Walter Parratt, the self-styled 'poor provincial organist' from Huddersfield

6 Stanley Weintraub, *Uncrowned King. The Life of Prince Albert* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 130.

7 Weintraub, *The Uncrowned King*, 168n.



**Fig. 2. Bainbridge photo of Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales in 1857**  
The Royal Collection © 2010 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II by gracious permission.

whose accomplishments as a musician took him to great heights in the service of three sovereigns. Parratt's musical career blossomed early. Born in the same year as the future Edward VII, the boy Parratt's prodigious musical talents matured quickly with the support of the Rev. [Sir] Frederick Gore Ouseley, Bt., who secured for the nineteen-year-old the position of private organist to the Earl of Dudley at Witley Court, Worcestershire, where W.H. Elgar tuned the chapel organ as well as the spinets and pianos placed about the great house. Although no detailed record of their encounters is known, Parratt and Elgar senior must have met frequently during Parratt's seven-year tenure at Witley (1861–8). From time to time William Elgar would bring his little boy with him on his tuning rounds, so it is likely that Elgar junior and young Mr Parratt met for the first time in the Dudley household.

Like Edward Elgar, Walter Parratt married a girl who devoted her life to the husband she acknowledged as that 'tempestuous man of genius'. Parratt had no interest in rank, only in music and chess, and was an acknowledged master of both by the time he arrived at Windsor in 1882 to take up a position as organist and music director at St George's chapel. Such was his disdain for the trappings of class that Parratt had to borrow a frock coat to accept his knighthood from the queen ten

years later.

Queen Victoria appointed her favoured music director Master of the Queen's Musick in 1893, not long before Elgar emerged as a composer in need of a formidable friend in high places. The post enabled Parratt to introduce Elgar's early works into palace drawing room concerts and into the musical accompaniment to State dinner events. Alice's diary records their first known adult encounter on 3 September 1896:

To rehearsal at Queen's Hall about 11 – Perfectly lovely morning – Deo Gratias – for it. Sir W. Parratt, Dr. Lloyd, Randegger carried away with enthusiasm for E's great musics. Also soloists.

The 'great musics' in question was *The Light of Life*, which was being rehearsed in the Queen's Hall in preparation for that year's Worcester Three Choirs Festival. Accompanying Parratt to hear the new work was Charles Harford Lloyd, Brewer's predecessor in the organ loft of Gloucester Cathedral and the current Eton Precentor, as well as Alberto Randegger, director of the Norwich Festival and conductor of the Queen's Hall concerts. The renown tenor Edward Lloyd headed the cast of soloists. The Worcester *Daily Times* had this to say about the work rehearsed that day:

Mr. Edward Lloyd says it is one of the finest English works composed for some time, and that the instrumentation is particularly fine. The tenor part is the finest he has had presented to him for many years ... Signor Randegger, after hearing the first rehearsal in London, said he thought it was the best English work that has been produced within his knowledge for certainly twenty years.<sup>8</sup>

Within days of that rehearsal Parratt asked Elgar to send examples of shorter works for palace performance. The composer responded with the score of *Sevillaña* and the suggestion that Parratt try out his Organ Sonata. Sir Walter responded with the following letter of thanks and regret at being unable to attend the Festival performance (Letter 1955):

September 11 [1896]

My dear Mr. Elgar

Many thanks – the Sevillaña has arrived – I like it very much. It is just the thing for the Queen's Drawing room and it shall be ordered. I hope trombones are not very important. We have only one. I got the organ Sonata at once and have played part of it. It needs some care in the registration but is very effective. Write me a Toccata – very fast! I wish I could have heard your work. Kind regards to your wife. I am

Yours faithfully,

Walter Parratt

The duties of the Master of the Queen's Musick included recommending

<sup>8</sup> Worcester *Daily Times*, 7 September 1896, cited in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: a Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 215.

applications to dedicate new works to the monarch. Two months after the *Light of Life* rehearsal, Novello asked Elgar for a march to celebrate the forthcoming sixtieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession. Elgar responded to the Diamond Jubilee request with his *Imperial March*, Op. 32. The score went off to Novello in January 1897, accompanied by a letter that included this paragraph:

Would it be of any material good to get permission to dedicate it to the Queen? If so I should be greatly obliged if you cd. advise me how to set about it. I know Sir W. Parratt & wd. ask him unless there is a recognized way unknown to me.<sup>9</sup>

Although the hope of a royal dedication came to nothing, the *Imperial March* was played to acclaim at its Crystal Palace premiere, and to acknowledged delight when it was performed at a Royal Garden Party in June and at a state concert in July.

Elgar was more successful the following year when he applied to Parratt for permission to dedicate *Caractacus* to the Sovereign. Sir Walter's reply indicated that esteem for the composer's music was rising in the eyes of both the Master and his royal employer (Letter 1970):

July 20 [1898]

My dear Mr. Elgar

I will certainly bring the matter to the Queen's notice – it will not be my fault if your request is not granted. I hope you are aware that I use your music constantly, and the Queen likes it. Have you done any more **small orchestra** things? They are most useful. Please tell Novellos to hurry up the proof of *Caractacus*. I am not allowed to recommend works I have not seen. I go to Osborne on August 8.

Another matter – I am getting up a sort of Victorian Triumphs of Oriana, a tribute by the Composers and Poets of the day to the Queen. Madrigals must be for unaccompanied part singing not however in antique form.

Will you set the enclosed?

Yours very sincerely,

Walter Parratt<sup>10</sup>

Sir Walter enclosed a series of verses by Frederick W.H. Myers entitled 'To Her Beneath Whose Steadfast Star'. Parratt was sufficiently impressed by Elgar's setting to include the piece in a celebration concert marking Queen Victoria's 80th birthday on 24 May 1899. Elgar travelled to Windsor to conduct. During her breakfast on the day, the Eton and Windsor Madrigal Society serenaded their sovereign with a programme that included two madrigals, one each by Parratt and Elgar. Clutching her lorgnette, the old queen watched and listened from her window as the 250-strong choir conducted sang their hearts out and then cheered loudly, according to local

<sup>9</sup> Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers. Letters of a Creative Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 43.

<sup>10</sup> Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar. Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 65.

press reports. After the concert, Parratt invited Elgar to conduct his works in the queen's presence at Balmoral and in the private chapel at Windsor. These occasions were shrouded in court formality stressing the vast gulf of rank that separated sovereign and subject.

A gulf existed between the composer and the next occupant of the throne too, but over the Edwardian years a bond of monarch-troubadour esteem grew to span the social divide between Edward VII and Edward Elgar. Happenstance formed one feature of this affinity. The king and the composer came to prominence at roughly the same time. From 1901 to 1910 the trajectories of their lives displayed a striking synchronicity *mutatis mutandis*. But perhaps a deeper explanation lay beneath circumstance. Did the two Edwards perceive in each other a kindred sense of sympathy as their concomitant arrival on the world stage liberated in each of them powers of genius long constricted by struggles against the youthful misalignment of their talents and their parental circumstances?

Elgar's friend and former employer Rosa Burley reported that the composer's outlook was permanently blighted by 'the bitternesses against his father for being a tradesman ... And in painful conflict with these feelings was a strong filial devotion to his parents'.<sup>11</sup> Bitterness set against filial devotion characterized the Prince of Wales's relationship with his parents as well. The eyes of the world rested on HRH from birth. Never in the long annals of the English monarchy had an heir-apparent born to a reigning queen survived to reach the throne, so the little prince was watched and guarded assiduously. His mother called him Bertie and wrote this to her uncle, King Leopold of the Belgians:

I wonder very much who our little boy will be like. You will understand *how* fervent my prayers, and I am sure everybody's must be, to see him resemble his angelic dearest father in *every, every* respect, both in body and mind.<sup>12</sup>

Although the son held his father in trembling respect, Bertie bore virtually no resemblance to Prince Albert, either in body or mind (fig. 3). The Prince Consort's character was formed by the German Enlightenment, which equated intelligence with intellectual tastes. The Prince of Wales was afflicted with what we now know to be attention deficit disorder that left him unable to attain the level of scholarship set by his father.

'Prince Albert's plans for bringing up his eldest son could scarcely have been better meant or worse contrived', wrote King Edward's biographer Giles St Aubyn, whose *Edward VII, Prince and King* portrays his subject's life as a journey 'from the beaming, happy child so cruelly exposed to the joyless theories of upbringing favoured by Prince Albert to the wise and reasonable pacifier of domestic and foreign broils...'.<sup>13</sup>

11 Rosa Burley and Frank C. Carruthers, *Edward Elgar, the Record of a Friendship* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 45-46.

12 The Hon Giles St Aubyn, *Edward VII, Prince and King* (New York: Atheneum, 1979), 16-7.

13 St Aubyn, *Edward VII*, 1 and jacket text.



Fig. 3. Portrait photo of the Prince of Wales as a boy. The Royal Collection © 2010 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II by gracious permission.

The Prince Consort starved his son of the companionship of contemporaries. Who after all could be good enough to befriend the First Gentleman of England? Anyone appointed to attend the boy was required to comply with rigorous rules set forth in Albert's memorandum on deportment written, according to Lord Redesdale, as though 'for the use and guidance of a seminary for young ladies'.<sup>14</sup> The severity of the *modus vivendi* imposed on the young prince produced a lifelong restlessness, an unquenchable craving for social intercourse. 'Good sport to your fishing!' the king said to Sir Edward on the occasion of the composer's knighthood investiture in 1904, a curious salutation since Edward VII loathed fishing, an activity performed undertaken in solitude.<sup>15</sup>

Like Elgar, the prince found himself obliged to learn his trade unaided by formal instruction. The queen ordered her ministers and their private secretaries not to discuss state matters or share government documents with him. His mother never tired of lamenting her doubts about her son's fitness to succeed her, his acumen being so far below the level of expectation set by beloved Albert. She thought Bertie

14 St Aubyn, *Edward VII*, 40.

15 Percy M. Young, *Elgar O.M.* (London: Collins, 1955), 114.

idle and frivolous, characteristics exacerbated by her refusal to allow him any form of occupation suitable to his talents – talents that would not bear fruit until after his mother's death in January 1901.

What was Elgar doing while the queen was dying? At the outset of 1901 he was revising the score of *Froissart*, the overture he had composed in 1890 when he was 33, newly married, living in London and happily embarked on a noble quest to conquer the capital as a composer. Although the capital was resistant, supporters back home had commissioned an orchestral piece to fill in the secular concert to be given in the Shire Hall at that year's Worcester Three Choirs Festival. Elgar responded by giving them his first substantial work. Inspiration came from Scott's *Old Mortality* in which the protagonist Henry Morton embarks on a heroic quest to lead Scotland's insurgent Covenanters in their struggle against the forces of Charles II led by a local commander called John Graham of Claverhouse. Alternately Morton's adversary and admirer, Claverhouse refers the young rebel to the writings of Jean Froissart, the fourteenth-century writer of romances based on 'true chivalrous feeling'. The royalist officer cites Froissart's description of the death of a knight well-regarded for 'his loyalty to his king...'.<sup>16</sup> The king in question was an earlier Edward at whose court Froissart served in Queen Philippa's suite between 1361 and 1364. Edward III was the first monarch to anoint his heir Prince of Wales, a title HRH held for 60 years until he became king at 6:30 p.m. on 22 January 1901 (fig. 4).

*Froissart* had been Elgar's first orchestral work printed by Novello. In 1890 the firm would only engrave the string parts over which at the composer's insistence were placed the words from Keats: 'When Chivalry lifted up her lance on high'. Now, more than a decade later, Novello agreed to print the full score, offering him the chance to rework the orchestration. The timing was propitious, coinciding with the Prince of Wales's emergence as a king in need of a troubadour. 'Just as his father had reformed the domestic side of court life', wrote Roger Fulford, 'so he [Edward VII] let in colour and pageantry to that ceremonial side of the British monarchy on which far too long the widow's cap had been firmly placed'.<sup>17</sup> The newly printed *Froissart* score would announce Elgar's emergence as troubadour to the new Edwardian age, lifting up the lance of his baton on high to defend the ideal of loyalty to kingship – an ideal he would enshrine again on a grander scale in his Second Symphony. The *Froissart* revisions went to August Jaeger at Novello on 12 January 1901, with a letter that included this line: 'In haste and joyful (Gosh! man I've got a tune in my head)'.<sup>18</sup> Elgar thought about working the tune into a symphony, but it wasn't susceptible of development, so he put it down for a few months before incorporating it into the trio section of his *Pomp & Circumstance* March No. 1, the first of a pair of marches premiered in Liverpool on 19 October 1901.

What would entice Elgar to produce rousing martial music in 1901? Could it have been a troubadour's response to the public's joyous desire for pageantry to

16 Sir Walter Scott, *Old Mortality* (Rhode Island: North Book, 2001), 358–9.

17 Roger Fulford, *Edwardian England 1901-1914* (ed. Simon Nowell-Smith, London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 16.

18 Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, 267.



Fig. 4. Rotary postcard portrait photo of King Edward VII in 1901. Author's archive.

celebrate the new monarch? Elgar's rising consciousness of himself as a troubadour coincident with Edward VII's accession is further suggested by the fact that the first appearance of the 'nobilmente' directive in an Elgar orchestral score occurs in *Cockaigne*, the concert overture he produced in the spring of 1901.<sup>19</sup>

Although the two Edwards did not meet for two-and-a-half years after the prince became king, the monarch-troubadour bond between them began to form within weeks of the succession. Sir Walter Parratt planted the seed (Letter 1969):

March 12, 1901

My dear Elgar

These words have been sent me by Arthur Benson, son of the Archbishop, a genuine poet and known to the Royalties. Should it take your fancy – he would be honoured & most grateful if you could set it to immortal music.

Ever yours,

Walter Parratt

Enclosed were the lines for 'Crown the King with Life', to be shaped into a short anthem with orchestra for the forthcoming Coronation. There followed a letter from Benson introducing himself (Letter 3293):

March 21, 1901

Dear Sir

Sir Walter Parratt, to whom I gave some lines on the King's Coronation, kindly told me that he would send them to you in case you felt inclined to set them. He now tells me you think favourably of the lines. I need hardly say that I shall be very proud if you decide to set them; and if there is anything that you find musically inappropriate in the words, I shall be delighted to try and amend them, though alteration is always somewhat difficult, especially in short metres.

Very truly yours,

A.C. Benson

In November 1901, a letter to Elgar from Harry Higgins (Chairman of the Covent Garden Grand Opera Syndicate) included an invitation that would transform the project from an anthem to an Ode (Letter 2018): 'What I should like to suggest to you would be this: – There will be undoubtedly a gala performance given in honour of the Coronation: would you be prepared to undertake the composition of a Coronation Ode?'

Benson responded with an expression of relief (Letter 3294):

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19 The very first use of the 'nobilmente' marking in an Elgar work is found in the score of the pianoforte transcription of 'Nimrod', but not in the orchestral score of the 'Enigma' Variations. The marking did not appear in a full score until *Cockaigne*.

December 1, 1901

Dear Dr. Elgar

I gladly concur in your suggestion about the 'Ode.' I heard from the Bishop of Winchester yesterday, who was of the opinion that the Ode was not of sufficiently liturgical character for the Coronation Service. Therefore, I think that to have it produced at the gala performance of which you speak would be a very good thing to do...

Believe me, sincerely yours,

Arthur C. Benson

The Bishop of Winchester, Randall Thomas Davidson, was a former Dean of Windsor and royal family friend, so his view could not be ignored. Had the work been accepted for the coronation service itself, time constraints would have relegated the *Ode* to an abbreviation of what it became. Higgins's commission offered an opportunity to produce a more substantial work. Elgar wrote to Benson for more lines. A subsequent letter from Higgins asserted that the king was supporting the commission (Letter 2019): 'I received a letter from Lord de Grey', wrote Higgins to Elgar on 1 December, 'from which I understand that the King approves my proposal that you should compose an ode in four parts and chorus, to be performed at the gala performance to be given next season in honour of the Coronation. The ode will be preceded by your Pomp & ceremony [*sic*] March in D'.

For the Westminster Abbey service, Elgar grudgingly complied with a Royal request for a hymn from words by the Rev. Samuel Childs Clarke. He produced 'O Mightiest of the Mighty', but was dissatisfied with it: 'That Hymn is all "wrong"' he wrote to Jaeger in January 1902 (Letter 8532), 'hymns always are – look at the accents in first lines – then the words pause at end of third line in every stanza *except 2* which requires to go on at once – That's the reason I never write hymn tunes – they're so ghastly inartistic'.<sup>20</sup> The castoff composition bereft of an opus number would prove to be the only work the composer would ever dedicate to the sovereign who reigned as George V during the final third of Elgar's lifetime.

Higgins scheduled his gala for 30 June 1902, four days after the date set for the coronation. Elgar supervised the final rehearsal on 16 June, then rushed back to Malvern to be measured for his court suit. Two days before the grand event, he was cycling along the Worcester-Hereford road with Rosa Burley. When they stopped in the village of Stretton-Grandison for tea, the innkeeper's wife broke the news that the coronation had been postponed because appendicitis had struck the king (fig. 5). The cancellation ruined many London merchants who had stocked celebratory food and drink. Guests emptied out of London's great hotels including the new Ritz on Piccadilly, where César Ritz, who had planned to open its doors with a celebratory feast on Coronation Day, suffered a nervous breakdown from which he never recovered. Elgar did not seem to mind. He spent Coronation Day cycling to Shelsey Walsh and Clifton upon Teme with his friends the Hoopers, and wrote to Jaeger the following day:

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20 Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, 323.



Fig. 5. Proof image on coloured silk of the intended Covent Garden Gala programme, presented to Rosa Burley (no copies were ever printed). Author's archive.

Don't for heaven's sake *sympathize* with me – I don't care a tinker's damn! It gives me three blessed sunny days in my own country (for which I thank God or the Devil) instead of stewing in town. *My* own interest in the thing ceased, as usual, when I had finished the M.S. – since when I have been thinking mighty things.<sup>21</sup>

Although the Coronation service was deferred by only seven weeks, many months went by before the *Ode* had its premiere at the Sheffield Festival. The first London performance on 25 June 1903 was momentous. The concert at the Royal Albert Hall was organized by Lady Maud Warrender to raise funds for the Union Jack Club. Years later her memoirs set the scene:

The Hall was packed. King Edward and Queen Alexandra were present, and the scene at the end was exhilarating. Union Jacks had been served out to everyone in the audience. The waving mass of these flags from floor to gallery was an amazing sight; one felt as if encompassed by surging fields of flowers.<sup>22</sup>

Alice's diary adds (25 June 1903):

In the interval E was presented to the King who spoke to him quite a long time & very touchingly told him how he liked his music & in his illness used to have some of his favourite pieces played to him once & sometimes more than once a day – & how it soothed him very much.

Elgar's efforts to persuade his public that he had ended the *Ode* with the *Pomp and Circumstance* No. 1 trio melody set to words on the king's initiative presents a touching but spurious act of troubadour homage. Benson believed that the refrain was Elgar's idea, judging by his letter to the composer of 10 December 1901 (Letter 3296): 'I now enclose an introductory measure for your air "Land of Hope, etc..."' Yet a note in Elgar's hand penned on the manuscript of the initial sketch, now in the Elgar Birthplace Museum, reads as follows:

First sketch of the main line 'Land of hope and glory.' N.B. This (and p. 18) are the earliest version for the finale of 'The Coronation Ode,' embodied in the ode at the suggestion of H.M. King Edward.<sup>23</sup>

If the impetus had come from the king, how was it communicated to the composer? Edward VII could not have made the proposal directly to Elgar because Alice's diary confirms that the two met for the first time at the June 1903 Union Jack concert. Moreover, court records confirm that the king heard the march for the first time at a Royal Orchestral Society concert on 5 February 1902, by which time the trio tune had been fitted to words. Could King Edward have heard the march before 1902 and made known his suggestion to an intermediary, who passed it along to Elgar sometime before December 1901? Long before their first encounter with the

21 Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, 360.

22 Lady Maud Warrender, *My First Sixty Years* (London: Cassell, 1933), 187.

23 Young, *Elgar O.M.*; illustration opposite p. 144.

composer, the king and queen were hearing Elgar's praises sung by an expanding number of Elgar's friends at Court, including the Ladies Maud and Mary. Lady Maud Warrender, a sister of the Earl of Shaftesbury, was a talented contralto and a close friend of the queen. Lady Mary Lygon was the sister of Lord Beauchamp whose seat, Madresfield Court, lay between Worcester and Malvern. A passionately musical former pupil of young Elgar, Lady Mary was now Woman of the Bedchamber to Queen Alexandra.

This letter from Queen Alexandra to Lady Mary, passed on to Alice, suggests that Edward was receiving courtier messages in 1902, given his rising reputation with the Royals at the time (Letter 8972).

Windsor Castle

November 12, 1902

My dear Mary!

Allow me to call you so! – It was very kind of you to send me that very pretty piece of music by Dr. Elgar – a greeting to myself in the Coronation Ode – which alas I have not yet heard. Please tell the great Master *how* much I appreciate his having sent it on to me and how grateful I am to you for having pointed out that the Chorus of 'Ancient Kings' is the prettiest and most effective one in the composition ...

Believe me

yrs. very sincerely,

Alexandra

On the other hand, if a courtier had communicated to the composer any suggestion on the King's behalf, the message is likely to have reached Elgar in writing, in which case Alice would have preserved a missive of such importance.

Clara Butt declared it was she who first suggested to Elgar that the tune be sung.

They were listening to the march together at a concert on 26 November 1901. 'What a tune!' she exclaimed, 'Why don't you write a song for me, and use that as a refrain?' 'You shall have that one my dear', replied the composer.<sup>24</sup> But in later years, Elgar steadfastly insisted it was the King's initiative, as is evidenced by this letter contradicting Clara Butt's assertion:

November 21, 1927

Battenhall Manner. Worcester

Dear Clara

I have just returned and found your letter here. I have not seen the Daily Sketch and do not know how my remarks were reported. King Edward was the first to suggest that the air from the Pomp and Circumstance March should be sung and eventually the song as now known was evolved, *via* the Ode in which you were to have sung.

There is nothing to contradict this.

<sup>24</sup> Winifred Ponder, *Clara Butt. Her Life Story* (London: Harrap, 1928), 188.

Believe me to be

yours very truly,

Edward Elgar<sup>25</sup>

During the months that followed their initial meeting, Elgar's encounters with the court brought him ever closer in the king's affections. Parratt made reference to this in his letter thanking Elgar for memorializing his gratitude to the Master of the King's Musick by conferring on him the dedication of his five part-songs bundled together under the title *From the Greek Anthology*, Op. 45 (Letter 1957):

August 16, 1903

Orchard House, Boscastle

My dear Elgar

I have nothing to say to the dedication except that it is much more than I deserve, and that it will be a permanent gratification to me.....The King has taken a great fancy to you. He commanded the Pomp and Circumstance for one Court: which caused a comical incident. The Lord Chamberlain sent word up to me that it was too loud, and asked me to play it PP!! which I flatly refused to do.....

The trajectories of king and troubadour were moving in parallel directions during 1904, their mutual *annus mirabilis*. The beginning of the year saw the Elgars in Italy, where Edward was hard at work on *In the South*. Work on the overture was interrupted when the Elgars found themselves obliged to cut short their holiday so that Edward could accept an invitation to join the king and the Prince of Wales, together with a variety of lords, ladies and composers, at Marlborough House on 3 February, for dinner followed by a 'Smoking Concert' at which each composer would conduct one of his works. That Elgar and King Edward were becoming more closely acquainted is evidenced by Alice's diary record of the event (3 February 1904): 'the King talked music to E & took him out first after dinner'. At the concert Elgar was obliged to encore his performance of *Pomp & Circumstance* No. 1.

Among Elgar's finest hours were the nights of the 14, 15 and 16 March 1904, when Harry Higgins presented a three-day Elgar Festival at Covent Garden. Never before had a London concert hall devoted three consecutive nights to the performance of the works of a living native composer. 'Dr. Elgar is the man of the hour in the musical world', proclaimed the *Westminster Gazette*. 'It is not too much to say of the three days' festival ... that it is the most remarkable tribute which has ever been paid in this country to a composer of national birth'.<sup>26</sup> The audience was no garden-variety assemblage of concert-goers as Joseph Bennett pointed out in *The Daily Telegraph*:

The auditorium was filled with one of those mighty and distinguished gatherings which only London can show. And all this in honour of an English composer who, a

<sup>25</sup> EBM Letter Book 227.2. Quoted in Young, *Elgar OM.*, 99.

<sup>26</sup> *Westminster Gazette*, 18 March 1904.

few years since, was an unknown provincial musician.<sup>27</sup>

The *Pall Mall Gazette* summed up the significance of the Edward VII's participation: 'it will be chronicled by historians that the King lavished his personal favours on a great English composer because His Majesty sought to encourage that which is most perdurable in English musical art'.<sup>28</sup>

Amid the whirlwind of celebratory activity, Edward found time to write this letter to his father:

25 Old Queen St. S.W.

Friday [18 March 1904]

Dearest father:

I have not had time to write a single line to anyone this last week. I hope you have heard all about the festival – the King came twice & the Queen 3 times! It has all been a most gigantic success & they have made a huge fuss over me.

We had a party here & three Ambassadors (Russian [Count Benckendorff], Portuguese & Italian) here – at Lord Howe's there was a large party, but I must come and tell you all about [it]. I was presented to the Queen who was very kind – dear Richter did it all splendidly.

I hope you are well [:] send me a line & ask Frank to send me the Worcester *Journal* here.

I shall come home on Wednesday.

The audiences have been tremendous.

Yrs affectedly

Edward<sup>29</sup>

A fortnight after the Festival, Elgar attended a dinner party given by his admirer the Marquess of Northampton. The other guests included the prime minister, Arthur Balfour. Edward took the opportunity to harangue Balfour on the shortcomings of the current musical copyright legislation. The prime minister took the opportunity to ask the composer if he would accept an honour. And so the erstwhile 'unknown provincial musician' became Sir Edward Elgar in the June 1904 Birthday Honours. Alice's diary (5 July 1904) recorded the investiture in the little-girl voice she used to denote squeals of pleasure and excitement:

E. dessed and looked vesy booful. A. helped him & buckled his sword. Then Frank arrived & drove to Buckingham Palace with E...The King smiled charmingly & said 'Very pleased to see you here Sir Edward'.

27 *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 March 1904, cited Moore. *Edward Elgar. A Creative Life*, 436.

28 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 March 1904.

29 Moore, Edward Elgar. *Letters of a Lifetime*, 147–8.

It is remarkable that the king found the time to encourage 'a great English composer' in March 1904, because at that moment His Majesty was preoccupied with placing the finishing touches on what would become his own magnum opus. A fortnight after the Elgar Festival ended, the king signed the 'Entente cordiale', an amalgam of agreements between Britain and France that would radically alter the ancient balance of power in Europe. 'The idea of the *Entente cordiale* was in the prince's mind as early as 1866; indeed he minted the phrase', wrote St Aubyn. 'The conspicuous part he played in turning those words into reality was possibly his greatest achievement'.<sup>30</sup> The basis of this and other diplomatic successes was His Majesty's shrewd judgment of people and situations deriving from brilliance as a linguist; his flawless command of French and German enabled Edward VII to outpace most of his ministers in forming relationships with and gaining insights from Continental European leaders.

Coupled with the HM-contrived pact struck between Britain and Russia in 1908, the 'Entente cordiale' relinquished the centuries-old policy of encircling France in favour of *Einkreisung*, the encirclement of Germany. The Kaiser, who could never get along with his uncle, now detested King Edward. 'He is Satan. You cannot imagine what a Satan he is', Wilhelm II fulminated from Berlin.<sup>31</sup>

Music sounded a summoning knell during King Edward's last days. He contracted bronchitis in Biarritz during April 1910. Limp with fever and fatigue from a rough Channel crossing, the king nonetheless rushed back to London on 27 April to hear Tetrazzini sing Gilda in a performance of *Rigoletto* at Covent Garden. Two nights later, a more seriously ill King Edward returned to the opera house for a performance of *Siegfried*. A week hence the Elgars happened to be in town, where the news bulletins were grave. Alice's diary entry sets down their despair:

May 6 ... Terrible news only too true—So difficult to believe the King was really dangerously ill—So terribly sudden. 1000s round Buckingham Palace. E. walked round. Maud Warrender to tea. She thought the illness was very dangerous – Oh! our own King.

That night Edward and Alice attended the second act of the same *Siegfried* production that would prove to be the king's nemesis. Reports of His Majesty's illness were so grave that Alice feared the performance would be stopped at any moment. 'Ghastly feeling to watch for it', she wrote (6 May 1910). The news of Edward VII's death, shortly before midnight, came at 1.30 a.m. on 7 May.

After the arc of King Edward's life had reached its end, Elgar sensed that the arc of his own was bending downward. The memorable music heard at the September 1910 Three Choirs Festival proved to be a new work by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Herbert Howells and Ivor Gurney travelled together to Gloucester where they were stunned by the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*. 'It was as if a door had opened into the future', said Howells.<sup>32</sup> The piece's placement in the programme was

30 St Aubyn, *Edward VII*, 260.

31 Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 2.

32 Paul Spicer, *Herbert Howells* (London: Seren, 1998), 23.

telling. During a 1977 radio interview, Howells remembered that ‘what mattered was that it was a Tuesday night, an Elgar night; a dedicated Elgar audience, all accepted devotees of the by then “accepted” masterpiece *The Dream of Gerontius*. But there conducting a strange work for strings was RVW himself, a comparative stranger; and his *Fantasia* would be holding up the *Dream* for maybe ten minutes. In fact for twice ten as it happened’.

‘They [Howells and Gurney] knew they had heard something important and had been present at a defining moment in music history’, wrote Pamela Blevins in her biography *Ivor Gurney and Marion Scott*. ‘The traditional values of splendour, pathos, sentimentality and sensuality did not fit the mood of these turbulent times. The ideal of beauty was seen as a mask, an illusion that distracted people from the harsh realities of life ... To portray life as idyllic was a fraud’.<sup>33</sup>

Elgar no longer qualified as the man of the hour in this changing musical world. The first performance of his Violin Concerto in November 1910 proved to be his last rapturously-received premiere. The following spring he was dismayed to see the audience of a half-full hall greet the first performance of his Second Symphony with what he perceived to be appalling disdain.

If Elgar’s place as Britain’s greatest living composer was no longer indisputable, the pleasant palliative of worldly honours continued to flow his way. Shortly after the disappointing Second Symphony premiere Elgar received a letter from the king’s private secretary offering him the OM (fig. 6). Five days later came the coronation service for which he produced the Offertorium ‘O Harken Thou’, as well as the recessional, his *Coronation March*. Was it the coronation recessional or Kipling’s poem ‘Recessional’ that Elgar had in mind when he composed the *Coronation March*? Consider this couplet:

The tumult and the shouting dies –  
The captains and the kings depart –

If the work were intended solely for the coronation service, why did Elgar leave the march undedicated, having dedicated the *Coronation Ode* to Edward VII? The *Coronation March* gives us music of departure, nominally the departure of the monarch from the Abbey. More likely the music memorializes the departure of ‘all our pomp of yesterday’ occasioned by the passing of King Edward VII.

Although he had accepted invitations to the Abbey service on behalf of himself and Alice and attended all the rehearsals, Edward made a last-minute decision to avoid the ceremony and forbade Alice to go on her own. Why? Apparently, he intended to go until the last moment. Consider the chronology:

- 10 June – Coronation tickets arrive
- 13 June – Elgar attends the first rehearsal at the Royal College of Music
- 16 June – Alice goes to Harrods to look for a dress
- 17 June – Elgar receives the OM offer and makes haste to accept
- 18 June – Schuster and others offer their congratulations
- 19 June – Elgar attends the second rehearsal, this one in Westminster Abbey

33 Pamela Blevins, *Ivor Gurney & Marion Scott* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 20.



**Fig. 6. Histed studio portrait photograph of Elgar taken in June 1911 wearing his OM decoration. Author’s archive.**

20 June – Elgar attends the third rehearsal during which peers & peeresses call out their OM congratulations  
21 June – Elgar tries on his court dress. Alice buys a veil and feather ‘in case’  
22 June – The Coronation service – the Elgars stay away

Although George V treated Elgar with unfailing graciousness, there was no comparable sovereign-troubadour tie of mutual esteem such as had existed between the previous King and the composer. In fact the relationship between Sir Edward and King George seemed ill-starred from the outset.

Elgar’s first failed encounter with the then Duke of York took place in 1894, when Worcester Cathedral’s organist Hugh Blair asked his friend for a composition to commemorate the duke’s forthcoming visit. Elgar produced *Sursam Corda* (Op. 11). After attending all the rehearsals, he missed the performance. The local press announced with deep regret that the composer was ill and unable to be present on doctor’s orders. *Sursum Corda* was not published until 1901, by which time the Duke of York had become the Prince of Wales. Elgar did not choose a dedicatee until the publication date. He could have approached Parratt for a royal dedication as he had done for *Caractacus* and would do for his *Coronation Ode*; instead he chose to dedicate the work to H. Dyke Acland, a golfing companion.

Having accepted the Coronation invitation on behalf of himself and Alice, it seems unchivalrous of Elgar to have refused to witness the enthronement of the monarch who had bestowed the coveted Order of Merit on him. Perhaps the composer did not credit George V with his election. Did Elgar believe the new sovereign was simply carrying out his father’s intention? Siegfried Sassoon thought so, judging by this March 1922 entry in his diary:

At one o’clock and in ‘spring-like weather’ I walk to the Reform Club. Passing the Athenaeum I meet Elgar. Of course this looks excellent on paper. ‘Met Elgar on the steps of the Athenaeum’ – a charming little vignette for posterity! – the almost venerable composer genially greeting a young fellow-artist. But – is it genuine stuff? you ask – isn’t it a little too appropriate that the encounter should take place so near the statue of Edward VII, august patron who conferred the O.M. (posthumously) in recognition of Sir Edward’s noble tribute to his royal memory [i.e. funeral march in Second Symphony]?<sup>34</sup>

Here we find another example of troubadour mythmaking to honour Edward VII. Elgar successfully encouraged the public belief that the Second Symphony’s funereal Larghetto had been purpose-composed as a lament for the loss of King Edward. In fact Elgar had sketched the movement before the king’s unforeseen demise.

A variety of adverse circumstances combined to numb Elgar’s enthusiasm for joining the coronation congregation. His health was good in 1911, but not his financial well-being. There had been rows over money with Novello all spring. ‘E. rather acutely feeling financial disappointments’ Alice confided to her diary on 9 June 1911. The fact that his two coronation service commissions were expected to

34 Siegfried Sassoon, *Diaries 1920-22*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Faber, 1981), 14 March 1922.

be contributed *gratis* deepened his financial misery. Novello had refused to pay a lump-sum copyright advance in favour of royalty payments on future sales. By 1914 only six copies of the score had been sold, earning the composer a derisory eleven shillings and three pence.

Then there was the disappointment evident in the Elgars’ rank-and-file placement for the service. The seats allocated to them in the Abbey were located far back in the south aisle of the nave, where they would have been unable to see anything of the ceremony. The prospect of enduring the seven-hour event seated on those bare mahogany stools specially made for the occasion must have daunted him. In July he wrote to Ivor Atkins: ‘Now we are in the thick of coronation things & a free fight is on as I refused to go to the Abbey – I loathe a crowd even to crown a King’.<sup>35</sup> Yet claustrophobia did not prevent him from attending the service of thanksgiving for the succession in St Paul’s Cathedral a week later. But there he was seated comfortably and honourably beside Parry in the choir.

Possibly what most prevented Elgar from attending the 1911 Coronation service was his pessimism – his sense that all that was good was now in the past. Undoubtedly he shared the view expressed by Lord Esher that with the death of King Edward, ‘all the old buoys which have marked the channel of our lives seem to have been swept away’.<sup>36</sup> If poignant proof were needed, Elgar found it in the reception of his Second Symphony. The composer’s particular pride in this work and his sense of its significance within his oeuvre are evident in his correspondence with two close female friends. ‘I have worked at fever heat and the thing is tremendous in energy’, Edward wrote to Alice Stuart Wortley on 29 January 1911.<sup>37</sup> Three days later, to Francis Colvin, he declared that he was ‘too busy with the “Spirit of Delight” symphony’ and cited the emotional effect of the composition process by quoting these lines from Shelley’s *Julian and Maddalo*: ‘I do but hide / Under these notes, like embers, every spark / Of that which has consumed me’.<sup>38</sup>

Alice shared her husband’s view that Elgar was creating something magisterial. In her diary (6 February 1911) she wrote of the slow movement: ‘Very great and impressive. A [herself] hears lament for King Edward and dear Rody in it, and all human feeling’. At the end of the month (28 February) she added, ‘E. finished his Symphony. It seems one of his very greatest works, vast in design and supremely beautiful’. The first-night audience disagreed. ‘What’s the matter with them Billy?’ Elgar cried out to the leader W. H. Reed. ‘They sit there like a lot of stuffed pigs’.<sup>39</sup> A few years before his listeners had roared their enthusiasm at the premiere of his First Symphony. Why not now?

In 1908 the mood of Elgar’s first symphony had matched the public mood,

35 Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1984), 218.

36 Reginald Brett, 2nd Viscount Esher, *The Journals and Letters of Lord Esher*, ed. Maurice V. Brett. (London: Ivor Nicolson and Watson, 1934-38), iv, 238.

37 Jerrold Northrop Moore, Edward Elgar. *The Windflower Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 75.

38 Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 127.

39 W.H. Reed, *Elgar* (The Master Musicians. London: Dent, 1946), 105.

reflecting an England basking in the golden-afternoon glow of the Edwardian zeitgeist, not unlike the mood prevailing in May 1911. 'The season from May to September 1911 was one of the high sunlit meadows of English history', wrote Juliet Nicolson: 'It was a time when England – rich, happy, self-indulgent and at least slightly decadent – felt most contently itself'.<sup>40</sup> A twelve-month period of official and social mourning had finally brought black-edged constraint to an end a fortnight before the Second Symphony premiere. Eagerly awaiting the forthcoming coronation, the public mood was one of long-live-the-king jubilation. Weather patterns mirrored the mood. An unusually chilly April had given way to an unseasonably warm May. Siegfried Sassoon saw in the balmy May 1911 weather the onset of 'one of those specially remembered summers from which one evolves a consistent impression of commingled happiness'.<sup>41</sup> As for the music of the moment, in the spring and early summer of 1911 Osbert Sitwell remembered 'an air of gaiety, unusual in northern climates prevailed ... Music flowed with the lightness and flash of water under the striped awnings and from the balconies'.<sup>42</sup> But not Elgar's music. Lightness and contentment had no place in his new masterpiece. Tranquillity and delight, yes, but Elgar's untimely intention was that these sensations should be reached after a complex and intricate journey through a labyrinth of 'all human feeling'. 'The spirit of the work is intended to be high and pure joy', he wrote, 'there are retrospective passages of sadness but the whole of the sorrow is smoothed out & ennobled in the last movement, which ends in a calm &, *I hope and intend*, elevated mood'.<sup>43</sup> Both the audience and the critics marked the melancholy rather than the joy, hearing apprehension looming over extremes of elation and despair in the Larghetto and the Rondo. For Edward the troubadour, the king was dead. Why could he not simply follow the crowd in its joyous transference of loyalty to the next incarnation of the Crown?

A diminutive, red-faced King George V and his unsmiling Queen Mary, together with their dour inner court, presented a sombre contrast to the glittering exuberance of Edward VII, Queen Alexandra, and their courtiers. Gone were the aesthetically-minded social lions and musically-inclined royal family members with whom Edward VII had surrounded himself. King George failed to inherit his father's love of opera or Edward VII's general regard for the social blessings of music. Consider this entry in George V's diary: 'Went to Covent Garden and saw Fidelio, and d—d dull it was'.<sup>44</sup> The king's taste in music inclined to the melodies of *The Merry Widow* and *No, No, Nanette*. One day during the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace the Grenadier Guards decided to vary their routine musical fare by playing extracts from Strauss's *Elektra*. The performance elicited the following message from the Monarch to the bandmaster: 'His Majesty does not know what the band has just

40 Juliet Nicolson, *The Perfect Summer* (London: John Murray, 2006), 1.

41 Siegfried Sassoon, *The Weald of Youth* (London: Faber, 1942), 23.

42 Osbert Sitwell, *Great Morning* (London: Macmillan, 1948), 101.

43 Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, 741.

44 Kenneth Rose, *King George V* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), 319.

played, but it is *never* to be played again'.<sup>45</sup> George V preferred Johann Strauss to Richard Strauss. 'Everything seems so hopelessly and irredeemably *vulgar* at Court', Elgar lamented to Alice Stuart Wortley.<sup>46</sup>

The king's appreciation for Elgar's music seems to have waxed and waned with the length of each composition. *For the Fallen* was the desirable length, and the king appeared visibly moved during the work's first London performance at the Queen's Hall on 7 May 1916. But the programme also included a performance of *Gerontius* the length of which left His Majesty visibly restless. Lady Elgar was not amused! Edward VII's successor preferred to acknowledge the nation's composers with honours rather than ardour. He had no taste for the music of Frederick Delius, yet he personally requested that Delius be made a Companion of Honour in 1929. George V would express his continuing esteem for Elgar by conferring two more orders of chivalry on him. In 1928 Elgar was made a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order. In 1933 the king upgraded the troubadour to Knight Grand Cross, the highest rank of the RVO. Up to that time and for many years afterward, Elgar was the only artist ever to have been so honoured. Unlike the 1904 Knight Bachelorhood and the 1931 Baronetcy, honours granted by the Government and merely endorsed by the sovereign, the KCVO and the GCVO together with the OM were the monarch's alone to give. How did Elgar respond to these manifest marks of Royal favour?

For a start the composer never dedicated a single work to George V during his reign. Although he accepted numerous invitations to dine with the king and attend his levees, Elgar nonetheless appears to have held in low esteem the cultural capacities of the king and his court. Consider Sir Edward's response to a request to contribute a miniature manuscript to Sir Edwin Lutyens' dolls' house being built as a birthday present from the nation to Queen Mary in 1922. Siegfried Sassoon's diary puts us in the picture:

The subject provoked an outburst from Elgar; he delivered himself of a petulant tirade which culminated in a crescendo climax of rudeness... "We all know the King and Queen are incapable of appreciating anything artistic; they've never asked for the full score of my Second Symphony to be added to the library at Windsor. But as the crown of my career I'm asked to contribute to – a DOLLS HOUSE for the QUEEN!..."<sup>47</sup>

Elgar's outcry seems churlishly inaccurate. Two days before George V's Coronation, Sir John Fortescue, the librarian at Windsor, *did* write to the composer (Letter 9116) requesting 'a specimen of your manuscript for the Royal Collection'. Elgar could have responded with the score of his E flat major symphony; instead he sent the manuscript of 'O Harken Thou', receiving in reply a warm note of thanks from Sir John for 'a most welcome addition to the Royal Library, peculiarly interesting and peculiarly appropriate' (Letter 9117).

Elgar saw further evidence of vulgarity in the Court's declared intention to

45 Ibid.

46 Moore, Edward Elgar. *The Windflower Letters*, 289.

47 Sassoon, *Diaries 1920-22*, 4 June 1922.

abolish the office of Master of the King's Musick when Parratt died in 1924. He wrote in protest to the king's private secretary asserting, as he put it in a letter to Lady Stuart Wortley, that 'its suppression wd. have a very bad effect abroad – where the effacement of the last shred of connection of the Court with the Art wd. not be understood'.<sup>48</sup> The Palace reversed course and preserved the post when Elgar offered himself as Parratt's successor.

His low opinion of King George's taste in music notwithstanding, Elgar's correspondence indicates an abiding respect for his sovereign. Alan Webb tells us the first objects he observed on entering Marl Bank were the silver-framed photographs of the king and queen placed proudly on the sitting room mantle shelf. At the Three Choirs meetings of the 1920s and 1930s, Elgar habitually conducted in court dress. A photograph of the composer with Percy Hull, organist of Hereford Cathedral, at the 1933 Festival presents Sir Edward Elgar, Baronet of Broadheath, in his court suit, proudly displaying his baronetcy badge as well as the Broad Ribbon, Star and Badge of the GCVO and round his neck the Order of Merit medallion (fig. 7).

Pride of place for the royal photographic portraits demonstrated a knight's loyalty to his king; the Second Symphony's tribute to King Edward demonstrated something more deeply personal. Percy Young wrote that Edward Elgar's 'gratitude and deepest affection' were reserved for two categories of relationships: '...those who first helped him – Hubert Leicester, Hugh Blair, Troyte Griffith, Frank Schuster'; and '...those who could treat him with natural equality – King Edward, Aylwin the Sussex farmer, Lindsay Macarthur, Lord Charles Beresford ...'.<sup>49</sup>

Timing proved decisive. Providence catapulted Edward VII and Edward the troubadour onto the world stage at roughly the same moment, offering each the opportunity to reinvent himself. For the reprobate prince reinvention produced monarchical greatness; for the provincial musician reinvention brought international acclaim as the greatest British composer since Purcell. Both brought to their new standing painful memories of perceived youthful injustices, but neither would have contradicted Churchill's observation that 'Kites fly highest against the wind, not with it'. Elgar's rapport with King Edward was made possible by HM's 'amazing simplicity' that enabled him to put people at their ease, according to the memoirs of Lord Ormathwaite, Master of Ceremonies to Edward VII. 'This great King', he wrote, 'grandiose and magnificent in so many outward ways, yet had the inward simplicity of a little child'.<sup>50</sup> At once grandiose and childlike – the combination must have seemed compellingly attractive to a composer whose music is replete with the notions of nobility and innocence.

In musical laureate terms, Elgar came to possess his own ennobling powers. Any monarch could raise any commoner to the peerage, but Edward the composer could raise the most obscure person to a level of lasting renown by conferring on him or her the patent of nobility as a dedicatee. Consider for example our interest in the profiles of 'my friends pictured within' from his 'Enigma' Variations. For those who

48 Moore, *Edward Elgar. The Windflower Letters*, 289.

49 Young, *Elgar O.M.*, 256.

50 Arthur Henry John Walsh, Baron Ormathwaite, *When I was at Court* (London: Hutchinson, 1937), 9.



Fig. 7. Photo of Elgar with Percy Hull at the west door of Hereford Cathedral prior to the opening service of Sir Edward's last Three Choirs Festival. Elgar is seen here in court dress wearing his decorations. Author's archive.

admire Elgar's compositions, who among us does not feel momentarily ennobled by the sonorities of his greatest works? I once asked the composer Howard Ferguson for his most vivid memories of Elgar. Ferguson replied that his clearest recollections derived from his encounters with the composer in the 1920s, when they were fellow houseguests of Edward and Antonia Speyer at Ridgehurst. The young man observed that, whenever the composer entered a room, everyone in that room stood up and treated Sir Edward with forms of deference Ferguson had heretofore seen accorded only to royalty.

What would the first-night audience have made of Elgar's Second Symphony had the premiere taken place a month or two earlier, when the British Empire was draped in mourning; or a month or two later, when a devastating dock strike coupled with the German gunboat menace of Morocco, as well as the hottest summer on record, had shrivelled the memory of that gentle late-spring inclination to complacent pleasure? He had dedicated his symphony 'to the Memory of His late Majesty King Edward VII' in order to acknowledge the encouragement he received from 'that sweet tempered King-Man' and to mark the melancholic coincidence that his symphony happened to address the significance of Edward VII's passing, a significance summed up by Barbara Tuchman in her commentary on the Royal funeral procession:

The muffled tongue of Big Ben tolled nine by the clock as the cortege left the palace, but on history's clock it was sunset, and the sun of the old world was setting in a dying blaze of splendour never to be seen again.<sup>51</sup>

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51 Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (London: Robinson, 2000), 1.

## A Young Friend of Elgar: Alban Cloughton (1876-1969)

**Valerie Langfield**

'A friend, a young one – Alban Cloughton of Worcester Cathedral has, I hear, obtained the organistship at Giggleswick [Hotel]. I hope you will soon know him: I am telling him of you.'<sup>1</sup> So wrote Elgar to Dr Buck on 16 December 1905. Evidently he knew the young man well; Alban turns up in Elgar's Worcester Philharmonic, playing the cymbals.<sup>2</sup>

Alban was named after his grandfather, Thomas Legh Cloughton, who in 1877 became the first Bishop of St Alban's when the new diocese was created by being separated from Rochester. Thomas Legh Cloughton was born in 1808, married the Hon. Julia Susanna Ward, daughter of the 10th Baron Ward, on 14 June 1842, and in 1867, having been vicar of Kidderminster for 26 years, became Bishop of Rochester. He died in 1892 and was buried in the churchyard at St Alban's Cathedral; there is a memorial to him within the abbey church.<sup>3</sup> The family, landed gentry, at one time owned the colliery at Winwick, Cheshire. Thomas Legh's father, Thomas Cloughton of Haydock Lodge, was a lawyer, and from 1818 to 1825 Tory MP for Newton; he married Maria, the daughter of Thomas Peter Legh of Lyme (also known as Lyme Hall), Cheshire.

Thomas Legh Cloughton had five sons and four daughters. One son was Gilbert (1856–1921), later Sir Gilbert, Chairman of the London North Western Railway Company; an older son, Alban's father, was also Thomas Legh (1847–1915). He was a Canon at Worcester Cathedral from 1886 until his death, having previously been

- 1 Percy Young, *Letters of Edward Elgar* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), 165. Elgar's letter is dated 16 December 1905; the whereabouts of the original are unknown, so that it is not possible to say whether Elgar refers to a 'Hostel' or a 'Hotel'. However, enquiries at Giggleswick School reveal that the building housing the boarders was called the 'Hotel'.
- 2 Young, *Letters of Edward Elgar*, 89; E. Wulstan Atkins, *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1984), 69, 73; Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar, A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 228, 407-8, 701. These also contain references to Alban's father, Canon Thomas Cloughton. I am greatly indebted to Mrs Beryl Cloughton for much of the personal information in this article.
- 3 C. W. Sutton, 'Cloughton, Thomas Legh (1808–1892)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5550>, accessed 24 February 2009]. This is the source for all personal information about Bishop Cloughton and his forebears.

vicar at Kidderminster, like his father.<sup>4</sup> The Canon had taken the usual family route to Oxford, where he took a third-class degree in history and law at Trinity College in 1870. He married Henrietta Louisa Horatia St John Mildmay (1852–1927) on 15 February 1876. William Thomas Alban Cloughton was born on 21 December that year. Alban was thus born before his grandfather was made Bishop of St Alban's, but the proposal for the new see had been made in 1875 and Thomas Legh the elder must have known for some time that he would be offered – and would accept – the seat.

From childhood Alban was nicknamed 'Bungie' or 'Bungey'; many others of his family also had curious nicknames. He shared his uncle's interest in railways.<sup>5</sup> His brother Harold was born on 28 September 1882; a third child, Susan Helena, was born in 1890. In later years Harold had a house in Snowdonia, from which he and Alban would go rough-walking, and they used to try to learn Welsh. He was appointed Principal of London University in 1943 (having been Acting Principal since 1941), and was knighted in 1948; he married Helen Henschel (1882–1973, daughter of George Henschel, the conductor and singer) in 1913, though later they separated.

Alban's family moved to Worcester when he was ten. His father, at one time Chairman of the Music Committee of the Worcester Musical Festival, was a good amateur violinist, playing with various local orchestras, including the Three Choirs Festival of 1890, and he took Elgar, whom he felt was acutely aware that his own father was a mere tradesman, under his wing. In 1902 he was very much involved in the discussions concerning the doctrinal problems of performing *The Dream of Gerontius* in an Anglican cathedral, and he worked hard to resolve them; he was supportive of Elgar at every turn. He may not have been the only musical Canon at Worcester: Mandell Creighton (1843–1901), later Bishop of London, was a contemporary, and even if he himself was not especially musical, his son Walter certainly was. Walter had violin lessons from Elgar and trained as a singer; Mandell Creighton's sister-in-law was Mimi von Glehn, to whom George Grove was devoted. Canon Cloughton's wife was godmother to Wulstan, the son of Ivor Atkins, the organist of Worcester Cathedral for over half a century.

Elgar and Alban Cloughton would go for bicycle rides, and Alban recalled later that Elgar would play his 'tunes' to him, calling him to 'Come and listen to this!' Alban went to Radley College, Abingdon, near Oxford, as had many of his family, including his father and uncles William (1846–60) and Piers Leopold (1850–1939). Church music was key at Radley, arising from the school's roots as an offshoot of the Oxford Movement. It may have helped, too, that Alban was placed in the house of George Wharton, the Precentor and also an organist. He refused to go up to Oxford, and instead went to the Royal College of Music in London for the academic year

4 He held the 8th Canonry and lived at 1 College Yard. He was buried in College Garth, in the middle of the cloisters. Family lore says that he was at nearby Holbeach, where Guy Fawkes conspired with his collaborators, but the archives at Worcester Cathedral, describe him as Vicar at Kidderminster from 1880-1887.

5 Both Alban and Gilbert are mentioned in O.S. Nock's autobiography *Line Clear Ahead* (Patrick Stephens: Cambridge, 1982).

1895–6, living at 34 Onslow Gardens, SW. His career there was undistinguished: piano was his first study (he was noted for his fine touch), and organ second, though he appears to have stopped organ lessons by Christmas 1895. He also took harmony classes.

It is not clear what Alban did in the three years after leaving the RCM, but in 1899 he succeeded Charles de Sousa as organist at Malvern Priory. This was evidently the time described by Jerrold Northrop Moore, in which Ina Pelly (the daughter of Canon Raymond Pelly, vicar of Malvern from 1896) fell in love with Alban; the love was unrequited, and he is not known to have spoken of her again.<sup>6</sup> Frederic Wadely succeeded him as organist in 1904.<sup>7</sup> In January 1906, armed with the introduction from Elgar to Dr Percy Buck, one of the musical luminaries of the area, he became music master at Giggleswick School. There he was 'paid from fees received from his pupils'.<sup>8</sup> He paid a sixth of those fees to the School, and he received board and lodging.<sup>9</sup> In 1907 he began to work for his ARCO (Associate of the Royal College of Organists); he passed it in 1909 and took his FRCO in 1912, though his membership lapsed in 1915, probably through not renewing his subscription.<sup>10</sup> He had ample organ-playing opportunity at Giggleswick, with a choice of two instruments, the Willis organ in the chapel and the Hyde Memorial organ in Big School.

Alban met his future wife, Georgina Gladys Aked (a relation of the composer Edward Bairstow), in Giggleswick. They were married on 11 March 1916, at which point he was given an allowance of £50 in lieu of board and lodging. However at Easter that year he left to train with the 10th Officer Cadet Unit in Gales, Scotland, and returned after the war, having served in France.<sup>11</sup> Their twin sons Ronald Alban and Paul were born on 28 December 1918, but Paul lived only a week.

Alban performed in many school concerts during his tenure, and also appears to have been a competent cricketer in the staff-pupil matches. He left Giggleswick in 1924. The school magazine claimed he was to be organist at St Paul's, Derby, but this cannot be confirmed; he was however choirmaster and organist at St Luke's Derby, which had a fine organ by Isaac Abbott, although he left there in August 1925, after which the post was divided between organist and choirmaster.<sup>12</sup> From 1926–48 he was organist at the Church of St Peter, Bushey Heath, Hertfordshire, living

6 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar. A Creative Life* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 701.

7 <http://www.malvernprioryorgan.org.uk/>, accessed 31 August 2009; follow the link to Priory Organists.

8 Email from Barbara Gent (Giggleswick School) to the author, 25 February 2009.

9 Email from Ian Roberts, 9 September 2009. I am very grateful to Mr Roberts for allowing me to make use of his researches (for a forthcoming publication) into the history of the school.

10 Email from Andrew McCrea (Royal College of Organists), 18 June 2009.

11 Ian Roberts, collection of biographies of staff at Giggleswick School; forthcoming publication.

12 Joan D'Arcy & Jane Steer, *St Luke's Church, Derby* (St Luke's Church, 2008).

at Langdale, Little Bushey Lane. In September 1928, he took up a post as organist and Director of Music at what was then known as St Saviour's School, Ardingly (now Ardingly College, Haywards Heath, Sussex). By September 1929 he had left; perhaps the journey between Sussex and Hertfordshire proved too arduous. He taught piano until his retirement, a kind teacher, described by a former pupil as 'full of fun'.<sup>13</sup>

Following the death of his wife on 5 September 1948, Alban moved to Sansbury Place, Duke Street, Settle, to live with her sister Olive Aked. He converted to Roman Catholicism; the reasons are unknown, though one might speculate (probably wildly) about an Elgarian influence of prolonged gestation. It is alleged that he converted after the death of his wife, but it is also claimed that he converted while at Bushey Heath. Certainly he attended the Salvatorian College in Harrow Weald, for lessons, and perhaps he chose not to let this be known, in view of his position at an Anglican church.

Once in Settle, he re-established himself in musical circles, and it was probably in 1951 that he met Roger Quilter. Quilter's songs are a staple of the English art-song repertoire; many have never been out of print, and there is a distinct canon of about 20. He was born in 1877, fifth child and third son of William Cuthbert (later Sir Cuthbert) Quilter, a very wealthy stockbroker and landowner. Roger Quilter went to Eton, then in 1896 to the Frankfurt Conservatory to study piano with Ernest Engesser and composition with Ivan Knorr. Back in London, he maintained a small household. His housekeeping couple, Harry and Ada Heaton, had begun to work for him in 1942 and looked after him until his death. After the war, they paid regular family visits to Settle, and they took Quilter with them since he was incapable of looking after himself, partly because of perpetual illness, but chiefly because of his upbringing.

In these later years, Quilter befriended a number of musicians around the country, both amateur and professional, and frequently gave them copies of his music, either printed (usually signed) or songs copied especially, sometimes in keys other than those normally available, sometimes in special arrangements, or else manuscripts he simply happened to have. Over the last two or three years of his life, he gave Alban Claughton a number of manuscripts and printed copies of songs and piano music. This is an important collection: most of the manuscripts are in Quilter's hand, though some are in that of his personal secretary Leslie Woodgate (1902–61), conductor and composer, who had studied at the RCM. Some manuscripts show slight signs of having been used in performance; some may simply have been copies made especially to give, and some may be the final copies before publication, or else the copy just prior to that. Most are inscribed to Alban Claughton, with

13 He was also a generous teacher; the same pupil, Paul Wigmore, 'on hearing the news of the invasion of Sicily, wrote (the air only!) a military march and called it "Sicilian Victory". Mr Claughton very kindly took it, harmonised it and played it for me on the St Peter's organ. In October, 1943, I was called up and while at RAF Cardington I showed it to the Bandmaster. He liked it, wrote out the band parts and the Station Band thereupon adopted it. I heard it played several times on the march before I was posted away to Skegness for Initial Training. (There, the Pier Pavilion organist took a copy and played it nightly, side drums, cymbals and all!). (Email from Paul Wigmore, 17 November 2009.)

increasing degrees of warmth and affection. They are now at the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale, which has a growing archive of Quilter material, though the main repositories of Quilter manuscripts are the British Library and, for songs published by Boosey or Boosey & Hawkes, the publishers' archive; these latter MSS are the proof copies. Other collections are in private hands, the owners almost always having a connection with Quilter.

After Olive Aked's death, Alban Claughton went to live with his son Ronald and daughter-in-law Beryl in Sale, Cheshire, but two or three years later, his brother Harold arranged for him to move to a residential care home in Queensgate Terrace, Kensington, where he died on 26 February 1969. A service was held in London, but, according to his wishes, his ashes were buried in his wife's grave in Settle. His brother Harold died a few months later, in May.

Alban Claughton wrote a little music, mostly songs. The following (all songs except the canticles) were published:

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, Weekes & Co., 1898  
*A Love Symphony* (A. O'Shaughnessy), Enoch & Sons, 1902  
*The Nightingale* (C.F. Grindrod), Boosey & Co., 1902  
*Cradle Song* (Tennyson), Weekes & Co., [1903]  
*In the Wood* (A.A. Procter), Boosey & Co., 1905

There are also several unpublished but highly competent songs, piano music and other items, dating from the 1950s.

Alban Claughton particularly enjoyed playing for silent films, and is known to have played in Watford, at the Gaumont Cinema in High Street and possibly the New Gallery Cinema in Regent Street. He used his experience in that field to enliven the Psalms and Canticles during Matins and Evensong with musical interpretations of thunder, lightning and storms. He was easy-going and utterly impractical; he had a strong sense of humour and an inability to worry (his wife apparently undertook that duty). Although he came from a family with a well-developed awareness of social position and responsibility, he himself showed no interest in such matters. But he was kind to Roger Quilter, who evidently found in him a sympathetic and very discreet soul.

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**Alban Claughton, his wife, and granddaughter. Reproduced by kind permission of Mrs Beryl Claughton.**

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## Tales from the Complete Edition - 3: Hope and Glory? It's the Pitt's

**John Norris**

What is a complete edition? The guiding principle is clear: a complete edition should aim to encompass every last scrap of a composer's music and, where a piece has undergone revisions in the composer's own hand, it should aim to represent his final thoughts on the piece. Pity the editors of the Bruckner Complete Edition, having to rationalise the endless revisions he made to his symphonies. With the obvious exception of *The Starlight Express* (as described in the last issue), this is far less of a problem for the editors of the Elgar Complete Edition; Elgar, having completed a work, was more inclined to move on. So the Elgar Complete Edition will contain:

- all of Elgar's original compositions, including drafts, sketches and fragments of unfinished and unpublished works
- his arrangements of works by other composers
- no arrangements of works by Elgar made by others

That is the principle; the practicalities of applying it to the Complete Edition are inevitably more complex.

First, what do we do for those works for which Elgar's full score has been lost, or never completed? For Volume 22 (Powick Music), published in 2008, the editor was able to reconstruct the full score of each piece from the surviving part-books; a similar approach is envisaged with the contemporaneous wind quintet music. For Volume 18 (*The Crown of India*), a more disparate selection of music survives: just two numbers ('Hail! Immemorial Ind!' and the 'Crown of India' March) from the full score to the masque; the suite of five numbers which Elgar prepared, or at least approved, for subsequent publication; plus a handful of manuscript sketches. But the fate of the complete full score remains uncertain, presumed destroyed. In order to show the scope of Elgar's complete score, it was considered preferable to make an exception to the general rule and reproduce Hugh Blair's piano transcription of the masque, commissioned and published by Novello with Elgar's obvious approval.

The reverse applies when we come to the volume containing Elgar's Third Symphony, as the parallels with *The Crown of India* – a fragmentary score in Elgar's hand; a much fuller score in another hand – are superficial. We know that Blair based his piano transcription on Elgar's full score, whereas Payne had to rely on

his imagination to fill the gaps left by Elgar. So, while Blair's transcription takes us closer to Elgar's achievement, Payne's realisation of the Third Symphony takes us beyond what Elgar achieved. The Third Symphony volume of the Complete Edition will confine itself to Elgar's unelaborated sketches.

Elgar's five piano improvisations of 1929 present a particular dilemma. Elgar committed nothing to paper; all we have are the recordings themselves. Whether a set of improvisations *should* be transcribed for publication in a complete edition is a debatable point. Although Iain Farrington has made an excellent, precise transcription, recently published by Novello, of the notes played by Elgar in his recordings, it is impossible to say whether Elgar played the notes he intended or would himself have written down.<sup>1</sup> Would he have regarded the recordings as his final thoughts or just a first draft? It is not our job to second-guess Elgar's unfulfilled intentions. Our thoughts at present are that we cannot do better than to republish, as a part of the Complete Edition, the recordings themselves.

Having filled the gaps in the written record, the rest, you might think, should be easy. Far from it: for those works available in a variety of arrangements, the most difficult aspect is distinguishing Elgar's contribution to each arrangement. The Elgar-Payne Third Symphony and the Elgar-Walker Piano Concerto may offer no challenge. But there were the uncertainties which until recently surrounded Henry Geehl's contribution to the (original) brass band version of the Severn Suite.<sup>2</sup> These recently surfaced in these pages in relation to the original brass band arrangement (by Frank Winterbottom, not Elgar) of *With Proud Thanksgiving*.<sup>3</sup> Such uncertainties extend to many of the smaller works which exist in more than one arrangement; we know that Elgar composed the original version, but we cannot always be certain which is the original version, nor whether subsequent versions were made by Elgar himself or whether the task was delegated to others such as the Novello house arranger.

The 'Canto popolare' from *In the South* provides a well documented example. Faced with the challenge of maximising income from Elgar's concert overture, Novello published the 'Canto popolare' separately in an arrangement for small orchestra, in versions for six other instrumental combinations, and as *In Moonlight*, Elgar's setting to the already composed music of verses from Shelley's poem 'An ariette for Music'. Fortunately, the General Editor does not have to address the thorny question of whether it is worth publishing each of the nine extant versions (including the original overture) across six different volumes of the Complete Edition, because it is known that four of the arrangements are not by Elgar: however good or original they may be, those for viola, cello, and clarinet (each with piano accompaniment), and for organ (by Brewer) simply do not qualify for inclusion. That still leaves us with arrangements for small orchestra, solo piano, violin and piano, and *In Moonlight*, all from Elgar's own hand, which justifies separate publication in the appropriate

1 Edward Elgar, transcribed Iain Farrington: *Five Improvisations* (London: Novello, 2006), reviewed in this Journal, 15/2 (July 2007), 61–3, where it is suggested that, indeed, Elgar may have played 'wrong notes'.

2 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.

3 John Norris, 'Tales from the Complete Edition: or what *did* Elgar write?', this Journal 15/6 (November 2008), 16–17.

volume in addition to the full orchestral original from which they are derived.

Admittedly, the 'Canto popolare' is exceptional. But recent work for the Complete Edition has unearthed some surprising results. If asked, most would probably say that, apart from *Sea Pictures*, Elgar provided orchestral accompaniments for eight of his solo songs: *The Wind at Dawn*, *Land of Hope and Glory*, *Pleading*, *The Torch*, *The River*, and the three Gilbert Parker settings of Op. 59. Although orchestral accompaniments to other solo songs exist, these are generally assumed to be the work of other arrangers – 'assumed' because Elgar's publishers, believing that the composer's name offered better sales prospects, often underplayed the role of the house arranger. But research for the Complete Edition has recently confirmed orchestral accompaniments in Elgar's own hand for *The Pipes of Pan* and *Follow the Colours* (also known as *Marching Song*, but that's another story, resolved below).

The sheet music of *A Soldier's Song* (later called *A War Song*) also advertises the availability of accompanying orchestral parts, the originals of which we have as yet to run to earth. If we are successful in doing so, we may yet be disappointed to find that they are not Elgar's own. But if it did turn out to be another orchestral accompaniment by Elgar himself, this would bring the total (again excluding *Sea Pictures*) to ... well no, not eleven, only ten, because perhaps the most surprising aspect is that *Land of Hope and Glory* in all its orchestral splendour, arguably Elgar's most popular work, is actually not by Elgar at all. True, Elgar composed *Pomp and Circumstance* March No.1 and then re-used the trio to provide the core of the Finale of the *Coronation Ode*. But when pressed by his publishers to turn it into a solo song for Clara Butt to perform on stage, the 'National Song' with the words familiar today, Elgar provided only a piano accompaniment. The task of cobbling together an orchestral accompaniment, no doubt drawing on the pre-existing orchestration for the March and the *Coronation Ode* finale, was delegated to Elgar's friend Percy Pitt. So the work will appear in Volume 16 (the second volume of 'Solo Songs with Piano Accompaniment') but not in Volume 13 (the volume of 'Solo Songs with Orchestral Accompaniment').

What if Elgar had completed both versions? Where Elgar has provided several arrangements of a work, do we publish them all? The first consideration is whether the arrangements are sufficiently different from each other. If all nine versions of the 'Canto popolare' had been by Elgar himself, it seems unlikely that the four arrangements for solo instrument with piano accompaniment would differ in anything more significant than the wording on the cover and, where necessary, a change of clef or key. And the separately-published orchestral interludes from *Falstaff* are no more than cut-and-paste jobs, identical to the original in every respect, so there is nothing to be gained by including them independently in the Complete Edition.

The ultimately successful search for orchestral parts to *Follow the Colours/Marching Song* threw up two unexpected discoveries. The biographical literature records that the song was first published in 1908 as a part-song under the title *Marching Song*, the more imaginative title of *Follow the Colours* being added only on republication by Novello six years later as a solo song with optional male chorus refrain. And yet there are only minimal differences between the two versions, both unison songs in which tenors and basses reinforce only selected phrases. It seems that republication involved little more than lowering the music a semitone, cutting

a few isolated bars from the instrumental introduction and linking passages, and removing the word 'UNISON' from what was to become the solo line. Even the title remained unchanged, with *Follow the Colours* appearing emblazoned across the 1908 sheet music, the only version which will appear in full in the Complete Edition.

A second consideration, applying to works for which we have both a piano arrangement and an orchestral score, is whether Elgar prepared the piano arrangement for intended publication or simply as a short score compositional draft en route to the orchestral version. Elgar's own piano arrangement of the 'Enigma' Variations is well known: Novello published it in advance of the work's premiere and it has now been recorded several times. And yet expert opinion is that, like the similar cello-and-piano arrangement of the Cello Concerto, it is no more than a by-product of Elgar's compositional method, never intended for publication at the time Elgar committed it to paper. Neither piano arrangement will therefore be published in its own right in the Complete Edition, their main value being to illuminate the orchestral versions into which they matured.

But, no doubt to improve his income from royalties, Elgar did make alternative arrangements, most commonly for solo piano and for small orchestra, not just of the 'Canto popolare' but of many of his salon pieces such as *Carissima*, *May Song*, the two *Chansons* and *Sospiri*. Here, where the instrumentation of the arrangements obviously differs and we are sure both are by Elgar himself, both versions will appear in the Complete Edition. In which volumes, however?

Another of the Edition's general principles is to seek to group within each volume works requiring similar forces, placing the arrangements for small orchestra in Volume 23, those for solo piano in Volume 35 alongside works such as the *Concert Allegro* and *In Smyrna*, while the violin-and-piano arrangements have already been published in Volume 37 ('Music for Violin'). But in some cases an over-strict application of this principle will lead to nonsensical results, scattering arrangements which are clearly best placed together across a multiplicity of volumes. Nowhere is this more apparent than for the songs for the 1924 *Pageant of Empire*, itself a widely misunderstood event. The songs survive in a variety of arrangements, some for solo voice, others in part-song arrangements, with orchestral accompaniments surviving for just two of the songs. The next article in this series will provide a fuller account of the songs Elgar wrote for the *Pageant*. All we need say here is that, for the Complete Edition to provide an integrated account of the songs, they must all be published in the same volume, whatever forces the surviving music is written for.

Elgar's songs present two particularly intractable problems: when is a solo song not a solo song?, and what constitutes an orchestral accompaniment? The original scheme for the Complete Edition divides the entire Elgar oeuvre into six series, with the second series comprising four volumes of songs: one of unaccompanied part-songs and unison songs; one of solo songs with orchestral accompaniment; and two of solo songs with piano accompaniment. Somewhat perversely, symmetry was avoided by placing *Pageant of Empire*, *From the Bavarian Highlands*, and the three individual part-songs with orchestral accompaniment (*Spanish Serenade*, *The Snow*, and *Fly, Singing Bird*) in the first series, devoted to choral works, despite most of the *Pageant* songs being for solo voice and the unaccompanied part-songs in the second-series volume being as much choral as their accompanied bed-fellows in

the first series. But this is an anomaly we can live with.

The more imponderable dilemmas relate to songs such as *Land of Hope and Glory*, *Follow the Colours*, and *Fight for Right*, solo songs with a choral refrain, in some cases optional; and choral songs such as *A Christmas Greeting*, *The Snow* (in its original version), and *The Birthright* for which Elgar provided an instrumental accompaniment for less than orchestral forces. The dilemma arises because we are faced with a continuum into which we must introduce somewhat arbitrary divisions between volumes: how many bars of choral refrain must a solo song have before we consider it to be a unison song? And while the two violins and a piano which Elgar employed in his original accompaniment to *The Snow* cannot stand comparison with the orchestral forces to which he later turned, the larger if unconventional forces employed in *The Birthright* (bugles and drums) and *So many true princesses* (military band) are less easily dismissed: why should a string orchestra be considered 'orchestral' when a military band, with a greater variety of instruments, is not?

Faced with such dilemmas, we have adopted a pragmatic approach, driven by the desire to keep all volumes to a manageable size. With the volume of unaccompanied part-songs and unison songs threatening to expand out of control if we admit all pretenders, we have agreed to exercise discretion by steering works away from this volume: the part-songs with an instrumental accompaniment by less than full orchestral forces will appear alongside their big sisters in the *Bavarian Highlands* volume of accompanied choral songs, while a few bars of unison choral refrain will not be sufficient to exclude *Land of Hope and Glory* from the appropriate volume of (predominantly) solo songs with a piano accompaniment.

The constant fear of publishers of complete editions is that a new work or manuscript will be discovered after the volume in which it should logically appear has been published (or – a greater dilemma – after the pages have been printed but not yet bound). Not a particularly likely occurrence for the Elgar Complete Edition, you might think, when so many researchers have put so much effort delving into the most obscure of Elgarian sources. And yet the *March for the Grafton Family*, Elgar's piano trio version of the *Empire March*, escaped publication in the 'Chamber Music' volume, arguably an editorial decision in that the trio was no more than a compositional draft for the orchestral march, although this seems unlikely. There also remain significant works – *The Crown of India*, *Pageant of Empire*, the *Severn Suite* among others – for which the manuscript orchestral full score remains unlocated but is not known to have been destroyed, so that the possibility remains that these manuscripts found their way into private hands and may one day re-emerge, or that a set of orchestral parts may be discovered in some bandmaster's archive. And the more conventional archives may still hold secrets waiting to be unearthed, as recent research at the British Library has shown.

Possibly the most significant discovery so far has been a manuscript in Elgar's hand containing his orchestration of the hymn tune 'Darwell', to which the words 'Rejoice the Lord is King' are usually sung, as written on the manuscript. G.R. Sinclair's name also appears on a bookplate accompanying the manuscript, suggesting not only that he at one time held the manuscript but that Elgar provided the orchestration for performance at a Hereford Three Choirs Festival. The manuscript appears in a bound volume at the British Library which also contains a number of other, familiar

works. Why Elgar's orchestration has previously escaped notice remains a mystery, but it is a matter of some relief that its natural home in the Complete Edition is in a volume yet to be published.

The search for orchestral parts to *Follow the Colours* led to a manuscript score clearly headed *Marching Song* in Elgar's hand. This was a short (19-bar) part-song with regular phrasing (as would befit a marching song) and piano accompaniment, but it was not *Follow the Colours*: the words were unfamiliar and the vast majority of Elgar's part-songs are unaccompanied, leading initially to the thought that this might be a sketch for a previously unknown and unpublished part-song for which, like *Spanish Serenade* and the two part-songs of Op. 26, Elgar was planning an accompaniment for two violins and piano. Fortunately, Brian Trowell was able to identify the words as belonging to *The Birthright*, leading to the revised assumption that this was a fair draft of the relevant verse before Elgar had added the accompaniment for bugles and drums.

This is not the only work whose original title gave Elgar cause for second thought. It is well known that Elgar's *Ave Verum Corpus* was a 1902 resetting of an earlier (1887) work, *Pie Jesu*, yet the 1887 manuscript carries a different title, *Offertorium* (not to be confused with *Offertoire*, his 1903 *Andante religioso* for violin and piano). And *Enina*, a title only familiar to us since David Owen Norris's 2003 recording of the waltz for solo piano bearing that name, also appears at the head of a sizeable orchestral manuscript subtitled 'Music to a Children's Play' which, on closer inspection, turns out to be an advanced draft of his first *Wand of Youth* suite. Does this mean that Elgar was at this point considering calling the whole suite 'Enina', as its positioning on the manuscript might suggest, or, perhaps more likely, including the waltz as a movement within the suite? Fortunately, such imponderables are of only passing relevance to the Complete Edition.

But the oddest curiosities can be laid at the door of Elgar's publishers, arrangers and others. We know that publishers believed that French titles sold best, and so *Liebesgrüss* became *Salut d'Amour* and *Evensong* became *Chanson de Nuit*. The same considerations do not apply to Welsh, and yet among the Elgar oeuvre is the Welsh-sounding *Yr Od*. Fortunately this came with the opus number 26 attached to it, pointing to it being a Welsh language version of *The Snow*. I asked Rhianon Trowell, a fluent Welsh speaker, whose immediate reaction was that, while this was *not* a Welsh expression she recognised, it did not translate as *The Snow*. However, she consulted the dictionary which brought about a change of heart: we had clearly identified the right number but, in translating it, the publishers had come up with 'the wrong type of snow'. One must assume that considerations of metre outweighed concern over meteorological precision.

Which leads us finally to a reference we came across to 'Sea Pictures – School Bombing' – surely not a sixth poem Elgar considered for the cycle but then failed to set. Our best guess is that an excerpt from *Sea Pictures* has been used as background music to a scene in a motion picture in which a school is bombed – probably a war movie such as the 1987 comedy drama *Hope and Glory*. But attempts to firmly identify the picture have so far failed. If our hunch is right, it will not affect the content of the Complete Edition, but it will nevertheless put our minds at rest if a reader can supply the missing link.

## Prolegomena to the Acuta Music King Arthur Suite

Robert Kay

The *King Arthur Suite* is the latest publication in the Acuta Music Late Elgar Edition. It comprises a 21-minute selection, rescored for full symphony orchestra, from Elgar's incidental music for Laurence Binyon's play *Arthur – A Tragedy*. The play was first performed in March 1923; the music has hitherto remained unpublished and unperformed, apart from an LP recording of excerpts made in 1973.

One must ensure, when compiling a selection from a larger work, that the musical integrity of the original is not violated. At the same time, as music's primary function is for performance and enjoyment, the end product must be attractive to concert and recording organisers and audiences. In the present instance an Elgarian could ask:

- Would it have been better to have published the *Arthur* music in its entirety?
- Would it have been better to have retained the original scoring?
- Given that Anthony Payne's completion of the Third Symphony incorporates material from *Arthur*, does the *King Arthur Suite* add anything of importance?
- Is the *Suite* 'authentic' or a 'realisation'?

### Selection of material

Elgar's music for *Arthur* comprises 113 pages of score, plus a few pages containing stage directions and repeats. This music falls into three categories: introductions to seven of the nine scenes, linking passages, and melodramas (music played under dialogue).

While the scene introductions are of substantial length and introduce original material treated in a symphonic manner, virtually all the 'links' and melodramas are extremely short (some of only a few seconds' duration) and are based wholly on music already heard in the introductions. These short passages would add considerably to the dramatic atmosphere in the theatre, but could not be accommodated within the practical considerations of concert performance.

The *King Arthur Suite* therefore consists solely of the seven scene introductions. Even so, these account for 86 of the 113 pages of music in Elgar's score.

## Orchestration

*Arthur* was originally written for a 13-piece theatre orchestra. This would be adequate for a stage performance, but would not necessarily produce a satisfactory sound in a concert hall (the 1973 LP recording used the original scoring, but with a full string section). In addition, certain sections of the music seem to call for the 'full orchestra' sound.

There is also the question of whether a work scored for a reduced orchestra is less easily programmable (we are talking here about amateur as well as professional performances: all players like to have something to do). It is the present writer's opinion that this is indeed the case and that there are works whose concert careers have suffered as a result of having been scored for unconventional forces.<sup>1</sup> It should also be noted that Ivor Atkins tried unsuccessfully to persuade Elgar to produce a full-orchestra *King Arthur Suite* for the 1926 Three Choirs Festival.

The decision was therefore taken to score the *King Arthur Suite* for full symphony orchestra. The instruments called for in the suite are the same as those used in *The Wand of Youth*, with the omission of the contrabassoon.

While we do not know how Elgar himself would have scored the *Arthur* music for full orchestra, care has been taken to ensure that the orchestral sound is not uncharacteristic. Some slightly unusual features of Elgar's original scoring have been retained.

## Symphony No. 3

Anthony Payne's elaboration of the sketches for the Third Symphony makes considerable use of the *Arthur* music in the second and fourth movements, as originally intended by Elgar himself. For two reasons, Payne's 'Elgar 3' does not present the whole picture as far as *Arthur* is concerned. It uses only a minor portion of the total score: most of the introduction to Scene II, and the central section of the introduction to Scene IV. Large amounts of *Arthur* do not feature in the Symphony: the 'Lancelot' motif (which plays a major part throughout the incidental music), most of the 'Banqueting Scene' (Scene IV), and all of 'The Castle At Night' (Scene V), the 'Battle Scene' (Scene VII) and the final threnody and recapitulation (Scene IX). Secondly, the Symphony uses the *Arthur* material as part of an abstract symphonic argument, whereas the *King Arthur Suite* presents the music in its original context of a dramatic narrative, where interplay of the various protagonists' musical motifs is of crucial importance.

## Authenticity

It may be wondered whether the *King Arthur Suite* is authentic Elgar, or a 'realisation'

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<sup>1</sup> For example, meritorious works such as Brahms' Serenade No.2 (no upper strings), Kodály *Háry János* (cimbalom and saxophones), Stravinsky *Petrushka* (the original version has a very large orchestra compared with the 1947 revision) nevertheless do not seem to be performed in public as frequently as their musical quality warrants. This consideration is particularly important in the context of non-professional music making.

in the manner of Symphony No. 3, the Piano Concerto and *Pomp & Circumstance* No. 6. For the avoidance of doubt let it be understood that, other than the fact that a larger orchestra is employed, the *King Arthur Suite* (with the exception of two bars added to provide convincing movement endings) consists entirely of music by Elgar himself, presented in the order in which it appears in the original *Arthur* score. The *King Arthur Suite* score can be used in conjunction with the 1973 LP recording (available on Chandos CD) as the selection of music is virtually identical.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

*Arthur* is the last unpublished Elgar work of any consequence, the *King Arthur Suite* appearing 121 years after the first Elgar orchestral work to achieve publication (*Salut d'amour*). It is surprising that, in the 28-year window of opportunity available, between the acquisition of Elgar's manuscripts by the British Library in 1977 (following Carice's death) and the final expiry of copyright in 2005, no interested party thought of making this original, attractive music available for performance in a copyright edition. The possibility of realisation of Elgar's original stage conception must await publication (scheduled for 2014) of the entire *Arthur* music in the Complete Edition.

*Robert Kay is a proprietor of Acuta Music, whose Late Elgar Edition makes available study scores and performing material of previously unpublished music written by Elgar in his final compositional period. King Arthur Suite is the sixth Acuta publication. A seventh, Elgar's 1932 orchestration of Chopin's Funeral March, is in preparation.*

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<sup>2</sup> The *Suite* selects slightly more music from the 'Banqueting Scene' and a few bars less from 'The Castle At Night'.

## MUSIC REVIEW

### Elgar, arr. Robert Kay: *King Arthur Suite*

Ledbury: Acuta Music, 2010

It is only in recent years, thanks to the activity of musicians and scholars, that we realize the extent to which Elgar's fondness for the theatre is matched by his musical output. The conditions of the theatre have always made the survival of its music (including opera) a matter of chance. Publishing sung dramas – operas – tends to solidify one version of something fluid, even where composers (such as Mozart or Bizet) have not produced, or thought it necessary to produce, a definitive score. There has never been a place in publishers' scheme of things for complete scores of music whose raison d'être is to support a spoken drama; the same, of course, applies to its descendant, film music. All too often such music disappears entirely, as with much of Elgar's *Beau Brummel* and the orchestral score of *The Crown of India*.

The latter case points to an escape route: excerpts of incidental or film music served up for the concert hall. *The Crown of India*, in the Complete Edition, includes fully authentic Elgar alongside the piano score that survived of the rest; this we can now happily hear in orchestration by the most experienced practitioner of Elgar realization, Anthony Payne.<sup>1</sup> But conversion into a concert suite deprives the music of the dramatic context in which it was conceived. With *The Crown of India* one might feel that is just as well. With respected authors like Blackwood and Binyon, however, there may be a case, if not actually for reviving their work in the theatre, at least for returning the music to its origins in printed form. This is the noble intent, indeed the achievement, of the Complete Edition's new score of *The Starlight Express*; the difficulties of dealing with melodrama have already been rehearsed in these pages.<sup>2</sup>

For the 1923 production of Laurence Binyon's *King Arthur* the Old Vic used only a handful of musicians, though possibly more than Lilian Baylis thought it could afford (she was particularly worried about the harp). The meagre ensemble was slightly augmented when Elgar conducted the premiere, as he paid for additional musicians himself. Yet the music is evidently of a character suited to a full symphony orchestra. For one reason or another Elgar turned down the suggestion that he adapt his *King Arthur* music into an orchestral suite. The problem cannot have been the labour of orchestration, with which Elgar would have had no difficulty. *King Arthur* was the first new work composed after his wife's death, but even in that period of uncertainty and depression he orchestrated music by Bach and Parry. Amplifying his own theatre band score would take time, but not the inventive effort of retrieving sketches and working them into coherent musical numbers, for that had been done. Had he decided on a suite, it is likely its form would be very similar to the new production from Acuta Music, described by Robert Kay in these pages (above).

It is at least possible that Elgar sensed that new ideas of equal quality might not occur

to him again, and that his notebooks might eventually be exhausted. On this hypothesis, he may have declined to make his own *King Arthur* suite because he wished to reserve its best musical ideas and their development for some larger project. Certainly when he set to work on his third symphony, and devising *The Spanish Lady*, he turned not only, as was his wont, to unused sketches but also to *King Arthur*. With the opera, he seems to mock his theatre band when a brilliant fanfare (used in the fifth movement, the battle scene, in the Elgar-Kay *King Arthur Suite*) rears up in a period comedy. The symphony, by contrast, was planned as a work of high seriousness. Arthurian associations link it to chivalry and heroism, and also to conspiracy; in *King Arthur*, the delicate A minor music used in the symphony's Scherzo plays a role in the complex banquet scene, and some of it would have accompanied dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

As Robert Kay remarks in his article (above), it will be the task of the Complete Edition to present the music in its authentic but rather skimpy theatrical instrumentation, and to resolve questions about its use within Binyon's tragedy, which seems to have required Elgar to offer flexible solutions to passages of melodrama (as in *The Starlight Express*). The *King Arthur Suite* in Robert Kay's orchestration merits the attention of orchestras (a recording would be nice as well), although it may prove disconcerting to those who know Anthony Payne's elaboration of the sketches for the Third Symphony. Not only the Scherzo but the main material of the Finale come from *Arthur*; inevitably several passages are identical in their musical essence if not in detail. It would take a lot of words, and music examples, to make a full comparison and I shall confine myself to saying that Kay's orchestration should work well, but Payne's is, I think, somewhat more Elgarian in its evocation of the composer's kaleidoscopic instrumentation, particularly as he felt free to use more instruments, including cor anglais and bass clarinet.

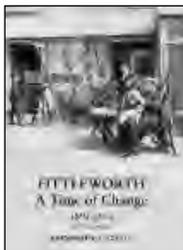
The introduction to the Acuta edition offers a concise summary of the drama. Consulting Robert Anderson's fine article about *Arthur* (which curiously is not mentioned) puts the music more fully into its dramatic context, and suggests that the ideal solution would be a grand production (perhaps on film), with all of Elgar's music scored for a real orchestra, as in Robert Kay's suite or, indeed, the Payne realization of the symphony. Meanwhile this is a welcome addition to the music available in print, and it is to be hoped that orchestras, amateur and professional, may give it a trial. The edition includes a short introduction to the dramatic contexts – without consulting the play I can't say whether it is right to locate Lancelot's home 'in the north' rather than, as is usually the case, in Brittany – and a useful table collating sections of *Arthur* music with 'Elgar/Payne'.

Julian Rushton

1 Reviewed in this Journal 16/4 (March 2010), 51–2, and obtainable from the Birthplace.

2 John Norris and Jerrold Northrop Moore, 'Tales from the Complete Edition 2: *The Starlight Express*', this Journal 16/4 (March 2010), 36–44.

3 Robert Anderson, 'first the noble Arthur', in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 164–81.



## BOOK REVIEW

### **Fittleworth – A Time of Change 1895-1916**

By Angela Brookfield

Fittleworth:  
Hesworth Books,  
2009. iv + 144  
pages

ISBN 978-0-  
9564125-0-8,  
priced at £12.

Here is unexpected treasure indeed. John Smith (1852–1925) ran a large building firm in Norwood, Surrey, and retired to Fittleworth, Sussex. His hobby was photography, and in his retirement he took around 1,000 pictures in Fittleworth and the surrounding area. Between 1895 and 1916 he also made extensive ‘Notes for a History of Fittleworth’. These have now been combined with many of the photographs in the present book, compiled by his great-niece, Angela Brookfield.

The Elgars, of course, rented Brinkwells, a cottage just outside Fittleworth, shortly after the period covered by this book. Anyone interested in seeing a contemporary account, in words and pictures, of life in a place so dear to Elgar’s heart will want to read it. Shortly after Alice’s death he wrote this letter to Carice from his sister’s home in Stoke Prior:

Dearest chuck,

I am all safe and well ... I think it wd. be your dear mother’s wish that all the people at Brinkwells shd. be remembered & with your concurrence propose the following

Mark	5.0.0
Charles	1.0.0
4 Aylwins	4.0.0
Mrs. Hunt	1.0.0
Mr. & Mrs. Hart	2.0.0
Mr. – the rector (I forget the name) for the poor of Fittleworth	5.0.0
The telegraph lady	1.0.0
& postman	1.0.0

these not as ‘sums of money’ but only for a memento. Can you think of anyone else there? The station master & 2 porters I think. I know it would be her wish but I don’t want to leave anyone out. What was the man’s name that called every week from Otway’s? Tell me what you think & I will do it.

They are all very kind here & it is very quiet

Love

Zu affect faser

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This book represents a way in which we, too, may have a memento of Brinkwells, and remember its people. It is printed on A4 glossy paper, so that all the photographs can be reproduced as clearly as the original prints: an essential but surprisingly rare feature of such books of old photographs. John Smith’s notes are most interesting, and have been supplemented by further information known to the compiler. The family has now lodged the complete photographic collection at the Chichester record office, where, after cataloguing and conservation, they will be available to all.

Martin Bird

## DVD REVIEW

### **Open Air – A Night with the Berliner Philharmoniker**

Berliner Philharmoniker conducted by Mariss Jansons



This DVD is of an open-air concert at Berlin’s Waldbühne in 2002, and is a programme of ‘Lollipops’ of which Sir Thomas himself would have been proud. Elgar is represented by ‘The Wild Bears’ from The Wand of Youth, played with tremendous verve and palpable enjoyment. With short pieces by Wieniawski, Tchaikovsky, Lumbye, Sibelius, Wagner, Dvořák, Bizet, et al, it must have made for a pleasant evening. Whether or not too many people who weren’t present will be interested in what is essentially a souvenir of the event is quite another matter. One could take the DVD player into the garden and watch it accompanied by a glass of best fizz ... but maybe not. If it appeals, then at the very least you’ll hear The Wild Bears played as never before.

Martin Bird

## CD REVIEWS

The following are available now from the Elgar Birthplace Museum: Znaider/Davis Violin Concerto; Zehetmain/Elder Violin Concerto; Williams *Sea Pictures/Pageant of Empire*; Williams *War Song/Follow the Colours*; Songs in Honour of Queen Victoria. Buying from the Birthplace, you contribute directly towards its finances at this difficult economic time. Their on-line shopping pages can be found at [www.elgarmuseum.org/trolleyed](http://www.elgarmuseum.org/trolleyed).



Dutton Epoch  
CDLX 7243

**Elgar: *Pageant of Empire, Sea Pictures, The Pipes of Pan, The River***

**Ivor Gurney: *Lights Out***

**Michael Hurd: *Shore Leave***

Roderick Williams (baritone), BBC Concert Orchestra, conducted by Martin Yates

On 19 October 1898 the conductor of the Norwich Musical Festival, Alberto Randegger, wrote to Elgar.

At the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Norwich Festival Committee, held to-day in Norwich, wh. I attended, I was requested to ask you if you would be able & willing to write a short choral work, sacred or secular at your choice, for the Festival wh. will take place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of October 1899.

Elgar 'suggested Black Knight amongst other old things', but Norwich was having none of it, and Randegger wrote again.

The Committee wish to secure a new work if possible ... as producing an old one is not the same thing ... I, personally, quite agree with your views on the subject, & I tried to press them on the Committee, but Festival Committees seem to consider the London Press so much that they think themselves bound to have some works expressly composed for them!

Could you possibly manage a short work – say of 30 minutes duration – They would be but too glad to have even so little from your accomplished pen – Please, try –

By January 1899, he needed a decision:

The Black Night [*sic*] is a splendid work – but we want a short work and not entirely Choral – as we must employ on one evening Miss Clara Butt, Mr. Ben Davies & Mr. D Bispham ... If you have not found a suitable "libretto" – could you write a "Scena" for either Contralto, Tenor, or Bass? Kindly let me know –

On 9 January Elgar 'saw Randegger re Norwich Festival' with an idea for a song cycle for Clara Butt. Fast forward to August, and at 11.15 on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup>, Miss Butt wrote to Elgar:

Dear Mr. Elgar

Have only just got in from Burton tired out & glad to see your letter. Will you & can you come here at 11 o'clock or any time after – up to 12.15 tomorrow morning or would rather earlier Wire me directly & I'll arrange it I am longing to hear the songs!

Yrs tired & in direst haste

Clara Butt

Next day Elgar 'Heard C. Butt sing Sea pictures', after which she sent him a post card 'In remembrance of Songs, Aug 11<sup>th</sup> 99.'

All this invites the question: what is a baritone doing singing a song cycle written for a contralto? To maximise sales, publishers quite naturally issued songs in a variety of keys to suit all voices, but that does not necessarily mean that *Sea Pictures*, especially with orchestral accompaniment, is suited to a baritone. However, Roderick Williams's voice comes across naturally and effortlessly, and those present at the sessions confirm that this is not a trick of Dutton's balance. More importantly, his interpretation is a revelation, making one hear the cycle anew and find fresh beauties. I do miss the high A at the end, but can appreciate that baritones can be loath to unleash such sounds in public!

Elgar's involvement with the 1924 *Pageant of Empire* at Wembley Stadium began in January of that year when he received a letter from a one-time violin pupil, Walter Creighton.

Might I come and see you ... and explain the outline of the Pageant which has been worked out by Rudyard Kipling, Louis N. Parker, Granville Barker, Sir Frank Benson & Sir Charles Oman. Rudyard Kipling is writing for us and we feel it unthinkable if we don't have your help as well. What we want is a March of Empire from you which will be the Leit Motive going through the three days programme.

Elgar duly obliged with the *Empire March*, and in June Albert Broadhurst, Managing Director of Enoch & Sons, wrote to the organisers.

We are writing formally to give you permission to perform or have performed, the Empire March (1924), (by Sir Edward Elgar), at any or all of your musical performances in connection with the British Empire Exhibition.

We note with extreme pleasure that Mr. Henry Jaxon has been entrusted with the important work of arrangement and conducting

of the Pageantry Music, and it is with great pleasure that we give formal permission for any of our publications to be used.

Later in the month Elgar received a letter from Laurence Binyon.

I am being bothered to write some verses for the Empire Pageant at Wembley, and as the verses are to be merely a vehicle for music I want to know if you are still doing anything for the Pageant or if you have retired in disgust like Kipling. They want, I gather, 3 sets of 4 lines to introduce each day. I'm not keen but feel I ought perhaps to try. I want advice however on the musical side. What sort of verse is wanted? Would long lines be an objection? Do send me a word, if you can.

If you were collaborating I could put more heart into it.

Intriguingly, Binyon could well be describing the verses written by Alfred Noyes and set by Elgar to introduce the various parts of the *Pageant* which were to be performed over three consecutive days. Due to open on 21 July, it had to be postponed as no full rehearsals had been possible owing to horrendous weather. The *Pageant* finally opened – without a full rehearsal – on 25 July in heavy rain, which caused an early curtailment of the evening's proceedings. It is not certain that the songs, in the event, were ever performed at the *Pageant*, or that Elgar was present. He was with Carice in Sussex on 21 July, although back in London by the 25th.

The seven songs are all well worth hearing. One, *The Immortal Legions*, is given in Elgar's orchestration. The others have been orchestrated by the conductor of this CD, Martin Yates. It is uncertain whether Elgar's orchestral versions were bulldozed along with the Enoch premises, or never existed in the first place.

Other Elgar songs on this CD are *The Pipes of Pan*, which had been something of a hit in the early years of the century, and *Rustula*, or *The River*, from Op. 60, which Elgar wrote in 1910. Alice's diary for 18 February says: 'Windy & wild. E. & C. trying boomerang. Surprise flight into road, rather alarming – E. wrote Song 'Rustula'.' The words were by that doyen of bunnies, Peter Rabbit. Elgar sent a copy to Frances Colvin.

I send a specimen of my dear friend Pietro d'Alba in his most, or almost most pessimistic mood. To read it one wd. think the carrot crop had failed or some other catastrophe acutely affecting the rabbit world was toward.

It proved to be his final contribution to literature, for he died on 3 May. In 1929 the songs appeared in the syllabus for the Licentiate Teaching Diploma at the Royal Academy of Music. Irene Thompson wrote to Elgar:

I hope you will pardon the liberty I am taking in writing to ask you if you could give me any fuller information as to the source of the words of "The River", than that which appears in the foreword to the song itself. As a professor of singing at the Royal Academy of Music, it falls to my lot to train teachers for this examination & I feel it would be an enormous help in preparing a lesson on the song in question, if one could find out the geographical position of the River, the nationality of the Author of the words, & the story to which the poem refers –

I have done my best to find all this out, but so far my efforts have been unavailing, & so, once again I beg you will forgive my troubling you to give me any information that you can in the matter.

Elgar reply was brief: 'Mr. d'Alba died some years ago'. Roderick Williams's performance of the song is breathtaking – as indeed it is of all the songs – and leads me to completely re-evaluate my opinion of Elgar the song-writer.

The disk is completed by Ivor Gurney's cycle, *Lights Out*, and Michael Hurd's 1962 cycle, *Shore Leave*. To summarise, this CD is an absolute corker. It offers unfamiliar Elgar works and a familiar Elgar work in an unfamiliar guise, all wonderfully sung and beautifully recorded. Unmissable.

Martin Bird

## Two Violin Concerto recordings, two reviews

### Violin Concerto

Nikolaj Znaider (violin), Staatskapelle Dresden conducted by Colin Davis

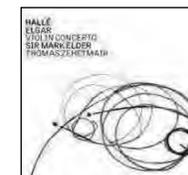
### Violin Concerto; Prelude (*The Kingdom*); Prelude and 'Angel's Farewell' (*The Dream of Gerontius*)

Alice Cooté (mezzo-soprano), Thomas Zehetmair (violin); Hallé Orchestra conducted by Mark Elder

Elgar's great Concerto has been fortunate on its treatment on record, even when recordings were thin on the ground. Every new issue was an event, for each one that was issued seemed special. It is a tribute to the most recent soloists that their recordings, too, have been events. Daniel Hope, James Ehnes, and Gil Shaham are but three of the noteworthy recent recordings; all have something to say which makes us sit up afresh and listen again. These come on top of older



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recordings such as those by Ida Haendel and Alfredo Campoli, and one from Tasmin Little to come later this year from Chandos, with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis. Here, arriving together, are the Danish violinist Nikolaj Znaider and the Austrian Thomas Zehetmair who continue the trend set by Kreisler, that great fiddlers from the Austro-German school take the concerto to their heart. Although, as it happened, it seems that Kreisler did not really take the concerto to his heart, and his attitude probably affected its reputation which, with the relative decline in Elgar's popularity after the Second World War, took some years to revive. Before he came to live in Britain permanently, even Yehudi Menuhin played a cut version of the Concerto.

It may seem perverse to begin by discussing the conductors, but in this concerto the conductor is as crucial as the soloist. True, a violinist can let the side down; but if he or she are as one with the conductor then something special can frequently occur. What makes Elgar's own recording with Menuhin supreme is his conducting; when listeners say how much they prefer Sammons/Wood I have to point out Elgar's exceptional involvement – utterly concentrated and, at times at white heat. All this is in complete contrast to the image which Menuhin carefully cultivated of the composer preferring to go to the races rather than rehearse!

With these two CDs I was immediately struck by both Davis's and Elder's mastery. Elder's disc has the advantage in some ways, for it includes the *Kingdom* Prelude and extracts from *Gerontius* on a generously filled CD. *The Kingdom* Prelude is fabulous – sweeping the listener away, although the control is absolute. Listen and you will appreciate what a great Elgar conductor Elder is; those of us who live nearer London can only envy Manchester its good fortune. I have not heard the opening bars more effectively played than this, with the crotchets in the lower strings driving the pulse as the orchestra above sweeps all before it. We have all heard *Kingdoms* where the beginning is flabby, heralding an undramatic journey to the end. Here I did not want the performance to stop, but it does, leaving me with the desperate hunt for the remote control before the start of the Concerto!

Alice Coote, who so beguiled me in her complete performance in 2008, does so again here in the excerpts from *Gerontius* in Elgar's arrangement without chorus (recorded at the same time as the complete performance). Everything seems to stop as her embodiment of Newman's Angel guides the listener to eternity. It is not just her beautiful voice or her clear annunciation, for she has a Baker-like spirituality which lifts her performance to a level rarely achieved elsewhere. With no choir her performance becomes an intimate dialogue with the orchestra. Elder's management of the piece is little different to his admirable complete recording.

In the other recording of the Violin Concerto Colin Davis has found the key to *my* Elgar: at once urgent and elastic, subtle and

outward looking, moving forward with just the right sense of flexibility. Nikolaj Znaider plays on Kreisler's Guarneri del Gesù instrument which was used for the premiere, and Znaider, Sir Colin, and his wonderful orchestra are as one in their view of the Concerto. The recording has already received numerous plaudits and it is rewarding to make a comparison with the Hallé CD. Znaider seems to be inside the work, secure, almost serene, while Zehetmair makes his performance more of a confrontation: a beast to be tamed; if we take the word Concerto to derive from *concertare* – to struggle – that is what Zehetmair seems to make of it. He wins eventually but it is more of a journey of discovery for him than Znaider.

On paper the differences in timing are minimal:

First movement: Znaider 17:51, Zehetmair 17:00

Second movement: Znaider 12:10, Zehetmair 12:31

Third movement: Znaider 19:22, Zehetmair 18:30

Davis takes 3' 04" before the violin entry and Elder 3'. Znaider emerges from the orchestra whilst Zehetmair embarks forcefully on his journey. It is the underlying energy which I find so attractive in his performance. Znaider is seductive in the second subject while Zehetmair is more tentative, as if respecting the deep personal implications of Elgar's melody. In both recordings the accompanied cadenza works wonderfully, the orchestral detail exposed and each orchestra completely relaxed in what it is doing. This is second nature for the Hallé, but you would not know that the music is relatively new to the Staatskapelle.

What an extraordinary work this is; particularly when two such different approaches can seem equally valid. I have come to the conclusion that a good library should have both recordings: you may listen to the Znaider more but you will keep on coming back to the Zehetmair when you need to be stimulated again into reviewing the intricate depths of this music. Both are supported by two splendid orchestras. The Dresden musicians (burnished strings and blazing brass) play as if Elgar's music was in the blood, and with the Hallé, it is! If pushed, I would choose the Zehetmair recording because it stimulates me to fresh thoughts about the Concerto; but both recordings are wonderful additions to the list of fine performances the work has inspired. Tod Handley felt the Elgar was the greatest of all violin concertos and on the evidence of these two recordings it is difficult to disagree.

Andrew Neill

Elgar's larger works are so complex and multi-faceted that I have often despaired of hearing recorded performances that tick all the boxes. I felt that about *Gerontius* until the arrival of the Hallé/Elder

version. I feel that this present CD does the same for the Violin Concerto. The Danish violinist Nikolaj Znaider is devoting this year to performing it across Europe and the United States, often with orchestras who probably haven't played Elgar for years, and with conductors who certainly haven't, if ever (Vladimir Jurowski and Valery Gergiev, for example). The Elgar Society surely owes him a great debt of gratitude for this.

The recorded sound is excellent, capturing a rich bass sonority, and the opening tutti displays the burnished and gleaming tone of the excellent Dresden orchestra to perfection, allowing all the myriad detail of Elgar's scoring to emerge in a natural acoustic. Znaider's tone is exquisite throughout, from the rapt intensity of the second subject through to the most taxing virtuoso flights. The enormous demands that Elgar places on his soloist are fully met, not only in the extreme technical hurdles that must be overcome, but also in music that requires a deep and passionate understanding of the emotion that courses through this work. Nor is the orchestral part merely accompaniment. Colin Davis and the orchestra see to it that all the conversation and intricate interplay between soloist and orchestra is heard, and know just when to blossom into a refulgent climactic tutti. Davis applies the brakes very dramatically at the end of the first movement; one doesn't want to hit the buffers too abruptly at the end, but those final cadential chords are a bit too deliberately placed for my taste. The slow movement is deeply felt and lyrically passionate, the Finale has all the momentum and virtuosity required, and after an exquisitely played cadenza the work ends in a rich and splendid blaze of sound.

I have several versions of the Violin Concerto on CD, all excellent in their very different ways: Zukerman/Barenboim; Kyung-Wha Chung/Solti; Dong-Suk Kang/ Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra; Leland Chen/Menuhin; and Takezawa/Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Hilary Hahn, these latter two both conducted by Colin Davis. There is also Philippe Graffin/Handley; the recent James Ehnes/Andrew Davis, and, in a class of its own, the historic Menuhin/Elgar performance. I don't think anyone would be seriously disappointed with any of these. But if I was forced into just one, I think it would be this Znaider CD. My one real complaint is that, at just under 50 minutes, there was room for another Elgar work, especially with this fine orchestra on hand.

Barry Collett

### Choral Songs in Honour of Queen Victoria

Arthur Goodhart, Arthur Somervell, Charles Harford Lloyd, Elgar, C.V. Stanford, Frederick Bridge, John Stainer, Charles Wood, Alexander Mackenzie, C.H.H. Parry, Walford Davies, George Martin and Walter Parratt

Spiritus Chamber Choir conducted by Aidan Oliver



Toccata Classics  
TOCC 0012

On 20 July 1898 the Master of the Queen's Music, Sir Walter Parratt, wrote to Elgar with a special request:

I am getting up a sort of Victorian Triumphs of Oriana, a tribute by the Composers and Poets of the day to the Queen. Madrigals must be for unaccompanied part singing not however in antique form. Will you set the enclosed?

Enclosed was a poem by Frederic Myers (1843-1901), *To her beneath whose steadfast star*. Parratt and Arthur Benson, who at that time was teaching at Eton, were planning to commission a set of choral songs in honour of the Queen's 80th birthday on 24 May 1899. Elgar readily agreed, but then seems to have forgotten all about it, for in December Parratt was moved to add a plaintive 'Don't forget my madrigal!' to a letter on quite another matter. However, he must have been impressed by what he eventually received, for he decided that Elgar's setting would be one of only two to be performed before the Queen on her birthday, the other being his own contribution. On 23 May, Alice recorded:

Heard by 12. post that Sir W. Parratt wanted E. at Windsor. Started at 4.45 train & went to G. W. Hotel Paddington.

From the hotel, Elgar wrote to Carice.

Now tomorrow all these good people, 250! are going to sing to our dear old Queen a tune that father wrote for her - but you know all about that so I will say that I am going to put on a nice coat & am going too & I shall tell the Queen all about Mr. Fox & my 1d. baby.

Next morning:

E. left Paddington 7.45 train - Very stormy. Went to Sir W. Parratt's - All very interesting & Part Song lovely. A. went out & to Academy - E. & A. returned by 4.45 train - Found Miss Burley had fetched C. to the Mount.

Queen Victoria went into more detail:

Beatrice came in early with a beautifully sweet nosegay, and then fetched darling little Elisabeth to wish me many happy returns

of the day. I got up almost directly afterwards and dressed, then went into the Audience-room, where all my beautiful presents were arranged. All my children, including dear Vicky, joined in giving me three very handsome silver candelabras for the Durbar-room at Osborne. Bertie's children, including Georgie and May, gave me two large silver jugs and fruit bowls, also for the Durbar-room ... During breakfast, which we took all together in the Oak-room, the Eton and Windsor Madrigal Society, the Windsor Choral Society, and the choirs of St. George's and Eton Chapel brought me a Serenade. The Eton volunteers and boys were present, and cheered loudly.

Benson recorded:

To-day we met at 8.45 (no early school) in the playing-fields, but dismissed owing to downpour. At 9.15 we met in school-yard – a hot steaming day, like an orchid-house; marched up to the Castle, and after a wait got into the yard. The Queen was breakfasting in a room over the porch. The choirs sang very sweetly. We joined in the fourth verse only of the jubilee hymn, and my verse was beautifully sung afterwards. Then two madrigals, one very poor. A good many boys fainted, thirteen in all, and sat in a row, green-faced and bewildered, on a little bench under the wall ...

Aidan Oliver and the Spiritus Chamber Choir have put us very much in their debt by recording the complete set of choral songs: a recording made in 2002 but released only last year. The singing is splendid: rich, and well-blended. It does full justice to the music. This is almost inevitably uneven in quality, but there are some absolute gems here. Elgar's is one of them, but also, for example, *Lady on the Silver Throne*, which opens the collection, by Arthur Goodhart, who spent a lifetime at Eton as student, master, and housemaster. Full texts are provided, and the detailed notes are by Lewis Foreman. Do investigate this CD if you can: it is a wonderful concert in its own right which demonstrates just how fine Victorian part songs could be. I do not think you will regret the effort.

Martin Bird



### **The Kingdom**

Naomi Harvey, Julia Batcherlor-Walsh, Alan Oke, Peter Savidge; Hertfordshire Chorus, Forest Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by David Temple

A hundred years ago, a performance of *The Kingdom* was looked upon primarily as a devotional religious experience. Listeners made careful study of the text, aided by such publications as Canon Charles Gorton's *Interpretation of the Libretto*. In musical terms this piety has translated into sluggish performances, which in their hurry (!) to

fall to their knees have quite forgotten that Elgar has pieced together a drama about ordinary people, to whom quite extraordinary things happened. A glance at the score should be sufficient to tell you that Elgar is seeking to grip his audience (not congregation – the work was written for a town hall, not a cathedral) with dramatic events that move ever forward with great drive. In February I had the extreme privilege to be present at a performance that, for the first time in my forty years experience of the work, treated the piece first and foremost as a human drama. For this to take place in St Albans Abbey, itself built to commemorate an ordinary person to whom extraordinary things happened, was somehow fitting.

Put simply, it was the finest performance of *The Kingdom* that I have ever heard, or can ever hope to hear. In David Temple there was, for once, a conductor who actually took notice of the directions Elgar gave in his score, and the result was a revelation. If I single out Peter Savidge from a fine team of soloists, it is merely because his voice, commitment, and sense of communication carried all before it. The Hertfordshire Chorus was simply superb. I've been singing in and conducting choirs, large and small, professional and amateur, for half a century, and the blend of sound, the tone, and consistent accuracy were something that I would normally expect to hear only in the best chamber choirs, amateur or professional. The tenor section especially, discretely reinforced by 'guest singers', came across with thrilling effect, sounding for all the world like a tribe of Placido Domingos. If the section where the sopranos and contraltos are divided into six, spread across two and a half octaves, needed still more 'oomph', then that is a minor quibble: Elgar, after all, was writing for a choir three times the size, and stiffened throughout with professionals.

The Forest Philharmonic played out of their communal skin, and showed just what excellence can be achieved by a mixture of professional players and talented amateurs. Sadly, the organ added a presence that was often intrusive, no more so than in the final chord of the piece where, despite being marked *piano*, it contrived to drown the rest of the orchestra. To some extent faults of balance such as this were due to the notoriously awkward acoustics of the Abbey. It is fantastic to see that so much money has been spent in making it an effective concert hall, but the sound still has a habit of going upwards, to land to its best effect towards the rear of the nave. Certainly in Row H the blend was bass heavy (and for a bass player to say that it must have been!), and the upper strings, despite their sufficiency of numbers, sounded distant.

But enough of this Beckmesserish stuff – this was the real Elgar, and a performance of *The Kingdom* of which everyone involved can be immensely proud. It was sponsored by the Elgar Society (money well spent!), and recorded. The recording is every bit as good as the performance and conveys accurately what I heard in the Abbey, while making the organ less prominent. It was made 'for promotional,

Hertfordshire Chorus (no catalogue number)

education and archive purposes only', but members of the Elgar Society who would like a copy may send their orders, with a cheque for £13.95 made payable to Hertfordshire Chorus, to Hertfordshire Chorus CD Dept, 2 Caro Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Herts., HP3 8NA.

Martin Bird



Pristine Audio  
PASC212

**Elgar: Variations for Orchestra ('Enigma'), Larghetto (Serenade for Strings)**

**Wagner: Preludes to Acts I and III of *Die Meistersinger*; Overture, *Der fliegende Holländer***

**Delius, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring***

Seattle Symphony Orchestra  
Sir Thomas Beecham

These performances are from Beecham's third and final season in Seattle in 1943, and were recorded at his request to illustrate his annual Conductor's Lecture, when they were used to torment the music critic of the *Seattle Star*, who had been less than benevolent towards Beecham and his players. Against all odds they have survived, though some of the originals show considerable signs of wear, and in both the 'Dorabella' variation and the slow movement from the *Serenade* the recorder has missed the opening bars.

The string playing and tone throughout is excellent; the woodwind less distinguished; and the heavy brass brash – each note heavily tongued, the tone not sustained. The horns have a nightmare in *The Flying Dutchman*, recorded at the opening concert of the season, splitting more notes than they would care to remember.

So why should Elgarians buy this disc, especially when Beecham made commercial recordings of both the *Variations* and the *Serenade*? Well, the answer is that Beecham had a great affinity with Elgar's music: he performed a surprisingly wide range of it, including *King Olaf* and *Gerontius*, even if he once gave *The Blue Danube* as an encore to the latter. There is much to be learned from listening to these performances. The pacing and phrasing of the *Variations* provides a master-class of conducting magic, with a superb pianissimo at the opening of 'Nimrod' (and a gratuitous cymbal crash at its climax). There is also an occasional and endearing roar of encouragement from Beecham to his players. The slow movement from the *Serenade* is exquisitely played, quite differently from his CBS recording.

I know I'm a sucker for 'Enigma' recordings (well over 50 at the last count), but I'm very glad I bought this one.

Martin Bird

**Elgar, *Follow the Colours*; *A War Song*  
Peter Tranchell, *Festive Overture*  
Herbert Murrill, *Country Dances*  
Walter Collins, *Prelude to Ecstasy*  
Lionel Sainsbury, *Allegro Risoluto* for string orchestra, op. 10  
Elis Pehkonen, *Sunset and Evening Star*  
John Ireland, *The Towing Path*; *Soliloquy*; *Annabelle Lee*;  
*Berceuse*; *The Holy Boy*; *In Praise of Neptune*; *Here's to the Ships*; *Psalm 23***

Roderick Williams (baritone), BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Martin Yates and John Wilson; Royal Ballet Sinfonia conducted by Gavin Sutherland and Paul Murphy

This somewhat strange CD seems to consist of session leftovers for which no room could be found elsewhere. It contains music recorded in six different sets of sessions in two locations over four years. On the cover it is described as 'John Ireland Orchestra Songs and Miniatures', but although the majority of pieces are by Ireland, they represent only about one third in duration. Four of the composers I had not come across before. The music covers the period 1884 to 2004. If you feel inclined to explore the more remote byways of English music, then by all means do so, but it is hard to see who exactly Dutton was aiming at with this disk.

The recorded sound throughout is up to Dutton's usual high standard. The playing of the strings of the Royal Ballet Sinfonia is decidedly rough in places, and gives the impression that there was insufficient time at the sessions for the players to get any familiarity with the notes. In Elis Pehkonen's evocative piece (written in memory of John Sanders, organist of Gloucester Cathedral from 1967 to 1992) they also seem a bit thin on the ground. The BBC Concert Orchestra, in contrast, plays unfamiliar music exceedingly well.

I'll concentrate on the two Elgar songs, for which no room could be found on Roderick Williams's CD of *Sea Pictures* and *The Pageant of Empire* (reviewed above). *A War Song* was first performed in its original guise as *A Soldier's Song* on 18 March 1884 at a Glee Club meeting in the Crown Hotel in Worcester. The performance, which 'evoked the greatest enthusiasm', was reviewed in the *Worcester Daily Times* next day.

Worcester Glee Club. – The performances last evening were specially interesting on account of the rendering of two new songs by local composers – Messrs. E.W. Elgar and W.C. Box ... Both Mr. Elgar's and Mr. Box's songs were very creditable to native talent; they were admirably sung and encored; "My love of long ago" was repeated, and the company would gladly have had "A soldier's song" again, but not wishing to unduly tax Mr. Pedley's powers, they readily consented to the postponement of the pleasure, and



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CDLX 7246

he gave in response "Woman's Faith and Woman's Trust".

William Charles Box (1855-1899) was organist of St. John's Church, Worcester, and a double bass player. Frederick George Pedley (1854-1909) was also born in Worcester, where he was Head Warehouseman at the Royal Porcelain Works. He sang in various church choirs, and was something of an athlete.

Elgar orchestrated his song in 1903 for one of Clara Butt's concerts. It was not a hit with the critic of the *Daily News*.

A new "War Song", from the pen of Dr. Elgar failed to impress me except as an exercise in descriptive orchestra touches, of which the composer, we all know, is a master. The poem, by G. Flavell Hayward, is a kind of triumphant lament over a battlefield, and does not call for blatant music of the bloodthirsty type. I cannot say that Dr. Elgar has given us of his best. The "whizz of the shot as it flies", the "rush of the shell in the skies", and so forth, are clearly suggested by the music, but the lament itself is thematically weak and sentimental. The song is a clever piece of rather patchy manufacture. Mr. Kennerley Rumford sang it with his usual incisiveness.

I must say I agree with his conclusion! *Follow the Colours*, by contrast, is a rather good piece, guaranteed to bring a smile of pleasure. The words, by Captain William de Courcy Stretton, late Royal Artillery, won the 'prize of 20 guineas offered by Mr. W.H. Ash, on behalf of the Worshipful Company of Musicians' for a marching song. Elgar had agreed to set the winning words, but complained in October 1907:

I have been through the songs for Marching again & again & I fear the result remains disappointing ... You see I cannot do anything with them: I am sorry but it is so. Now you had better see if the words will inspire some other minstrel.

Nevertheless, he persevered, and Carice noted on 27 December that 'Mother went to post Father's Marching song, which he has just finished'. It was first performed by the Royal Choral Society at the Empire Concert at the Albert Hall on 23 May 1908. The *Worcester Herald* reported:

A London correspondent says it was rendered notable as a musical event by the first performance of works by Sir Edward Elgar and Sir Alexander Mackenzie. Sir Edward Elgar's contribution was a manly and inspiring marching song for soldiers, "Follow the Colours", which is certain to become popular in the ranks by reason of its strict avoidance of complexity and its splendid rhythm.

Roderick Williams sings it with considerable verve and, since it was not intended as a solo song, you have my full permission to join in while marching around your music room.

Martin Bird

### J. S. Bach in Orchestral Transcriptions

**Elgar: Fantasia and Fugue in C minor; Eugene Ormandy: Toccata and Fugue in D minor; Lucien Cailliet: 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring'; William Smith: 'Air on the G string', Fantasia and Fugue in G minor, Arioso from Cantata 156; Ormandy: Prelude and Fugue in C minor; Harl McDonald: 'Ach, Gott vom Himmel sich darein'; Smith: 'Little' Fugue in G minor; Ormandy: 'Come, sweet death'**

Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy



Pristine Audio  
PASC211

In the last few months I've been totally hooked by Andrew Rose and his Pristine Audio website. Every Friday he offers a selection of fresh digital transfers of a wonderfully varied range of treasures, available as downloads or as CDs. Here we have a transfer of a Philips LP from the 1950s with the added bonus of three recordings from the late 1940s. As always with Pristine, the transfers have been admirably done, within the limitations of the sources available. If there are those who might query the advisability of buying 55-year-old recordings of plush orchestral transcriptions where the highest sound quality would seem to be a prerequisite, then I can only urge them to indulge in the fabulous string sounds emanating from this disc. There was nothing quite like the sound of the Philadelphia under Ormandy, and the Elgar transcription has never sounded, to my ears at least, quite so plump and gorgeous as here. Ormandy crowns it at the end with a triumphantly held chord of C major rather than Elgar's (and Bach's) short one in the minor – it sounds inevitably right, and no more than many an organist would do on reaching the end of such a glorious piece.

Martin Bird



Chandos  
CHAN 10578 (3)

### Sullivan: *Ivanhoe*

Toby Spence, Stephen Gadd, James Rutherford, Peter Wedd, Peter Rose, Matthew Brook, Leigh Melrose, Andrew Staples, Janice Watson, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Geraldine McGreevy

Adrian Partington Singers, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, conducted by David Lloyd-Jones

I bought this set with a sense of eager anticipation, as one who has (with most of the population!) for long loved Sullivan's lighter operas, but had never heard a note of *Ivanhoe*. Elgar, too, must have felt something similar, as Alice's diary for 31 January 1891 – the date of the first performance – says, simply: 'E. & A. for a chance of *Ivanhoe*.' Not surprisingly, they couldn't get in, but on 2 March: 'E. & A. into London via Addison Road, took tickets for *Ivanhoe*', and on 7 March: 'To *Ivanhoe* in the Evening'. Elgar's marked libretto is preserved at the Birthplace. I was able to go one better and print a vocal score from the internet (readily available as a free download), and then settled down for an enjoyable evening.

Let me say straight away that both performance and recording are all one could wish for. There is some superb singing (especially from Toby Spence in the title role), excellent playing and conducting, and a recording which brings out all the delightful touches of Sullivan's deft orchestration. Beyond that, however, what struck me most was the mediocrity of the music and the dreadful libretto. George Bernard Shaw placed Scott's novel 'among the masterpieces of fiction': yet in the hands of Julian Sturgis it has been reduced to such couplets as the following:

An ashen spear in strong right hand,  
Good horse between the knees;  
What treasure can a king command  
More glorious than these?

I can't help thinking that one William Gilbert would have made a somewhat better job of the adaptation. For that matter Wagner, in *Lohengrin*, dished up a rather more musically gripping tale of Knights of Old, and Verdi turned rum-ti-tum accompaniments into fiercely dramatic statements rather than 'vamp till ready' fillers. Dramatically, too, the work is a non-event, with much of the important action taking place off-stage. The tournament is described by Friar Tuck as if commentating on a particularly pedestrian edition of *It's a knock-out*, and I found myself thinking not of Chivalry, but of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. For most of the time the musical language and harmonic structure of the piece is no more than could be expected of a gifted student. Purcell, in his rather more successful attempt 200 years earlier to invent an English operatic style, was infinitely more adventurous than Sullivan. In short, after having such

high expectations, I felt sadly deflated. Of course, I could be missing something, but if that is the case I am in good company: Shaw again, from his review for *The World* in February 1891.

A comparison of the newspapers of 1876 with those of 1891 would lead anybody who knew no better to conclude that the opening of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus with *The Nibelung's Ring* was an insignificant event in comparison with the opening of the Shaftesbury Avenuehaus with *Ivanhoe*.

It would hardly be reasonable to demand that Sir Arthur should have intensified the work of Scott as Mozart intensified that of Beaumarchais and even of Molière; but he might at least have done as much for him as he has done for Mr Gilbert in *Patience* and its forerunners ... Richard himself, surely, though it is quite conceivable that he should be singing the same sentimental ballad whenever he is neither drinking nor killing anybody, yet the ballad should not be a mere paraphrase of the Wandering Minstrel song in *The Mikado*, as if Coeur de Lion had picked up that subtle strain by ear, and not picked it up quite accurately ... The chief stroke of humor in the opera is the patriotic chorus in the tournament scene, to which Sir Arthur has imparted an unmistakable music-hall swing, which must have sorely tempted the gallery to join in.

Martin Bird

### Haydn Wood, Violin Concerto in A minor; Adagio from Violin Concerto in B minor

#### Lionel Sainsbury, Violin Concerto, Op 14

Lorraine McAslan (violin), BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Gavin Sutherland (Haydn Wood) and Barry Wordsworth (Sainsbury)



Dutton Epoch  
CDLX 7245

Haydn Wood (1882-1959) is best known as a composer of light music and songs, and to Elgarians for transcribing four solo songs as a suite of orchestral miniatures (available on Dutton Epoch CDLX 7148). I'd never heard any of his 'serious' music and as he, like Elgar, was a fine violinist, was intrigued to see what sort of concerto he would write for his instrument. Here we have the surviving slow movement of an early Violin Concerto, and the complete Violin Concerto of 1928. The former dates from 1905, and this is only its second documented performance. With its solo line of falling sevenths, it has echoes of an Elgar miniature: absolutely lovely, and worth the price of the CD on its own. The later concerto is on an altogether more expansive scale and, as Lewis Foreman says in his typically perceptive note, could be mistaken for music written for a 1930s romantic film. The slow

movement – like that of the Brahms concerto – at its start forgets it is a violin concerto, the lovely theme given on the horn above gentle string accompaniment. Again, an unfairly neglected piece: as Lionel Sainsbury's 1989 concerto already seems to be. This was first performed in a BBC broadcast of 1995 by the present artists, and had to wait until the 2002 Worcester Festival before it received a public performance. It has echoes of Walton, and is written in a totally accessible and immediately attractive style.

Lorraine McAslan plays with verve and commitment, and if I don't quite get on with her tone (to my ears there's an unwelcome metallic edge) then I am quite happy to admit I may be in a minority of one here. I was attracted to this CD by the Haydn Wood pieces, and then found myself pleasantly surprised by the Sainsbury.

Martin Bird



**Vaughan Williams, *Dona nobis pacem; Sancta Civitas***

Christina Pier, Andrew Staples, Matthew Brook, Bach Choir, Winchester Cathedral Choristers, Winchester College Quiristers, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by David Hill

Naxos  
8.572424

*Sancta Civitas* was first performed in 1926. Elgar heard it in 1929, when Vaughan Williams conducted it at the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester. At the first full choral rehearsal in the College Hall on 11 July, 'Dr. Vaughan Williams spent nearly an hour over his work. Sir Edward Elgar was one of the interested listeners in the balcony'. It was performed on the evening of 12 September, sharing the programme with Elgar's Second Symphony and Verdi's *Stabat Mater* and *Te Deum*. Vaughan Williams said in a B.B.C. broadcast of 1957:

[Elgar] ... gave it generous praise: and he told me that he had once thought of setting the words himself, "But I shall never do so now", to which I could only answer that this made me sorry that I had ever attempted to make a setting myself.

The Bach Choir has a long tradition of performing *Sancta Civitas*. I have a fine recording conducted by David Willcocks, and Vaughan Williams himself conducted the second performance of the work at the choir's Jubilee in 1926. 'Vidi', writing in *The Three Pears* magazine of the Worcester performance, said:

Dr. Williams does not spare himself nor his chorus, and when at one terrific climax in the work, one saw those rugged features, with eyes glaring, and teeth bared, and the right arm with its baton coming across to the left shoulder and then with a vicious lightminglike sweep to the right, one felt an almost irresistible inclination to duck and almost to see all the heads in the front rows roll off and go down the orchestra steps like so many apples.

Sadly, the present performance does not achieve anything like that intensity. It is all rather bland and careful, and not helped by a somewhat backward balance of the choir. All the right notes are given in all the right places, but no spark of inspiration for this listener.

The same is true of *Dona nobis pacem*. Here we have the advantage of knowing exactly what Vaughan Williams meant the piece to convey, as a recording survives of him conducting BBC forces in the Concert Hall at Broadcasting House in 1936 (SOMMCD 071, coupled with the composer conducting his Fifth Symphony). Passion and dramatic intensity positively leap from the speakers, and bear out 'Vidi's' observations of Vaughan Williams the conductor. All of which is rather sad for the Naxos issue – but there really is more to music than the notes.

Martin Bird

**Vaughan Williams: 'The Voice out of the Whirlwind'; *Valiant-for-Truth*; *Mass in G minor*; *Three Choral Hymns*; 'Nothing is here for tears'; *A Vision of Aeroplanes*; 'The souls of the Righteous'; *A Choral Flourish***

Choir of Clare College, Cambridge conducted by Timothy Brown



Naxos  
8.572465

The tradition of English Choral music is something of which we can be justly proud, and among those who have been pivotal in its development we owe a huge debt to Ralph Vaughan Williams. A composer with an amazingly broad range – symphonies to folk song arrangements – he has somehow linked all that has been best about our choral music from the Elizabethan golden age to the twentieth century. This disc has a fascinating selection of his works, including some lesser known gems while including probably his best known piece of English church music, the *Mass in G minor*. This composition uses many different combinations (solo voices, quartets, eight part writing) and not only has echoes of the English renaissance but looks forward harmonically.

The Clare College choir is made up of ten sopranos, six altos, five tenors and seven basses. There is a 'guest' voice on each part and a tenor soloist in *The Whitsunday Hymn* who doesn't appear anywhere else – intriguing. The choral sound, while clean and of high quality, sometimes lacks clarity of diction. The disc opens with 'The Voice out of the Whirlwind', a motet for mixed chorus and orchestra or organ adapted from 'Galliard of the sons of the morning' from *Job*. The sleeve notes speak of the verbal imagery being strikingly powerful, but as the diction is not always crystal clear – particularly when the choir is accompanied – and no texts are supplied, this is not always apparent. The organ sometimes muddies the texture rather than adding to it. In *Valiant-for-truth* the choir delivers the dramatic and colourful text well, and the word setting is revealed as masterly.

The *Mass* is given a well rehearsed performance, though occasionally the blend and balance is less than perfect. The opening phrase is well sung by the altos but perhaps doesn't quite capture the prayerful and hushed reverence that the best performances have. The soloists have a fresh and youthful sound – as one would expect from a Cambridge college – are accurate and generally well balanced. Vaughan Williams requests really carefully graded dynamics – *ff* to *pppp* – and this asks a lot of any choir. The Clare College choir produce well controlled singing and are reasonably faithful to the demands of the composer though it is not always clear where the climax of a movement is. The overlapping choral phrases and individuals entries are well caught and the sublime 'Dona nobis pacem' is beautifully done.

The *Three Choral Hymns* were originally written for choir and orchestra and for this reason the organ registrations here might have been more adventurous. The singing is exuberant and committed and when the singers make a conscious effort the text is cleanly delivered (the sopranos, if occasionally a bit shrill in the first of these numbers should be congratulated on the clarity of their words in the second). The tenor solo in the third hymn is excellently sung.

The best piece on the disc for me is the technically demanding *A Vision of Aeroplanes* which is very well sung and accompanied with panache by Jamie McVinnie – a bravura piece of virtuoso organ playing. This is without doubt Vaughan Williams's most challenging and imaginative composition for choir and organ. The performance here is exciting and colourful. It was written for Harold Darke and his professional St Michael's Singers, who must have had a bit of a shock when first presented with the score!

'The souls of the righteous' was written for the Dedication Service of the Battle of Britain Chapel in Westminster Abbey. The words are clear, the solos are well sung and the chording of the choir exemplary. *A Choral Flourish* provides a suitably exuberant finale.

My main disappointment with this disc is the lack of texts, coupled with occasionally less than clear diction from the choir. Particularly in less well known pieces unless one can understand the text, one cannot appreciate the word setting. Most concert programmes give texts; it is a pity that Naxos has not done so here. Nevertheless I recommend this disc for the interesting repertoire. There may be preferable recordings of the *Mass* – I doubt that there is a better one of *Aeroplanes* – but the works collected here, some of them rarely heard, do justice to Vaughan Williams as a pivotal figure in the history of English Choral music.

David Ireson

## LETTERS

### *On Wulstan Atkins*

*From Relf Clark*

Having in 2008 expressed in print for what I believe was the first time the view that Wulstan Atkins may not have been Elgar's godson, I was glad to see Martin Bird's letter in the November edition and Jerrold Northrop Moore's in March. However, on p. 392 of *The Elgar-Atkins Friendship* Wulstan Atkins sets out the text of the letter he sent to Elgar on 9 June 1926. He is in Cambridge and anxious that Elgar should be there on Degree Day, 26 June: 'I know that unless it is essential you hate leaving Napleton ... but I would like to have my Godfather as well as my parents on this special occasion'. He goes on to refer to his Godmother, the widow of Canon Claughton. Elgar replied on 11 June, and the text of that letter is set out on the same page: he fears that it will be 'impossible'. The originals or photocopies of these letters will put the matter to rest, surely.

### *A response from Martin Bird*

Those who knew Wulstan Atkins from the 1970s tell me that although they had heard from others that he was Elgar's godson, they never heard it from Wulstan himself. This bears out Dr. Moore's recollection 'that the notion was never put forward during Carice's lifetime'. The letters from Dr Moore and Dr Clark (above) have prompted me to investigate a little further.

On the question of a Catholic being godfather to an Anglican child, it would seem that this was indeed possible. In 1923 Percy Hull, organist of Hereford Cathedral, asked Elgar to be godfather to his son Cedric, and, after demurring on the grounds that he was too old, Elgar agreed.<sup>1</sup>

I'd forgotten the existence of Wulstan's letter of June 1926 – and my immediate reaction was to think that this settled the matter. The relevant extract, in full, is as follows:

I know that unless it is essential you hate leaving Napleton, Marco and Meg, and now Mina – I am longing to meet Mina – but I would like to have my Godfather as well as my parents on this special occasion. If you are kind enough to grant my request, I can get you a room, or rather I believe my people have an extra room already booked for my Godmother who cannot come.

This, of course, seems pretty conclusive, except for two things: Meg had been killed by a car in 1923, and Mina had been acquired at the end of 1924. So it seems strange that Wulstan, who says in his book that he and his father visited Elgar on at least three occasions during the Easter vacation of 1926 and 'had a quick walk round [Napleton] with Marco and Meg', should make such a gaffe when writing to

<sup>1</sup> See Elgar's letter to Hull, in Percy M. Young, *Letters of Edward Elgar and Other Writings* (Bles 1956), 280. The matter is also mentioned by Lady Hull in the *Elgar Society News*, January 1991.

Elgar only a few weeks later. The story of Elgar's many dogs will, no doubt, be told at some length one day – certainly I had no idea that he had so many – but the following details are relevant here.

There were two dogs called Meg. Elgar got the first in February 1921 while he was still at Severn House. When the house was vacated, she went to live with Carice in Surrey. The second Meg – the one we see in photographs with Marco and Mina – was, her pedigree form tells us, 'Merry Meg of Kempsey ... born 27<sup>th</sup> April 1926'. She was a gift from Beatrice Harrison.

The existence of a hitherto unsung cairn terrier is revealed by entries in Carice's diary from 1926: 'Father lunch at Club ... He rested & we went out a little. Stores & saw a cairn he liked' [26 April]; 'Father & I to the Stores – he bought the cairn' [28 April]; 'Father back to Kempsey – 12.45 with the cairn – Squirrel' [29 April]. Squirrel was quickly passed on to Elgar's Secretary, Mary Clifford, as he told Carice on 8 May (EBM letter 271):

No real news: dogs are well. The puppy (squirrel is too difficult to call out so it's Peter) is at Tibberton &, the last news of him was good ... Both dogs are sitting in the sun, & strongly disapprove of 3 military airships which have just flown over.

So we can be sure that, when Wulstan returned to Cambridge for his final term, Elgar's new cairn, Squirrel/Peter, had gone to Tibberton, and that Marco and Mina were well established at Napleton, where they were to be joined at some point later in the summer of 1926 by Merry Meg of Kempsey.

While I can see how after 60 years Wulstan could easily have got in a muddle over all this while writing his book, it is less easy to understand how he could have been in a similar muddle in 1926 when he referred to the dogs so precisely in a letter inviting Elgar to Cambridge. It is quite possible that Wulstan was confused by the sheer volume of four-legged friends, especially as they were all either terriers or cairns, and most had names beginning with 'M'. I can only leave readers to draw their own conclusions!

### ***On The Starlight Express***

*From John Morrison*

In their interesting 'Tales from the Complete Edition 2 : *The Starlight Express*', John Norris and Jerrold Northrop Moore give the impression that Elgar boycotted the first performance that he was down to conduct due to 'sour relations in the rehearsal period'. Undoubtedly relations between some of the people involved in the production were difficult. I understand what is not mentioned: that the premiere was to have been the conducted by the composer, but because Lady Elgar had suffered concussion a few days before as the result of a traffic accident, he stayed at home with her, and the conductor was Julius Harrison.

### ***John Norris responds:***

There is inevitably an element of risk in coming to emphatic conclusions about human behaviour, as there is always a tendency to disguise one's true emotions for

fear of appearing foolish. But correspondence between Elgar and Blackwood, now in the British Library (Add. MS 69834), leaves no doubt that Lady Elgar's accident was at best the final straw in Elgar's decision to boycott the première performance, and more likely no more than a smokescreen.

As recorded in the article in the March Journal, the discontent arose from the stage design, which was by Henry Wilson, President of the Arts and Crafts Society. A week before the premiere, Blackwood wrote to Elgar: 'I hear that Mr. Wilson, the artist, has designed the Sprites in the spirit of Greek fantasy – Lamplighter a quasi-Mercury, Gardener as Priapus, or someone else, and Sweep possibly as Pluto. It is a false and ghastly idea'. On 25 December, Blackwood added: 'I know what your [sic] feeling. Probably you guess what I'm feeling. Can we do anything? ... I have, of course, the right of veto. That means getting a new artist, postponement of opening, heavy loss of money to Miss Ashwell, and so forth. You know better than I do what a sweeping veto would involve. That our really big chance should be ruined by her strange belief in a mediocre artist is cruel. This murder of my simple little play I can stand ... but this suburban, Arts & Crafts pretentious rubbish stitched on to your music is really too painful for me to bear'.

That Elgar sympathised entirely with Blackwood is shown by his letter to Troyte Griffith, a friend of Henry Wilson: 'Your friend has ruined any chance the play had of success – he's an ignorant silly crank with no knowledge of the stage at all & has overloaded the place with a lot of unsuitable rubbish & has apparently never read the play! He ought to be put in a Home!' And the final word as always lay with Alice who, far from being incapacitated by her accident, was busy writing her diary: 'First performance of the *Starlight Express* – E. wd. not conduct as the *mise en scene* was so repulsive – & was not even present – Music wonderful – '. But giving up the glamour of the premiere in order to tend to his ailing wife made much better press coverage for all concerned.

*From Andrew Neill*

The publication of *The Starlight Express* in the Elgar Complete Edition reflects an extraordinary achievement in the history of our Society. The edition has had a chequered history, but 20 volumes now sit on my shelves, a reminder of Elgar's infinite variety and the enormous contribution he made to the culture of this country. This lengthy score means that my copy of the hand-written conductor's version can be consigned to a corner of a cupboard. Those of us who love this music can be grateful for a milestone of considerable significance. I recall a meeting 10 years or so ago outside the British Museum with Robert Anderson and Roger Dubois when I was persuaded that the Complete Edition should be re-established. I said then that, perhaps, *The Starlight Express* represented the 'Mount Everest' of the Edition, in that the music had never been edited nor had it been originated. This analogy may be a little fanciful, for another 23 volumes remain to be published, but this unassuming red volume represents something major in our ability to understand the music of the man this Society serves.

All involved in shining light on this delightful music deserve the heartiest congratulations of all members for this exceptional and hard-won achievement.

## Other Correspondence

### From Kevin Mitchell

I wish to congratulate John Drysdale on his excellent article 'A Matter of Wills' in the March issue. It shed new and fascinating light on the Elgars' finances. It is interesting to compare the capital of a composer with writers who were his contemporaries. John Drysdale noted that in February 1934 Elgar's gross estate came to £13,934. When Thomas Hardy died in 1928 his gross estate was valued at £91,000; J.M. Barrie in 1937 left £173,500; H.G. Wells in 1946 left £60,000; and Shaw's gross estate in 1950 reached the staggering sum of £367,233.

In matters of income Elgar also did not fare as well. After the enormous success of the First Symphony in 1908 – which achieved almost 100 performances in one year – Elgar's income from performing fees for the first eighteen months following the premiere amounted to £800. J.M. Barrie's income in 1906 alone was £44,000 and *Peter Pan* had by then grossed over half a million!

### From Carl Newton

Andrew Neill's interesting article in the March issue provides five options for the reason for Kipling objecting to *Fringes of the Fleet*. But it is surely obvious that only one really fills the bill. When Elgar cavalierly added a fifth poem to the set, not by Kipling and after the premiere, he was clearly breaching the terms, implied or otherwise, of the poet's original agreement. Parker was a minor Canadian poet who was a friend of the Wortleys. Hence Elgar's anguished letter was addressed to Alice Stuart Wortley. Kipling did not forbid performances of the original set; it was in the public domain and there are several instances of its use. As Andrew says, he may not have warmed to Elgar's application of titles not the poet's own, but I doubt if he would have forbidden the work on that ground. The story that he did it because he was lamenting the loss of his son is a good romantic myth – he had been long aware his son was dead and he was entirely in his rights to object to Elgar's action.

### From Barry Collett

The letter from Dr J.H. Roberts in the March Journal raises an interesting point which has exercised me for a long time, namely, conductors' cavalier disregard for what is required in the percussion department. Before I conducted my own orchestra I was the timpanist with a very competent East Midlands orchestra. In one concert we were to do Elgar's First *Wand of Youth* Suite. No extra percussionists appeared throughout the rehearsals, until on the final rehearsal on the afternoon of the concert I asked the conductor where they were. 'Oh', he replied, 'is there some percussion in this? Well, just put in what you can, dear boy'. So, with an airy wave of his hand, all of Elgar's expertly judged percussion effects were dismissed. I was outraged, and I think upset him by asking if he would be so relaxed if no violas or oboes had turned up. I also remember attending, years ago in Tewkesbury Abbey, one of the first joint performances of *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*. Again, despite the effort that had obviously gone into the performances, the percussion section was woefully undermanned. I now wonder if some of that attitude, rather than acoustic problems, lay behind the seeming indifference to Elgar's requirements, even in recordings conducted by the composer.

## 100 YEARS AGO...

Back in London after his tour of Devon and Cornwall, Elgar was immediately caught up in the social whirl. There were visits to concerts, the theatre, and opera; the British Museum on 18 April and the Academy dinner on the 30th; and he and Alice heard Ysaÿe and Pugno play Beethoven sonatas on three consecutive Wednesdays. They dined at friends' houses, and entertained others at New Cavendish Street, including Isabella Jaeger, the Blairs – old friends from Worcester – and G.J. Bennett, organist of Lincoln Cathedral, where Elgar was to conduct *Gerontius* early in June. It was almost two weeks after his return before Alice makes any mention of composition: on 24 April, 'E. very thrilled with his [violin] Concerto & working at it'; and two days later: 'E. very intent writing'. The Elgars' extended stay in London meant that Edward saw a good deal of Alice Stuart Wortley, who was closely associated with the composition of the concerto. Alice's daughter Clare later affirmed that she gave him 'an impulse at a critical moment'. On 20 April he wrote to Alice: 'I am now ablaze with work & *writing hard*; you *should* come & see (& hear it!)', and a week later: 'I have been working hard at the Windflower themes but all stands still until you come and approve'.

The death of Edward VII on 6 May affected him deeply. On the 7th Alice described him as 'feeling desolate', and 'very depressed' three days later. On the 13th he went to Frank Schuster's 'The Hut', and stayed for ten days, during which work on the concerto resumed.

Back in London Elgar chanced to meet in Regent Street W.H. Reed, leader of the London Symphony Orchestra, and asked if he 'had any time to spare, as he wanted a little help with something which he was sketching out for the fiddle'. The date was fixed for 28 May, and when Reed arrived he found the composer 'striding about with a lot of loose sheets of music paper, arranging them in different parts of the room'. Elgar found the session very helpful and Reed came again on several occasions.

At the beginning of June the lease on the New Cavendish Street flat came to an end, and they returned to Hereford. On 9 June he conducted *Gerontius* at Lincoln, with Alice Stuart Wortley in the audience. The following day he went back to 'The Hut': composition continued, and Reed went down to help on the 12th. On the 17th Julia Worthington arrived in Hereford, and Elgar returned there the following day. Reed went to Hereford on 30 June to play through the concerto. He later wrote: 'Ivor Atkins ... played the piano accompaniment, while Sir Edward strode around the room, listening and rubbing his hands excitedly'.

At the beginning of July the Elgars spent five days in Cornwall as guests of Lady Mary Trefusis and her husband. Before returning to Hereford he had a conducting engagement at Bournemouth in a concert in which Stanford, Mackenzie, Parry, and German all conducted their own works. It was finally decided that the premiere of the concerto would be given at a Philharmonic Society concert on 10 November. Throughout July Elgar worked hard at the orchestration. Another diversion came with the York Festival on 20–21 July, at which he conducted the *Variations*, *Cockaigne*, *Sea Pictures*, *The Wand of Youth*, and *King Olaf*. By now the Elgars had decided to move from Hereford to London. On the 14th Sinclair and Percy Hull had been to dinner at Plas Gwyn and were 'very sad' when given the news. No doubt the decision was at least partly because of Alice's desire to see her husband at the heart of the artistic and social life of the country, an experience which they had both enjoyed so much a few months earlier.

Geoffrey Hodgkins

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